



UNITED STATES GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20548

GGD-76-81  
4-1276  
093761

GENERAL GOVERNMENT  
DIVISION

B-114874

APR 12 1976

The Honorable Olin E. Teague  
House of Representatives

Dear Mr. Teague:

On December 8, 1975, you requested that we determine why the Bryan, Texas, Post Office was relocated and whether the move was beneficial to the Government. You also asked that we determine why local citizens were not asked to comment on the move and why you were not informed of it.

The Old Bryan Post Office Downtown Station located in the Federal Building at 210 West 26th Street was moved one block north to 210 West 25th Street on October 14, 1975. We discussed this move with United States Postal Service officials and reviewed the Decision Analysis Report concerning the relocation. In addition, we toured the old and new stations and the main post office building in Bryan, Texas.

We believe relocation of the station was necessary to provide sufficient space for the Service's current and future needs.

WHY RELOCATION TOOK PLACE

The Bryan station occupied 4,358 square feet of space in the Federal Building, which also housed other Government agencies. According to Service officials, the lobby space was inadequate and the number of lock boxes could not be increased to meet demand. At the time of the relocation, about 100 people were on a waiting list for lock boxes and another 180 people wanted to change from small boxes to larger ones. In addition, only onstreet parking was available for customers and employees.

Service officials said that lobby space was critical at the station because of heavy window business, including 1,000 food stamp transactions a month. Inside mail drops located near the service windows increased lobby congestion.

According to the Postal Service analysis, the station needs 4,512 square feet of space currently and projects a 10-year need for 6,047 square feet.

GGD-76-81

707334  
093761

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED BEFORE  
PURCHASING THE NEW BUILDING

To alleviate the space problem at the old station, the Service considered several alternatives, including (1) remaining at the Federal Building with or without increased space, (2) leasing or buying the building at 210 West 25th Street, or (3) constructing a new Service-owned building. Pertinent facts about the alternatives follow.

Remain in the Federal Building--Postal real estate specialists determined that no more space was available for lease in the Federal Building and no adjacent rental property was available. Early Service computations showed that the rental rate the General Services Administration (GSA) charged for the Federal Building space was excessive when compared to rental rates for other buildings in the area. Revised computations showed that the GSA rate was in line with rental rates in the area. However, Service officials anticipated increases in the rent charged by GSA, and this was one of the factors in the decision to move.

Buy or lease an existing building--The asking price for the site and building at 210 West 25th Street was \$200,000. The 10-year rental cost was \$198,000. The Service considered this an excellent building in the right location with space adequate for its projected 10-year requirements and adequate parking.

Construct a new building--The Service estimated that it would cost \$367,173 to build a post office with space adequate for its current and future needs.

The Service decided the best alternative was to purchase the building on West 25th Street. It offered the owner \$150,000, the appraised value of the building and property. He accepted. The Service officials believe they have acquired an excellent building at a reasonable cost.

SPACE PROBLEMS OVERCOME

By relocating to West 25th Street, the Service overcame its space and parking problems.

In the new station one additional service window has been added. Inside mail drops have been moved away from the service windows, alleviating lobby congestion. The table below summarizes the increase in available space.

Comparison of Available Space

	<u>Old station</u>	<u>New station</u>
Space available (square feet)	a/4,358	b/11,500
Service windows	2	3
Window service area (square feet)	275	778.5
Lock box area (square feet)	222	722

a/The Service needed 4,512 square feet of space and projected a 10-year requirement for 6,047 square feet.

b/The new station has over 5,000 square feet of excess space, some of which will be used for storage. The Service does not plan to rent out the remainder of the excess space due to the cost of sealing it off and securing it from the post office. No decision had been made as to how this space will be used.

As of January 1976, the Service had added 338 boxes at the new station, as shown in the table below.

Comparison of  
Number of Lock Boxes

<u>Box size</u>	<u>Old station</u>		<u>New station</u>	
	<u>Available</u>	<u>Rented</u>	<u>Available</u>	<u>Rented</u>
1 (smallest)	600	535	600	396
2	160	130	464	310
3	70	69	100	78
4 (largest)	10	10	14	10
	<u>840</u>	<u>744</u>	<u>1,178</u>	<u>794</u>

In addition to the increased number of available boxes, the Service changed the style of the boxes to permit interchanging box sizes to meet changing demand.

The new station has offstreet parking for customers and onstreet parking for both customers and employees, as shown in the following table.

Comparison of Available Parking

	<u>Old station</u>		<u>New station</u>	
	<u>Onstreet</u>	<u>Offstreet</u>	<u>Onstreet</u>	<u>Offstreet</u>
Employee	a/Several	None	b/Several	None
Customer	8	None	b/Several	13

a/Available for customers and employees within two blocks of the building.

b/Across the street from the building.

An additional benefit from the move was the transfer of delivery routes from the main post office building. Because of overcrowded conditions at the main post office, 12 city delivery routes were transferred to the new station, opening up much needed space at the main post office. The Postal Service is also considering the transfer of five rural carriers to the new station.

OPERATIONAL PROBLEMS RESULTING  
FROM THE MOVE

In your letter of December 8, 1975, you advised us that your constituents had complained about the changes required in their box numbers and the hours the station was open for business.

About 2 months before the relocation, notice of the move and a memorandum concerning reserving box numbers were placed in each box. Since businesses usually rented the larger boxes, efforts were made to limit changes in these box numbers and minimize changes in preprinted stationery. Some numbers on small boxes were changed, but the Postal Service received only one complaint.

Before the station was moved, a study by Bryan postal officials showed that from 8 a.m. to 8:45 a.m. there was very little window business. Therefore, to better utilize the clerks' time at the new station, the Service changed its hours of business from between 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. to between 8:30 a.m. and 5 p.m. The Bryan Postmaster told us that as of January 26, 1976, no complaints had been received on the change of hours.

PUBLIC NOTIFICATION OF RELOCATION

The Service has no procedures for soliciting public opinion on post office relocations. Postal customers in Bryan were not asked their opinion of the move. Service officials told us that the public would be canvassed only if a major change in service was to occur. The relocation of the Bryan station was not considered a major change.

The Service normally discusses the general location of a new post office with local officials. In this case, however, the Service did not consider it necessary since the post office was being moved only one block into an existing building.

According to Service officials, the Service does not notify Congressmen of an impending relocation of a post office.

- - - -

The Postal Service has reviewed the report and concurs with its findings.

We trust that this information meets your needs.

Sincerely yours,



Victor L. Lowe  
Director