TESTIMONY

OF

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BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, PUBLIC BUILDINGS AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

OF THE

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

WEDNESDAY, JULY 22, 2009
2:00 P.M.

2167 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

Good afternoon, Madam Chair, I am Steve Alleman, Amtrak's General Superintendent responsible for all rail operations at Washington Union Station. Thank you for the invitation to testify. Amtrak has its monthly board meeting today, so because of this conflict, our Board Chair, Mr. Tom Carper, and our CEO, Mr. Joe Boardman, are unfortunately unable to attend. They asked me to express their regrets, and to thank you on their behalf for your longstanding record of support for the station.

Union Station is Amtrak's second busiest station (in terms of annual ridership), and it sits at the point of convergence of three rail routes that connect Washington with destinations to the north and west, and one that runs across the Potomac River to connect the city to Virginia and the South. Above the station tracks is a bus deck that provides travelers with connections to both intercity and local bus services. These connections are very important to Mr. Boardman's vision of an interconnected rail system with complementary transportation services. Mr. Boardman has a lot of experience in the transit world, and he appreciates the need for close modal integration; it's the best way to provide travelers with a satisfactory range of transportation options. This belief is anchored in the knowledge that the network must provide the citizens of the District with transportation choices that will satisfy their needs.

There are currently several proposals to construct a bus station on the existing deck at Union Station. Greyhound would like to move its services to the deck, a move we would support. DCDOT is interested in expanding the facility as well, and I think it's a reasonable goal – the deck entrance at H Street is large enough for the volume of traffic.

Union Station handled 11,888 busses last year. A number of these services provide intermodal connections that make rail service convenient and effective. The larger issue of an intercity bus station is the subject of a study that's jointly funded by USRC and Greyhound; I understand that we can expect to see a report in August. The study will analyze the structural, ventilation, and water and sewage needs of these proposals, and the ability of our structure to accommodate them. The existing waiting areas and restroom facilities in the station are inadequate for Amtrak's daily clientele, to say nothing of the needs of an intercity bus station. While it doesn't address them specifically, we would hope that the study will begin a process to identify those needs, because there's not enough room in Union Station.

We expect that the train ridership trend will increase, and you can expect to see corresponding growth in demands on our facilities. Given the extraordinary demands that various users are making on this historic structure, Amtrak believes the appropriate course of action is a formal joint consultative process involving key stakeholders. This process needs to recognize Union Station's unique and irreplaceable role as DC's intermodal terminal, and to address growth needs for rail and the existing bus services. Once we have an idea of the engineering feasibility, a joint effort should undertake the necessary environmental studies to determine the impact and cost of major changes so that we could have a definite idea of what they will likely be. A consultative process would also allow us to bring in other neighboring stakeholders such as the NOMA Business Improvement District.

We are currently working with DC DOT and Union Station Redevelopment Corporation, as well as the other involved entities to determine the best way forward. USRC is an excellent forum for these discussions, since the USRC Board includes Amtrak, the city, and the Federal City Council, all of whom are present today and believe the Board is an appropriate forum for these discussions, and are interested in moving forward with a plan that is adaptive and reflective of the regional and national goals for intermodality and livable communities.

In closing, I suggest we begin formalizing the steps we need to take by:

- Identifying the funding we will need to develop plans,
- Assessing the impacts of those plans,
- Determining costs, and
- Finding the funding to pay for feasible projects.

I am confident we can work together with all of the stakeholders on this, and I believe this collaborative effort will yield a vision for the 21st Century Union Station. That vision will help us to make the intermodal improvements that we need to truly realize a new and revitalized Union Station. I will be happy to answer any questions you have at this time.