



Capital District Transportation Authority



# Title VI Site Determination Equity Analysis 2345 Maxon Road Extension, Schenectady, NY 12308

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Ethan Warren  
Title VI Coordinator  
Capital District Transportation Authority  
85 Watervliet Avenue  
Albany, NY 12206  
[Titlevi@cdta.org](mailto:Titlevi@cdta.org)

## Executive Summary

As part of the planning process for a West Facility for the Capital District Transportation Authority, CDTA must conduct an equity analysis to ensure the siting of that facility is done without regard to race, color, or national origin, in compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

CDTA found that only one of the 11 options considered for the West Facility, the purchase of the Daily Gazette property at 2345 Maxon Road Extension, was a viable solution that met CDTA's West Facility goals.

Although the project is located in a minority census tract, CDTA concludes from its own analysis and from outreach with residents that the impacts from construction, traffic, and cumulative impacts will be minimal. CDTA concludes that the selection of 2345 Maxon Road Extension for the CDTA West Facility has been made without regard to race, color, or national origin, in compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

## Background and Project Purpose/Description

CDTA provides fixed route transit service plus other services in a six county area of the Capital Region of New York. In Fiscal Year 2024 (April 2023 → March 2024), CDTA provided 16.5 million rides between its fixed route, commuter bus, microtransit and paratransit services. CDTA operates 385 total service vehicles with a total driver headcount of around 440, plus contractor staff and vehicles for certain services.

CDTA has been in a process of rapid expansion for over a decade. After having served only four counties for its first 52 years, CDTA expanded to Montgomery County in 2022 and Warren County in 2024. From 2011 to 2023, CDTA rolled out three Bus Rapid Transit (BusPlus) routes. In 2020, CDTA began operating FLEX microtransit. CDTA is also striving to meet zero emission goals by adopting battery electric and hydrogen fuel cell buses. On top of CDTA's total fleet count being higher, many of those buses are now 60 foot articulated buses, as well. CDTA will also soon initiate a service expansion study to look at possible expansion to other adjacent counties, including Washington, Fulton, Columbia, Schoharie, and Greene. All of these factors have led to space constraints within CDTA's garages and will constrain future service plans unless more space is acquired.

The property on which the Schenectady Division sits (2401 Maxon Road Extension in Schenectady, New York) was purchased by CDTA originally in 1972 and the original structure was constructed shortly thereafter. Since construction was completed the following year, the facility has been in use continuously by CDTA as a bus storage, maintenance, and operations facility. An expansion was completed in the 1990s which added the dual bus maintenance and wash equipment lanes along the building's north side, as well as increased the internal

circulation and storage capacity by extending the building's west side. The facility is composed of two main parts: a steel framed, metal wall paneled rear section housing the bus wash, fare vaults, and bus storage and a masonry clad front section which houses vehicle lifts, maintenance areas, staff break rooms, facilities, and administrative offices. An aerial image showing the existing structure and property on which it sits is provided in Figure 1.



*Figure 1: Existing CDTA Schenectady Division and Adjacent Daily Gazette Building*

Many of the above mentioned service expansions are provided wholly or partially by CDTAs Schenectady garage, particularly the BusPlus Red Line and much of the fixed route service in Montgomery and Warren Counties. The Schenectady Garage is also the closest to many of the candidate counties for future expansion.

CDTAs three main garages (Albany, Schenectady, and Troy) have all been expanded to attempt to accommodate CDTAs growth, but all are maxed out. At all three garages, vehicles are already regularly stored outside, where New York weather takes a toll on their longevity. Administrative functions and other amenities are constrained in the Schenectady garage, limiting CDTAs ability to provide services to its employees.

Further incremental expansion of the Schenectady facility is not considered cost effective. In June 2024, CDTA completed a feasibility and alternatives analysis for a new CDTA “West Facility,” based on input from CDTA leadership regarding CDTA priorities, capacity requirements, staff and functional accommodations, material storage needs, and desired amenities for a new Schenectady facility.



## Study Purpose

The purpose of this study is to supplement the existing feasibility and alternatives analysis by ensuring site selection is done without regard to race, color, or national origin.

## Title VI Compliance

CDTA is committed to ensuring that no person be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance.

Title 49 CFR Section 21.9(b)(3) states, “In determining the site of location of facilities, a recipient or applicant may not make selections with the purpose or effect of excluding persons from, denying them the benefits of, or subjecting them to discrimination under any program to which this regulation applies, on the grounds of race, color, or national origin; or with the purpose or effect of defeating or substantially impairing the accomplishment of the objectives of the Act or this part.” Title 9 CFR part 21, Appendix C, Section (3)(iv) provides, “The location of projects requiring land acquisition and the displacement of persons from their residences and businesses may not be determined on the basis of race, color, or national origin.”

CDTA’s own Title VI Program states:

*When CDTA engages in a construction project requiring land acquisition and/or the displacement of persons from their residences or businesses for a new operations, maintenance, or support facility, we will complete an equity analysis during the planning stage to ensure that the location of the facility is selected without regard to race, color, or national origin.*

*CDTA will conduct public outreach with communities, persons, and other stakeholders potentially impacted by the various site alternatives for the new facilities. The equity analysis will compare the relative impacts of various alternative sites. CDTA will also give attention to the presence of any other facilities with similar impacts in the area of each alternative site to determine if any cumulative adverse impacts might result. Analysis will be done at the census tract level to ensure that proper perspective is given to localized impacts.*

*If CDTA determines that the location of the project will result in a disparate impact on the basis of race, color, or national origin, CDTA will only locate the project at that site if there is substantial legitimate justification for doing so, and if there are no viable alternative locations that would have a less disparate impact on the basis of race, color, or national origin. In the case where other options do exist, CDTA will implement the least discriminatory alternative. CDTA will demonstrate how these conditions are met.*

## Site Selection and Identification Process

CDTA conducted a CDTA West Facility Feasibility and Alternatives Analysis which considered site options for a “West Facility” to replace the Schenectady Garage. Before considering options, CDTA first developed a list of operational requirements for a future West Facility. Afterwards, CDTA evaluated eleven options which had potential to fulfill those requirements. CDTA analyzed a “No Build” scenario, a plan to expand on the existing garage lot, candidate sites for relocation, as well as a plan to acquire and expand onto the Daily Gazette building next to CDTA’s current garage. A summary of the analysis’ conclusions regarding each option is provided below.

### No Build

This option was rejected due to the lack of space available for current operations. The amount of space available on the site now makes future service expansion difficult if not impossible. The main space issues with the No Build scenario include:

1. The current facility cannot be used to maintain articulated buses—which make up a significant share of the CDTA fleet—due to the short length of the maintenance lanes.
2. The current facility also lacks space for necessary offices and staff amenities, both for current needs as well as are needed to accommodate future expansion
3. Tight space within the building hinders service, storage, and maintenance operations

### Reconstruction on Current Property

CDTA also considered demolishing the existing garage and building a new, larger facility. Concept site plans were developed, based on operational requirements and engineering analysis. This option was ultimately rejected for two reasons:

1. It would involve temporarily relocating and possibly even suspending operations for the duration of the construction project
2. The concept site plan would barely meet planned requirements into 2030. Further expansion would require vertical construction or acquisition of adjacent property

### Acquire a new Property and Relocate

CDTA looked at 8 possible sites to build a new garage and settled on 61 Maple Avenue as the best of those options. All other candidate sites were rejected outright or judged to be lesser options because either:

1. Wetlands, rivers, ponds, or flood plains reduced developable space below West Facility requirements (Thompson Street, 141 Sunnyside Road, River Road, 839 Amsterdam Road),
2. Public health hazards associated with previous use were discovered (544 Burdeck Street)
3. Grading issues posed construction risks (Schermerhorn Road), or
4. Other important development projects were found to be planned already (66 Freemans Bridge Road).

61 Maple Avenue was rejected for procedural issues and time constraints for the West Facility to be completed. It was found that in addition to normal time taken for property acquisition, many special circumstance environmental clearances, local permits, and other approvals would be required, raising the possibility that service plans could be delayed for years. Worse, such reviews could discover that Maple Avenue is also unviable, like the other seven sites, for similar environmental or engineering reasons. The risk of that happening and potentially leaving CDTA years behind schedule and with zero suitable sites for its West Facility has been deemed unacceptable.

## Acquire the Daily Gazette Property



Purchasing the Daily Gazette property and expanding onto it was also evaluated. This was found to be the preferred option. This site was found to be viable. Additionally, major benefits to this option include:

1. Recent renovations at the Daily Gazette building, including new building systems, office spaces and operations support systems
2. A highly positive site visit conducted in April 2024, which found the building to be in excellent condition
3. Interior warehouse space requiring only minimal renovations to be converted to a bus garage

4. No major environmental risks for CDTA in using the property, or to the environment from CDTAs use of the property
5. Operational advantages, as CDTA can continue to use the existing Schenectady Garage and treat the Daily Gazette building like a next-door expansion
6. Minimal traffic impacts, as the location is directly next to the existing garage and to current CDTA bus routes in Schenectady
7. The size of the site and concept site plan could accommodate all future operational needs and expansions

## Conclusion

Acquiring the Daily Gazette property was found to be the only viable option for CDTAs West Facility. Full details of the alternatives analysis can be found in the CDTA West Facility Feasibility and Alternatives Analysis Final Report.



## Equity Analysis

To fulfill CDTAs Title VI Program, an equity analysis was conducted on the alternatives selected during the West Facility Feasibility and Alternatives Analysis. Since the only alternative considered “viable” was the Daily Gazette building at 2345 Maxon Road Extension, this analysis focuses exclusively on that site. CDTAs goal is to ensure that the location of the facility is selected without regard to race, color, or national origin.

CDTA must determine if purchasing the Daily Gazette property will result in a disparate impact. If CDTA determines a disparate impact will occur, CDTA will only continue with the Daily Gazette property if there is substantial legitimate justification for doing so and if there are no viable alternative locations that have a less disparate impact on the basis of race, color, or national origin.

## Disparate Impact Determination

CDTAs Disparate Impact Policy states that a disparate impact occurs when more than 25.0% of the population bearing adverse effects belongs to minority groups. The effects of living next to a transit operations facility are considered, on the whole, to be adverse. The Daily Gazette is found in Census Tract 202 of Schenectady County.



Demographics for Census Tract 202 of Schenectady County, New York are shown below.

Metric	Daily Gazette (GEOID 360930202)	Region (Albany, Rensselaer, Schenectady, Saratoga, Montgomery Counties, NY)
Population	2,154	898,871
Minority Population	1,110	168,818
Percent Minority	52%	18%

The minority population of 52% is above 25%, meaning the negative effects of locating a transit operations facility in this Census Tract are considered a disparate impact. Because CDTA has no viable alternatives, however, CDTA finds “substantial legitimate justification” for selecting this site. In the next section, CDTA analyzes the actual scale of impact of the site selection. Impacts are found to be minor.

## Adverse Impacts Determination

CDTA evaluated potential traffic, construction, and cumulative impacts of selection of the Daily Gazette building for its West Facility. All impacts are expected to be minor, supporting CDTAs selection.

### Increase in traffic

Both cars and buses being driven to the new CDTA garage at the Daily Gazette site will likely mostly approach the building on Maxon Road Extension and Erie Boulevard. A much smaller segment of cars may come into the site from Aqueduct Road. All these roads are either industrial or rural and include very little housing. The City of Schenectady has zoned these streets mainly for light industrial and industrial use.<sup>1</sup> Within the town of Niskayuna, Aqueduct Road is mainly zoned for industrial use and offices, with a small amount of R-2 residential zoning.<sup>2</sup> Route 351 also drops off 1/5 of a mile from the garage, making it accessible for transit riders, as well.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.cityofschenectady.com/642/ZONING-MAP>

<sup>2</sup> [https://cms2.revize.com/revize/Niskayuna/bus-directory/Document%20Center/Department/Town%20Clerk/zoning\\_map\\_0.pdf](https://cms2.revize.com/revize/Niskayuna/bus-directory/Document%20Center/Department/Town%20Clerk/zoning_map_0.pdf)



Figure 2: Daily Gazette site and main roads and CDTA routes leading to it.

This should lead to very little, if any, traffic on the streets of the actual minority neighborhoods with which this analysis is concerned. It also means customers and employees will be able to reach CDTA by transit. What car traffic the garage does generate on neighborhood streets such as Van Vranken Avenue or Hillside Avenue will likely be from residents of those neighborhoods going to the CDTA offices, either as customers or for work.

Lastly, the Daily Gazette site being so close to CDTA service means minimal deadhead times and less overall pollution.

CDTA concludes minimal adverse impact is expected relating to traffic from this project.

## Construction impacts

As is typical for the planning phase of a construction project, CDTA does not yet have a full design plan for the Daily Gazette building. Because of this, the full list of construction work to be performed on the Daily Gazette property is not known with complete certainty. However, based on an initial tour and review of the property, CDTA is confident that the following construction work will occur on the site:

1. Construction of additional surface parking
2. Modification to the southern CMU building face of the industrial space in B-Wing and Installation of mechanical roll-up doors

### 3. Interior renovations to adjust office spaces.

It is possible the design process will reveal a need to build an addition on the building. Should that occur, the north side of the property was identified as the likely location for that to occur.

Many homes within the census tract are quite far away from the Daily Gazette site (up to a mile) and are not likely to be affected. The closest home is around 400 feet away. While the Daily Gazette building is closer to a neighborhood than 61 Maple Avenue, construction at the Daily Gazette will also be far less intense.

CDTA concludes that the adverse impacts of construction on the Daily Gazette site will be minor.

## Cumulative Impacts

CDTA must also consider whether cumulative impacts in the area from the West Facility and other similar projects combine to cause a cumulatively major negative impact upon residents. The only known recent similar development in the area is at 1910 Maxon Road Extension, where manufacturing for machinery related to cannabis began in 2021. That location is further separated from neighborhoods, being roughly 900 feet from the nearest home. It is also about a half mile away from the Daily Gazette building, spreading out impacts. Maxon Road Extension is, as previously stated, an industrial road. The Daily Gazette building also used to be used for trucking and printing for newspaper delivery and other light industrial uses. That use has declined in recent decades which is what prompted the Daily Gazette to sell the building. Bringing the garage back into use as a bus garage will return the area to a level of intensity the area already knew in the past.

CDTA finds minimal cumulative impacts associated with the site.



## Community Outreach and Input Received

On November 6, 2024, CDTA hosted a meeting where the draft equity analysis was presented. 548 letters were sent to the homes of residents and property owners in the area, inviting them to attend this meeting. Two people attended the meeting, both of whom were residents of the intended area. A turnout of two is low, but generally in line with expectations. The attendees appeared to understand the analysis and to agree with the choice of the Daily Gazette building without raising any serious concerns. One attendee said they do at times see CDTA buses drive through their neighborhood when the buses' normal route is closed but didn't seem to think it was a serious concern.

## Conclusion

CDTA finds that the choice of the Daily Gazette building for its West Facility was made without regard to race, color, or national origin and in compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act. While the property is within a minority census tract, CDTA has substantial legitimate justification for choosing the location as it is the only viable option, despite an exhaustive search. CDTA conducted its own analysis and considered input from residents of the area and feels confident the negative local impacts will be minimal.