

From: Mike Garfield [mailto:michaelg@ecocenter.org]

Sent: Monday, October 15, 2012 4:30 PM

To: Hieftje, John; Smith, Sandi; Briere, Sabra; Lumm, Jane; Derezinski, Tony; Taylor, Christopher (Council); Kunselman, Stephen; Higgins, Marcia; Teall, Margie; Hohnke, Carsten; Anglin, Mike

Subject: Ann Arbor Station Resolution

Dear Mayor Hieftje and Members of the Ann Arbor City Council,

The Ecology Center supports the resolution on tonight's agenda regarding the Ann Arbor Station – as proposed by Councilmembers Taylor, Briere, and Higgins, and Mayor Hieftje – and we urge you to vote for it.

We believe that the expansion of mass transit is one of the most important things the City of Ann Arbor can do for the environment. Transit reduces smog, soot, CO2, and other air pollutants that would otherwise impair people's health and worsen climate change. The proposal to locate a train station and multi-modal facility at Fuller Park would create a critical transit hub at the site of the largest employment center in Washtenaw County. It would facilitate bus travel to and from major destinations in the city, and is a linchpin in the long-standing efforts to connect Ann Arbor to Ypsilanti and the rest of southeast Michigan with commuter rail.

Before tonight, however, we were unable to support the plan.

The Ecology Center has been a leading advocate for the City parkland acquisition millage, every time it has been on the ballot. We were one of many groups that fought to protect the landmark oak trees from the University's North Campus expansion plans in the early 1990s. I was personally involved in the negotiations that resulted in the land swap between the City and the University, part of which led to the City's lease of space in Fuller Park to U-M for parking. Under the circumstances, this was a reasonable use of City parkland, and one that made no longer-term obligations to the site.

It may be legal to build a parking structure or multi-modal station on city parkland, but it was not what voters thought they were approving when they voted – overwhelmingly, each time – for parkland acquisition millages. If the City wants to build a non-park facility, like a train station or multi-modal station, no matter how great the public benefits, then the City owes it to voters to seek their approval first. If the City is going to make a long-term commitment to “reprogramming” this space, then voters should be asked their support.

Tonight's resolution ensures that the City will maintain its commitment to parks, and potentially removes the conflict between two of our community's great key values.

We urge you to support the resolution.

Sincerely,

Mike Garfield

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