
Acadia Gateway Center News – August 2006

Public Meeting Scheduled

WHEN: Thursday, Sept. 7, 2006, at 7:00 PM
WHERE: Trenton Elementary School

The Maine Department of Transportation (MaineDOT) will host a public meeting to present the preferred alternative for the Acadia Gateway Center. This presentation will highlight what the center would offer to visitors and Trenton residents, how it would be adapted to the local environment, and the steps that would be needed to go from planning to implementation. Persons attending will have an opportunity to ask questions and submit comments. If you cannot attend, please submit written comments.



Goals of the Acadia Gateway Center

The proposed facility would reduce traffic congestion on the Route 3 corridor and in Acadia National Park by attracting visitors and

commuters to use the Island Explorer bus system. The Acadia Gateway Center would also enhance the experience of visitors to the region and allow for the efficient operation of the Island Explorer. The Acadia Gateway Center would provide:

- connections to the Island Explorer and other bus services with parking for visitors and commuters
- visitor information about Acadia National Park and other destinations in Downeast Maine
- administrative, light maintenance, fueling, and storage facilities for the Island Explorer.

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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Update

Residents of Trenton received a newsletter in April 2006 that summarized the Acadia Gateway Center concept, described the preferred location in Trenton, and answered 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.

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: public meeting for comments on Environmental Assessment
- October: Federal Transit Administration issues a decision on the Environmental Assessment

The planning team continued to work from May through August to adapt a preferred facility design to fit the location and needs. 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 viewpoints, and space for local businesses to display their products.

This newsletter provides readers with a more detailed description of the proposed facility, including what it might offer for residents of

Trenton. We encourage readers to discuss this proposal with neighbors and elected leaders, and to call MaineDOT if you have any questions.

Preferred Alternative

The preferred alternative for the Acadia Gateway Center would provide a transit facility/welcome center and a bus maintenance facility for Downeast Transportation, Inc. 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/welcome center occupying 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. Full buildout would use 20 acres of the 369 acres property.

Planned Services

The Acadia Gateway Center would be constructed in phases as a complex of buildings with space for National Park Service information and park pass sales and local Chambers of Commerce information. Eventually, a larger National Park Service welcome center with a theater and exhibits may be built. Space has been reserved for supportive uses, but market studies show that auxiliary activities at the site may not be viable.

The bus maintenance facility would provide Downeast Transportation, Inc. with offices, a light maintenance area for the buses, 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.



The complex of buildings would be loosely organized around a south-facing courtyard offering views to Mount Desert Island. A new road would be constructed to provide access from Route 3 to the Acadia Gateway Center facilities. The access road would branch to create a one-way bus loop with berthing for four Island Explorer buses and two intercity or tour buses at the transit facility/welcome center, while cars would be directed to the north side of the site and then west to the parking areas. Parking would be provided for approximately 570 cars, providing short-term and extended parking.

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 commuter and staff parking, utilities, and the bus maintenance facility. 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 would include the construction of the transit facility, National Park information and pass sales, and restrooms. Island Explorer bus service from the facility to Mount Desert Island would begin.

Phase III could include the construction of the National Park Service’s welcome center.

Phase IV, if built, could consist of theaters and the development of the auxiliary space on the site, if a viable use were identified.

Phases would proceed as funding is secured.

***Acadia Gateway Center:
Questions And Answers***

Why is this facility needed? Automobile congestion in Acadia National Park has been a concern for many years. The Island Explorer has been successful at removing cars from the park, but is currently designed to serve people staying on Mt. Dessert Island. The new Acadia Welcome Center would invite day visitors to use the Island Explorer, as well as commuters to the island.

Does Trenton's zoning allow such uses?

Current zoning appears to allow for Phase I, the road and bus maintenance facility. Following phases may require application of contract zoning, as proposed in Trenton's Comprehensive Plan Update. The draft comprehensive plan has been found consistent with state law and will be submitted for town vote. The plan is viewable at www.hpcme.org/landuse/trenton/trentonplan.htm.

What would be the tax impacts of developing this property?

It is proposed that 20 acres on which the facilities would be built be owned by the MaineDOT. The balance of the land may be retained by FOA. Current taxes on the entire parcel are about \$1,600. Much of the property is in "tree growth" designation. Trenton collects about \$2.3 million in property taxes overall, so less than 1% would be lost. Friends of Acadia would establish an endowment from which annual payments in lieu of taxes can be made.

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

Local agencies met in May 2006, to discuss emergency services. The group determined that existing municipal services had the capacity to provide coverage for the proposed facility. The Trenton fire department would provide primary service and County Ambulance would provide ambulance service. Basic safety, security, snow removal, solid waste removal, and recycling services would be provided by the occupants of the facilities.

What are the effects on the environment?

Maine state agencies and DMJM Harris have conducted a thorough environmental assessment. There are extensive areas of wetlands which are protected by state and federal law. This means that all buildings, other structures, and parking areas would be located to minimize impacts on any protected wetlands. 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 federal, state, and local guidelines.

How would this project affect traffic congestion and safety?

The project would be designed to assure that all traffic could enter and exit the site 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 a rate of 2.5 percent a year. Traffic on Route 3 in Trenton is already about 20 percent over its design capacity during peak times. In addition, MaineDOT is evaluating improvement to the Rt. 3 & 230 intersection .

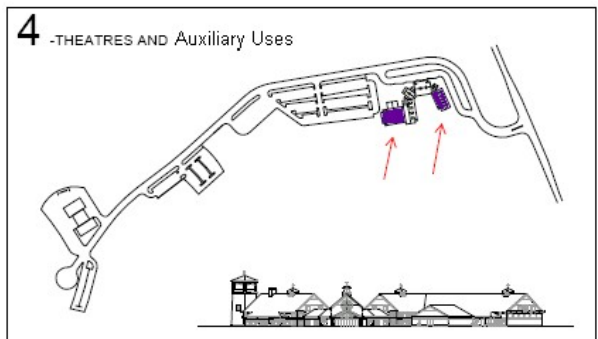
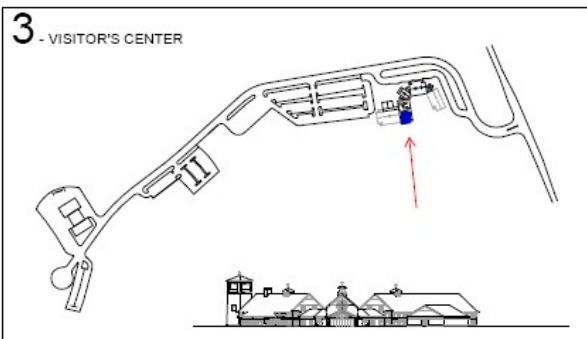
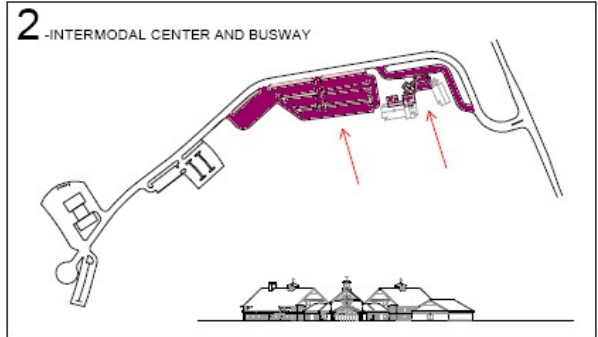
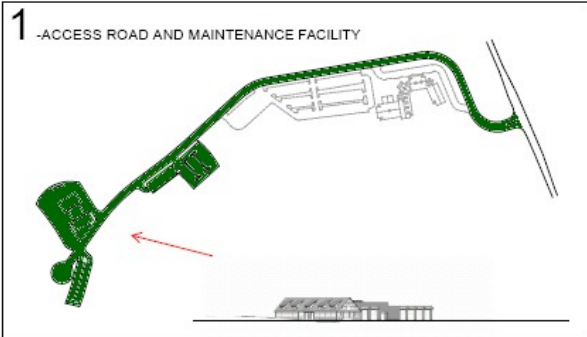
Would the increased use of buses hurt local businesses?

The local and regional chambers of commerce met in May 2006, to discuss how this facility can help their businesses. Designed correctly, the Acadia Gateway Center would help people find information about local businesses. Chamber of Commerce representatives would be on hand to provide information about local business, replacing the current information center on Thompson Island. Many visitors would still use their cars to visit Acadia National Park and would be more likely to visit Trenton businesses. People who park at the center while taking the bus to Acadia National Park would see Trenton businesses and have an opportunity to return later in their car.

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ACADIA GATEWAY CENTER

500'



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