



MURIEL BOWSER
MAYOR

September 28, 2020

Mr. David Valenstein
Office of Railroad Policy and Development
USDOT Federal Railroad Administration (MS-20 RPD-10)
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Mr. Valenstein:

As the Mayor of the District of Columbia, I am pleased to support the comments of District of Columbia government agencies to the Federal Railroad Administration's (FRA) Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) published for comment on June 12, 2020 for the proposed Washington Union Station Expansion Project, in accordance with requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

Washington Union Station is a vital local, regional, and national transportation hub and cultural destination. A leading example of civic infrastructure on the East Coast, it has a significant history in the District of Columbia serving residents and visitors for over 110 years. Union Station has seen many iterations in its service to the District, as a bustling train hub, a national visitor center, a place of civic convening, an underinvested reminder of a previous time, an urban retail destination, and most recently as a multimodal transportation hub. Union Station's next century of life will be determined by ongoing activities, including preliminary design and analysis of its expansion, as part of this NEPA review process. As such, it is critical that this process not only improve rail and intermodal transportation, but that it also create a best-in-class urban anchor. This is an essential vision for ensuring that the rich legacy of Union Station continues to serve our residents and visitors in an iconic design of intermodal excellence and sustainability.

The Preferred Alternative presented by the FRA in the DEIS does not present this vision. Instead, it is built on outdated 20th century ideals and approaches, including an unnecessary emphasis on single-occupancy vehicles and their storage. These assumptions compromise the future of Union Station by:

- Underutilizing a uniquely important location in the District and nation,
- Negatively impacting the public realm,
- Detracting from preservation of the historic station, and
- Failing to generate meaningful revenue to support the Project's costs.

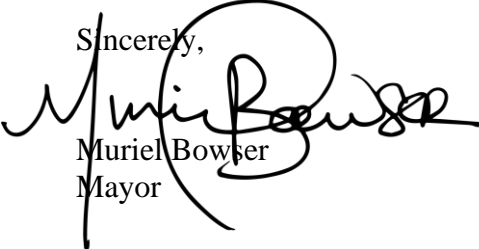
To be successful, the next chapter for Union Station must focus on its relationship to surrounding neighborhoods, its historic context, its long-term effects on—and contributions to—the District’s transportation systems, and its anchoring position in our nation’s capital and along the Eastern Seaboard. Comments from various District and federal agencies with broad and deep technical, policy, and design expertise (including the District of Columbia Department of Transportation, the District of Columbia Office of Planning, and the National Capital Planning Commission) unanimously support this assessment and provide numerous ways to change the project in order for it to be successful. At a high level, a Preferred Alternative for the expansion project must be developed that integrates:

- An intermodal transportation system (including pedestrian and bike connections, intercity bus, Metro access, taxicabs, and rideshare services) with a significantly reduced parking program,
- A well-designed land use program that aligns with private air rights development to both support transportation needs and create economic development opportunities through use of air rights that are proper for the urban context and can serve to financially support the Station,
- A dedicated pick-up/drop-off facility to support movement of taxicabs and rideshares supporting safe transportation to and from the Station,
- High-quality public space that is pedestrian-oriented and highlights the historical and civic character of the Station, and
- An overall design that intentionally and appropriately connects with the surrounding neighborhoods.

I urge FRA to accept and incorporate the comments from District and federal agencies into the Preferred Alternative in the DEIS. As currently proposed in the DEIS, the Project falls far short of what District residents, visitors, workers, and other stakeholders need and deserve.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Muriel Bowser
Mayor