Testimony of Gabe Klein, Director
District of Columbia Department of Transportation

Before the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
Subcommittee on Economic Development, Public Buildings
and Emergency Management

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Good morning Chairwoman Norton and members of the Subcommittee. I am Gabe Klein, Director of the District of Columbia Department of Transportation or DDOT. I thank you for the opportunity to join this discussion on "The Congressional Vision for a 21st Century Union Station: New Intermodal Uses and New Union Station Livable Community".

DDOT has been involved with Union Station for many years, beginning with our funding for the garage behind the station. My remarks today will largely focus on the results of the DRAFT Final Union Station Intermodal Transportation Center Feasibility Study and its recommendations for planned improvements. Before going further, I would like to express the District's gratitude and appreciation for the leadership role the Subcommittee and Chairwoman Norton has taken to support the development and improvement of Union Station.

Background

DDOT has been active in seeking improvement to Union Station for many years. When Union Station was renovated in the 1980s, the District of Columbia contributed $40 million toward the construction of the Union Station Garage. In the late 1990s, DDOT also provided Amtrak with $3 million for lead paint abatement and renovation of train platform canopies.

More recently, DDOT participated with the Union Station Redevelopment Corporation (USRC) and several other local and federal agencies in analyzing Columbus Circle and Columbus Plaza in front of Union Station. In 2000, a plan was developed to minimize conflicts between vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists. The plan entailed reconfiguring Columbus Circle and Columbus Plaza. In recent years, Amtrak has sought to add a system of bollards to this plan. This has resulted in considerable back-and-forth between the National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC) and the Commission on Fine Arts (CFA). In June, both agencies agreed on the bollard design. DDOT is now incorporating their latest guidance into the scope of work so that a solicitation for construction bids can go out in September. A new bike station, which was envisioned as part of the Columbus Circle reconfiguration, has been able to proceed on its own and DDOT expects the bicycle station to open near the end of September.

In 2003, DDOT supported Union Station's effort to expand its garage – provided that Union Station remove sedan parking from the bus deck. This position expressed DDOT's support for increased transit, charter, and intercity bus use at Union Staiton. The garage has been expanded and DDOT reconfigured the H St Bridge median to accommodate additional bus traffic. The garage now holds 2,194 cars instead of 1,450 and the bus deck now has space for 98 buses instead of 65.

Today, Union Station is the premier intermodal transportation center in Washington, D.C. About 90,000 people utilize the station every day – about 32 million annually. As a transportation facility, people go there to access intercity passenger rail, commuter rail, transit (Metrorail, Metrobus and the DC Circulator), sightseeing buses, charter buses, intercity buses, rental cars, car-sharing vehicles, taxicabs, private autos and soon, bikesharing and bike storage.

ITC Feasibility Study

The Union Station Garage occupies only half of the air rights above the tracks immediately east of the Station. During the past decade, there has been considerable interest in developing the other half as well as air rights north of the H Street Bridge. The Akridge Companies acquired these air rights from the General Services Administration. Akridge proposed creating additional transportation-related facilities in association with their development of these air rights – and these proposed transportation facilities gave rise to the Intermodal Transportation Center funds appropriated by Congress. As an initial step, DDOT used some of these funds to undertake a feasibility study for these facilities.

Over the past year, DDOT has been analyzing the feasibility of new transportation facilities as part of the proposed new development in and around Union Station. Our analysis examines these new facilities' impacts on Union Station's existing facilities and services, and on its ability to accommodate future passenger rail, public transit and tourism growth. Data collection for the feasibility study began in February 2008 and represents the most comprehensive analysis to date of the myriad transportation alternatives at Union Station. The overarching purpose was to investigate the feasibility of the development, design and construction of new intermodal transportation facilities as part of the proposed Burnham Place commercial and residential development. The study area of the project encompasses an approximately 20-square block site bounded by M Street to the north; 3rd Street to the east; Massachusetts Avenue to the south; and North Capitol Street to the west and includes residential, commercial and federal stakeholders such as the Capitol Complex, and the neighborhoods of Capitol Hill, NoMa, Stanton Park, Sursum Corda and Near Northeast.

Needs Assessment & Framework Goals

After studying the existing demand for the multiple modes of transport at Union Station, we identified several key needs paramount to the goal of making Union Station a world-class, multi-modal center: 1.) Improved modal connections; 2.) Increased rail and bus capacity; and 3.) Enhanced pedestrian circulation and wayfinding.

We developed the following framework goals to guide the development of the improvements proposed in the Union Station ITC Feasibility Study and evaluated each recommendation on its ability to meet the aforementioned identified needs, and support the development of a comprehensive, efficient and accessible multi-modal station at Union Station:

Framework Goals

1. ***Maintain and enhance Union Station as a multi-modal transportation hub;***
2. ***Promote Union Station as a fluid pedestrian environment that supports comprehensive connectivity;***
3. ***Ensure enhanced safety and security in and around the station; and***
4. ***Respect the architecture, cultural, and regional significance of the historic station.***

Study Recommendations

There are over 22 recommended improvements outlined in the DRAFT FINAL Union Station ITC Feasibility Study which cover five areas: Columbus Plaza; the Train Concourse Area; First Street, NE; H Street, NE; and the Parking Garage and Tracks Area.

For the purposes of this testimony, I would like to focus on three of the study's recommended improvements that are of particular interest to this body, and also maximize and leverage

investments recently made by several Union Station stakeholders including The Congress of the United States, Amtrak, USRC and the District of Columbia Department of Transportation:

1.) Construction of an inter-city bus station on the Union Station parking deck;

2.) Completion of the WMATA pedestrian tunnel to 1st Street and vertical connections to H Street;

3.) Expansion of Train Concourse Areas including improved wayfinding signage.

These and the other recommended improvements are necessary to support the proposed growth in and around Union Station to the year 2050.

Currently DDOT is working with Greyhound, USRC and Akridge to identify the optimal location for an inter-city bus facility that will provide the necessary access and capacity for inter-city bus operations on the existing Union Station parking deck. We will continue to keep you abreast of these developments as they are on-going. An essential element in creating an inter-city bus terminal on the Union Station parking deck is determining the structural integrity of the existing parking deck to support passenger facilities associated with intercity bus service. USRC has begun this analysis and the findings will influence decisions regarding the type of inter-city facility that can be constructed.

In addition, care must be taken to ensure operational compatibility between intercity bus services and the transit services, sightseeing services and charter bus parking that must also share this space. Another challenge is to determine how Greyhound and other carriers can share an inter-city bus terminal while paying their fair share for the terminal's construction, operation and maintenance.

DDOT envisions a future inter-city bus facility providing a new "front-door" to Union Station from an enlivened H Street with vertical pedestrian access from Metrorail occurring via the extension of the WMATA pedestrian tunnel from the northern Metrorail mezzanine to 1st Street, NE beneath the H Street overpass. Given the existing pedestrian conflicts at the Northern Metrorail access and egress points, a new entrance at 1st Street, NE will provide residents, employees and visitors to NoMa with direct, unencumbered access to Union Station. We are currently working with WMATA to develop conceptual designs for the completion of this pedestrian tunnel and reconfiguration of the existing 1st Street entrance to facilitate improved pedestrian circulation between commuter rail, Metrorail and inter-city rail passengers. The cost estimates for these pedestrian improvements are approximately $9 million.

Union Station serves over 5 million inter-city rail passengers annually who access the station via Metrorail, taxi, buses, walking, and bicycle. That figure is expected to increase significantly as planned improvements to Amtrak's Northeast Corridor and the Southeast High Speed Rail Corridor through Virginia and North Carolina are implemented over the next five to ten years and MARC and VRE expand their commuter services. The existing waiting areas and bathrooms at Union Station must be expanded to support the growth of inter-city and commuter rail travel. Expansion of the East-West concourse to the North, expansion of the Mezzanine Level and expansion of the North Concourse will provide more waiting areas and facilitate improved passenger circulation between regional and commuter rail passengers. The cost estimates for the phased improvements to these concourse and mezzanine areas are approximately $20 million.

These improvements are but a small breakout of the detailed recommendations for improvements to Union Station provided in the Intermodal Transportation Feasibility Study. DDOT will work cooperatively with all of Union Station's stakeholders to review each of the

recommendations and design concepts developed under the ITC Feasibility Study to ensure a sound implementation plan to improve Union Station. DDOT has already submitted pre-applications to the United States Department of Transportation for economic stimulus grants to assist with the waiting area enhancements and the reconfiguration of the existing Metrorail connection.

Timeline

In August, the Community Leaders Committee and the Technical Advisory Committee will receive copies of the DRAFT Final Union Station ITC Feasibility Study for review and comment. Upon receiving their comments and recommendations the DRAFT will be finalized and presented to the public in late September. We will also have the results of the structural analysis study of the parking garage and its ability to support an intercity bus terminal facility.

Conclusion

DDOT is proud to be one of the partners that have helped make Union Station one of the premier intermodal transportation centers in the country. We are grateful for your leadership and assistance in providing funding that makes continued improvements possible. With your help, we will allow even more people to find safe, convenient and affordable ways to come to the Nation's Capital and access its many attractions. Thank you for inviting me to testify. I am happy to answer any questions.