

MEMORANDUM

TO: Park Advisory Commission

FROM: Julie Grand, Gwen Nystuen, and Sam Offen

DATE: June 15, 2010

SUBJECT: Resolution Regarding the Proposed Fuller Road Station

Attached for your review and recommendation is a resolution regarding the proposed Fuller Road Station.

Background

The Park Advisory Commission (PAC) has received presentations from staff on three occasions, the last occurring on March 16, 2010. At each of these meetings, the vision for the Fuller Road Station (FRS) has narrowed, shifting from a highly conceptual intermodal transportation center focused on rail to the specific Phase I collaboration with the University of Michigan to construct a large parking garage with additional bicycle and bus amenities. PAC appreciates the time that staff has dedicated to presenting this information and answering our questions. However, a number of concerns remain with the proposed project.

The resolution before you encompasses two main concerns regarding the proposed Fuller Road Station:

1. **The process in which decisions have been reached thus far.**
2. **The proposed reduction in revenue to the Parks and Recreation budget.**

Process

In spite of PAC's close attention to the proposed project, questions remain regarding the scope and timeline of the Fuller Road Station. In addition, the history of the decision-making process between City staff and their current and potential partners has lacked transparency. PAC recognizes that some uncertainty will inevitably arise within any large project. However, in the future, PAC would greatly benefit from clearer, more timely, and more comprehensive information regarding the significant steps in the FRS process.

PAC is also concerned over the lack of substantive opportunity for public commentary. Presentations to commissions, as well as to the public, have offered the chance to ask project-specific questions, but have not inquired as to the overall direction and/or desirability of the FRS. PAC is charged with making recommendations to City Council on all matters concerning the parks system. However, PAC was not informed of important steps taken to advance the proposed FRS until after the fact, including the November 2009 Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the University of Michigan.

Reduction in funds

In FY 2010, Parks and Recreation received \$69,552 from the University of Michigan to lease three lots on the north and south sides of Fuller Road for parking. This lease allows the University to utilize the space on Monday through Friday from 6 am to 4 pm and is limited during the summer to accommodate the users of Fuller Park. Under the proposed plan, the University will gain significant parking space without restrictions while Parks and Recreation will lose approximately \$44,706 in revenue.

The loss of funds to an already stretched and shrinking budget would undoubtedly have a negative impact on the parks system. Parks and Recreation has already made some difficult concessions in the FY 2011 budget, such as eliminating maintenance in a number of parks. In spite of continued budget cuts, Parks has managed to maintain all of its facilities, including Mack Pool and the Senior Center.

PAC proposes that Parks and Recreation receive an increase in revenue that is reflective of a number of factors. First, that a permanent structure is being placed on a valuable asset which will allow the University to park cars in a covered space 24 hours a day, 7 days per week. Second, that the number of spaces allocated to the University will increase by 300% to 400%. At the current rate of \$125 per space, the minimum allocated to Parks and Recreation should be between \$100,000 (800 spaces) to \$127,500 (1020 spaces) annually, with a yearly 3% increase.

Additional Concerns

Benefit to Park Users

At this point it is unclear how any of the amenities within the proposed Phase I Fuller Road Station will benefit park users. At a minimum, the building of such a structure may be in conflict with the goals stated in the Parks, Recreation and Open Space (PROS) Plan, which supports amenities such as open space, athletic fields, or natural areas near and along the Huron River. Unlike a paved lot, the building of a parking structure is permanent, and sets a precedent for the building of future non-park use projects on parkland.

Safety

The proposed Fuller Road Station is designed to accommodate a more than four-fold increase in cars in addition to Greyhound, AATA, and University buses. This increase in traffic, coupled with the introduction of additional curb cuts, raises concerns for the safety of park users, pedestrians and bicyclists. The current design takes pedestrians and bicyclists directly across the entrance and exit of the station. Increased traffic may also pose safety hazards for users of Fuller Park when crossing from the south to the north side of the road.

Recommendations

In general, PAC supports alternative transportation and is in favor of the goals of an intermodal station which would increase mass transit. A great deal of enthusiasm for the project has been expressed at PAC meetings, particularly at the outset of the planning

process. However, as important steps have been taken to advance and alter the proposed Fuller Road Station, neither PAC nor the public has been adequately informed.

PAC therefore requests that a concerted effort be made by project staff to provide opportunities for PAC and the public to give meaningful input into all future significant decisions regarding the proposed FRS. PAC hopes to receive a clear schedule for the proposed FRS from project staff, with future updates as necessary in a timely manner. More specifically, PAC recommends that the final Parking Services Agreement (PSA) will be published at least two weeks prior to Council approval in order to provide adequate time for public input.

In PAC's view, it is critical that the City negotiate the lease terms for the final PSA to not only restore, but to increase funding to Parks and Recreation to be commensurate with the number of spaces provided by the proposed parking structure, as well as reflective of the value of the parkland. Moreover, PAC is recommending that the final PSA agreement should indemnify the Parks Department for any shortfall in revenue caused by the University's decision to discontinue leasing the North lots on Fuller Road. The Parks Department should not lose almost \$45,000 annually, particularly when one considers that a large and valuable piece of parkland is essential to this project.

Finally, pursuant to our discussion with Mayor Heiftje at the May 18, 2010 PAC meeting, PAC is in agreement with the Mayor's suggestion that all revenue generated from future lessees of the proposed FRS should be allocated to Parks and Recreation Services. This may include, but is not limited to, the University of Michigan, private bus and taxi companies, and rail.

Prepared by: Julie Grand, Gwen Nystuen, and Sam Offen; Park Advisory Commission

Resolution on the Proposed Fuller Road Station

Whereas, the Park Advisory Commission (PAC) has been briefed on numerous occasions about plans for the Fuller Road Station (FRS) by project managers and City staff.

Whereas, in spite of such briefings, the overall scope of the proposed project, including the timeline and decision-making process by City staff and their partners continues to change and remains unclear.

Whereas, the opportunity for direct input from the public regarding the direction and overall desirability of the FRS has not been commensurate with the scale of the proposed project.

Whereas, one of PAC's roles is to make recommendation concerning the use of parkland.

Whereas, the City of Ann Arbor and the University of Michigan have jointly proposed building an approximately 1,020 car parking structure, which represents an increase of 770 parking spaces.

Whereas, building the proposed FRS will create a permanent structure on parkland.

Whereas, the Parks and Recreation Department currently receives \$31, 057 (FY 2010) annually from the University of Michigan for 250 parking spots in the South Lot, and according to the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the University is slated to receive only \$24,846 with a 3% yearly increase for almost 800 spots following completion of the proposed parking structure in 2012.

Whereas, it is unlikely that the University of Michigan will continue to lease the North Lots on Fuller Road following the completion of the proposed parking garage, resulting in an additional annual loss to the Parks budget of approximately \$38,495 (FY 2010).

Whereas, the potential loss of revenue (totaling \$44,706 in FY 2010 dollars) from the University of Michigan will result in the Parks and Recreation Department having to make additional cuts to an already stretched and shrinking budget.

Whereas, according to its terms, and pursuant to information presented to PAC, the November 2009 MOU is not a final agreement with the University of Michigan, including its terms with respect to compensation to the Parks and Recreation Department.

Resolved, that while PAC is generally in favor of the goals of an intermodal transit station, concerns remain about the overall benefit to park users of the proposed Fuller Road Station as a stand-alone Phase One project.

Resolved, that if such plans are approved, PAC urges Council to negotiate the final agreement with the University of Michigan to include a significant increase in revenue to the Parks and Recreation Department above and beyond that currently agreed upon in the

MOU. Further, PAC recommends that the final agreement should indemnify the Parks and Recreation Department for any shortfall in revenue caused by the University's decision to discontinue leasing the North lots on Fuller Road.

Resolved, PAC recommends that the final Parking Services Agreement will be published at least two weeks prior to Council approval of the proposed FRS.

Resolved, PAC recommends that all revenue generated from lessees of the proposed transit center should be dedicated exclusively to the Parks and Recreation Department.

Resolved, PAC requests that project staff will present PAC with a clear project schedule for the proposed FRS, with future updates as necessary.

Resolved, that an effort be made by project staff to provide opportunities for PAC and the public to give meaningful input into all future significant decisions regarding the proposed FRS.

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Submitted by: Park Advisory Commission

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