
Acadia Gateway Center News – August 2006

Public Meeting Scheduled

WHEN: August 31, 2006 at 7:00 PM
WHERE: Trenton Elementary School
WHO: Trenton residents, businesses and local organizations

The Maine Department of Transportation will host a public meeting to present the proposed Acadia Gateway Center Plan. This presentation will highlight what this center will offer to visitors and Trenton residents, how it is adapted to the local environment and the steps that will be needed to go from plan to program. Persons attending will have an opportunity to ask questions and submit comments. If you cannot attend, please submit written comments.



Explorer buses. Residents spoke up about what they think such a facility would mean for Trenton, potential benefits and costs.

Residents of Trenton received a newsletter in April that summarized the Acadia Gateway Center concept, the preferred location in Trenton and answers to frequently asked questions. Also in April a survey was sent to every household in Trenton to ask for feedback on the kinds of services such a center might offer to the community.

The planning team continued to work May through August to adapt a preferred facility design to fit the location and local requirements. A business team has been estimating the number of visitors that would use this facility, and the potential for added services such as an auditorium, nature trails, scenic view points and space for local organizations to display their work.

This second newsletter provides readers with a more detailed description of the proposed facility, including what it offers for residents of Trenton. Readers will also find a summary of findings from the survey, information on potentially related projects, such as extending the Acadia All American Road / Scenic Byway and efforts to improve traffic flow and safety on Route 3. We encourage readers to discuss this proposal with neighbors and elected leaders and to call MaineDOT if you have any questions.

Timeline

The timeline for the project in 2006 is as follows:

- August: Release the Environmental Assessment for 30-day public review; Conduct public meeting
- September: Respond to public comments on the Environmental Assessment
- October: Federal Transit Administration issues a decision on the Environmental Assessment

Update on the Acadia Gateway Center

On March 28 residents of Trenton were presented with several options that the Maine Department of Transportation is considering for a proposed facility that would provide park and ride connections to the Island Explorer, information about Acadia National Park and other regional attractions and a facility to maintain the Downeast Transit / Island

Preferred Alternative

The Preferred Alternative for the Acadia Gateway Center provides a transit facility/visitor center and a bus maintenance facility for Downeast Transportation on a 369-acre site located on the west side of Route 3 in

Trenton, Maine. The project has been designed to minimize wetland impacts, with the transit facility/visitor center occupying primarily the northeast corner of the site within an open meadow area, and the maintenance facility located on the west side of Crippens Brook within a wooded upland area of the site.

Planned Services

The transit facility/visitor center would be constructed as a complex of buildings that would include the transit center that would provide a waiting area for the buses with local Chamber of Commerce functions, a National Park service (NPS) Visitor Center and theatre, restroom facilities and space for supportive commercial uses. To avoid competition with existing businesses in town, commercial uses would be limited to small-scale operations such as a bookstore, vending machines and park souvenirs. The complex of buildings is loosely organized around a south-facing courtyard offering views to Mount Desert Island.



The bus maintenance facility would provide Downeast Transportation with offices, a light bus maintenance area, secure fleet storage, and an environmentally sound fueling location to support Island Explorer and other transit operations in Hancock County. Fifty employee parking spaces would be provided here.

A new road would be constructed to provide access from Route 3 to the Acadia Gateway Center facilities. The access road branches to create a one way bus loop with berthing for four Island Explorer buses and two intercity buses at the transit facility/visitor center, while cars are directed to the north side of the site and then west to the parking areas. Parking would be provided for approximately 570 cars, organized as follows: 70 spaces for commuters

using the Island Explorer buses, 120 short-term (30 minute) parking spaces, 240 1-2 hour spaces, 100 spaces for extended parking and 40 spaces for staff. Up to an additional 20 RV spaces would be provided.

Phased Construction (see cover illustration)

The Acadia Gateway Center would be constructed in phases. Phase I would include the construction of the access road, some parking, and the bus maintenance facility, which is expected to be operation in 2009. The maintenance facility would serve all of Downeast Transportation's buses including the seasonal Island Explorer, weekly year-round and weekday commuter buses. Phase II, operational by 2012, would include the construction of the transit facility the full Island Explorer bus service to Bar Harbor would begin. Phase III would include construction of the National Park Service visitor's center, and is expected to commence in close coordination with the transit facility. Phase IV would consist of the NPS theatre, and the development of the commercial space on the site.

Acadia Gateway Center: Questions And Answers

Does Trenton's zoning allow such uses?

The uses are not presently allowed in the location where the project is proposed. The draft comprehensive plan, under review by the state and yet to be submitted for town vote, recommends that such uses be allowed subject to a public referendum.

What will be the tax impacts of developing this property?

The land might be owned by the Maine Department of Transportation or other tax-exempt organization.

If so, it would be removed from the tax rolls. Current taxes on this parcels are about \$1,600. Trenton collects about \$2.3 million in property taxes overall, so only a minor amount that would be lost. Limited commercial operations that are subject to property tax may be placed on the site.

Would the town have to provide any municipal services to the site?

Local emergency responders met in May to discuss this question. No major health, safety or municipal emergency services were anticipated by this group to result from this new facility. Acadia National Park would provide some on-site emergency services such as limited first aid, policing and fire preparedness. This site might provide useful capacity for local emergency management. The Trenton fire department would provide back-up service and County Ambulance would provide ambulance service on a contractual basis. Solid waste and recycling services would be provided by the National Park Service.

What about threats to the area's environment and historic features?

Consultants working on the project have conducted a thorough environmental assessment. There are several areas of wetlands, but these are protected by state and federal law. This means that all buildings, other structures and parking areas would be separated from any wet areas by a vegetative buffer. The site has no endangered or threatened species and no noted historic or archaeological sites. The project will be designed to minimize storm water runoff and other environmental impacts. All vehicle storage, maintenance and fueling operations would be designed in accordance with the strictest state guidelines.

Would this project result in increased traffic safety problems?

Route 3 in Trenton has several segments with higher than normal crash rates. A high percentage of crashes result from the lack of turning lanes and signals and parking on the shoulder of the highway. The project would be designed to assure that all traffic can enter and exit safely. Overall, the project should have a positive impact on traffic flow since it will make it easier for more people to travel

by bus rather than car. If public transit options are not introduced, traffic on Route 3 is likely to increase at rate of 2.5 percent a year. Traffic on Route 3 in Trenton is already about 20 percent over its design capacity during times of peak summer travel. This project may also draw visitor back to Route 3 that have been switching in large number to Route 230 in recent years.

Would the presence of businesses at the center mean unfair competition with existing businesses in town?

The business plan for the center is being developed in consultation with the local business community to assure that competition is minimized. Commercial uses are expected to be limited to vending machines and park-related uses. An example of the latter would sales of maps and books about the park.

Would the increased use of buses hurt local businesses?

The local and regional chambers of commerce met in May to discuss how this facility can help their businesses. Designed correctly, the gateway center will help people find information, including information about local businesses. A regional chamber of commerce representative would be on hand to provide information about local business, replacing the current information station on Thompson Island. The large majority of visitors will use their cars and thus equipped may be more likely to visit Trenton businesses. People who park at the center while taking the bus to the Park would see the businesses and have an opportunity to return in their car later.

How can the public provide input?

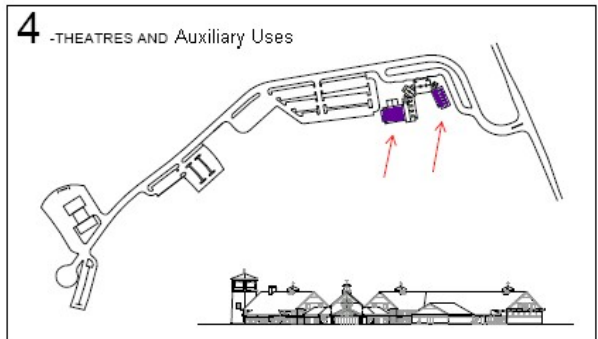
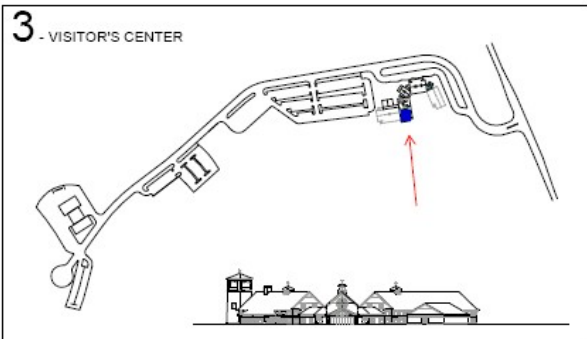
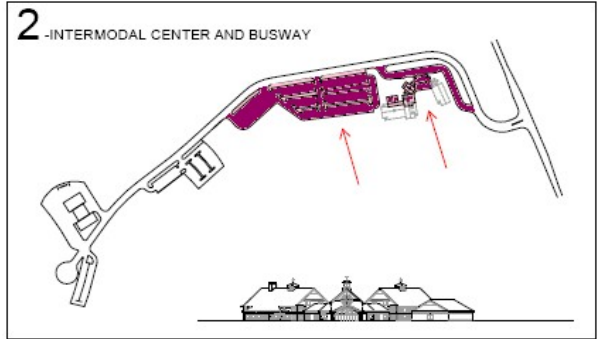
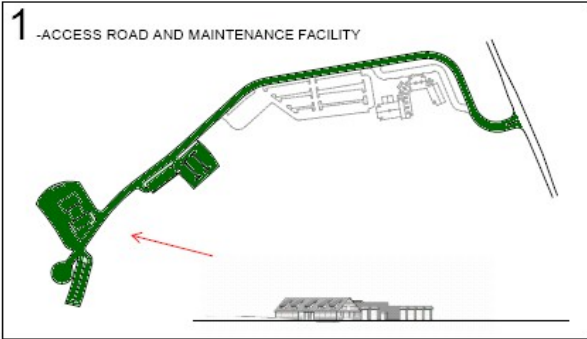
Come to our next public meeting, call us or e-mail us with your comments and questions.

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ACADIA GATEWAY CENTER

500'

MaineDOT
DMJM HARRIS | AECOM

Conceptual Design for Acadia Gateway Facility with Phased Development
Log on to www.AcadiaGatewayCenter.com for more information, photos and project updates!