

# Public, Businesses ignored – Bus Terminal on the move

By **Dan Gray** - July 13, 2021



Photo of the possibly soon-to-be former bus terminal on Dennis Street. (Dan Gray/SaultOnline.com)

***"I have considered all of the arguments we've received, pushing back on the staff recommendation, but I don't find many of them substantive," – Mayor Provenzano.***

Six Councillors agreed in the end with Provenzano after a conversation lasting over an hour. The discussion, full of double-talk, extra motions, criticism of staff, and a complete disregard for what the majority of citizens wanted, ended with a decision to move the terminal.



The extended debate included two motions, one to have a proper EA done on a new downtown bus terminal, and a second to build a bus terminal, were defeated before the main motion was read.



Councillors Matt Shoemaker and Matt Scott headed the first motion. In essence, they wanted a proper assessment done for a downtown location. During the following discussion it was apparent that the Mayor believed everyone wanted a downtown location based on his comment made to Councillor Hillsinger.

"My understanding is everybody's of the (opinion, the) one place where we are aligned, I think Councillor Hillsinger, is everybody wants to keep this in the downtown. Right?"

Multiple heads at that point could be seen agreeing with that sentiment.

Staff had provided reasons as to why the ACR station wasn't being looked at more closely in their report, but Shoemaker didn't think it had been done properly.

*"I believe that there needs to be a more thorough investigation of certainly the ACR station. And I'm not convinced that that was as thorough as it needs to be," said Shoemaker. "If in doing that research, they find something more fitting, then I'm happy to hear from them in that regard."*

At that point, Provenzano chose to defend city staff in light of this accusation by Shoemaker and make his opinion heard.

"I couldn't support your motion in spending more money on the investigation of this because it's my opinion, based on the multiple reports that we've read on this and received on this, that staff has been thorough, and staff has had a thorough investigation. But there are limited places we could put this in the downtown core," said Provenzano. "Do we need any more information before we vote on Councillor Shoemaker's motion?"

Before anyone could jump in, Shoemaker responded by averring that the EA process was not started properly and it appeared that this decision had already been decided.

"The typical EA process starts with asking for a solution to a problem. This did not start that way. And Mr. McDonald confirmed that at the last meeting or two meetings ago when he was here. Usually it starts with what's the problem? Okay, our transit building is out of date and we need a new option. That wasn't the case here," noted Shoemaker. "It started with an alternative that was already decided."

When his motion was defeated, Councillor Rick Niro's motion was next. Backed by Councillor Bruni, he had made a motion to build a new terminal downtown.

During the discussion, Councillor Lisa Vezeau-Allen backed moving the terminal away from the downtown by quoting a report which said it should stay downtown.

"I just want to bring up the 2018 Roger Brooks presentation that went through our downtown, and Roger Brooks did say that it's important to keep the terminal within the downtown core because it's where people stop and start."



In her opinion, with the current location, the only place people stop and start at is Station Mall. She said moving the terminal to Huron Street might actually be beneficial to the downtown.

"While the terminal does access the Station Mall, we certainly have many, many, many more places in our downtown that are not within walking distance to the terminal that people need access to," said Vezeau-Allen. "I think this might even make it easier for people to get to places like the library and Clergue Park."

Councillor Niro's motion stated that moving the terminal is the equivalent to turning their (Council's) backs on the downtown businesses.

"Over the last few years, we've spent significant time staff time and money, significant dollars to convince people and businesses to move downtown, to stay downtown, to spend money on their buildings. We had matching grant projects, very significant, now it is our turn to do something downtown." said Niro.

*"I have a hard time just turning our back and walking away. I think that you know, if we expected people to stay downtown because we want to revitalize we need to show them that we really mean it and we'll do our part to stay downtown, as well," Rick Niro*

Just before the decision on Niro's motion was made, Provenzano gave his expansive personal opinion on the motion. In part he said:

"I have considered all of the arguments we've received pushing back on the staff recommendation, but I don't find many of them substantive and the reality is this, the proposed location is in our downtown. And it is important that we support all of our downtown," said Provenzano. "But from my perspective, I think it is much more advisable to spend \$2 million on an older building and improve that building that is at the gateway of our city, a building that people see when they come into our city."

After Provenzano's five minute explanation of his stance, Niro's motion was defeated 7-4. The original motion to move the terminal to 111 Huron Street was approved, also 7-4.

For Moving – Gardi, Vezeau-Allen, Hillsinger, Hollingsworth, Christian, Dufour and the Mayor.

Against – Niro, Bruni, Scott and Shoemaker.

Do you think this council completely disregards public opinion? Cast your vote in our community opinion poll below.

**Do you feel that city council is repeatedly disregarding public opinion since the last election?**



- ☐ yes
- ☐ at times
- ☐ no

Vote

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### Dan Gray

A native of Centre Wellington, Ontario, I have worked as a freelance journalist all over the province of Ontario. Most recently I ran a local news page in my hometown of Fergus, Ontario. I look forward to bringing my experience covering breaking news, municipal matters and general interest stories to the team at Superior Media and communities we serve.

