

AGENDA # 6

City of Madison, Wisconsin

REPORT OF: LANDMARKS COMMISSION

PRESENTED: 9/20/21

TITLE: Section 106 Consulting Party Review -
Proposed Bus Rapid Transit
Project

REFERRED:

REREFERRED:

REPORTED BACK:

AUTHOR: Heather Bailey, Preservation Planner

ADOPTED:

POF:

DATED: 9/21/21

ID NUMBER: 67237

Members present were: Anna Andrzejewski, Richard Arnesen, Katie Kaliszewski, and David McLean. Excused were: Arvina Martin and Maurice Taylor.

SUMMARY:

Mike Cechvala, registering neither in support nor in opposition and available to answer questions
Graham Carey, registering neither in support nor in opposition and available to answer questions

Bailey explained the Landmarks Commission's duty as a Certified Local Government (CLG) to comment on any federal projects that may affect historic properties. The proposed Bus Rapid Transit system has the potential to impact several National Register listed or eligible properties and historic districts, including the University Hill Farms historic district, Bascom Hill historic district, State Street eligible historic district, Wisconsin State Capitol, Gisholt Machine Company, and East High School. She discussed the Section 106 process, which involves identifying the Area of Potential Effect (APE), identifying historic properties within the APE, and assessing potential effects to those properties. She referenced the application materials that analyzed those items and showed images of the proposed station renderings near historic properties or in historic districts within the APE. As a CLG consulting party, the Landmarks Commission needs to determine if the proposal meets the criteria for an Adverse Effect, if they need additional information to make a determination, or if there are methods to mitigate the visual impacts. When the project team has completed their assessment of effects on historic properties, the Landmarks Commission will review that document and provide final comments as one of the consulting parties. Bailey discussed the applicable standards regarding an Adverse Effect and staff's recommendation for this initial proposal that station designs will read as a product of their time, will not create a false sense of history, will not obscure significant viewsheds, and will not alter historically significant street designs. She also recommended they forward the preservation file for 841-849 E Washington Avenue and the Landmarks Commission's demolition review of that property. She explained that the applicants' survey did not find architectural significance related to 841-849 E Washington Avenue, and the commission had recently discussed reasons for its historical significance, which the project team may find helpful.

Mike Cechvala, City of Madison Metro Transit, provided an overview of the Bus Rapid Transit project.

McLean said that the proposed BRT stations seem small and contained, and they are fairly transparent, which are all good things. Arnesen agreed.

Andrzejewski requested confirmation that the project team will provide more detailed information in the future for the commission to make a final determination of the Adverse Effect. Bailey said that the project will come

back before the commission when the final determination of effects is submitted, and this is just an initial run through to see if the commission has any concerns or needs additional information.

Andrzejewski said that she agreed with McLean and Arnesen that she doesn't see anything problematic, though she pointed out that they haven't seen everything yet and wanted to make sure they have another opportunity to weigh in after the determination of effects is completed. She referenced the staff report and agreed that the proposed project does not create a false sense of history, which was her biggest concern. She said that it doesn't appear to damage the historic landscape fabric from what they have seen so far but will look for the opportunity to provide comments later.

Bailey spoke to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards. She said that the proposed stations are either in the median, or if closer to buildings, they project out from the terrace with a sidewalk between the station and any historically significant buildings, so there is a lot of separation. She pointed out that this is a transportation corridor, so this is an appropriate use; one would expect to see this type of structure in these areas. She said that the stations are also removable, so they are not destroying any historic fabric and could potentially be removed in the future. Andrzejewski said that infrastructure is always variable, and it is significant that this is an evolving use. She said that generally in preservation, one recognizes evolving uses, and as long as it doesn't destroy historic fabric or create a false sense of history, it is in good shape.

ACTION:

A motion was made by Andrzejewski, seconded by McLean, to authorize staff to forward the Landmarks Commission's comments and the preservation file and demolition review of 841-849 E Washington Avenue to the applicant, and to provide initial comments and ask for the Assessment of Effects in order to provide final comments. The motion passed by voice vote/other.