



UNION STATION REDEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

Frequently Asked Questions about the Washington Union Station Expansion Project

What is the Washington Union Station Expansion Project?

The Washington Union Station Expansion Project (SEP) is a proposed major expansion and modernization of Washington Union Station (WUS) to meet anticipated growth in multimodal transportation demands by 2040. The SEP is planned to include many new public amenities for local and intercity travelers and other station users, including: new rail tracks and platforms, concourses, station entrances, intercity and tour/charter bus facilities, parking and pick-up/drop-off areas, rental car facilities, retail opportunities, and bicycle facilities, as well as pedestrian improvements around the station. At the same time, the project would preserve the historic grandeur of WUS. The SEP is distinct from other area projects, including development of the private air rights above portions of the tracks.

Who is the project team?

Union Station Redevelopment Corporation (USRC) and Amtrak are the project proponents of the SEP. The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) is the owner of the station, the garage, the air rights where the existing bus facility and garage are located, and the majority of the underground area, which will be used for the new concourses. USRC leases and manages the existing station and garage on behalf of FRA. These facilities are administered pursuant to long-term lease agreements. Amtrak operates rail service at the station. FRA is the lead federal agency conducting the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) review process for the SEP. FRA and the project proponents are supported by a team of talented consultants from Beyer Blinder Belle, VHB, Grimshaw, and Arup, who are recognized leaders in urban design, architecture, engineering, transportation planning, historic preservation, urban land use, and environmental review.

How long will the project take?

The NEPA process began in 2015. Following concept development, concept screening, concept refinement, and alternatives refinement, which were informed by engagement with various stakeholders, FRA identified (in coordination with the project proponents) six Action Alternatives, in addition to the No-Action Alternative. In fall 2019, a Preferred Alternative was identified. All of the Action Alternatives were analyzed in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) that was released in June 2020. The DEIS public comment period was extended to a total of 105 days and ends on September 28, 2020. It is anticipated that FRA will issue a Final EIS and its Record of Decision (ROD) in 2021. After the ROD, the project will proceed into design, which is expected to be an extended multi-year process. A new project design team will be assembled to begin the design and submit the project for review by the National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC) and the Commission of Fine Arts. Construction will begin upon receipt of final design approval and funding, with a projected completion date by 2040.



What are some improvements for people who walk or bike to the station?

Several improvements are proposed for pedestrian and bicycle access and safety at the station. The SEP would provide additional station entrances on First and Second Streets NE, as well as entrances near the train hall, bus facility, adjacent private development, and streetcar service on the H Street Bridge level. There are also plans to reorganize the pedestrian space at the station’s southwest entrance by eliminating some of the roadways. Greater bicycle storage capacity and reconstruction of the cycle track on First Street NE are also planned.

What is the plan for buses?

WUS is and will remain a popular destination for intercity and tour/charter buses due to the proximity to the National Mall, Capitol Hill, Metrorail, Metrobus, and train lines. The station provides access to a diverse range of travelers and visitors to and from the National Capital Region. WUS’s ability to accommodate large groups for major events and school trips and serve as a staging for civic events, all of which use the station’s dining and retail establishments, will continue to attract these large groups. The bus facility must be of a sufficient size to serve increasing bus ridership adequately and to minimize additional congestion on the streets surrounding the station. The Action Alternatives cover a range of options for the bus facility’s size and location, all of which are substantially smaller than the existing 61-slip bus facility. The minimum bus program has been determined to be 25 bus slips, based on collected data of existing uses and an active management approach for buses, which is outlined in the DEIS appendices. The Preferred Alternative provides the most accommodation for buses with 40 slips. Each of the Action Alternatives meets this minimum threshold, with varying flexibility to accommodate scheduling challenges during peak hours. Offsite options for a bus facility were studied; however, none were determined to be feasible or satisfied the project purpose and need. The bus facility location in the Preferred Alternative, which is largely within the federal air rights in the southwest portion of the study area, best advances the transportation planning objectives of the SEP and treats all users of the station equally regardless of race, class, social position, or income.

What is the plan for parking?

The parking program varies in size and location across the Action Alternatives, all of which substantially downsize the existing 2,450-space parking facility that would remain in the No-Action Alternative. The parking facility, which includes the rental car operations, would continue to serve as an amenity for the DMV region, intercity train and bus travelers not served by metro or local transit. The facility would also provide short-term parking for the retail, office space, and other activities within the historic station and on the federal property where the existing garage stands. The parking program is supported by existing objective data and reasonable projection modeling and would meet the intercity rail and bus ridership demand for the design year (2040). The program also meets USRC lease obligations for the many stores, restaurants, and offices within WUS. As the DEIS explains, the size of the parking facility is not a major contributor to vehicular traffic projections around the station. Moreover, it removes vehicles from the street network that might otherwise circulate or



park in surrounding communities. Further adjustments to the parking program may occur as the project progresses through the NEPA process and design.

What considerations affect the location of parking?

The DEIS alternatives include several locations for parking in and around the project site, including the No-Action Alternative that would keep the existing parking facility in its current place. No offsite parking location was found to be feasible, including sites owned by the Government Publishing Office (GPO), National Park Service, and the Architect of the Capitol. For example, the project team dismissed proposals to locate parking below Columbus Plaza. In addition, parking above the rail tracks in the supportive structures under the deck that underpins the development was studied, but was rejected due to certain safety, security, and design issues. An above grade facility could be adapted to other uses (such as pick-up/drop-off) much more readily than an underground facility, both during the design phases, as well as post-construction. Moreover, minimizing the extent of below grade construction could result in several benefits. Access to below grade parking facilities would be very limited from any direction and likely would strain already overburdened city streets and intersections. Below grade entrances from K Street NE, G Street NE, G Place NE, and Columbus Plaza could severely limit or eliminate public access. Potential impacts from excavation necessary for a below grade parking facility would disrupt Metrorail Red Line service and potentially impact several adjacent historic properties along these streets.

What is the relationship between Burnham Place and the SEP?

In 2006, FRA, USRC, Union Station Investco (the station developer), and Akridge (the private developer) finalized an agreement for the sale of air rights above the portion of the tracks north of the station not already occupied by the WUS garage. In 2012, Akridge and Amtrak developed a vision plan that included a private development called Burnham Place. While a starting point, the vision plan was not a master development plan and did not attempt to address or solve the multitude of functional and construction issues that are critical for a buildable WUS expansion project or Burnham Place. For example, it did not realistically locate key station-related elements and did not account for federal obligations, including NEPA. The SEP, which would be on federal property, and Burnham Place, which is planned to be on private property, are separate projects with independent utility, and the SEP triggers the NEPA process. Nevertheless, the SEP team has continued to meet and coordinate with the private developer over the course of the past five years, including over 30 meetings and workshops, and the DEIS reflects that input. Through the remainder of the NEPA process and future design of the SEP, the project team will continue to coordinate with all stakeholders, including the adjacent private developer.

Does the parking element in the SEP include parking for the Burnham Place development?

No. The parking for Akridge's private development is governed by the 2006 air rights agreement and zoning requirements. According to a recent presentation to the NCPC on May 7, 2020, Akridge intends to build 1,000 to 1,500 parking spaces for its Burnham Place development. That parking would be limited solely for use by the



private development and not be accessible to the general public. The location of Akridge parking is unknown since their parking would need to be placed above the deck, as safety, security, and design considerations would prevent Akridge's suggestion to place it sandwiched between the rail tracks and the Burnham Place deck.

Why does the overall layout of the Preferred Alternative look like today's station?

While there are some similarities to today's layout, there are some important differences. The bus and parking program have been reduced in overall size and take up a smaller footprint in order to: expand the train hall, reduce the visual impact on the historic station and First Street NE, avoid visual impacts from the private development and H Street NE by providing a buffer of commercial space, and allow for the construction of a central deck-level roadway by the adjacent private development. Concentration of station elements within the existing federal property also preserves a larger footprint for the Burnham Place development.

What causes traffic around the station?

Station vehicular traffic principally results from the amount of pick-up and drop-off activity by taxis, Uber, Lyft, and other for-hire transportation services that are directly related to the amount of intercity rail traffic in the station. As the DEIS explains, this demand and volume are expected to significantly increase, regardless if the SEP is built. The local roadway network and regional and local transit services are not under the jurisdiction of FRA or the project proponents and may require additional investments by the District and regional transit authorities. For its part, the SEP alternatives have multiple options for managing station-related traffic by utilizing internal roadway systems, employing ramps, and incorporating a one-way circulation strategy that was recommended by the District government. The SEP further addresses the growing spread of pick-up/drop-off traffic into the surrounding neighborhood by providing dedicated areas around the station, in addition to the front of the station, and by providing parking, which avoids some for-hire vehicle trips. Overall, the SEP aims to reduce traffic congestion, not just in the District, but in the region as well, with Union Station serving as a regional transit center. The project team continues to engage with agencies and local stakeholders to develop measures to manage traffic and divert it from nearby neighborhoods.

How has the SEP project team involved the public?

The project team has undertaken a substantial public outreach campaign for the SEP. FRA solicited and received numerous public comments that were incorporated into the scoping and preparation of the DEIS and the agency is now awaiting comments on the recently released DEIS. FRA has closely coordinated with other federal and District agencies, serving as cooperating agencies under NEPA, as well as myriad consulting parties in the National Historic Preservation Act Section 106 review process. Additionally, FRA has met frequently with the project proponents, station users, the intercity bus companies, historic preservation organizations, local community groups, elected officials, and other stakeholders, including Akridge. USRC has also made project information readily available at local public events and meetings and on our website and social media. These public outreach efforts will continue throughout the NEPA process and project design.