



Providence Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Commission

Jorge O. Elorza, Mayor

Staff Report: “Downtown Transit Connector” – Downtown, Upper South Providence - Wards 1, 11, and 12 (For Action)

Presented at May 17, 2017 BPAC meeting

Project Description

The City of Providence seeks comments from the BPAC regarding the conceptual level plans developed by RIPTA and the City for the Downtown Transit Connector (DTC)—a planned high-frequency bus service that will operate between the Providence Amtrak/MBTA Station and the Hospital District in Upper South Providence. The plans include six proposed station locations, bus only lanes, pedestrian-realm improvements, and bike lanes along portions of the route. This will be a concept level review of the project. When advanced in the future, this project will come back to the BPAC for preliminary plan review.

The RIPTA Downtown Transit Connector (DTC) will be an “enhanced bus corridor” that will provide riders with improved service frequency (four to five minutes during peak hours), reliability, and design features. The project will create substantial and attractive stations for transit passengers, and will incorporate features that give priority to transit vehicles, enhance local placemaking, and improve pedestrian accessibility. The \$17 million project is funded by RIPTA and a USDOT Transportation Investments Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) grant awarded to the City of Providence in 2014. Part of the funding will be used by RIPTA to purchase vehicles to operate the service.

Bus Service

Service will be operated by regular RIPTA routes that are extended to run along the corridor via Eddy Street, Dorrance Street, Kennedy Plaza and Exchange Street. The preliminary service plan proposes that Routes 51, 55, 58 and 72 be extended south beyond Kennedy Plaza to RI Hospital, and that Routes 3 and 6 be extended north to Providence Station. Route 1 may also be extended to serve Providence Station.

Stations

Stations will include high-quality shelters with seating, real-time bus information, lighting, wayfinding and signage/branding. Fare vending machines and interactive kiosks may be included. Stations will also be designed with placemaking in mind, using special pavement treatments, landscaping, public space, art and other features to help integrate stations into the surrounding neighborhood.

Street Striping and Bus Lanes

Streets in the corridor will be restriped to better accommodate high-frequency bus service, while maintaining traffic flow and safety for all modes. The DTC corridor will incorporate proven measures for improving the speed and reliability of transit, providing safe and convenient pedestrian access, and minimizing conflicts between DTC buses and pedestrians, especially at intersections and stations. Design features may include extended green lights giving an operational advantage to buses (and emergency vehicles) along the corridor, special signal phases to “jump” the traffic queue and move ahead of regular



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traffic, and dedicated bus lanes. In some area, on-street parking spaces may be eliminated to provide road space at bus stations and for bus lanes.

Bike Share Integration

The City of Providence is planning to launch a bike share program. DTC stations will be integrated with bike share stations to ensure multi-modal connectivity.

Branding

RIPTA is working with their design consultants and members of Providence’s creative community to develop project “branding” to provide a recognizable “look” and distinctive identity for the DTC service.

Conceptual Plan Components

The main components of the project, from south to north, include:

- The southern-most pair of stops along the DTC will be located on **Eddy Street adjacent to Rhode Island Hospital**. These stops will serve the large and growing concentration of healthcare facilities, medical offices, and biotech businesses services in the area.
- **Bike lanes are planned on Eddy Street between Dudley Street and Allens Avenue.**
- Layover space for three buses is planned as part of the future Dudley Street Connector project between Eddy Street and I-95, north of Blackstone Street.
- Another pair of stops is planned further north on **Eddy Street near the intersection of Eddy and Richmond streets**. The intersection of Eddy and Richmond streets is planned to be reconfigured to create space for a DTC station and a pocket park.
- Bus only lanes are proposed in both directions on Eddy/Dyer Street between South Street and Dorrance Street, which will result in some on street parking removal.
- Travelling further north on Eddy and Dyer streets, a pair of stops is planned on **Dyer Street just north of Ship Street, adjacent to the planned Waterfront Park and Wexford development on I-195 Parcels 22 and 25**. These stops will also serve South Street Landing, the URI/RIC Nursing School, Brown Medical School, Davol Square, the Children’s Museum, and the growing concentration of residents and businesses in this neighborhood. These stations are located adjacent to where City Walk, a planned \$2M investment to create a pedestrian and bike-friendly connection between Roger Williams Park and India Point Park, is planned to cross across Eddy Street.
- At the intersection of Dyer and Dorrance streets, the DTC corridor turns onto Dorrance Street to connect into Downcity. A bus only lane is proposed for southbound buses on Dorrance Street between Dyer and Weybosset streets, which will result in some on street parking removal.
- A pair of stops are planned to be located on **Dorrance Street near Pine Street**. These stations will also serve Johnson & Wales University’s downtown campus and Garrahy Courthouse.



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- From Dorrance Street, the DTC route will connect directly into **Kennedy Plaza**. Specific station placement within the Plaza is dependent upon the completion of a long-term vision for the layout of the Greater Kennedy Plaza area.
- Exchange Street is proposed to become one-way only for vehicular traffic, freeing up needed space for bus only lanes, protected bike lanes, and expanded sidewalks to create a more welcoming gateway between Providence Station and Kennedy Plaza. **Protected bike lanes are proposed for Exchange Street between Exchange Terrace and Finance Way.**
- The northern terminus of the DTC corridor will be **integrated with the planned Providence Intermodal Transportation Center (PITC) being developed by RIDOT in the vicinity of the MBTA/Amtrak Station**. Final station location is dependent upon the determination of a site for the PITC. This station will serve the rail station, state offices, Providence Place Mall and surrounding office and residential buildings, and provide DTC riders with connections to commuter rail and Amtrak service, as well as several other RIPTA bus routes, including the R-Line.

Potential Issues to discuss

- Additional safety improvements to the proposed bike lanes on Eddy Street
- Need for Eddy Street bike lanes to connect to at least Richmond Street/Point Street
- Pedestrian crossings at various points along the route

Respectfully submitted by Martina Haggerty.