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Port plans for 42nd Street bus terminal tower take shape

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The Port Authority of New York and New Jersey has not given up on its plans to resurrect its decrepit, congested 42nd Street bus terminal.

Within the next year, the bistate infrastructure agency plans to release a request for proposals to developers interested in building a tower on top of the terminal, with the proceeds going towards improving the transportation hub beneath it, according to a knowledgeable source.

The development-rights sale is part of a larger strategy now being developed by a working group that's expected to be released around the end of the year.

The goal is to find the \$1 billion or so in funding necessary to rebuild the bus terminal, the world's busiest, serving more than 200,000 people a day, and more than 65 million a year.

As part of that strategy, the Port Authority recently released a request for proposals for land it owns on Dyer Avenue, between 33rd and 34th streets. The Port is similarly expected to sell off other slivers of land it owns on the West Side, according to two knowledgeable sources.

At the same time, the Port Authority has applied for a resiliency grant from the Federal Transit Administration to build a \$400 million bus garage on West 39th Street, between 10th and 11th avenues, which will serve two purposes: it will handle overflow from the existing bus terminal and, should the bus terminal reconstruction go through, it should be able to help handle displaced operations. According to the source, the grant request is for \$240 million.

This would not be the first time the authority has sought to resurrect its aging bus terminal by selling the air rights on top of it to a developer.

Vornado Realty Trust's longstanding plans to build a Richard Rogers-designed, 40-story tower on a portion of the terminal officially collapsed in 2011, after it lost its funding partner and was unwilling to go it alone.

Pat Foye, the Port Authority's executive director, hinted at the agency's plans this morning, at a breakfast hosted by the New York Building Congress.

"As before when a deal with a leading real estate developer of this town was made to build an office tower over the bus terminal, I think that a combination of sale of air rights and construction of some kind of office building or mixed use facility will play a significant role in the rebuilding of the new bus terminal," he said, speaking to a construction industry crowd at Hilton in midtown.

"We're very focused on the bus terminal, which frankly serves more commuters on an annual basis than PATH does," he added.

A spokesman for the Port Authority had no immediate comment.

NOTE: This article links to a DNAinfo report on the authority's bus depot plans which cites \$230 million as the number requested by the authority from the FTA that would go toward a new bus garage. The original version has been changed to reflect the fact that the source puts the total amount requested at \$240 million.