

AGENDA # 1

City of Madison, Wisconsin

REPORT OF: URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION	PRESENTED: September 29, 2010
TITLE: 101 East Wilson Street – PUD(GDP-SIP), Passenger Rail Station. 6 th Ald. Dist. (20052)	REFERRED: REREFERRED: REPORTED BACK:
AUTHOR: Alan J. Martin, Secretary	ADOPTED: POF:
DATED: September 29, 2010	ID NUMBER:

Members present were: Marsha Rummel, Mark Smith, Dawn O’Kroley, Todd Barnett, Richard Slayton, John Harrington, R. Richard Wagner, Melissa Huggins and Jay Handy.

SUMMARY:

At its meeting of September 29, 2010, the Urban Design Commission **RECEIVED AN INFORMATIONAL PRESENTATION** for a passenger rail station located at 101 East Wilson Street. Appearing on behalf of the project were Donna Brown, Carrie Cooper, both representing the DOT; Charlie Webb; Greg Uhen and Steve Holzhauser, representing Eppstein Uhen Architects; Susan Schmitz, representing DMI; and Keith Plasterer. Appearing neither in support nor opposition were Gary Werner, and Robbie Webber. Cooper presented background information on the rail station, including Federal money, possible station locations in Madison, Watertown, Brookfield and Milwaukee; train traffic controllers, a train maintenance facility, additional train sets, and corridor upgrades. They would like to extend the service from Madison to Minneapolis. She stated Wisconsin was the only state to apply for the \$800 Million grant. They are currently doing environmental reviews, as well as design of the stations. Early next year the environmental assessment should be complete. In late 2011 or early 2012 construction of the station should begin, with service between Milwaukee-Madison to begin in early 2013. Uhen then presented graphics of the site of the DOA building, noting the constraints of the site: the first floor reuse to fulfill the program of all uses required, and the platform which is located at grade at the track level. The first floor level would include the entrance off of Wilson Street, seating areas, ticket kiosks, potential retail zones, toilet facilities, a restaurant for patrons and some administrative and storage space. The main premise of this floor would be a circulation corridor from the public way of Pinckney and Wilson Streets to the bridge that takes you to the platform. Any visitors going up to the DOA would have to go through a security area. The idea is that the entire first floor would be dedicated to the transportation center with some administrative offices on the second floor. Concept drawings showed what Wilson Street could look like but final design hasn’t been started yet. This would include a redo of the skin of the first and second floor, using that two-story base to replace the glass, add some canopy elements so it’s easily determined where the entrance is. They are also looking at some sort of vertical element at the corner of the building to denote the entrance as well. Working around to the platform they are taking into consideration how the new renovations would relate to Monona Terrace. Building materials for the platform are still undetermined, but they are looking at some form of stone or brick for some of the solid elements and largely a steel structure for the roof. There would be a connection from the structure to Monona Terrace. With regard to the design problem of getting patrons to the first floor to the platform, an escalator is a good way to move a lot of people vertically and allows for queuing inside the building.

Susan Schmitz of DMI spoke of a need to enhance the pedestrian and bicycle connections so it works better. She presented a handout prepared by members of DMI's committees (a group of downtown professionals) with some verbal suggestions, and some sketches with improvements to the interior. DMI would ask that the Commission consider these so this can be a station that works not only for the people using the high speed, but the pedestrians and bicyclists as well.

Gary Werner spoke to the excitement of the progress on this project. He has made suggestions to the DOT about partnering with the City of Madison in the reconstruction of the Doty Street parking ramp and building into that structure the City bus and passenger drop-off with the concept of having a tunnel to get people from that location to the platform. He asked if that idea has been considered at all. He expressed his concerns about parking, access for bicycles, access for buses and he feels these two structures could be integrated to solve these problems.

Keith Plasterer spoke to his concern of a lack of baggage check system in the plans.

- Brown responded that plans for checked baggage are currently in the works.

Robbie Webber expressed concern with lack of an elevator and walkway on the south side of John Nolen Drive. She would encourage the team to not put the buses in the vehicle corridor. She emphasized the importance of the entrance at John Nolen Drive. She would also like the walkway to be covered to protect people from the elements.

Comments and questions from the Commission were as follows:

- Is it part of your purview to look at the drop-off and other parts of the passenger crossings, etc.?
 - We meet with City Traffic and Parking Committee every two weeks. We've been discussing ways to pick-up and drop-off, including drawings. We also realize this has to take into consideration the security issues so it has to be very highly organized. We have some interesting design constraints here, but we all share your same concerns here.
- There's a sense of place in those older train stations and this to me feels very generic. Does this reflect how train stations are designed now and how people move in and around them? Is there an opportunity for more place-making?
 - There is a balcony on the outside which could continue to be an outdoor space. That can remain and be improved.
- Why do we need two tracks?
 - Two types of trains: freight trains and passenger rail.
 - There will be queuing either in the first floor level or downstairs, but no one goes to the platform until they're ready to board. The platform itself will not be a place for people to mill around.
- I agree fully that the restaurant terrace could be a nice place, but it certainly is going to take work to get there. Making it that kind of place would be a good outcome of this process.
- I'm not sure what hours the train arrivals and departures are. My guess is they are longer than the hours of the DOA building, and so how do we separate those functions, and have the train part of the building open for that access? If the building seems closed that's not inviting for the train patrons.
 - We've had to deal with that at the Milwaukee station. Part of what we want to do is remove the spandrel glass on the first floor to make it more inviting and transparent.
- Why do we enter here (existing centrally located entry) and have this jog (to the right), why not just come through this first bay here? And close the lobby off. It seems like you want a clear separation between the users of the station and the people doing DOA, but I think conceptually the DOA needs to be a tower sitting on top of the station. The station really needs to take prominence here.
 - It moved because of the meetings we've had with the folks at the DOA, but I think it's debatable.

If the DOA people continue to balk at that I would even push for something in the corner. Completely reworking that corner, maybe that's what they're after. I think it could be better.

- The idea of this terrace level actually being able to come out and take advantage of this lake view, that's why people really like that terrace. I'm wondering if that would also give you a platform that you could build over the tracks, if that would give you more queuing space which I think could potentially be difficult. It would also give you the opportunity to give you a sense of a great hall, a proper station with that triple or quadruple height. I think that's a great place for it to happen. The rest of this proposal right now looks a little bit cramped because of this slot. Does it seem to you that you've got an adequate budget to get this project done?
 - They've already gone over the budget with this design.
 - We will continue to work with the City.

I know it's difficult to find the dollars right now but if it's half baked, it's gonna flop.

- I think figuring out a second entrance is going to create this life and vitality and ability for the public to move through the station even if you don't have a train ticket. Getting that public thoroughfare is crucial. The in and the out is really kind of the key to this.
- The narrowness of the train station itself implies motion.
- The verticality of the two tower elements are great contrast to Monona Terrace. It's very interesting architecturally. Bringing in some color is interesting.
- It would be great to see your scope extend down to that mural and get some lighting on that mural. Look at the bus transit because that's got great potential for a drop-off area.
- Be careful, because this reminds me of getting off of a small plane and having to walk across the tarmac and come up the stairs into the airport. There isn't the welcoming because it's so narrow.
- The drop-offs and turn-arounds are backwards. Not that we're going to re-orient Wilson Street to be a one-way the other direction, but that would be a start.
 - City staff and Monona Terrace have studied how to get a turn-around in here. We've talked about extending some sort of canopy here.

So you're aware of the problem; you can't downplay that problem.

- This is exciting; this is great to see.
- Is Wilson Street going to be able to handle having the main entrance on Wilson Street? It's already somewhat busy and there's the plan for the public market there. My concern is where the major entrance would be and what makes sense from a traffic standpoint.
- The building doesn't really celebrate what's going on here.
- This is an exciting project. The view that you see is from the water, it's not from where most people will be within the building. The part that's really fun is really the tease. All of the money being spent on this object that no one really gets to hang out and be part of. This doesn't seem like a space where I really want to hang out.
- We've all taken a train before. Scheduling mishaps happen; if you're sitting here and have to wait another hour and you can't even see the lake, that's unfortunate.
- To what degree is the platform protected from the elements?
 - It's underneath Monona Terrace so it is somewhat protected.
- What are the plans for bicycle parking?
 - Those are a work in progress at this point.
- People nearby are concerned about noise. Have you looked at that?

- We're doing a noise analysis and I don't have a definitive answer for you because we're not done yet. Using a noise modeling from the Federal Railroad Administration and given distances from the platform to adjacent residences we don't think there will be a noise impact, but we're not done with the study yet.
- As the service progresses we'll get a better feel for those.
- Can you tell me how they collect the diesel fumes?
 - I can't give you a definitive answer on that yet either. We're trying to determine that now.
- It was hinted that we're either at or over budget. What is driving that? Are there creative ideas about what could be done?
 - We're at budget and that depends on how far we go in terms of what the City would like to see, the State, the DOA is trying to pull together.

I'm trying to get at how, what can we do to help make that possible.

Adding square footage is going to add to the cost. We are struggling with getting people from the first floor down 50-feet to the platform. You could use glass, you could have a simpler form.

- What purpose is this structure* that we're seeing here? (*Portion of the platform structure not under the convention center parking structure and visible.)
 - Refuse. In emergency situations you could get out.

It seems like there's a lot of this building that isn't serving function. I would like to point out just how important it is that you are working on this "ceiling" here. A station needs to be that beautiful hall where we're in the hall and we're looking out; in this case the more we can look out at the lake the better.

ACTION:

Since this was an **INFORMATIONAL PRESENTATION** no formal action was taken by the Commission.