

Needs for downtown bus depot, parking conflict

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4/11/79

Rapid City needs both a downtown bus depot and more public parking, Mayor Art LaCroix told the Common Council's Public Works Committee Tuesday.

However, for the moment the two needs conflict.

The Trailways bus station on Sixth Street occupies a building scheduled for razing to increase downtown parking.

The bus company, originally scheduled to vacate the building by April 1, last month had its lease extended to May 1. At that time, the company expressed

interest in temporarily leasing the city's shop on Second Street.

It now finds that to use the facility, an estimated \$50,000 of improvements would be necessary to bring the shop up to code for a bus depot.

Bus company representatives say they are not willing to make such an investment without a longer lease. The City Council had a planned a month to month lease.

The bus company has asked for a five-year lease or another extension at the Sixth Street location until more suitable quarters can be found or until a centralized transportation facility can be built.

City Attorney Ray Woodsend said such a facility would be at least two years in planning and construction.

LaCroix said the lease on the Sixth Street location can not be extended because the property is part of the downtown parking district and downtown businesses will begin making payments on their parking assessment next month.

The bonds have already been sold for the project, said Woodsend.

LaCroix said he feels further delay may jeopardize the downtown shopping area. He said with Penney's gone and Sears about to leave, other businesses may be waiting for the city to increase

downtown parking "before jumping into leases in the downtown area."

Councilman Dick Goschke said having a downtown bus depot will become increasingly important as the cost of gasoline continues to rise.

Woodsend pointed out that if the city forces Trailways to lease elsewhere, it may not be free to enter a new terminal facility should it become available.

Acting City Engineer Bill Craig said as much as 80 percent federal funding could be available to build a centralized transportation facility.

Council members were unsure how to act and tabled the matter.