



UNION STATION MASTER PLAN STUDY



The Chicago Department of Transportation has begun a comprehensive study of issues related to Chicago's Union Station, the **Union Station Master Plan**.

Opened in 1925, Union Station is the third-busiest railroad terminal in the United States, serving over 120,000 daily arriving and departing passengers carried on over 300 trains. Union Station is owned by Amtrak, which operates 56 daily

intercity and long-distance passenger trains from the terminal. Metra, the region's commuter rail agency, is the station's most active user.

Continuing growth in both commuter rail service and Amtrak long distance and intercity passenger rail service, combined with the potential for future growth in high-speed intercity passenger rail, has compelled the City and affected railroads to evaluate future options for accommodating the growth in station traffic. The Union Station Master Plan will identify issues related to the existing terminal, and develop and evaluate proposals for addressing these issues in the short, medium, and long term. An overriding objective is to provide more capacity for both Metra and intercity rail service to meet future growth.

The existing configuration of the passenger and commuter concourse beneath a major high-rise office building makes it difficult for the terminal to accommodate future passenger growth, while the operational capacity for trains is constrained by the current number and size of platforms and track configuration. The study will evaluate the capacity of the existing concourse where most passenger facilities are located, the tracks serving train operations, and the platforms conveying commuters and longer-distance travelers to and from Chicago.

The study will also coordinate with Amtrak's initiatives to reinvigorate the currently under-utilized Great Hall area of the terminal.



The Central Area Action Plan adopted by the Chicago Plan Commission in 2009 established improvements in and around Union Station as one of the highest priorities for encouraging the growth of the Central Area. It also recommended specific enhancements in and around the terminal.

The future importance of Union Station as a major transportation hub has been further enhanced with the federal government's recent focus on improving intercity passenger rail infrastructure throughout the United States. This federal commitment has resulted in more than \$2 billion in grant funding to Illinois and other Midwestern states to enhance passenger rail routes serving Chicago, and significantly increases the prospects for future growth in passenger rail travel demand.

The Central Area Action Plan also recommended a West Loop Transportation Center (WLTC) concept as a possible alternative to provide capacity for future high-speed rail, and a new rapid transit line and busway in the area to the west of

the Chicago River. This area is expected to continue to grow as a major regional center of offices and retail. Envisioned beneath Clinton Street, the West Loop Transportation Center would provide multiple levels to accommodate additional Union Station intercity tracks, a future CTA rapid transit line, and/or busway facilities.



As part of the Union Station Master Plan study, the WLTC concept will be evaluated further alongside other alternatives – such as expanding the Union Station concourse and adding track and platform capacity within the current terminal area. The goal of the study is to recommend improvements that over time will allow Union Station not only to be a well functioning rail terminal, but also will enhance its stature as a civic asset for Chicago.

The study will be guided by a Technical Advisory Committee comprising representatives of the Chicago Department of Transportation (CDOT), the Department of Housing and Economic Development (DHED), Amtrak, Metra, the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT), the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), the Regional Transportation Authority (RTA), the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA), the Metropolitan Planning Council (MPC), and the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP). This committee will undertake a thorough review of operationally feasible alternatives for the terminal. In addition to addressing capacity issues at the terminal itself, connections to other transportation facilities in the area (such as CTA rail stations and bus stops, private shuttles, taxis and autos) will be evaluated.

A Civic Advisory Committee charged with coordinating input from civic and business leaders has also been formed and will be led by the Metropolitan Planning Council. The focus of this committee will be to review proposals for Union Station with an eye towards what improvements would most effectively help to make Union Station a catalyst for economic growth in Chicago's Central Area and the Chicago region as whole.

As the study progresses, more information will be posted on the CDOT website and the website of the Metropolitan Planning Council. Later in 2011-2012 we also intend to create a website dedicated to the study and hold a project open house to solicit input from the general public about the issues to be addressed in the study and ideas for improvements.

In the meantime, if you have questions about the study or wish to comment, please email jeffrey.sriver@cityofchicago.org.

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