

A RESOLUTION

23-509

IN THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

September 22, 2020

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, That this resolution may be cited as the “Sense of the Council Regarding the Union Station Expansion Project Resolution of 2020”.

Sec. 2. The Council finds that:

(1) Union Station, which is the largest transit hub in the District and the second busiest Amtrak station in the country, sees as many as 100,000 passengers each day and is a national landmark situated in a growing neighborhood. It serves District residents, commuters, business travelers, and tourists traveling on Metrorail, Metrobus, Circulator, intercity buses, regional and national train lines, bicycles, and foot.

(2) In June 2020, the Federal Railroad Administration (“FRA”) issued a draft environmental impact statement (“DEIS”) for the proposed Union Station Expansion Project that intends to expand and modernize Union Station’s multimodal transportation facilities to meet current and future transportation needs in the District and Amtrak’s Northeast Corridor.

(3) The project includes a major realignment and renovation of the existing train tracks, renovations to the existing building, a new rail terminal, a new parking garage, and a new bus facility. The project is proposed by the Union Station Redevelopment Corporation (“USRC”), which manages and operates Union Station under a long-term lease from FRA and Amtrak. FRA is the lead agency preparing the Environmental Impact Statement detailing design alternatives for the Federal government.

(4) Mixed-use development adjacent to Union Station has the potential to transform the surrounding neighborhood, providing office, residential, and retail uses, in addition to new public spaces. In order for any such development to be compatible with the surrounding neighborhood, it is essential that all aspects of the Union Station redevelopment be done in concert with local planning efforts and best practices.

(5) The DEIS released by FRA falls short of the needs of District residents, workers, visitors, and project stakeholders, and does not take into account comments by the National Capital Planning Commission, the District of Columbia Office of Planning, members of the Council, and the impacted Advisory Neighborhood Commission (“ANC”). Major changes

are needed to the DEIS. Any preferred alternative identified in a final environmental impact statement must reflect both the needs of FRA and sound urban design principles.

(6) The preferred design alternative that the FRA identified in the DEIS proposes 1,600 parking spaces in a new Union Station garage, even though extensive analysis by the District of Columbia Office of Planning concluded that fewer than 300 spaces are actually needed. This conclusion has been supported by Federal planners at the National Capital Planning Commission (“NCPC”) as well as District residents, Advisory Neighborhood Commissions, adjacent landowners, and Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton. NCPC has reported that nearly two-thirds of the current parking spots are monthly parking contracts — that is, not needed for commuters, travelers, and shoppers coming to Union Station. Overparking this project ignores changing trends in this multimodal core, will have a negative effect on adjacent development, is counter to the trend to reduce parking at many other large urban stations in the Amtrak system, and will induce additional traffic in the neighborhood.

(7) ANC 6C, which includes Union Station, has repeatedly emphasized that “[a]s currently envisioned, the expanded Union Station would be surrounded by a snarl of cars and buses, creating a barrier to access for the residents of the surrounding neighborhoods.” In addition to creating a pedestrian-unfriendly environment at a dense transit hub, FRA’s preferred design ignores the place-making potential at this gateway to the District. The preferred design also frustrates the intent of the Council, which budgeted more than \$200 million to remake the adjoining pedestrian bridge at H Street, N.E., as a safe pedestrian crossing to the private development adjoining the federal site.

(8) The DEIS also does not adequately consider the placement and scale of the proposed parking garage, the impact of the proposed garage access points on multimodal circulation around the facility, and northern viewsheds impacted by the proposed garage. The expanded garage is predicated, in part, on preserving a legacy revenue stream for USRC that relies on parking fees as it has since 1981. This does not reflect the changing transportation dynamics of the past 40 years and assumes that USRC is incapable of reimagining its business model.

Sec. 3. It is the sense of the Council that:

(1) Multimodal transit options, including bus, rail, transit, rideshare, bicycle, and pedestrian access, must be prioritized over parking in the FRA’s environmental impact statement for the proposed Union Station Expansion Project;

(2) The Union Station Expansion Project and neighboring development must enhance the quality of life for those who live around Union Station and for those who come to work in or visit the city by considering input from neighbors about how to integrate the design into the neighborhood; and

(3) The FRA must reduce the size and scale of the proposed parking garage consistent with the District of Columbia Office of Planning’s projections.

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Sec. 4. The Council shall transmit a copy of this resolution to the Federal Railroad Administration (for inclusion in the record), the Union Station Redevelopment Corporation, the National Capital Planning Commission, and the District of Columbia Office of Planning.

Sec. 5. This resolution shall take effect immediately.