

Wareham Intermodal Transportation Center Site Analysis



Photo courtesy of Wareham Free Library

Southeastern Regional Planning
& Economic Development District
November 2005

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**Prepared by
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Administration:

Stephen C. Smith, Executive Director
Roland J. Hebert, Deputy Director, Transportation Planning Manager

Principal Contributor:

Louise Daley, Principal Transportation Planner

With appreciation to the Wareham Intermodal Center Study Committee

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Purpose

This Wareham Intermodal Transportation Center Site Analysis was conducted between May and September of 2005. The general purpose of the site analysis was to evaluate potential sites and identify an optimal site for an Intermodal Transportation Center that will serve regional transportation needs, link activity centers, improve local transit access and serve as a catalyst for redevelopment

Need

The impetus for this study was based on the following transportation needs:

1.) The OWL buses currently use the front of Walmart as an unofficial transfer point, in the absence of a designated transit station. Three of the four local bus routes meet here every hour, on the half hour, to allow transfers from one route to another. This situation is unsafe due to the amount of vehicle and pedestrian traffic in front of the store. It also contributes to delays for the buses that are trying to maintain on-time performance.



2.) The only bus stop in Wareham currently being served by Peter Pan/Bonanza Bus is at the Mill Pond Diner. Service is infrequent with one trip to Boston at 6:15AM and three trips returning from Boston. An intermodal center will allow for improved connections between the OWL bus service and the intercity bus service provided by Bonanza Bus, taxi service, bicycles and potentially, rail service. It will also allow space and facilities to serve passengers of these services. It would encourage increased ridership and perhaps, become a more viable stop for the private bus carrier resulting in increased frequency of service for Wareham.

3.) Current commuter bus riders must wait at the side of the road on Route 28 where they are inches away from traffic with no protection from the weather. An intermodal center will provide a safe waiting area with passenger amenities, such as heat and a bathroom.

4.) The current Peter Pan bus stop at the Mill Pond Diner consists of an unlined, dirt parking lot adjacent to a pothole-riddled parking lot. There is no sign or identifier of any

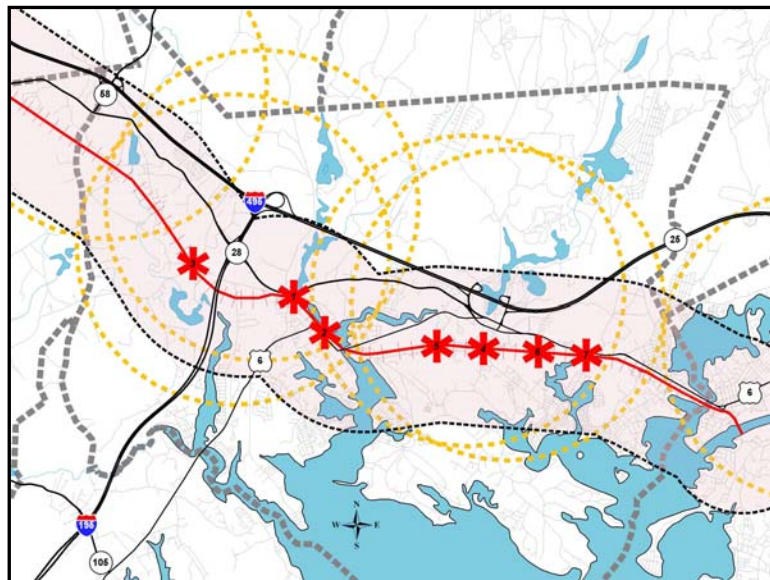
kind to indicate it is a transit stop. The stop and associated commuter parking exists on private property. This site, in its current condition, makes an unfavorable impression on those passengers onboard the Peter Pan bus as it makes its stop here. Mike Sharff, Director of Planning at Peter Pan/Bonanza Bus, has said that if the bus service were more visible, ridership may go up. Peter Pan has adopted a strategy of increased service to intermodal centers, with service to Hartford, Boston, Pittsfield, Worcester and soon to the new Holyoke Multimodal Center.

5.) The future development of the town is expected to bring changes in travel patterns. GATRA wants to create a designated transfer site that positions it for meeting the future transportation needs of the town.

Location Assumptions

Access is the most important factor in finding the optimum location of an intermodal center. It must be located in a place that is a logical terminus for dropoffs for bus service and rail, taxi, shuttles and carpools; it must be easily accessible for the OWL bus as a starting point for routes to serve all parts of town; it must be easily accessible for the commuter bus that would like to spend as little time on local roads as possible; it must be easily accessible by pedestrians, bicyclists and other non-motorized transportation modes; and it is highly desirable that it be accessible by rail.

The study area was defined to include areas contained within a one mile buffer drawn around the existing rail line in the town and a two mile buffer drawn around the interstate interchanges. Sites were then sought that met these two basic location criteria. Following the rail line from northwest to southeast, the following site areas were chosen for further study: Tobey Road, Tremont Nail/Mill Pond, Downtown, Minot Avenue, Depot Street, rear of Cranberry Plaza/Walmart and the old Ocean Spray complex at Main Avenue and Route 28. An additional site mentioned early on was the Makepeace property east of Route 28 off of Lou Road, but this site was rejected due to the lack of access to rail.



Public Involvement

An Intermodal Transportation Center committee was formed with invitations to an extensive list of local agencies, departments and civic groups. This list of contacts was kept informed of the committee's progress through meeting notices and minutes. The committee members and contact list are included below. Meeting notices were also posted at the Library and the Town Hall and sent to the Wareham Courier.

Wareham Intermodal Center Study Committee

Cindy Parola, Board of Selectmen
Marilyn Whalley, Community & Economic Development Authority
Lt. Irving Wallace, Police Department
Debbie Bell, Senior & Social Services
Jim Newman, Disability Commission
Michael J. Cicoria, West Wareham Strategic Planning Committee
Susan Pizzolato, Wareham Community Services Collaborative
Marie Oliva, Cape Cod Canal Region Chamber of Commerce
Matt Churchill, Churchill Transportation
Mike Sharff, Peter Pan/Bonanza
Francis Gay, GATRA

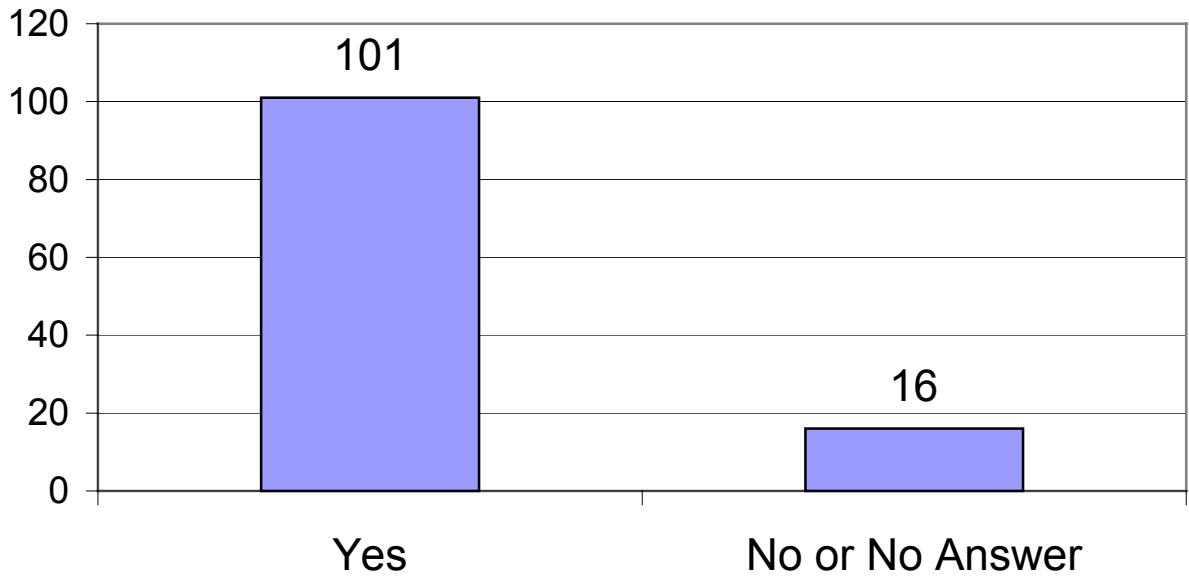
Additional Contacts

State Rep. Susan Williams Gifford
State Senator Marc R. Pacheco
Thomas A. Joyce, Police Chief
Robert McDuffy, Wareham Fire Chief
Howard Anderson, Onset Fire Chief
David Evans, EMS Director
Anthi Frangiadis, Planning Board
Barbara Bailey, Historical Commission
Robert Brousseau, School Committee
Phyllis Decas, Wareham Village Association
Onset Bay Association
Tony Lopes, Cape Verdean Festival Association
Anna Fiorentino, Wareham Courier
Robert T. Slager, Wareham Bulletin
Paul Kandarian, Boston Globe South

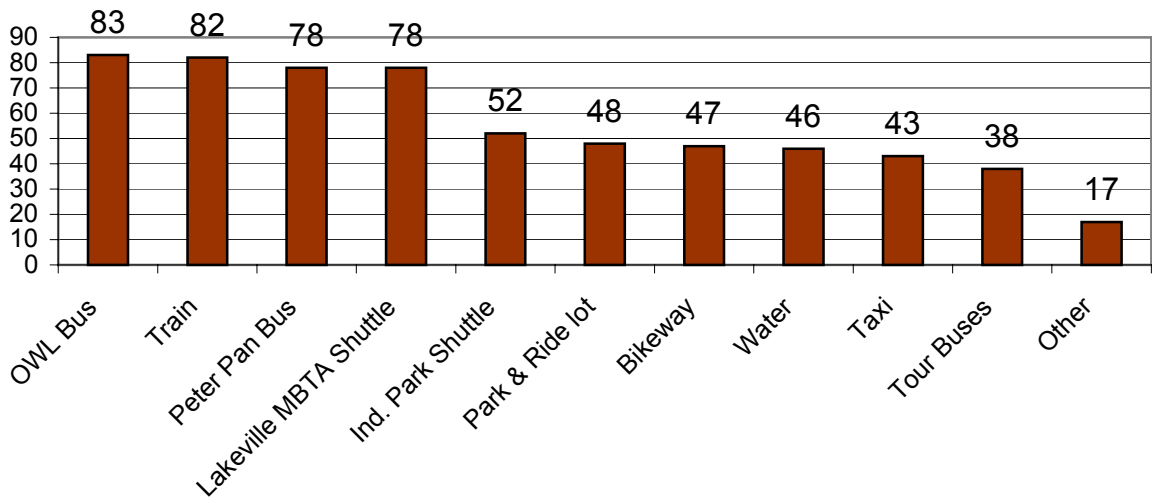
Opinion Survey

A brief questionnaire was uploaded on the Town website, distributed at a Council on Aging luncheon, printed in the Wareham Courier and distributed on the OWL buses. There were 30 responses to the website, 4 from the Courier, 64 from the COA and 19 from the OWL—for a total of 117 responses. The combined responses appear in the following charts.

Do you support the development of an ITC in Wareham?



What types of transportation should be included at an ITC?



There was overwhelming support for more transportation options, as would be expected from the COA and OWL sources. The results for the 30 Town website responses are attached separately and show the same level of support. The responses showed most interest in having the OWL, rail and Peter Pan service at an intermodal center. Survey comments are included below.

Comments from Wareham Intermodal Transportation Survey, June 2005

- Tremont Nail Factory owned by town; underutilized; historic site is perfect
- Trains to Boston
- \$50cab from Lakeville to Middleboro-no cabs after 10PM; OWL routes too long and indirect for elderly to ride; nothing for disabled and hard of hearing elderly;
- Train to Boston from Wareham!
- Very good idea; we need this; thank you
- Who is going to pay for these services? Taxpayers?
- Who will pay for this? We have enough taxes. Now, state funded?
- Trains from Wareham to Boston
- Any shuttles that could be provided for the working folks would be a great asset to the Town of Wareham.
- We need transportation very badly. Where I live there is nothing; to have a ride would be great.
- This would be so good for the elderly; this town by far has many senior citizens.
- These buses are good for people who don't drive. It's a good means of transportation.
- Would be great idea
- Train
- Rush delivery
- To be built behind Merchants Way, old RR station
- Good idea; very beneficial to all
- More transportation options will be wonderful for children & adults
- Unfunded
- Good idea!
- Transportation to a T station would be a good idea
- Better coordinated schedules between OWL and Peter Pan
- We need this bus to go to Lakeville MBTA station
- It would be great to have transportation to the Providence airport available.
- Is this effort in conjunction with the MBTA study? The "gateway" to Cape can become a true "gateway" to the Cape and beyond. The center itself should be a destination; transportation museum for kids, restaurants for folks waiting for trains, etc., How we need the T in town...
- There are many people living in Wareham who work in Boston so train service or at a minimum a shuttle to Lakeville is drastically needed.
- Bus to New Bedford is very important to many people for a variety of reasons.
- Other Services Needed: Providence airport; New Bedford – for Doctors and DTA; Christmas Tree Shops; Marion; Weweantic Shores; Boston; YMCA; Sundays; more services for persons with disabilities.

Survey of Commuter Bus Users

A survey of ten current commuter bus users waiting at the Mill Pond Diner revealed that many had been using the bus for a number of years. Asked about their preference for a bus stop location, they all said that the current location worked well for them. A bus stop on Main St. in the downtown would not make much difference to anyone, although two said it would be a little closer for them.

It is unknown if Peter Pan would continue to serve the town of Wareham if rail service to Boston is restored. The company indicates that it is currently serving Worcester, Springfield, Holyoke and other centers which have rail service. The added amenities of an intermodal center in Wareham will be an attraction for additional transit users of bus and rail. Service to Peter Pan's westbound destinations remains an opportunity to gain travelers originating in Wareham and surrounding towns on this side of the canal. In addition, current bus users who were interviewed seem to favor the bus over rail service for various reasons, suggesting that it is important and worthwhile to maintain as many commuting choices as possible.

Intermodal Committee Meetings

The first meeting to discuss the ITC was held on May 26, 2005 at 4:00 PM at the Wareham Free Library. Discussion centered around the desired goals of the project and some of the issues involved. There was agreement about the location assumptions and the sites chosen for study.

Project goals discussed included:

- serve the current need and anticipate future needs;
- minimize traffic impacts;
- be accessible without requiring travel through the center of town;
- be easily accessible from both ends of town;
- contribute to the viability of Main Street;
- provide space for bus connections and for intercity bus passengers;
- provide a connection to the rail line;
- have access for emergency vehicles; and,
- help to promote the Town as a destination.

A second meeting was held on July 28, 2005 at 9:30 AM at the Library. At this meeting, the committee quickly cut the list of 7 sites down to 3. The Minot Avenue site was eliminated due to its location in a residential area, indirect access and the fact that it is surrounded by land that becomes flooded during a heavy rainstorm. The Depot Street site was eliminated due to the traffic issues that hinder access during the summer. No one liked the area in the rear of the plazas due to limited space, conflicts with truck loading and wetlands. The Main Avenue site was also ruled out based on its non-central location that would not provide easy access to most of the town. In addition, if rail does come to Wareham and Buzzards Bay, this site as a rail station would be too close to the Buzzards Bay station. The Committee reached a consensus that the top three sites for consideration were Tobey Road, Tremont Nail/Mill Pond and Downtown.

Key points raised at the first two meetings:

- Bike and pedestrian connections and amenities are important for state and federal funding;
- Intercity transportation is important to the workforce;
- Public transportation is vital for residents who do not have access to cars;
- The ability to sell tickets at or near a bus stop is attractive to Peter Pan bus;
- Services that offer convenience to transit customers such as a coffee shop, dry cleaner, bank and day care are attractive features and should be part of the center;
- There is the potential for the area around I-195 to expand into a new town center with development on Makepeace property and the former Nstar site.

At the final meeting on September 8, 2005 at 9:30 AM at the Library, the Committee applied a list of agreed upon criteria to the top three sites. There was consensus that the Tobey Road site is a good future regional rail station, with good access to the highway and ample room for parking. A discussion of the two other sites covered the issues and opportunities for both. The committee members agreed that the intermodal center should contribute to the viability of downtown and be accessible by a pedestrian link to the downtown. In the end, the desire to not worsen the traffic congestion downtown and better access for buses were the determining factors for choosing the Mill Pond/Tremont Nail site. There remains concern, however, with the appropriate use of public transportation on the historic Tremont Nail property.

The results of the Intermodal Transportation Committee meetings were presented to the Tremont Nail Master Plan Committee at their meeting of October 3, 2005. Members expressed concern over the presence of buses on the Tremont Nail site, although they supported such a use for the Mill Pond parcel. They were also concerned about parking intended for the uses at Tremont Nail being used up by commuters. In the end, they agreed to the idea of GATRA further studying the Tremont Nail/Mill Pond site as a whole for its feasibility as an intermodal center, provided they were not committing to such a use at this time. Francis Gay, the GATRA Administrator, assured the Committee that if GATRA receives approval from the Board of Selectmen to move forward in the planning process, there would be additional community outreach and collaboration in order to develop a plan for the study area of Tremont Nail and Mill Pond. Without public approval, federal funds could not be used for this purpose.

Site Evaluation of Top Three Sites

Maps, photos and descriptions of all seven sites were presented to the Committee. Photos of the top three sites, along with townwide maps of various features appear at the end of this report.

Issues and Opportunities of Sites

Some issues are held in common for all three sites. For example, the need for traffic and roadway improvements exists at all sites. Many of the issues for the Mill Pond/Tremont Nail site are the same as those for the Downtown site. These issues include the presence of floodplain and wetlands. An additional common issue is the need to amend the current

Wareham Village I zoning district in order to allow a passenger transportation center use. Such a use is currently allowed by right in Industrial and Commercial Strip zones only, and by Special Permit in R30. It is appropriate for a transportation facility (designed at the proper scale) to be located in an activity center that is well-populated. Opportunities for Transit Oriented Development (TOD) exist at all sites.

Tremont Nail/Mill Pond Site

The road design at Tihonet, Main and Elm streets should be addressed prior to increased use of the rail, regardless of where a station is located. The intersection of Tihonet and Cranberry Highway should also be improved for safety reasons. Sidewalks in the area are either nonexistent or substandard. Pedestrian access to the site and on the site must be brought up to standards that comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards and architectural guidelines. Some of the Tremont Nail site is in a low elevation flood hazard zone. There needs to be an engineering analysis of the buildings and the dam on the Tremont Nail property prior to occupation. The Mill Pond diner and package store business will be variously affected depending on the ultimate plan for the project.

The Tremont Nail Master Plan Committee has worked out a mission for the site as a Cultural Center that will inform and educate about the industrial history of Wareham. It is intended as a destination for tourists with a mix of cultural, historical and retail uses. There is concern by the Master Plan Committee that buses on the Tremont Nail property would be incongruous with the vision for that property, and they hope that buses can be contained on the other side of Elm Street. It is expected that the planning process for an intermodal center at this site will result in a mutually acceptable concept plan.

This site, that is partially town-owned, was preferred due to its central location, access to the highway and rail, and visibility from Route 28. The intermodal center is viewed as a catalyst for improvement to the immediate area and to downtown, creating increased activity and economic development in the area and attracting businesses. It stretches downtown to the site. Its location serves as a convenient transfer point for residents and visitors to travel between the different areas of town and different transportation modes. Locating an intermodal center at this site provides an opportunity to get funding for needed infrastructure improvements in the area. In addition, there is the potential to create a destination for family-oriented tourism, bringing in people from bus, rail and bicycle.

Downtown

Space limitations in the downtown are challenging in designing an intermodal center that includes all of the desired uses. The roadway configuration and the impact of having buses maneuver through congested streets are of concern. Parking conflicts and flood hazard issues are other issues that would have to be overcome in a downtown location, where much of the Downtown lies in a low elevation flood zone. The fire station on Main Street was viewed as a possible site for an intermodal center. An eight hundred foot long raised MBTA rail platform would stretch one hundred feet longer than the distance

between the fire station and the existing train station building. The existing fire station building would be replaced and the Fire District would need to be relocated.

Many of the same opportunities for redevelopment and revitalization exist in the downtown whether an intermodal center is created right there or 7/10 of a mile away at the preferred site. The infrastructure investment of locating a transit center in the downtown would be expected to spur revitalization of existing buildings, more intense use of existing space and mixed uses with a greater demand for housing in the downtown.

Tobey Road

Roadway improvements are needed in this area based on proposed development projects that are expected to greatly increase traffic volume. The narrow curve under the railroad tracks that floods and has 11'6" low clearance needs to be remedied now. In addition, proposed projects for this area will create a major impact on the Route 28 corridor that will make traffic conditions unacceptable and will inhibit support for further development projects. A full cloverleaf is needed at the I-195/Route 28 interchange in order to support the expected increase in development in this area of the town. The Town should seek a study to make a full interchange at I-195 and Route 28 to eliminate the need for left hand turns on and off of I-195.

If the West Wareham Lifestyle Plaza is built, the intermodal center would then be located across the street from a major activity center, but it would still not be easily accessible from there. Also, there would continue to be very few residences or other uses within walking distance. Therefore, there would be no other reason to go to this proposed location, other than the plaza.

The site has no flood zone or wetland issues. There is ample space for parking and other uses. Transportation funding could be used to address some infrastructure needs. This site is recently developed, but could be redeveloped in the future.

Committee Recommendation

After much discussion, the Committee came to a consensus on a recommendation to choose the Mill Pond/Tremont Nail site for further study as an intermodal center. The decision to choose this site over downtown was not made lightly. There are issues and opportunities for each of the evaluated sites. The negative impacts of conflicts over parking between business and transportation uses and effects on traffic movements were issues of concern for a downtown site. With the Mill Pond/Tremont Nail site, the positive impacts include improved access for buses, the opportunity to leverage infrastructure improvements for a Town owned site and the opportunity to extend the downtown area to the Tremont Nail site.

It is also a recommendation that the Town plan for a future regional rail station at the Tobey Road site. This site could provide the best possible access to rail from a highway between Lakeville and the Cape Cod Canal, and ample room for parking. It also has the potential for transit oriented development that would include housing around a transit station—although that is not allowed under current zoning.

Next Steps

The Board of Selectmen voted on November 8, 2005 BOS to accept the Committee's recommendation of the Mill Pond/Tremont Nail site for further study as an intermodal center. They stressed that this project is important for a variety of reasons, including the ability to make transportation connections and economic benefits to residents and businesses.

This vote allows GATRA to move forward in its planning process. GATRA intends to use Federal Transit Administration planning funds as a match for a Wareham Community Development Authority grant application from Mass Development for a feasibility study of the use of the Tremont Nail site. GATRA will subsequently do their own feasibility study of the site as an intermodal center. If these studies are favorable, GATRA will then prepare a preliminary site concept and design plan, which will require significant public input.

Benefits of a Transit Center

1. Infrastructure improvements - Federal or state transportation funding programs can be used for improvements. FTA funding in Corpus Christi, Texas turned two key transfer centers into focal points of the surrounding communities with landscaping, pedestrian walkways, lighting, vibrant paint and tilework that transformed the neighborhoods. As a result, there was increased ridership and significant re-investment in the community. Grants from the State Executive Office of Transportation's Transit Oriented Development \$30M Bond Program will provide financial assistance for pedestrian improvements, bicycle facilities, housing projects, and parking facilities within 1/4 mile of transit stations.
2. Spinoff development - In small towns and big cities across the country, public transportation is spurring economic development and revitalization. It is responsible for creating beautiful, walkable neighborhoods combining public transportation and mixed uses. Even widening sidewalks and adding bikeways provide dramatic impact and value. The benefits of enhancing public transit through principles of TOD increase property value, tax revenues and create community revitalization.¹
3. Create a Place - Building public transit centers and bus stops in the heart of the community reduces the need for parking spaces and can create a community landmark. Done correctly, a transit center can be a place centered around attractive features such as planters, benches, fountains and public art—creating a place where people want to spend time shopping, playing, living and working. A well-designed transportation infrastructure improvement can improve a place's image, and attract people and businesses.

¹ 10 Ways to Enhance Your Community: Unleash the Power of Public Transportation, APTA Public Transportation Partnership for Tomorrow

