



Testimony before the Transportation & Infrastructure Committee
Subcommittee on Economic Development, Public Buildings & Emergency Management
by Thomas Wilbur
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Madame Chairwoman and members of the Committee, my name is Tom Wilbur and I am a Senior Vice President with Akridge, the Washington, DC-based company that purchased the air rights adjacent to Union Station above the rail yards for development. Thank you very much for this opportunity to discuss our plans and ideas for this “crown jewel” in the nation’s inventory of grand historic buildings.

Today, I will provide an update on our project and describe some of the exciting improvements for the station and adjacent areas we are studying.

However, let me begin by expressing our enthusiasm and commitment to the long-term success of Union Station. As a local development firm with more than 30 years of experience here, we have participated in the redevelopment of the City. From The Homer Building, which we completed in 1990, to Gallery Place in 2003 and now the Southeast, Southwest and Northeast quadrants where we have projects in the pipeline totaling more than seven million square feet, we have seen the District of Columbia become a world class city—a place with outstanding architecture and mixed-use, 24/7 neighborhoods rivaling any major city in the world. Our company’s commitment to the civic, cultural and environmental health of our City is long-standing. In fact, our firm’s founder, Chip Akridge, regrets that he is unable to be here today, but commitments in his capacity as Chairman of the Trust for the National Mall have taken him to the west coast.

Union Station is a unique resource which is representative of the renaissance of Washington, D.C.. Because it is located at the intersection of the Central Business District, Capitol Hill, the Capitol Complex and emerging NoMa and Near Northeast neighborhoods, our development, called Burnham Place, and Union Station serve as critical anchors for the development of the eastern portion of downtown Washington.

Union Station is the entry to the city for every walk of life. From the Wall Street banker arriving from New York to the legislator working on Capitol Hill; The Metro-rider from Silver Spring, tourist from Phoenix, commuter from Baltimore or student riding from Gallaudet by bicycle – all of these people converge at and rely upon Union Station.

Our project, named after Daniel Burnham, the architect who designed Union Station, provides an opportunity to reclaim the property over the tracks—currently a void which divides several important neighborhoods—and turn it into another great, mixed use neighborhood bringing vibrant activity and economic benefits to the City. As a model, think of the Park Avenue air rights development at Grand Central Station in New York.

- A new emergency evacuation roadway between Columbus Circle and H Street
- The creation of a facility to accommodate Greyhound Buses
- A northern extension of the Metro tunnel pedestrian walkway to H Street
- A pedestrian connection between NoMa and Burnham Place near First and Eye Streets NE
- And, expanded parking facilities for tour and commuter buses

Executing many of these ambitious ideas will require intensive collaboration and support from the stakeholders who have a vested interest in the operation and future of the station. Akridge is glad to have Amtrak, WMATA, MARC, VRE, DDOT, USRC, the Ashkenazy Acquisition Corporation and many others as key allies in this process, and we look forward to continuing these partnerships to study and execute these important projects.

Thank you once again for this opportunity. That concludes my remarks, and I would be glad to answer any questions the Committee might have.