



Submitted Electronically
July 6, 2022
Transmitted via email to info@ncpc.gov

Mr. Marcel Acosta
Executive Director
National Capital Planning Commission
401 9th Street NW, North Lobby, Suite 500
Washington, DC 20004

**RE: Washington Union Station Expansion Project – NCPC File Number 7746;
Public Testimony for the Federal City Council at July 7, 2022 NCPC meeting**

Good afternoon Mr. Acosta and Commission Members,

My name is Anthony Williams, and I am the CEO and Executive Director of the Federal City Council, and former Mayor of the District of Columbia from 1999-2007. I am pleased to have the opportunity today to express the Federal City Council's strong support for the Federal Rail Administration (FRA)'s revised concept for the Washington Union Station Expansion Project (SEP).

The Federal City Council (FC2) believes the expansion of Union Station represents the single greatest economic development and transportation opportunity for the District of Columbia and the region. Founded in 1954, the FC2 feels both a sense of organizational ownership and pride for Union Station given our instrumental role in realizing the redevelopment of the station in the 1980s, and through our service as one of five board members of the Union Station Redevelopment Corporation (USRC). FC2 has frequently championed some of the biggest, most complex, and transformative infrastructure and economic development projects in the District of Columbia's history. We know that the expansion of Union Station requires a bold vision to garner the full support of key stakeholders at the local, regional, and federal levels.

Today, the Federal City Council is thrilled to support the FRA's revised concept. The FC2 believes FRA's revised concept effectively responds to stakeholder concerns raised during the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) public comment period. In doing so, the SEP plan now embodies best practices in safety, accessibility, station operations, historic preservation, and urban design. We believe FRA's revised concept provides a bold vision for stakeholders to rally behind, and with it, finally get the political and financial underpinning required to realize the SEP. **Specifically, the FC2 supports the following key changes addressed by the FRA in their revised concept, including:**

- 1) Right-sized, optimally located parking facilities.** The revised concept significantly reduces the proposed station parking and rental car facility size, and shifts the parking facility underground, beneath the rail concourse level. The FC2 is pleased that these changes to the parking facility follow the District Government's recommendations and we agree with this rightsizing given recent trends and traveler preferences.

- 2) **A centrally located, world-class bus facility.** The revised concept now incorporates a high-capacity, intercity and charter bus facility that is centrally located. In addition, it provides an attractive and safe waiting and boarding experience that is fully integrated with station amenities. By reconfiguring the bus facility to be accessible from both the new Train Hall and air rights development level, the revised concept ensures that all riders, regardless of which mode they are using for their trip, will be treated with a first-class customer experience at the updated Union Station. The plan also efficiently connects bus passengers to Metrorail, Metrobus, DC Streetcar, taxis, bike share, and other non-auto services on-site to promote multimodal travel connections. The FC2 appreciates the work done by USRC staff to coordinate closely with a wide variety of bus carriers and the District Department of Transportation (DDOT) during the past year, and appreciates that the FRA has incorporated feedback from these stakeholders into the revised plan for the bus facility.

- 3) **Below-grade Pick-up/drop-off (PUDO) facility, and new, dedicated space and programming for optimal PUDO management.** Shifting the majority of PUDO activity to the parking facilities below-grade, and creating new dedicated PUDO operations at Columbus Circle and the Train Hall, has significant benefits. The revised concept's underground facility provides for dynamic management for PUDOs – allowing for the spacing of vehicles by provider or destination to handle peak demands -- making it easier for passengers to get home when multiple buses or trains arrive at the same time. Mandating PUDO activity to dedicated PUDO facilities alleviates conflicts with bicyclists and pedestrians and reduces congestion on the roads surrounding the train station. Rail and bus passengers will have more direct access points from dedicated PUDO locations and be able to access their destinations more quickly within the new train hall and air rights development.

- 4) **Dedicated, connected bicyclist and pedestrian infrastructure and facilities.** The plan reimagines the station's existing east and west vehicle ramps as pedestrian and bicycle routes with only occasional station vehicle uses. The FRA's incorporation of the greenway and maintaining protected multimodal connections around the station is a big win for stakeholders. This means people who walk, roll, and bike will now have fully protected, connected routes to easily access both the lower First and Second Street NE levels, Columbus Circle, H Street Bridge, and the future air rights development. The new project vision significantly improves safety, access, and connectivity around, and adjacent to the station. The improved experience around the station, as well as enhanced facilities for storage and access to the station for bicyclists and micromobility users, will encourage increased multimodal travel to and from the station.

- 5) **High-quality urban design.** The FC2 appreciates the federal government's embrace of best-class urban design practices, and we support the FRA's revised concept marrying the preservation of the historic hall with a world-class transit hub. The new project vision ensures that the federal government and air rights developer can now work together to maximize the benefits of the real estate above the rail yard. This approach now holds enormous potential for public and private spaces that can fill important needs such as parks, public spaces, and connections to the surrounding community, reinforcing the importance and prominence of the station in its broader neighborhood context.

As a stakeholder who has supported this project during the entire environmental review process, the FC2 wants to reiterate our steadfast support for this project. Without more frequent, affordable, and reliable rail options, our congested roadways will continue to pollute our region and disconnect hundreds of thousands of people from opportunity simply because they cannot afford to own a car. Ability to expand capacity for transit and move people in an environmentally sustainable way for the next century is critical to combat the climate crisis.

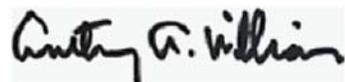
Our rail network is a system and is only as strong as its weakest link. Union Station's rail infrastructure is the same aging, rusted and in many cases failing infrastructure as Maryland's Frederick Douglass (formerly B+P) Tunnel or Virginia's Long Bridge. From Richmond to Baltimore, and Raleigh to Boston, Union Station's transformation is the missing link in our region's growing commuter rail service, and in our nation's passenger rail network. The SEP is essential for realizing Amtrak's vision of a larger rail network, expanding capacity and connecting the Northeast Corridor with the growing Southeast Corridor. The SEP will fix tracks and rail infrastructure in the 25 acres of railyard and facilities behind Union Station in the first modernization since their construction in 1907. The SEP will finally make Union Station's platforms and facilities ADA compliant and in doing so, enhance access and use for people of all ages and abilities.

The FC2 is pleased to hear of the collective support the new project vision has received from stakeholders thus far. We are also encouraged to see private, public, local and federal entities working together effectively toward a common goal. We believe it signals a strong road ahead for the SEP. The strong, diverse support for the revised DEIS from stakeholders and the public will facilitate the swift completion of the environmental review process and position the SEP for available federal funding opportunities.

We are grateful to NCPD for hearing stakeholders at all levels of the process and we look forward to our continued close collaboration with FRA on this critical, transformational project.

I look forward to answering any questions you may have and thank you again for the opportunity to provide comment today.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Anthony A. Williams". The signature is written in a cursive style and is placed on a light-colored rectangular background.

Anthony A. Williams
CEO and Executive Director
Federal City Council