
NEW YORK AVENUE METRORAIL STATION
Florida Avenue and 2nd Street, NE

Report to the Washington Metropolitan Transit Authority

February 1, 2001

Abstract

The Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) has submitted preliminary site and building plans for the station structure (the platform canopy, entrance canopy and mezzanine) and concept plans (station entrance pavilion, traction power substation, and Metropolitan Branch Trail) for all other features of the New York Avenue Metrorail Station. The proposed station is located on the existing Metrorail Red Line near New York and Florida Avenues in Northeast Washington, D.C. The station is part of a public-private partnership designed to promote increased economic development in the surrounding area, provide improved access from the region to the area's growing employment opportunities, and create mobility options for station-area residents.

Authority

WMATA Compact, Public Law 100-825 of 1988 (D.C. Code, sec. 1-2431) which states, "Before a mass transit plan is adopted, altered, revised or amended, the Board (Board of Directors of the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority) shall transmit such proposed plan, alteration, revision or amendment for comment to the following and to such other agencies as the Board shall determine: the National Capital Planning Commission."; and Section 5 of the National Capital Planning Act of 1952, as amended (40 U.S.C.71d).

Commission Action

That the Commission:

- **Approves** the preliminary site and building plans for the New York Avenue Metrorail Station structure, and the concept plans for the station entrance pavilion, traction power substation, and Metropolitan Branch Trail for the Metrorail station located at New York and Florida Avenues, NE, as shown on NCPC Map File No. 42.10(46.00)-40888, and

- **Recommends** that WMATA:
 - Continue to evaluate the accommodation of retail in a manner that promotes an active pedestrian environment while maintaining station image and visibility.
 - Pursue scenarios to provide adequate traction power supply without the need to construct a new substation.
 - Continue to work with the District of Columbia Department of Public Works (DCDPW), the District of Columbia Office of Planning (DCOP) and the Coalition for the Metropolitan Branch Trail to coordinate the development of the station and the Metropolitan Branch Trail.
 - Provide a second entrance in the vicinity of M Street in the final design.

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BACKGROUND AND STAFF EVALUATION

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSAL

The New York Avenue Metrorail Station will be built on the existing Metrorail Red Line between the Union Station and Rhode Island Avenue Metrorail Station, near the intersection of Florida Avenue and 2nd Street in Northeast Washington, D.C. It is bounded by Florida Avenue, NE on the north, existing Metrorail Red Line tracks on the east, 2nd Street, NE on the west, and M Street, NE on the south. The station is part of a public-private partnership designed to promote increased economic development in the surrounding area; provide improved access from the region to the area's growing employment opportunities; and create mobility options for station-area residents.

The proposed Metrorail station would be located approximately one and one quarter miles south of the Rhode Island Avenue Station and half a mile north of Union Station. It would also be located south of Brentwood Yard, a Metrorail heavy maintenance facility located north of New York Avenue. The Red Line, which has the highest ridership in the Metrorail system, runs north-south and is completely grade-separated (i.e., it passes over or under all other roads, facilities, and sidewalks). The line parallels the Amtrak Northeast Corridor rail line, which carries intercity passengers, and MARC commuter rail service.

WMATA's preliminary proposal request includes the station structure and those associated elements of platform canopy, entrance canopy, and mezzanine. The proposed station will have a center platform with a standard 600-foot length. Two new tracks will be built west of the existing inbound track to serve this station. This approach will minimize impacts to existing Metrorail operations during construction.

The conceptual proposal design includes all other features of the proposed New York Avenue Metrorail Station such as the station entrance and the Washington Metropolitan Branch Trail. The proposal includes one station entrance near the north end of the station to support access from Florida Avenue and N Street. A landscaped entrance plaza is proposed to connect the station to Florida Avenue. The design also includes provisions for an optional entrance at the south end of the station in the vicinity of M Street.

The Washington Metropolitan Branch Trail is a 12-foot-wide bicycle and pedestrian pathway, which runs from Silver Spring, Maryland to Union Station (7.7miles). WMATA has assumed responsibility for the portion that is within the project limits.

The purpose of the proposed project is to provide high-quality regional transit access to an area currently undergoing an impressive economic revitalization. While the existing development in the area is served reasonably well by the current transit connections, the level of future development that is anticipated to be close to Florida and New York Avenues would be underserved by the existing local transit system. The addition of a new station to the existing Red Line would enhance accessibility to the New York Avenue corridor, support current development activities, and encourage even stronger future redevelopment efforts. Moreover, the station would provide better regional access for area residents and institutions, including Gallaudet University and the planned new headquarters for the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms, proposed to be located at the intersection of New York and Florida Avenues.

PREVIOUS COMMISSION ACTION

Following its June 29, 2000 meeting, the Commission forwarded comments to WMATA in a letter dated July 13, 2000 regarding the draft Environmental Assessment (EA) for the proposed New York Avenue Metrorail Station. The letter included the Executive Director's Recommendations (EDR) dated June 29, 2000. It indicated that the general findings were acceptable. The proposed mitigation measures addressed most short- and long-term environmental effects to the rail alignment area and proposed station location.

CONSULTATION

Staff has worked closely with WMATA throughout the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process to ensure a comprehensive approach to the planning of this facility. The outreach planning process involved a considerable number of community, business, and government representatives in the development of the environmental document. The issues that were identified in the Environmental Assessment addressed the many concerns expressed both in local community meetings, and in the official scoping effort by WMATA, to focus on and analyze the potential significant environmental effects of the planned new station. WMATA is commended for its efforts.

EVALUATION

Staff supports the proposed project, and recommends that WMATA give further consideration to the following aspects, which it believes are important to the continued planning of this vital project.

Traction Power Substation (Conceptual)

Additional traction power supply will be necessary to support a station at this location. WMATA is currently considering the construction of an additional substation either near the intersection of New York and Florida Avenues, NE or near L Street, NE. The substation would have an area of approximately 1,000 square feet. However, WMATA may also be able to provide the additional power supply by boosting the power at each adjacent Metrorail station, thereby eliminating the need for a new substation. Staff is hopeful that the additional necessary power can be provided through the existing substations. However, if a new substation is necessary, staff prefers the proposed substation location at L Street, NE, thus not precluding design opportunities near the intersection of New York and Florida Avenues.

Station Structure (Preliminary)

Design of the basic station structure appears straightforward and functional. It is in keeping with the design of other WMATA stations.

- Platform Canopy – The design of the platform and entrance canopies is refreshing. The canopy structure is forward thinking and makes a strong statement. A welcome departure from existing station canopy designs, the new design is more contemporary. Skylights are used extensively, resulting in an overall design that appears light and airy. The proposed colors support this feeling.
- Entrance Canopy – The use of the same canopy design (as that of the platform canopy) ties the entrance to the station platform and gives the station entrance identity and recognition.
- Mezzanine – The use of clear glass and stainless steel is appropriate for the façade of the station mezzanine. This results in a clean and timeless statement that is compatible with the design of the canopies.

Station Entrances and Associated Development (Conceptual)

- Entrance Pavilion – Although logically positioned on the axis of N Street extended, the location of the Florida Avenue entrance will depend upon the final design of N Street in association with that of the proposed adjacent developments. To the extent possible, the final location of this entrance pavilion should be deferred until the design of both Second and N Streets and the conceptual design (or design guidelines that will determine the design) of the adjacent developments are finalized.

Staff believes a secondary entrance near M street is essential to provide the appropriate connections south of the proposed ATF Headquarters Building, Gallaudet University, the existing residential areas, as well as other proposed developments. This would allow individuals in the vicinity of M Street easier access to and from the Metrorail system.

- Second Street – The design of Second Street (number of lanes, drop-off, parking, width of sidewalks, etc.) and the design of the associated streetscape is an integral component of the design of the station. NCPC staff preference is for the design of a landscaped public open space in front of the station.
- Station Mezzanine – Staff encourages the development of an active pedestrian environment through the design of the 2nd Street streetscape that is associated with the proposed Metrorail station. This area is assumed to include shade trees and associated landscaping, street furniture, information kiosks, retail vending (e.g. pushcarts), and to the extent possible areas for planned events. However, staff believes that the station should not be buried within commercial development. The proposed glass and stainless steel curtain wall is appropriate to the station because station visibility is paramount.

Washington Metropolitan Branch Trail (Conceptual)

- WMATA has committed to provide assistance in the development of the Metropolitan Branch Trail at the proposed New York Avenue Station. Staff recognizes the importance of the trail as a link in the bicycle and pedestrian network between Union Station and Silver Spring, Maryland—and as a means of access to the proposed New York Avenue Station—and is pleased that WMATA is designing the proposed station to accommodate the trail. However, the location and conceptual design of this trail facility is of concern to staff. It is essential that access to and from the elevated trail is integral to the design of the station; it should not appear as an after-thought. The use of materials, design of the railings, etc. must be integrated into the station architecture. In hopes of creating a pedestrian friendly environment, staff supports activity beneath the cantilevered portion of the trail possibly with the use of lighting and/or works of art to reduce dead space at the ground level. Additionally, staff encourages WMATA to continue with its coordinated meetings with the District of Columbia Department of Public Works, the District of Columbia Office of Planning and The Coalition for the Metropolitan Branch Trail to work toward the coordinated development of the station.

Coordinating Committee

The Coordinating Committee reviewed this item at its meeting on January 10, 2001, and forwarded the proposal to the Commission with the statement that the project has been coordinated with all agencies participating. The participating agencies were NCPC; the Fire Department; the Department of Housing and Community Development; the Department of Public Works; the General Services Administration; and the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority.

National Historic Preservation Act

WMATA has been in consultation with the D.C. State Historic Preservation Office for the past year, since the initial development of the environmental documentation.

The proposed placement of the station is to the north of the Woodward and Lothrop Warehouse, the one historic property along the Red Line in that immediate vicinity that is eligible for listing in the National Register. The location and design of the station entrance will also require close coordination.

National Environmental Policy Act

Pursuant to NEPA, WMATA completed an EA that addresses the environmental impacts associated with its action to construct a new Metrorail station on the Red Line between the existing Union Station and Rhode Island Avenue Metrorail Station. In accordance with NEPA, WMATA must complete an environmental evaluation prior to any construction of the station in compliance with the WMATA Compact agreement (PL 100-285).

WMATA issued the draft EA in May 2000 and completed a final EA and Finding of No Significant Impact in September 2000. The Commission staff reviewed and participated in the preparation of the EA and reported to the Commission the findings of that document on June 29, 2000. In January 2001 the staff recommended to the Acting Executive Director adoption of the WMATA EA and the determination of a Finding of No Significant Impact pursuant to NCPC environmental procedures.

Overall, the site contains limited environmental constraints that require straightforward mitigating action. The project area is relatively flat but the station rail platform itself is 20 to 25 feet above the surrounding streets and is situated adjacent to the existing Metrorail right-of-way and the CSX railroad. No wetlands exist at the site and no threatened or endangered species exist in the project area. The EA states that the station would not generate significant noise or air quality impacts.

The site soils have moderate limiting properties for most engineering applications relating to its structural and drainage qualities. Site studies conducted for determining the presence of hazardous materials in the site soils found that potential total petroleum hydrocarbons exceeding District of Columbia action level may be present in some locations in the project area. The EA notes that additional site sampling and testing would be performed and that mitigation in accordance with the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) will be adhered to.

The proposed action will have no impact on any significant or substantial vegetation.

Pedestrian and vehicular modes of travel provide access to the site. Pedestrian use occurs on walkways on either side of the Red Line that lead to and from Stanton Park and Gallaudet University. Main sidewalk travel exists along M Street and Florida Avenue. In the context of facilitating access to this station the staff believes the Metropolitan Branch Trail, as a proposed independent bicycle and pedestrian trail, should be integrated with the design of the New York Avenue Metrorail Station. Staff supports the District of Columbia Department of Public Works

goal of having the station seamlessly connected with the trail. This approach would also provide an added dimension to the intermodal nature of the station.

No vehicle parking will be developed at the new proposed station. Metrobus and transit shuttle drop-off areas will be provided in the station site design.

The staff fully supports WMATA's comprehensive approach to the environmental analysis of this facility. Its outreach environmental review process has involved a considerable number of community, business, and government individuals in its completion. The issues that have been identified in the EA address many concerns expressed in local community meetings to focus and analyze on the potential significant environmental effects of the planned new station. WMATA is commended for its efforts.

Federal Capital Improvements Program

This project was not included in the Federal Capital Improvements Program, Fiscal Years 2001 – 2005, adopted by the Commission on August 3, 2000. However, the project was included in the District of Columbia's FY 2001-FY 2006 Capital Improvements Plan.

Comprehensive Plan

The New York Avenue Metrorail Red Line project is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital. A goal of the Comprehensive Plan states that the federal government should "Promote adequate systems for the transportation of residents, employees, visitors, and goods to, from, and within the National Capital Region."

Several policies contained in the Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital apply to the proposed Metrorail project. Applicable policies relating to the protection and enhancement of historic properties, Special Places and Special Streets specify:

- New construction on Historic Landmarks or in Historic Districts should be compatible with the historical architectural character and cultural heritage of the landmark or district. In design, height, proportion, mass, configuration, building materials, texture, color and location, new construction should complement these valuable features of the landmark or district, particularly features in the immediate vicinity to which the new construction will be visually related.
- Special Streets and Places should be maintained and enhanced in a manner that promotes their roles as major features that help establish the images and the symbols of the National Capital in the minds of its residents and visitors. They should be embellished, when possible, with monuments, fountains, sculpture, gardens, distinctive buildings, and other features of civic art. These embellishments should be placed strategically to serve as frequent points of orientation and visual delight. To the extent practicable, public activities and buildings should be located and focused on the Special Streets and Places.

- The existing street space and the buildings fronting on Special Streets and Places should be maintained, protected, and enhanced. Any repair, maintenance, improvement or new building should respect the historic elements, enhance the aesthetic quality, and promote the amenity of this space.



STATION LOCATION

Vicinity Plan



