

# Spot slated for new train-bus center

A newly hired consultant will work out how the downtown Roanoke site will function.

By Jeff Sturgeon

jeff.sturgeon@roanoke.com  
981-3251

The spot picked for Roanoke's new passenger rail platform is about a minute's walk from the outdated city bus station, which has spawned talk of a future joint-purpose passenger facility.

What might that look like? Could it be a transportation match made in heaven?

That's for a newly hired consultant to figure out.

Wendel Architecture of Richmond will forecast train ridership, evaluate the bus station and develop concepts for an intermodal transportation center. It could go at the bus station known as the Campbell Court Transportation Facility or at any other workable site nearby. In addition, the consultant will explore adding space for taxis and setting up a bike sharing service.

The Wendel team began work in September. Its final report is due April 1, or which it will be paid \$284,387.

At least one public meeting is planned as Wendel gathers string. Details of the time or place aren't out yet.

Passenger trains served downtown until 1979. Amtrak intends to reinstitute the service using the racks of Norfolk Southern

Corp. by September 2017 at the latest, according to the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation. A tentative schedule released earlier this year says the train would depart Roanoke at 6:19 a.m. and reach Union Station in Washington, D.C., at 11:20 a.m. You could come back that afternoon. The service is available from Lynchburg now.

Preparations are being made for the return of passenger rail service downtown. Jennifer Mitchell, the head of the rail transportation agency, will give some of those particulars from 5:30 to 7 p.m. Nov. 10 at the O. Winston Link Museum downtown. It will be a town hall-style meeting hosted by state Sen. John Edwards titled "Amtrak Is Coming To Roanoke!"

City officials have said a boarding platform should be in place by January 2017 south of the tracks near Norfolk Avenue and underneath the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Bridge. It will be 850 feet long and 16 feet wide, a tentative plan said.

Roanoke has the option of adding a passenger station to the platform. It's too soon to say what such an improvement might cost, where the money would come from or whether such a facility will ever happen. The new report is expected to help figure that out.

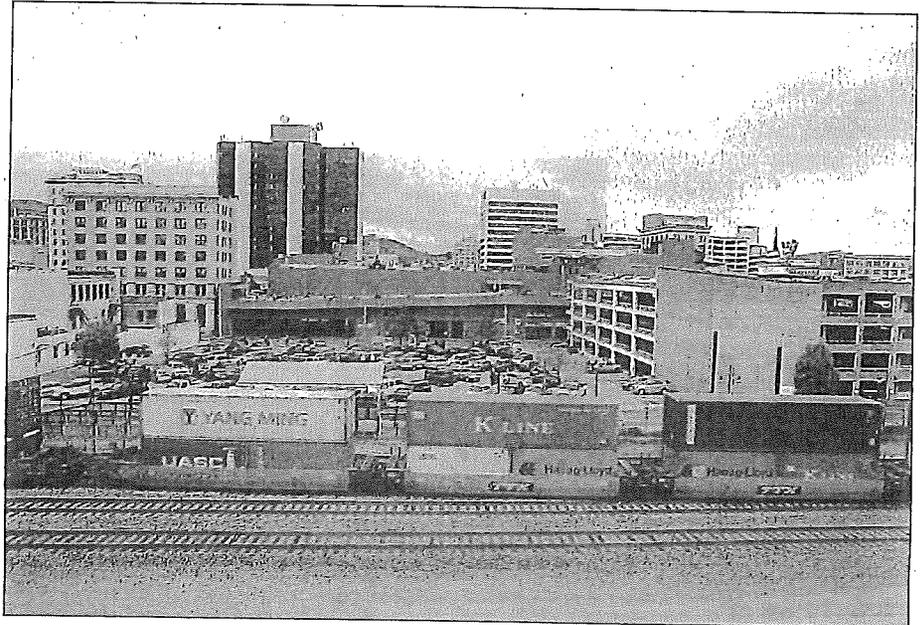


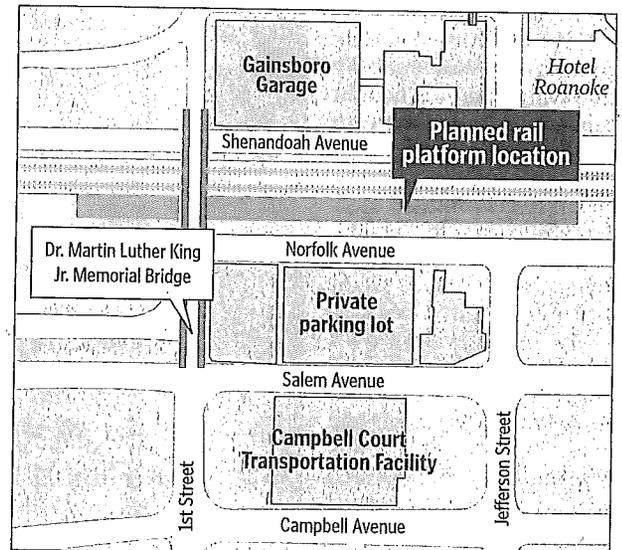
Photo by STEPHANIE KLEIN-DAVIS | The Roanoke Times

Looking south from the Roanoke Higher Education Center parking garage, the Campbell Court Transportation Facility sits adjacent to the future site of a passenger rail platform.

Campbell Court is already a transportation and commercial hub, with such tenants as Greater Roanoke Transit Co.'s Valley Metro bus service, the Smart Way commuter bus, Greyhound, off-street parking and thousands of square feet of vacant office and retail space.

Roanoke has "an opportunity for a multimodal transportation facility," the city said in retaining Wendel Architecture, "that arises from the proximity of the selected locations of the future rail platform, GRTC's current transit hub at Campbell Court and the relationship of both to other transportation modes."

Between Campbell Court and the tracks is a



The Roanoke Times

privately owned lot with about 150 parking spaces,

Lampros, the person listed as the lot's owner, could not be reached for comment.