



PLANNING DIVISION STAFF REPORT

September 20, 2021

PREPARED FOR THE LANDMARKS COMMISSION

Project: Madison Bus Rapid Transit
Regarding: CLG Consulting Party Comments for FTA Undertaking
Legistar File: [67237](#)
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Background

As a Certified Local Government, the City of Madison's Landmarks Commission and Historic Preservation Program are included as consulting parties for any Federal undertakings which may have potential effects on historic properties. Most of these inquiries staff handles administratively. However, the proposal for the Bus Rapid Transit system in Madison and the resulting new stations to service this route has the potential to have impacts to several National Register listed or eligible properties. As such, staff has referred the formal comments to the Landmarks Commission for their input prior to submitting comments on the proposed undertaking.

36CFR800

The chapter of the Code of Federal Regulations commonly referred to as Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act requires assessments of a Federal undertaking to first determine if there are any historic properties within the Area of Potential Effect (APE). The submittal materials include a document that specifies the APE for this undertaking and identifies the historic resources that the project team believes could have impacts. The consultant completed assessments of properties within 100 feet of a proposed new station.

The second step is to determine if the proposed undertaking will have an Adverse Effect on those properties. Per 36CFR800.5(a)(1):

"Criteria of adverse effect. An adverse effect is found when an undertaking may alter, directly or indirectly, any of the characteristics of a historic property that qualify the property for inclusion in the National Register in a manner that would diminish the integrity of the property's location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, or association. Consideration shall be given to all qualifying characteristics of a historic property, including those that may have been identified subsequent to the original evaluation of the property's eligibility for the National Register. Adverse effects may include reasonably foreseeable effects caused by the undertaking that may occur later in time, be farther removed in distance or be cumulative."

Of the historic properties included within the cultural resources survey, the project team created some sample visuals to show how stations would look when they were in close proximity to a significant property or located within a historic district. These properties include University Hill Farms historic district, Bascom Hill historic district, State Street eligible historic district, Wisconsin State Capitol, Gisholt Machine Company building, and East High School. These concepts show the two versions of the station design and the configurations of a station in the median vs. in the terrace directly in front of a property.

The stations within University Hill Farms, and in front of Gisholt Machine Company and East High School will be located on medians in the roadway. For the two individual properties, the stations are obviously separate from the historic property and located in the middle of the public right-of-way. They are not blocking significant viewsheds and do not appear to compromise the historic integrity of the historic properties. The stations in and adjacent to University Hill Farms historic district are located within the medians. The National Register nomination discusses the street design meant to direct large volumes of traffic along Regent, Whitney Way, and Midvale Boulevard, with a slightly smaller internal volume of traffic to run along Segoe Road and Eau Claire Avenue. The station locations mitigate impacts to the views of contributing properties within the historic district and are modifications to the existing transportation infrastructure that supports the original intent of the design

of that neighborhood, which was to provide easy transportation access for the residents within that neighborhood.

The other station locations along the route are in the terrace, where we currently locate bus shelters in our downtown core. The stations along State St are of a truncated design, with a smaller footprint, but of a similar design to the rest of the BRT stations to maintain the branding identity of the BRT route. The stop adjacent to the Bascom Hill district is in front of the nonhistoric addition to a contributing resource, but is significantly stepped back away so as not to impact viewsheds to the Chazen Art Museum. Likewise, the stations on the Capitol Square are on the opposite site of the road from the National Historic Landmark property and they do not obscure significant viewsheds, which are largely along the street corridors. The granite planters that will be removed date to beautification efforts on the Capitol Square in the 1970s.

The additional stations located on E Washington seem to be significantly stepped back away from the historic resources and not obscuring significant viewsheds.

Conclusion

The station designs will read as a product of their time and not create a false sense of history. Initial analysis is that they do not seem to obscure significant viewsheds or alter historically significant street designs. Staff would recommend forwarding to the consultant the preservation file for 841-849 E Washington and the Landmarks Commission's discussion of the significance of the resource during the recent technical demolition review in order to provide the missing significant history for this property to be included in the survey files.

When the project has compiled their assessment of effects on historic properties, the Landmarks Commission will review that document and provide final comments as one of the consulting parties.

The Landmarks Commission needs to determine if

- The proposal would meet the criteria for an Adverse Effect
- The commission needs additional information to make a determination
- There are methods to mitigate the visual impacts, which the commission may suggest

Staff will submit the Landmarks Commission's comments to the FTA designee.