



U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure

James L. Oberstar
Chairman

Washington, DC 20515

John L. Mica
Ranking Republican Member

David Heysfeld, Chief of Staff
Ward W. McCarragher, Chief Counsel

July 18, 2008

James W. Coon II, Republican Chief of Staff

SUMMARY OF SUBJECT MATTER

TO: Members of the Subcommittee on Economic Development, Public Buildings, and Emergency Management

FROM: Subcommittee on Economic Development, Public Buildings, and Emergency Management Staff

SUBJECT: Hearing on "Union Station: A Comprehensive Look at the Private Management, the Public Space, and the Intermodal Spaces Present and Future"

PURPOSE OF THE HEARING

On Tuesday, July 22, 2008 at 10:00 a.m., in room 2167 Rayburn House Office Building, the Subcommittee on Economic Development, Public Buildings, and Emergency Management will examine the private management of Union Station, current intermodal transportation plans, as well as future intermodal transportation plans.

BACKGROUND

Union Station, a monumental gateway structure, was built on its current location as a result of a recommendation from the 1901 McMillen Commission Report. It was designed by the eminent architect Daniel H. Burnham and was completed in 1907. Burnham designed the building in the Beaux Arts style favored by himself and other proponents of the turn-of-the-century "City Beautiful" movement. The federally owned building is seven hundred and sixty feet in length. The ceilings are ninety five feet high. The exterior is adorned with sculptures and three Romanesque archways. The commercially available space is approximately 213,000 square feet. Currently there are 130 shops in the building and approximately 90,000 persons pass through the building on a daily basis. The Union Station METRO stop is the busiest stop on the metro line.

Public Law 97-125, (S. 1192) "The Union Station Redevelopment Act of 1981," amended the National Visitor Center Facilities Act of 1968 to provide for the rehabilitation and completion of Union Station in Washington D.C. The house companion bill, H.R. 3927, was reported by the then

Public Works and Transportation Committee, Subcommittee on Public Buildings and Grounds, but failed to pass the House.

The senate bill shifted the responsibility for the Union Station project from the Department of Interior to the Department of Transportation. The bill authorized a one year study of the building's structure, and rail handling functions. Most importantly the study was to examine "the potential for privately financed commercial development and use". (Hearing Report 97-86 Dec 16, 1982, page 1). The bill further authorized the Secretary of Transportation to select a developer through competitive process for the commercial development of the building, and authorized the completion of the parking garage. The bill also authorized the Secretary of Transportation to buy the property from Washington Terminal Company and restore the building to its primary use of passenger transportation with less of an emphasis on use of the facility as a visitor center. Washington Terminal Company had first offered to sell the building to the federal government in 1958 but the offer was rejected. In order to save the building from demolition, in 1964 the building was designated a District of Columbia landmark.

The Department of Transportation established the Union Station Redevelopment Corporation (USRC), as a wholly owned government corporation, to meet the obligations of the legislation regarding development and the stated goal of "commercial development of the Union Station complex that will, to the extent possible, financially support the continued operation and maintenance of such complex". According to the charter the corporation's principal office shall be in the District of Columbia.

According to Senate Report 97-269, the idea of an intermodal center dates back to the mid 1960's to a 1967 report issued by the National Capitol Planning Commission (NCPC) which envisioned a station combining bus, intercity, and intracity rail components with local transportation modes. Further, the senate bill envisioned approximately 300,000 square feet dedicated to intermodal activities.

PRIOR LEGISLATIVE AND OVERSIGHT ACTIVITY

The Subcommittee has not held an oversight hearing specifically focused on Union Station. However, the subcommittee held two hearings, June 8, 2007 "What Visitors Can Expect at the Capitol Visitor Center: Transportation, Access, Security, and Visuals" and April 1, 2008, "A Growing Capitol Complex and Visitor Center: Needs for Transportation, Security, Greening, Energy, and Maintenance" at which intermodal plans at Union Station were explored.

On March 20, 2008, Chairman Oberstar, Ranking Member Mica, and Subcommittee Chair Norton sent a letter to Union Station Redevelopment Corporation President David Ball, expressing support for efforts to relocate the Washington, DC intercity bus terminal to Union Station.

On May 3, 1979, H.R. 3927 a bill to amend the National Visitor Center Facilities Act of 1968 was introduced. The bill failed to pass the House. On December 16, 1982 the Subcommittee on Buildings and Grounds held a hearing on the implementation of P.L. 97-125, The Union Station Redevelopment Act of 1981.

WITNESSES

David Ball

President

Union Station Redevelopment Corporation

Bryant Chambers

Assistant General Manager

Jones Lang LaSalle, Inc.

David Leach

President and Chief Executive Officer

Greyhound Lines, Inc.

Daniel Levy

Counsel from Kriss and Feuerstein L.L.P

Ashkenazy Acquisition Corporation

Erin McCann

Private Photographer

Emeka Moneme

Director

District Department of Transportation

Thomas Wilbur

Senior Vice President

Akridge Corporation