EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Kent Multimodal Transit Center, named “Kent Central Gateway”, will be a center of activity and movement for residents, students, and visitors to Kent. The Kent Central Gateway will improve on existing conditions while also creating new opportunities. The purpose of this study is to analyze sites within the study area and compare them across a number of criteria in order to find the optimal location for the facility. The study area is located between Kent State University and Kent’s downtown and is bound by Main St., Water St., Summit St., and Lincoln St. For ease of comparison, the study area is divided into eight “superblocks”. These are: Main to Erie CBD (central business district), Erie to Haymaker CBD, Haymaker to Summit CBD, Northwest Gateway, North Gateway, Summit West Gateway, Northeast Gateway, and Summit East Gateway (see Map 1).

The site selection phase follows a process in which each site selection factor is analyzed separately and compared across all superblocks. The selection factors are listed below, with greater weight given to issues higher on the list. The factors and their relative weight are based on stakeholder and public input.

- Transit Issues
- Community Planning Issues (those not covered in other site selection factors)
- Economic Development Potential
- Pedestrian and Bicycle Connectivity
- Social and Environmental Resources
- Property Issues
- Traffic Operations
- Traffic Safety

These issues are discussed below and summarized in a comparison matrix in Figure 1 on page 5:

- **Transit issues** are compared according to: effects on routing and schedule; physical access for transit vehicles; exposure and visibility to encourage transit use; and potential to connect to future passenger rail site. The Northwest Gateway site provides the best qualities for transit needs, while the Northeast Gateway and Main to Erie CBD also rank highly.

- **Community planning issues** are based on the City of Kent Bicentennial Plan, PARTA Transit Development Plan, and the Kent Campus Master Plan. The comparison criteria include: providing adequate parking; strengthening connections between campus and downtown; developing PARTA’s public image; positively impacting KSU’s host community and adjacent properties; and locating transit facilities near public services. The Northwest Gateway is the best site for these issues, with the North Gateway and Erie to Haymaker CBD ranking next.

- The comparison criteria for **economic development potential** include: support existing downtown businesses; support new economic development initiatives; potential for integrating joint development and leveraging public transportation funding; and site size and configuration sufficient for joint development. The Northwest Gateway is the best site for these issues, while the North Gateway and Northeast Gateway also rank highly.

- Comparison criteria for **pedestrian and bicycle connectivity** include: presence of unsafe intersections for pedestrians; connection between campus and downtown; and connection to planned Portage Hike and Bike Trail. The Northwest Gateway and North Gateway are the best sites for these issues. Main to Erie CBD also ranks highly.

- The comparison criteria for **social and environmental resources** are: potential for impacts to public facilities,
religious/social organizations, known cultural resources, Environmental Justice, and residential neighborhoods. Erie to Haymaker CBD is the best site for these criteria, with the Main to Erie CBD and Haymaker to Summit CBD ranking next.

- **Property issues** are compared by: availability and potential for acquisition; development issues; and relative cost of acquisition. The Northwest Gateway and Summit East Gateway are ranked the best for these issues, while the Summit West Gateway also ranks highly.

- The comparison criteria for **traffic operations** are: functional classification of roads; location of underutilized roads; and intersection congestion. The Northwest Gateway, Main to Erie CBD and Summit West Gateway are best for these issues.

- **Traffic safety issues** are compared according to: presence of high crash intersections; opportunities to correct crash issues; and potential for adding to crash problems. The Main to Erie CBD ranks highest for these issues, while the Summit West Gateway and Northwest Gateway also rank highly.

Public meetings were held after the initial site selection analysis was conducted so that the public could review the analysis and have their comments incorporated into the study. During public outreach, the criteria used to compare superblocks, as well as the weight given to each criterion, were presented to the public. Although general comments about the project varied, comments specifically aimed at the comparison criteria generally agreed with the study team’s assumptions.

**Proposed Site**

The study recommends moving forward with the Northwest Gateway superblock site for more detailed analysis and to create a conceptual layout of the facility on that site. The Northwest Gateway site provides, among other things:

- Good accessibility to current transit routes
- Good proximity to both downtown and Kent State University
- Good ability to foster economic development along Main St.
- High visibility
- Partially vacant land
- Unique topography that allows for multi-level development
- Good ability to leverage public transportation funding
- Good ability to connect along proposed Portage Hike and Bike Trail
- Good ability to take advantage of currently underutilized Depeyster St.
- Good linkage to other proposed developments in downtown
- Good ability to improve pedestrian connectivity and connections between campus and downtown

The recommendations include keeping the North Gateway site open for future analysis for the possibility of extending development from the Northwest Gateway site. The reasons for this are:

- Pedestrian connectivity and a downtown-campus connection are very important to the success of the project
- Haymaker Parkway, along the eastern edge of the proposed Northwest Gateway site, poses the largest barrier to achieving those goals in the study area
- North Gateway, on the opposite side of Haymaker adjacent to the proposed site, also scored highly on pedestrian and planning issues
In future phases, the study will consider opportunities to extend the Northwest Gateway development into North Gateway to improve the ability to overcome the Haymaker Parkway barrier in achieving increased pedestrian connection and linkage between downtown and campus. The North Gateway will not be considered as a site for the facility on its own, because in isolation the site does not achieve many goals of the project. As the project moves to the conceptual layout of the facility in the next phase, these issues will be analyzed further.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comparison Factors</th>
<th>Related Criteria</th>
<th>Main to Erie CBD</th>
<th>Erie to Haymaker CBD</th>
<th>Haymaker to Summit CBD</th>
<th>Northwest Gateway</th>
<th>North Gateway</th>
<th>Summit West Gateway</th>
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Figure 1: Summary matrix of superblook site analysis
Purpose and Needs Statement
Multimodal Facility

The City of Kent and Kent State University have expressed the desire to enhance physical connections between downtown Kent and the University. Establishing a high-density multimodal facility can both capture traffic at primary roads and arterial system (Haymaker Parkway) and transfer vehicle occupants to pedestrian, bicycle and transit systems connecting downtown Kent, the University and Northeast Ohio. The western area of campus is seeing renewed academic activities, cultural activities and special events.

Consideration should be given throughout the design and construction of this project to move people seamlessly through the system between the campus and the community. We visualize this facility to be a transfer station, encouraging people to change from personal vehicles to another form of transportation. The facility should act as both an arrival point for and a portal to the City and University. We see the possibility of such a facility encouraging people to patronize nearby private businesses, encouraging more business development around campus and into downtown Kent. We see that this facility could serve as a meeting place or destination in itself for classrooms, art events, and a welcome center for both the campus and the city. The facility can be a connector for both community and university. As such, it must be designed as a vital civic space.

Consideration should be given throughout the design and construction of this project to minimize the possible negative impacts and accentuate the positive impacts the project may have on surrounding neighborhoods and business interests. It must build upon the transportation planning and other principles used in the Crain Avenue Bridge Project Purpose and Needs Statement, the Terrace Area Parking Purpose and Needs Statement, the Bicentennial Comprehensive Plan and other City/Campus Projects as they evolve. Further, the development of the multimodal facility needs to be integrated with improvements to Summit Street, and other City Transportation Projects.

The project activity consists of:
A. Locating the facility to optimize University, City, Business, PARTA and user needs.
B. Encouraging economic development opportunities (e.g. welcome center, hotel, conference center, etc.) and enhancing Main Street as a connection between Kent State University and downtown Kent.
C. Designing a facility and associated components to meet the purposes and variety of the objectives listed below.

Project Objectives:
1. Design a facility where all modes of transportation connect (transit, bicycle, pedestrian systems), thereby encouraging pedestrian and bicycle traffic.
2. The facility should be designed to assure safety and security.
3. The facility should integrate with the City's intelligent traffic planning.
4. The facility should take advantage of the topography.
5. The facility should be an attractive, unique facility integrating development opportunities (e.g. housing, office, etc.) along its frontage. It should be in tune with its surroundings, scaled accordingly and represent Kent's historical architecture.
6. The facility should be designed to create/enhance multiple convenient connections between downtown Kent and Kent State University.
7. The facility should be designed to accommodate future modification for alternate transportation needs (e.g. commuter rail, airport limousine, shared cars, electric cars, segways, intercity buses, taxis, car rental, bike parking, bike racks and lockers, bike rental, motorcycle parking, pedestrian access to the campus, Esplanade, downtown Kent, The Portage Hike & Bike Trail, etc.)
8. The facility should utilize green building strategies and employ eco-friendly operational strategies.
9. The facility shall be designed and operated so as to minimize the environmental impact on neighboring properties (i.e. noise and light pollution, water runoff, litter, etc.)

This Purpose and Needs Statement explicitly does not address the location of the multimodal facility or its overall size or its parking capacity. Neither is the cost nor the scope of its amenities delineated.