

Spokane Downtown Transit Alternatives Analysis: Universe of Alternatives

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DATE: May 25, 2010

Introduction

This memorandum documents the potential improvement alternatives that will be explored by the technical team for the Spokane Downtown Transit Alternative Analysis (DTAA) project. The basis for these alternatives came from a design workshop held on May 6, 2010 with the project's Sounding Board and Technical Advisory Group members. The workshop produced seven core alternatives for further analysis. These alternatives will be used to frame the discussion with the public over the next five weeks as the project team ensures the range of alternatives is inclusive of the "universe of possibilities." When completed the list of alternatives will be evaluated against the evaluation criteria developed by the project team, which are based upon the project goals.

The draft evaluation criteria include:

- Travel Time
- Flexibility of Operation
- Comfort/Convenience
- Capital Cost
- Safety/Security
- Funding
- Accessibility/Ease of Understanding
- Environmental/Sustainability
- Ridership and Geographic Equity
- Economic Development
- Urban Form and Activity
- Consistency with Relevant Policies

Centers

The project team called out important centers or areas in the City, which would benefit from high performance transit service. Not to be confused with “Centers and Corridors” as formally adopted in the City’s Comprehensive Plan, these centers were identified within the current planning process to identify aggregations of human activity, both existing and envisioned in the future. The use making up each center ranges from predominately residential to primarily commercial with some of the centers exhibiting a healthy mix of jobs and housing. Institutional uses such as Gonzaga University and the Spokane County campus are activity foci in their respective centers. In general each center has opportunity for new development; specific centers are called out in planning document for a substantial increase in development in the next twenty years. Furthermore, the centers are sized to be representative of pedestrian travel sheds. The information below summarizes the centers identified.

Existing Centers

- **Browne’s Addition:** This is a residential center at the western edge of the study area and is one of the oldest neighborhoods in the city. Originally developed with expansive mansions built by Spokane’s elite, residential density intensified over the 20th Century and particularly through World War II, as significant levels of transit service connected the neighborhood to downtown and destinations to the west including military installations.
- **Downtown Core:** Predominately an employment center, this area includes the Central Business District, government buildings, Retail District, Financial District, and Davenport Arts District. The core has always been the central location for mass transit, with central stations generally between Howard Street and Monroe Street and adjoining Main or Riverside avenues. Today, Spokane Transit’s Downtown Plaza is located between Sprague and Riverside avenues on the west side of Wall Street.
- **University District:** This includes both Gonzaga University and Riverpoint Campus, so it spans the areas to the north and south of the river, in the northern corner of the study area. While the campuses provide the primary loci of activity, there are some residential areas around the Gonzaga campus. This also includes the Hamilton Street commercial area.
- **County Campus:** Spokane County government offices are within two to three blocks from the courthouse on Broadway Avenue a few blocks west of Monroe Street. The center is defined broadly to also include the commercial activity along Monroe Street from Boone Avenue to Bridge Avenue and as far east as to include the Spokane Veterans Memorial Arena.
- **Medical West and East:** This oblong shaped center is located south of Highway 90. It incorporates mostly service oriented uses, including the Deaconess/Shriners Hospital, Lewis and Clark High School, Sacred Heart Medical Area, Rockwood Clinic, and the 5th and Browne Medical Area. There are pockets of multi-family

residential buildings included in this center (Central Lower South Hill neighborhood).

Future Centers

The following centers are planned to develop or are viewed as having important re-development opportunity. In several cases they are expected to develop significantly within the next twenty years.

- **Canon:** This is a relatively dense residential area in the southwest corner of the study area.
- **West Downtown:** This is a mixed-use area to the west of the Downtown Core.
- **East Downtown:** This is an employment center to the east of the Downtown Core that also includes the intermodal station (intercity bus and AMTRAK).
- **South University:** This is currently a light industrial/commercial area that includes the 2nd and 3rd avenues and in recent years has been designated as the southern portion of the University District. It is expected to expand in residential use and bio-medical services use as the University expands south.
- **North Bank:** Currently North Bank includes a mix of commercial, hospitality and cultural facilities. Plans developed over the past several decades have called for further intensification of this area.
- **Kendall Yards Commercial:** This is a commercial center north of the river west of Monroe Street. It is expected to include a mix of uses including hotels, office and retail uses.
- **Kendall Yards Residential:** This linear area is expected to be predominately residential in the future. It is located to the north of the river, on the western edge of the study area.

Core Alternatives

Each of the seven core alternatives would connect several existing and future centers (as described above). Most of the alternatives also offer variations to extend into more centers or that travel on different bridges or roads to reach a key center. This list of alternatives will be refined after input is gathered from stakeholders and the public at large.

Red Alternative: Loop

The core of this alternative would provide a looped route to the key areas in the city, along two options.

Smaller Loop:

- From the Downtown Core, extending north over the Monroe Bridge to the North Bank area. The loop would extend west along Boone to the University District, before heading south along either Hamilton or Cincinnati to cross the river over Spokane Falls. The small loop would then cut through the University District south of the river and East Downtown before connecting back to the Downtown Core.

Larger Loop:

- The larger loop would follow the same route from the Downtown Core north and west, but instead of connecting from East Downtown to the Core, it would extend south to Medical West and East areas along Division or Browne before heading north on either Howard or Hall to connect back to the Core.

Orange Alternative: County Campus to Medical

The core of this alternative would extend from the County Campus area to the Medical area (including both the west and east portions of this area). The north/south movement from the Downtown Core to the medical area would be along Howard or Wall streets. Crossing over the river into the County Campus area, the existing bridges of Monroe, Post, or Howard could be used.

Pink Alternative: County Campus to University

The core of this alternative would extend from the County Campus area to the University District south of the river, along either Main or Riverside. From the Downtown Core to County Campus, the river could be crossed using the existing bridges of Monroe, Post, or Howard.

Extensions of the alternative could reach to:

- Kendall Yards East
- University, north of the river (over the Spokane Falls bridge, north along Cincinnati or Hamilton)

Turquoise Alternative: Browne's Addition to University (via North Bank)

The core of this alternative would extend from the Browne's Addition area to the University District area north of the river. The route from Browne's Addition to the Downtown Core would then cross the river on either the Monroe or Post bridges, to extend west to the University area.

Dark Blue Alternative: Browne's Addition to University

The core of this alternative would extend from the Browne's Addition area to the University District area north of the river, along Main, Spokane Falls, or Riverside. The route between Browne's Addition into the Downtown Core would need to follow First, Sprague, or Riverside. The alternative would extend from the west to the east of downtown, crossing the river either on Division or Spokane Falls (extending north along Cincinnati or Hamilton).

Lavender Alternative: University to Medical East

The core of this alternative would extend from the University District area south of the river to the Medical East area. This could be achieved three ways:

- Aerial tram (from the University to Medical East areas, following a more direct route between these points)
- Sherman Street (from the University to Medical East areas)

- Division Street (from the University to Medical East areas)

From Medical East, the alternative could be extended to Medical West, then either reaching south to the Cannon area or extending northwest into Browne's Addition (either along Walnut or Jefferson).

Another extension would be possible to the University area, by crossing over the Spokane Falls Bridge, north along Cincinnati or Hamilton.

Plum Alternative: University to Medical West

The core of this alternative would extend from the University area, south of the river, to Medical West by crossing under the highway at either Wall or Howard.

Extensions of the alternative could reach to:

- Cannon
- Medical East
- University, north of the river (over the Spokane Falls bridge, north along Cincinnati or Hamilton)

Modes

Each of the modes were evaluated at a high level on several factors to determine their appropriate use for the downtown setting, including vehicle capacity, land use density requirements, speed, and stop spacing. All of the alternatives would examine the use of the following mode options:

- Streetcar
- Bus
- Enhanced Bus
- Electric Trolley Bus

The Looped alternative may also be compatible with personal rapid transit (PRT) mode. The University to Medical East alternative offers an option that would use an aerial tram to connect the centers. Additionally, some alternatives may be able to be served by regionally focused modes, such as light rail transit (LRT) or bus rapid transit (BRT).

Next Steps

Following an open house later in June, the project team will evaluate the concepts above in relation to the project's evaluation framework and will compile initial recommendations to be discussed with the Sounding Board, Technical Advisory Group, and Core Stakeholders.