

# Bus plans take detour

## Council asked to put brakes on new terminal, study downtown

BY DAVID HUTTON, THE STARPHOENIX NOVEMBER 21, 2009

Building a new downtown transit terminal is no longer the only option as city administration explores a "completely different approach" to the project, a city report says.

The report, to be considered at Monday's executive committee meeting, recommends studying enhanced bus shelters and multiple transfer points downtown while continuing to tweak plans for the new terminal.

Revisiting the bus mall concept is part of a major three-year, \$750,000 "big-picture" revisioning of the downtown, proposed by the civic administration, that includes studying transit routes and pedestrian and cycling paths, incorporating the main library expansion into a new civic square and reusing the police station as civic office space once it's vacated in 2013, the report says.

The idea is to rethink the city centre plan as some of the most important downtown city projects in recent history get underway at once, officials say.

The city will use consultants to review the plans, the report says.

Among them will be Danish architect Jan Gehl, renowned for evolving Copenhagen into the world's most bike-friendly city.

While the bus mall concept is still on the table, the transit department wanted to ensure the design is consistent and if it's still a viable option, said utility services manager Jeff Jorgenson.

A new downtown transit model could include opening 23rd Street up to traffic once again, he said.

"It's far wiser to pause and confirm we're going in the right direction before putting concrete in the ground and developing the site," Jorgenson said.

The design plans for the \$7-million downtown bus terminal, which currently include a glass-fronted centrepiece public plaza and building on the corner of 23rd Street and Third Avenue, were criticized by councillors and sent back to the city's transit department in September.

The city centre plan is necessary given the number of projects happening at the same time, said Sandi Schultz, the city's manager of special projects.

"We're really taking a step back now and saying it is time to look at the whole downtown," she said.

Coun. Charlie Clark said it's critical to hear from the public and study how people are using the downtown before proceeding with such major public developments.

The three-year plan includes public forums and online discussion as well as presentations by experts in downtown revitalization.

"I think our downtown isn't dead," Clark said.

"I think we're lucky that our downtown is doing a lot better than a lot of other downtowns, but we have to keep it surviving and maybe change the way people move around and how it's used."

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## TIMELINE

2010: The city will research and collect data on how downtown "is functioning for people," including pedestrian and transportation studies.

2011: The public will be engaged through several public forums where experts on downtown redevelopment will be invited to speak. There will also be blogs and web forums set up to gain input into the designs.

The city will also unveil a concept plan for a civic plaza that incorporates transit, City Hall, the library, the vacated police station and the Sturdy Stone building.

2012: The city administration will look at integrating the plan into a whole and moving forward with design and construction of the main projects.

## DOWNTOWN PROJECTS

- The detailed design of the Third Avenue Stereoscope continues
- Designing an east-west bicycle corridor along 23rd Street is underway
- The downtown bus mall will be studied alongside other options
- The city will look at moving some departments into the vacated police station
- The \$50-million main library expansion will be studied alongside other work in the area
- A civic square project will try to integrate the library, City Hall and transit and become a hub for public activities

