MPC Roundtable

Place Stations:
Creating Fun and Functional Transit Centers

March 14, 2012
Central Area ACTION Plan (2009)

• Chicago’s Central Area is the primary employment center of the region
• Trips into and within the Central Area have increased significantly
  – New cultural and educational facilities
  – Unprecedented residential growth
Central Area ACTION Plan (2009)

• Transit travel to, from, and within the Central Area continues to grow
  – CTA Rail and Bus
  – Metra Commuter Rail
  – Amtrak Intercity Passenger Rail

• Union Station is the busiest transit hub in the Central Area
  – Busiest Metra station; more than 100,000 boardings & alightings per weekday
  – Third busiest Amtrak station; nearly 10,000 boardings & alightings per day
Central Area ACTION Plan (2009)

- Union Station Master Plan addresses all CAAP “Goals and Needs”:
  - Improve transit in the Central Area
    - Serve the growth in trips
    - Improve service coverage & options
  - Increase regional transit capacity
  - Improve pedestrian environment
  - Manage traffic circulation
  - Encourage alternative modes
    - Bicycles
    - Water taxis
  - Improve national & international connections
    - Accommodate Midwest high-speed rail
    - Improve access to airports
Central Area ACTION Plan (2009)

• Twelve of the Plan’s 26 recommended transportation projects involve Union Station:
  – Union Station Access/Intermodal Upgrades
  – Union Station Capacity/Facility Upgrades
  – Expand/Upgrade Midwest High-Speed Rail
  – Transit/Passenger Information Systems
  – East-West Transitway
  – Clinton Transitway
  – West Loop Bicycle Station
  – Expand Water Taxi Service
  – CREATE Program
  – Traffic Management
  – Clinton Subway
  – West Loop Transportation Center
Union Station History

- The last of Chicago’s historic stations; now owned by Amtrak
- Designed primarily to serve long distance trains, including large amounts of mail and express traffic
- Trains approach from north and south but do not pass through

Original Concourse Building, demolished 1968
Chuckman Collection

The original concourse interior featured open space
Univ. of AZ Library/Fred Harvey Collection

The original station handled voluminous mail and express packages

During World War II 100,000 passengers per day passed through Chicago's Union Station
Street Access issues

- Conflicts between:
  - Taxis
  - Buses
  - Automobiles
  - Shuttles
  - Pedestrians
  - Bicycles

Station Congestion Issues

Concourse Level during morning rush hour
Track/Platform Issues

• Existing track layout limits both train and passenger capacity
  – Narrow, obstructed platforms cause overcrowding
  – Single point of access to southern platforms
  – Irregular platform lengths
  – Limited ability to operate trains through the station
High Speed Rail / Improved Intercity Passenger Rail

Midwest Regional Rail Initiative

• A 3,000 mile network of fast, frequent intercity trains
• Corridors with improvements currently funded include:
  – Chicago-Bloomington/Normal-Springfield-St Louis
  – Chicago-Kalamazoo-Battle Creek-Ann Arbor-Detroit
  – Chicago-Milwaukee
  – Chicago-Rockford-Dubuque
  – Chicago-Quad Cities
Many Prior Ideas, But Most With Limited Analysis

Original Daniel Burnham proposal for Union Station with office tower (c. 1914)

Winner of Chicago’s Union Station 2020 Design Competition (2009)

Helmut Jahn proposal for separate high speed rail station east of old Post Office (2010)

West Loop Transportation Center proposal (2002)

Solomon Cordwell Buenz proposal (2011)
Goals of This Master Plan Study

1. Provide sufficient capacity for significant increases in Metra and intercity ridership
   - estimated 40% increase in trains by 2040
   - possible significant further increases

2. Make the terminal more inviting for passengers

3. Provide more direct and convenient transfers to buses, CTA trains, taxis, shuttles, pick-up/drop-off

4. Create a terminal that is vibrant, a civic asset, and a catalyst for growth in the West Loop and region
Short Term Ideas

- Two upcoming CDOT projects can improve local street traffic flow and curb access:
  - Central Area East-West Bus Rapid Transit project (improved bus lanes)
  - Union Station Transportation Center (off-street bus terminal)
Medium Term Ideas

• Convert unused baggage platforms for commuter use
• Convert unused mail platform for passenger/high-speed train use
• Enhance existing passenger station facilities to improve flow
• Rebuild Canal Street viaduct in a manner that improves street access
Long Term/Visionary Ideas

• Possible new station tracks and platforms in subway under Clinton or Canal Streets

• Coordinate larger scale station expansion/enhancement with possible future land development
“Placemaking” opportunities

• Transform the historic station into an iconic destination
  – Economic engine that draws people for dining, shopping, and other activities
  – Easy connections to other transit modes

• Create a new intercity rail station

• Improve riverfront and nearby blocks
  – Input from passengers, workers, and residents

Washington, D.C. Union Station
Guiding Examples

Denver Union Station

Atlanta Downtown Multi-Modal Passenger Terminal

San Francisco Transbay Transit Center
Union Station Development Context

• The 2009 Central Area Action Plan built on the 2003 Central Area Plan

  – The 2003 plan expanded “Downtown Core” zoning to the area west of the Chicago River
  – Clinton/Canal are to be high density office corridors (limited residential in this area)
  – This leverages existing and future expanded transportation access in this area
High development densities and a strong preference for job-generating uses should accompany the substantial new investment in West Loop transportation projects.
Union Station Development Context

• Several recent announcements of corporate relocations to the Union Station area:
  – “...many companies have said that their moves are tied to the recruitment of workers who want to live and work in the city.”  -Chicago Tribune, Dec 12, 2011

• New Sara Lee meats division
  – “…a downtown location will provide...an environment that will be energetic, foster breakthrough thinking, create revolutionary products, offer fresh perspectives and own the market.”  -Marcel Smits, CEO

• DeVry Inc. administrative office
  – A new office at 330 S. Riverside Plaza will handle online student services, admissions, and financial aid. It will employ about 150 people initially, with potential to increase to 1,000 workers within a few years.
Street-Level Opportunities

• 222 S Riverside Plaza
  – Above Union Station Passenger Concourse
  – 35 stories, built in 1971
  – 1,184,432 square feet

• 300 S Riverside Plaza
  – Across street from Passenger Concourse
  – Above south platforms
  – 22 stories, built in 1983
  – 1,048,357 square feet
Redevelopment Opportunities

- Old Post Office
  - Adjacent to Union Station facilities
  - Above south tracks and platforms
Redevelopment Opportunities

• Union Station Headhouse
  – December 2010 Feasibility Report:
    • Retail uses and special events on Great Hall and Canal Street Levels
    • Lower floors – New First Class Lounge, Amtrak Control Center & Amtrak regional offices
    • Upper floors – hotel or possibly rental housing
Redevelopment Opportunities

• Amtrak Parking Garage Block
  – Amtrak & City owned property
    • Amtrak owns the garage; City to acquire north end of block for an off-street bus terminal
  – Entire Block (85,665 SF) represents a significant future redevelopment opportunity
Redevelopment Opportunities

• Western half of 300 S Riverside Block
  – PD 27 amended in 1985 to allow a second phase:
    • 47 story building
    • 1.2 million square feet of rentable area
Project Schedule & Next Steps

• Develop simulation models to evaluate technical alternatives for:
  – Street access improvements
  – Tracks/platform improvements
  – Station configuration improvements

• Identify agencies that will:
  – Seek full funding for individual projects
  – Lead each project through the planning, environmental review, detailed design, and construction processes
  – Explore Public/Private Partnership Opportunities

• Continued public outreach for each project
Thank You

Please visit

www.UnionStationMP.org