



Commission Action

January 9, 2020

PROJECT Washington Union Station Expansion Project Union Station 50 Massachusetts Avenue, NE Washington, DC	NCPC FILE NUMBER 7746
SUBMITTED BY United States Department of Transportation Federal Railroad Administration	NCPC MAP FILE NUMBER 1.11(38.00)45049
REVIEW AUTHORITY Federal Projects in the District per 40 U.S.C. § 8722(b)(1) and (d)	APPLICANT'S REQUEST Approval of comments on concept plans
	ACTION TAKEN Approved comments on concept plans

The Commission:

Finds the primary goal of the project is to support current and future growth in rail service and multimodal connectivity for Washington, DC and the National Capital Region well into the 21st Century.

Finds it is the federal interest to support multimodal connections and transportation alternatives in the regional system.

Supports the overall project purpose, including accommodating future growth in rail service; improving accessibility and egress; enhancing the user experience; enhancing integration with surrounding uses; sustaining the station's economic viability; and preserving the historic train station.

Finds that Union Station is an important historic resource and is a gateway into the National Capital, and therefore the function, design and experience of the facility impacts the first impression of visitors. At the same time, the station is a critical transportation hub for residents and workers.

Notes Union Station Redevelopment Corporation (USRC) oversees the station operations and maintenance, and USRC funding supports preservation of the station, maintains the station as a multimodal transportation center, and enhances the retail and amenities within the station.

Notes the major project components include reconfiguration of the station tracks, a new train hall, bus facilities, and replacement parking facilities.

Finds the realignment and placement of the station tracks form the foundation of the design and configuration of other project elements. Changes in grade, limited points of access, constrained

site boundaries, and varying jurisdictions also create constraints that influence the placement of the proposed facilities.

Notes the applicant has developed six alternatives (A, B, C-East and West, D, E, and “A-C”) that share the same project components, but differ primarily in the placement of the train hall, parking and bus facilities.

Notes the applicant has indicated that Alternative “A-C” is their preferred alternative because it minimizes the duration, depth, complexity, and cost of construction as there would be no extensive construction below the concourses; keeps intermodal uses close to each other and close to the main station like today; and minimizes operational traffic impacts on the H Street Bridge and public street network by optimizing deck-level vehicular circulation and re-using the existing east and west ramps.

Regarding the transportation facilities:

Supports the reconfiguration of the train platforms to create greater efficiency, improve accessibility, and enhance the user experience.

Finds the addition of a new concourse level with pedestrian entrances at 1st Street and 2nd Street will greatly improve pedestrian access from the adjacent neighborhoods.

Supports the addition of a new east-west train hall that helps create a large, gracious entry to the track platforms, creates a setback from the historic train station and brings natural light into the facility.

Finds that the rail station, bus facility and Metrorail Station should be located in close proximity to each other to facilitate intermodal connections for travelers.

Supports the creation of new pedestrian entrances at the level of the H Street bridge and new train hall to improve accessibility to the station, and to relieve demand for drop-offs at the front of the station.

Notes the traffic impacts of the proposed alternatives were not part of the concept submission, but will be included as part of the impacts analysis within the Draft Environmental Impact Statement.

Requests the applicant coordinate with the District Department of Transportation to evaluate the proposed circulation system and any impacts to the transportation network, including Columbus Circle, the H Street Bridge, and adjacent streets.

Regarding the parking facilities:

Notes the site currently has about 2,200 striped parking spaces with an average utilization rate over 80 percent. Rental car areas and the mezzanine accommodate about 250 additional vehicles.

Presently, a majority of the spaces (1390) appear to be used by monthly pass holders whereas the use of the garage for daily retail or rail users appears substantially less.

Notes the preferred alternative reduces the proposed number of spaces by approximately one-third to 1,575 spaces, with approximately 600 spaces for retail, 900 flexible spaces for general use, and 75 spaces for rental cars.

Notes the federal Transportation Element provides specific guidance for federal employee parking, but in this case, much of the parking is for non-federal commercial use and other station users.

Notes the proposed 2019 federal Transportation Element of the Comprehensive Plan states agencies should consult the parking policies of local jurisdictions to determine appropriate parking standards for non-workplace federal uses, including residential, commercial, and institutional uses.

Requests the applicant substantially reduce the number of parking spaces, and that the applicant, private development partner, and staff work with the District Office of Planning and the District Department of Transportation to evaluate and confirm the appropriate amount of parking given the mix of uses, traffic and urban design impacts, and transit-oriented nature of the project prior to the next stage of review.

Notes the applicant has evaluated off-site locations for parking, including other federal properties and private sites, but has determined they all face significant challenges regarding acquisition or implementation.

Regarding historic preservation and urban design:

Finds the applicant seeks to enhance the functionality of the Union Station, and the proposed alternatives generally do not directly alter the historic station building itself.

Notes that proposed development behind the station should consider the setting of the historic building and the critical views from the National Mall, U.S. Capitol, and other viewsheds.

Supports the use of the east-west train hall to create a wider setback between the historic train station and new development to the north, as a way to help mitigate the visual impacts of the new development.

Supports the provision of a pedestrian access corridor between the top of the H Street Bridge and the station / train hall to create a new way to access the station from the H Street-Benning Streetcar Station. The “access zone” will require coordination with adjacent private development.

Finds the placement of parking beneath the station tracks and lower concourses may be challenging due to constructability and cost and therefore, the smaller the massing of the above grade garage, the better.

Finds that bus and parking facilities can be designed in a manner that can support compatibility with other adjacent uses, including the integration of retail and other active uses, the architectural treatment of buildings and facades, and the incorporation of other public amenities.

Requests for the next review the applicant further develop plans and renderings that show how active uses, amenities and architectural features can enhance the public realm and create a design that is compatible with adjacent development.

Requests the applicant prepare elevations and renderings to show how the height and mass of the alternatives will look from key viewsheds, including from the U.S. Capitol building, the National Mall, Delaware Avenue, and 1st Street, NE. The renderings should also include the massing of any private development permitted in the USN zone.

Regarding further coordination:

Requests the applicant coordinate with the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority regarding the proposed improvements and new entry to the Metrorail station along 1st Street, NE.

Requests the applicant coordinate with District Department of Energy and Environment regarding stormwater management and other environmental issues related to the site.

Requests the applicant provide a phasing plan that describes the timing and implementation of each project component, where applicable, as part of the next review.

Julia A. Koster
Secretary to the National Capital Planning Commission

