

July 10, 2008

Mr. John M. Lewis, Jr., Chief Executive Officer
GRTC Transit System
101 S. Davis Avenue
Richmond, VA 23220

Dear Mr. Lewis:

On behalf of the Shockoe Bottom Neighborhood Association I want to thank you for your presentation of the transfer center proposal for Main Street Station at our last SBNA meeting. SBNA recognizes the need for efficient bus transfers and we are supportive of this goal. However, we remain concerned with the scale and potential impact of the plans you presented. We had understood before the meeting that the plan was to have the Main Street Station shed (second floor only) act as one of several transfer stations for the city. It now appears that the Main Street Station shed is the only such transfer station in the entire city and that bus traffic will be on both the first and the second levels of the shed with access over the existing Shockoe Bottom street grid.

We do not believe that the Shockoe Bottom can absorb the impact of this proposed development. We understand that City's Traffic Engineering has concluded that traffic cannot enter the center directly from Broad Street. This conclusion means that bus traffic would have to approach the center over the existing grid of neighborhood streets. Such a plan is a major problem for the historic integrity and residential / commercial nature of the Shockoe Bottom neighborhood. For these reasons we believe the transfer center as presently envisioned is incompatible with the future of this area.

This is not to say that we would oppose any plan to use Main Street Station as a piece of a larger transfer solution for the city. It is only to say that we believe that the plans you presented are not acceptable as presented.

During our meeting, you cited Charlotte as an example of a city transfer station that had a positive impact on its surrounding neighborhood. In fact, the area immediately surrounding Charlotte's bus transfer center remained underdeveloped and crime-ridden for many years while the rest of Charlotte's "uptown" district blossomed. When Charlotte was awarded the Charlotte Bobcats NBA franchise, the team wanted an uptown location. The area immediately surrounding the bus transfer station was the only area in downtown Charlotte that had remained undeveloped, making that site the only available land for the arena. It was not until the development of that sports arena that this part of downtown Charlotte became economically viable.

We remain committed to an offer we made at the SBNA meeting to work with GRTC to find a solution to the City's transportation needs that meets the needs of both GRTC and the Shockoe. Our concerns with the proposals you showed us are as follows:

1. **Damage to the historic neighborhood** – We believe that a single transfer center accessed through the existing street network is not compatible with the Shockoe neighborhood. We believe that access to the center must be exclusively from Broad Street or north of Broad.
2. **Noise and air pollution** - We believe all vehicles entering and exiting Main Street Station should be electric or hybrid vehicles exclusively.
3. **Public Safety** – We would like to have a specific public safety plan be developed along with any planning for the utilization of Main Street Station as a transfer center and that plan should be subject to the approval of the SBNA.
4. **No Greyhound and Trailways** – We would like written assurances that once a facility is designed for bus access that it will not then become the new location of non-local bus traffic.
5. **Restrict Bus routing** – We believe that access to the transfer center must be restricted to the second floor of the train shed (via Broad Street or north of Broad) and that any grade level access to the center be restricted to the southwest parking lot under the expressway.
6. **Seat at the Table** – We are concerned that planning which will dramatically affect the Bottom is occurring without meaningful input from the businesses and residents who already live and work in Shockoe. We requested a meaningful “seat at the table” during the balance of the planning process. You did not respond with a substantive commitment to that request. By way of this letter, we formally request that the Shockoe Bottom Neighborhood Association be officially included in all stages of the planning of this proposed project.

Sincerely,

David Napier, President
Shockoe Bottom Neighborhood Association

Cc: Ms. Shelia Hill-Christian, Chief Administrative Officer, City of Richmond
Mr. Carthan Currin III, Director, Department of Economic Development, Richmond