

**West Valley City Intermodal Transportation Center
Environmental Assessment**

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Utah Transit Authority
West Valley City**

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***This Environmental Assessment is approved
by the Federal Transit Authority
for review and comment but is not yet final.***

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1.0 Purpose and Need

1.0 Purpose and Need

West Valley City (WVC) and the Utah Transit Authority (UTA) are proposing to construct an Intermodal Transit Center within the City Center site of West Valley City in accordance with the West Valley City Vision Plan (WVC 2004). West Valley City is the second largest city in Salt Lake County and is an integral component to the Wasatch Front. Figure 1-1 shows West Valley City in a regional setting.

1.1 Project History

In May 1998 a draft *Environmental Assessment* (EA) (WVC 1998) was presented to the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) for approval of the West Valley City Intermodal Transportation Center (Proposed Action). The location of the Intermodal Center studied in the 1998 EA was at approximately 2700 West and 3600 South, in West Valley City, Utah, immediately east of the City Center offices on 2 acres of the existing Valley Fair Mall parking lot (Previously Approved Site). The FTA approved the 1998 EA, and a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) was issued in 2000.

Subsequently, the Proposed Action was earmarked for Federal funds as part of the program of transportation projects developed for the 2002 Winter Olympic Games. Prior to the 2002 Olympics, Intermodal Centers were constructed in Park City and Ogden, Utah. The Proposed Action, however, was not advanced to design. Since the initial FONSI, the Proposed Action has continued to receive Federal funds for pre-design activities and has been included in numerous West Valley City plans.

Since completion of the 1998 EA and receipt of a FONSI from the FTA, West Valley City and Valley Fair Mall have continued to assess the location selected for the Proposed Action. It has since been determined that the in-street location on 2700 West Street is not optimal in light of current plans for redevelopment of the entire block encompassing the City Center offices. West Valley City council and staff has indicated that another location for the Proposed Action approximately 650 feet from the previously approved site that could provide better intermodal connectivity, better pedestrian access, and a better fit with planned redevelopment of the City Center offices would be superior to the previously approved site. Consequently, West Valley City has determined that a new site be studied that would take advantage of the potential offered by locating the Proposed

Action west of 2700 West Street in the interior of the block that contains the City Center offices.

Since the location, functions, and impacts of the Proposed Action at a new location would be different from those at the original location, a new environmental study was initiated. In June 2005 West Valley City, in cooperation with the UTA, the Wasatch Front Regional Council (WFRC), and the FTA, initiated a joint master planning and environmental analysis process to determine the most appropriate location for the Proposed Action. This EA presents the substantive results of the environmental component of the joint planning process.

1.2 Need for the Proposed Action

The Proposed Action will serve a variety of current and future mobility needs. The need for the Proposed Action is demonstrated by the following:

- substantially deficient existing facilities to accommodate current bus boardings, transfers, and park-and-ride patrons;
- previous long-range planning efforts that have conclusively shown the need for improved transit facilities in West Valley City, including a new Intermodal Center and Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) connection; and,
- a city vision for a new town center that is transit friendly and would include an Intermodal Center—a vision that was corroborated and embraced by a December 2004 City Center Vision Plan (WVC 2004).

1.2.1 Facility Deficiencies

Although transit ridership is strong, transit facilities at the City Center offices/Valley Fair Mall transfer zone are considered to be highly deficient and are described below.

Outside of Salt Lake City, the City Center offices/Valley Fair Mall transfer zone is the most highly used boarding area served by the UTA. Bus boardings at the City Center offices/Valley Fair Mall transfer zone were tabulated by the UTA in late 2005. On an average weekday, 1,763 patrons board at this location, accounting for approximately 3.4 percent of all boardings on the UTA system in the Salt Lake Urbanized Area. Furthermore, although the area does not include any formalized park-and-ride or kiss-and-ride facilities, field investigations indicate that there is substantial use

of the Valley Fair Mall parking lot for these purposes. Past field counts suggest that approximately 70 patrons use the Valley Fair Mall parking lot as a de facto park-and-ride facility in an average day (WVC 1998). The same is assumed currently. During these investigations a substantial number of other patrons were observed being dropped off or picked up in the Valley Fair Mall parking lot.

Despite the high ridership, facilities for transit patrons in the City Center offices/Valley Fair Mall transfer zone are minimal, and inconvenient. Existing bus stops (Figure 1-2) provide few or no amenities for patrons. Only three of the seven existing stops have shelters. The existing shelters are relatively small and protect only four to six patrons. Several bus stops do not have a paved pedestrian pad, which requires passengers to board and exit buses in poor, sometimes muddy, conditions. Some stops do not have seating for patrons. In addition, 2700 West Street, an arterial roadway, separates many of the existing bus stops. When patrons seek to transfer between buses, the separation of bus stops requires passengers to cross 2700 West Street. Since 2700 West Street is a fairly wide arterial with only one lighted crosswalk, patrons may feel unsafe when making transfers. Currently, PM peak hour traffic volumes on 2700 West Street are approximately 1,700. The separation of bus stops, which average 400 feet, also makes it difficult for passengers to know which bus stop accommodates which route. This is confusing and inconvenient.

A consolidated Intermodal Center with amenities for patrons would eliminate these facility deficiencies, and provide an improved transfer hub in the heart of West Valley City. Improved facilities for patrons would make transit more appealing and accessible to a larger population of travelers. These improvements would likely contribute to an increase in transit ridership, resulting in less single-occupancy vehicles on surrounding roadways.

1.2.2 Implementation of Previous Planning and Programming Objectives

The Proposed Action has emerged from a process of transportation planning and programming. Several specific planning studies and programs have identified West Valley City in general, and the Proposed Action specifically, as important for transportation improvements. These plans and programs are (1) *Long-Range Transit Analysis for the Wasatch Front Region* (WFRC 1996), (2) *2004-2008 Transportation Improvement*

Program (WFRC 2003a), (3) *2030 Long-Range Transportation Plan* (WFRC 2003b), and (4) *West Valley City Major Investment Study* (WVC 2000). Each of these plans and programs, and how each relates to the Proposed Action, are described below.

In 1996 the WFRC completed a study that identified major activity centers and travel corridors in the Salt Lake Urbanized Area where major transportation investments would be warranted (WFRC 1996). The study concluded that a primary activity center exists in the northeast quadrant of West Valley City. The study forecasted that by 2015 the West Valley City activity center would have a trip density of 215 trips per acre, the third highest density in the urbanized area. Only the Salt Lake City Central Business District (CBD) and the University of Utah ranked higher. With higher trip densities West Valley City will become an even better transit market than it is today.

In the WFRC study, twelve major transportation investment corridors were identified and evaluated based on ridership, cost, service to activity centers, and fit with the bus system (WFRC, 1996). Major transportation investment in the West Valley City corridor ranked very well for both service to activity centers and fit with the bus system. Overall, West Valley City tied with the CBD-University corridor for the best overall ranking. Moreover, it was concluded that West Valley City (vicinity of the Valley Fair Mall) is one of two major activity centers outside of the Salt Lake City CBD that should serve as a focal point for radial bus routes. An Intermodal Center at the West Valley City activity center was identified as a needed improvement.

The current WFRC *Transportation Improvement Program* (TIP) was released in December 2003 and covers 2004 to 2008 inclusively (WFRC 2003a). The TIP is a financially constrained program, consisting only of projects that have identified funding. However, the TIP also includes a supplemental list of transit projects that could be added to an amended TIP should funding become available. Final design and construction costs for three Intermodal Centers are on this supplemental list, one of which is an Intermodal Center for West Valley City.

In addition to the TIP, the current WFRC *Salt Lake Area Long-Range Plan, Technical Report 43*, includes a new transit center in West Valley City near the current hub of UTA operations at the Valley Fair Mall (WFRC 2003b).

In 2000 West Valley City completed a *Major Investment Study* (MIS) for a corridor roughly bounded by 5600 West Street on the west, State Street on the east, 4100 South Street on the south, and 2100 South Street on the north (WVC 2000). Virtually all modes of surface transportation were included in the MIS, including the potential for a light rail transit connection between West Valley City and the north-south light rail transit line currently running between Salt Lake City and Sandy City. The need for an Intermodal Center at the terminus of the proposed West Valley City light rail transit line was documented in this study.

The Wasatch Front Regional Council Long Range Plan has identified the need for a fixed guideway project from 8400 West Street to the terminus of the West Valley Light Rail Transit (LRT) line. Congestion Management-Air Quality (CMAQ) funding has been programmed for an initial deployment of BRT service, and the project is anticipated to become operational sometime in 2007. Initially the project will extend from 8400 West Street to 200 West Street with eleven stations in each direction and a shared stop at the existing LRT station at 200 West Street and 3300 South Street. A designated BRT station has been planned for West Valley City. When LRT is extended to West Valley City, the BRT terminus would be moved from the LRT Station at 200 West Street to West Valley City. It is anticipated that a fully functional Intermodal Center at West Valley City Center would accommodate the BRT terminal station. In the interim, UTA has determined that the proposed bus hub at West Valley City Center would accommodate BRT station requirements.

The above plans and programs provide compelling testimony for the Proposed Action. They provide the foundation for the study of Intermodal Center sites, operating characteristics, and concepts.

1.2.3 Provide Transit Infrastructure to Support the City Center Vision

Considerable effort has been made by West Valley City in recent years to enhance not only the character of the area but also the overall perception of the area by regional residents and visitors. As one means to help develop a vision for the town center, West Valley City applied for a Regional Urban Design Assistance Team (RUDAT) workshop sponsored by the American Institute of Architects. West Valley City was one of only three cities to be accepted in 1997.

The RUDAT workshop was conducted in late November 1997. The results of the RUDAT workshop were summarized in a 57-page report with 10 recommendations, four of which were transportation related. The recommendations from the RUDAT workshop envisioned a town center with an Intermodal Center as the focal point.

More recently, West Valley City has updated plans for the city center with a City Center Vision Plan. The City Center Vision Plan calls for “a recognizable center with landmarks focusing on 3500 South Street, Constitution Boulevard (2700 West), and Market Street, that includes a revitalized mall, an Intermodal Center, grand entrances from both directions along 3500 South, and a new mix of uses in the Market Street area” (WVC 2004).

1.3 Project Description

Under the Proposed Action, the West Valley City Intermodal Center and park-and-ride would be located on 4.37 acres of land surrounding the City Center offices (church parcel 2.31, West Valley City parcel 0.25, UTA parcels 0.98, and ROW area 0.83). Included in Figure 1-3 are the approximate boundaries of work required for the Intermodal Center under the Proposed Action, including curb and gutter modifications, sidewalk improvements, and other items as described below.

1.3.1 Project Area

The project area contains a mix of residential, commercial, and civic land uses. The City Center offices are considered a quasi public/private land use. Other land uses in the project area include Single-Family Residential, Multi-Family Residential, and Commercial. As illustrated in Figures 1-4 and 1-5, current zoning closely matches current land uses.

The parcels that would be affected include four apartment buildings owned by the UTA that currently house a total of 17 residential dwellings. In addition, one larger parcel that was previously owned by a church was acquired by West Valley City for UTA as a protective buy and was evaluated separately as a Categorical Exclusion (Bio-West 2004). West Valley City owns one residential parcel containing a single-family residential home. Two other parcels are private commercial property operated as a business complex with six office units. In addition to the use of properties, the closure of Market Street between Lehman Avenue and 3650 South Street would be necessary.

1.3.2 Proposed Action

The Proposed Action is to develop the Intermodal Center as shown in Figure 1-3. This design concept provides a physical facility that would streamline passenger transfers and UTA operations. Under the Proposed Action the Intermodal Center would consist of three basic physical elements including a 10-bay bus hub, a southern park-and-ride lot adjacent to the bus hub, a northern park-and-ride lot located on the former church property, and an operational element that includes the consolidation of bus routes to a single location. Each of these features is described below.

The bus hub would be located on land vacated by the closure of Market Street, the acquisition of one single-family residential home, and the demolition of the UTA-owned apartments on Market Street between Lehman Avenue and 3650 South Street. The centerline of Market Street would form the eastern edge of the bus hub, and a new two-way road would be constructed to the east of the bus hub to provide access to the business currently located on the northeast corner of Market Street and 3650 South Street. The bus hub would be approximately 121 by 440 feet in dimension and would consist of a central island surrounded by 10 saw-tooth bus bays. The southernmost bus bay on either side of the island would be designed to accommodate articulated buses up to 65 feet long. Buses would access the bays via a 25-foot-wide circular drive with access and egress to 3650 South Street.

Patron facilities to be provided on the center island of the bus hub include a canopy covering the majority of the patron waiting area, ticket vending machines, seating, lighting, and public art. A conceptual design is included as Figure 1-6.

Construction of the bus hub would result in the removal of 17 existing parking stalls: 14 stalls from the offices at the southwest corner of Lehman Avenue and Market Street, 2 stalls from the City Center offices parking lot, and 1 stall from the business at the northeast corner of Market Street and 3650 South Street. However, 13 new stalls would be created in the City Center offices parking lot, and 9 new stalls would be created at the parking lot of the business at the northeast corner of Market Street and 3650 South Street. The southern park-and-ride lot would be constructed on the four UTA-owned parcels located on Market Street between Lehman Avenue and 3650 South Street. The south-

ern park-and-ride lot would be 64 by 314 feet in dimension and constructed adjacent to the bus hub. The western edge of the bus bay would form the eastern edge of the southern park-and-ride lot, while the eastern edge of the existing library property on 3650 South Street would form the western boundary of the park-and-ride lot. The southern park-and-ride lot would accommodate 27 regular stalls and 7 Americans with Disabilities Act stalls. Eventual expansion of the southern park-and-ride lot could be accommodated by using vacant property located immediately to the north of the library. Sidewalks would be provided to connect the southern park-and-ride lot to the bus hub.

The northern park-and-ride lot would be constructed on the former church parcel that is located on the northwest corner of Market Street and Lehman Avenue (former Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints church at 2842 West Lehman Avenue). Approximately 146 stalls would be provided. The northern park-and-ride lot would be designed to accommodate future LRT facilities, and the eventual straightening of Market Street, as envisioned in the City Center Master Plan (WVC 2006), currently being developed. The northern park-and-ride lot would encompass the entire parcel, but it would not encroach on adjacent parcels. Since the property is owned by the UTA, no property acquisition is required. The parcel area is 2.31 acres.

The bus hub would consolidate the bus transfer points in the City Center offices/Valley Fair Mall transfer zone into one location. Currently, there are 17 routes that have transfer points near the City Center offices/Valley Fair Mall transfer zone. All of these routes and the future BRT route would be operated through the Intermodal Center. Combining these transfer points would make transferring to other routes easier for passengers and provide a direct connection to the BRT route. Connection between local buses and the BRT system would facilitate the transport of passengers between multiple modes of transportation and the transport of patrons to many important destinations.

To access the bus hub, buses would be rerouted from their current stops and directed to 3650 South Street via 3200 West Street and 2700 West. Buses would access the bus hub via 3650 South Street from the west and east.

The added park-and-ride lots would increase automobile traffic on local streets including Market Street and Lehman Avenue. In addition, the closure of Market Street's southern

leg between Lehman Avenue and 3650 South would result in changes in existing bus operations and local traffic patterns. The closure of Market Street would cause the existing traffic at the unsignalized intersection of Market Street and 3650 South Street to be rerouted to other intersections in the area. The displacement of traffic would cause increases in traffic volumes and disruptions in traffic patterns in the area. These impacts and other impacts related to the Preferred Alternative are described in detail in Chapter 3 (Section 3.6, Traffic and Parking).

1.3.3 Independent Utility

The Proposed Action is part of a comprehensive plan to redevelop portions of West Valley City surrounding the City Center offices and provide improved transit service. This comprehensive plan includes a future land use component and future development of the West Valley City Intermodal Center. The Proposed Action (construction of a bus hub and related parking) is the first step in this comprehensive plan and is described in the Purpose and Need and analyzed in this EA. The second step, to be completed by West Valley City, will expand the West Valley City Town Center with the addition of a city plaza. The final steps will be an ultimate build-out of the Town Center with LRT and BRT operations functioning within the area. Only the Proposed Action is evaluated in this EA.

The Proposed Action (bus hub and park-and-ride facility) has independent utility from future steps in this comprehensive plan which includes expansion of the Town Center and full buildout of the City Center, as well as the planned 3500 South BRT line and the future West Valley City LRT line. The 3500 South BRT and the West Valley City LRT lines were considered during the design of the Intermodal Center to anticipate their future incorporation into the operations of the Proposed Action.

The 3500 South BRT and the West Valley City LRT lines are being analyzed in separate environmental documents. Although these projects have independent utility from the Proposed Action they are part of the comprehensive plan for this area of West Valley City. Therefore, they are addressed in the Cumulative Impacts analysis section of this document (see, Section 3.17).

The Proposed Action is useful in and of itself, and it does not require implementation of additional projects to fully

justify its construction and operation. Under the Proposed Action, the consolidation of existing buses would provide the UTA with improved operating efficiency. Patrons would have easier, safer access to buses. Improved operations would allow more people to access transit at the Intermodal Center compared with current conditions. These benefits can be realized without further implementation of additional projects or phases of the Intermodal Center.

Because future development of the Intermodal Center is not considered as part of this Proposed Action, such phases may require subsequent environmental analyses if their impacts are broader than the scope of impacts disclosed in this EA.