

HRT's next stop: a new home in Norfolk

Hampton Roads Transit is on the move

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In another two years, the regional transportation authority will have a contemporary complex on 11 acres on 18th Street in Norfolk. The whole project will cost \$69 million, most of it financed by federal and state funds, including grants, and some local funding. In addition, \$14 million will come as a result of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

HRT is developing the three-building complex connected by pedestrian bridges with Concorde Eastridge, a Northern Virginia developer, under the Public-Private Education and Infrastructure Act, known as PPEA. The law permits government, or government agencies like HRT, to partner with private developers. HRT operates five other facilities, including its headquarters in Hampton. HRT has already demolished its vehicle maintenance facility on Armistead Avenue, which is nearly a century old. A facility at the former Ford plant is the temporary home for HRT's vehicle maintenance plant. HRT transferred about 500 employees, mostly bus drivers and mechanics, to the Ford facility, beginning in October.

Design of the new facility will be ready for the city's review by next March, according to Sibyl Pappas, a project manager for Patton Harris Rust & Associates, who has worked on the plans for the new facility since 2004 as an outside consultant. But the plans won't include a retail component of 58,000 square feet at ground level, most of it facing Monticello Avenue between 14th and 15th streets, as originally proposed. Nor will they include seven residential towers, four stories high, for a total of 210 apartments, which were part of the original plans. Pappas said the long-term plan is to have a complex like the one across from it on Monticello, a mix of condominiums, apartments and parking garages, developed by Bristol Development. For now, the mixed use component is on hold, due to tight credit and soft demand for this type of urban product. "Everything is going to 18th Street," said HRT spokesman Tom Holden. Pappas said the developer is very focused and very much wants the project to go forward.

Phase two calls for construction of a 36,000-square-foot administrative building. "There was a period when they were considering a green roof," Holden said. "Portions of it date back to the turn of the century. Nothing about it was modern – it still had trolley tracks going into the bays." The new complex will feature a 63,000-square-foot vehicle maintenance facility with 20 bus bays, a central parts store room, major and minor rebuilds, a mechanics training area and a 16,000-square-foot room for dispatch. A separate 15,000-square-foot facility is slated for bus washings, bus fueling, bus retrieval, building and grounds. The administrative facility will house administration service planning, scheduling and marketing communications departments. The main offices will be connected to a single-level, elevated parking deck, by an access ramp and pedestrian bridge. Buses will park underneath the main parking deck.

Planning for the new complex began in 2002. HRT and the developer had planned to begin demolition and construction next year. But money from the ARRA helped jumpstart the project ahead of schedule. Hampton Roads Transit is on the move. In another two years, the regional transportation authority will have a contemporary complex on 11 acres on 18th Street in Norfolk. The whole project will cost \$69 million, most of it financed by

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