

2 Study Context

2.1 Historical Significance

Union Station was designed by renowned architect Daniel Burnham of Burnham and Root in Chicago. Its size, splendor, and original cost were all monumental and befitted its initial role as a gateway to our nation's capital. Its railroad tracks opened in 1908 as a replacement for two other rail stations and tracks in the vicinity of the National Mall. According to its Web site, "at various times [the



station] employed a staff of over 5,000 people and provided such amenities as a bowling alley, mortuary, baker, butcher, YMCA, hotel, ice house, liquor store, Turkish baths, first-class restaurant, nursery, police station, and a silver-monogramming shop."

In 1969, the National Capital Planning Commission (NCPCC) put forward a plan to reinvent the space after it suffered damage from a train accident in 1953 and experienced a decline in rail travel with the debut of commercial aviation. The purpose of NCPCC's plan was two-fold: 1) to create a new and modern passenger terminal serving rail, intracity bus, and intercity bus passengers, desired by both the terminal owners and NCPCC; and 2) save the historic



View inside the Headhouse circa 1920 (left), 1953 train crash in Union Station (center), and existing retail at Union Station (right).

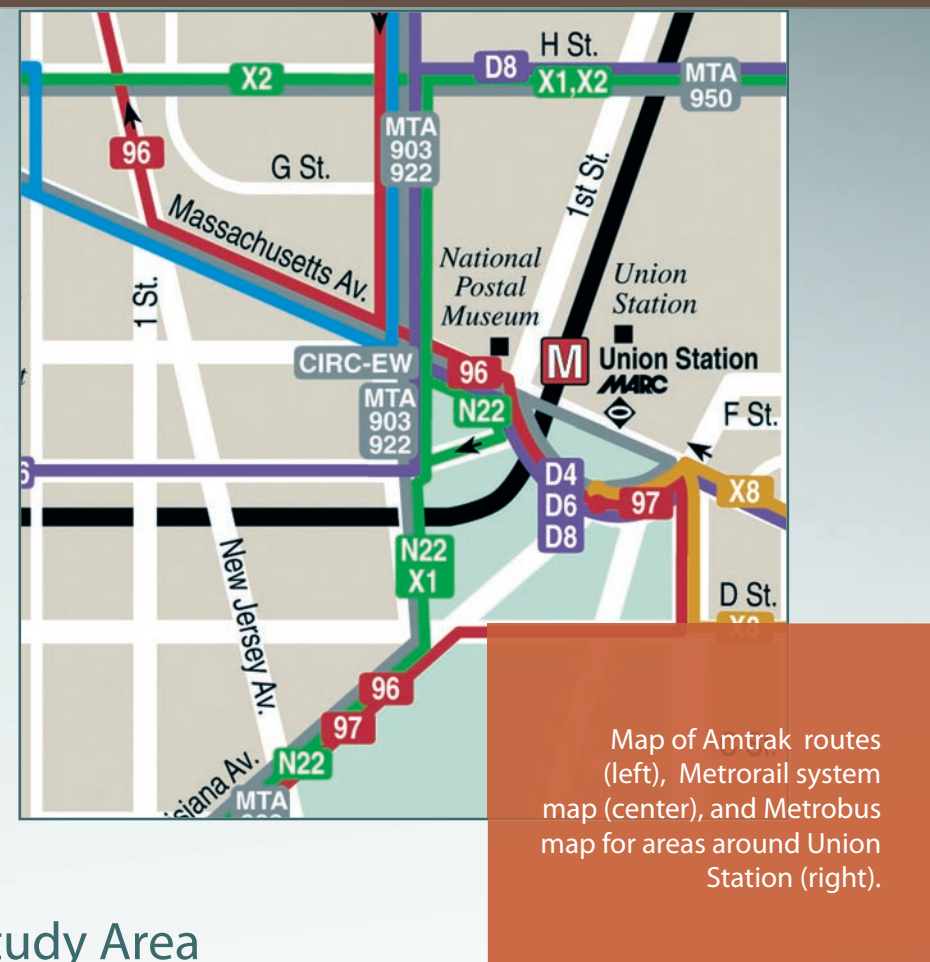
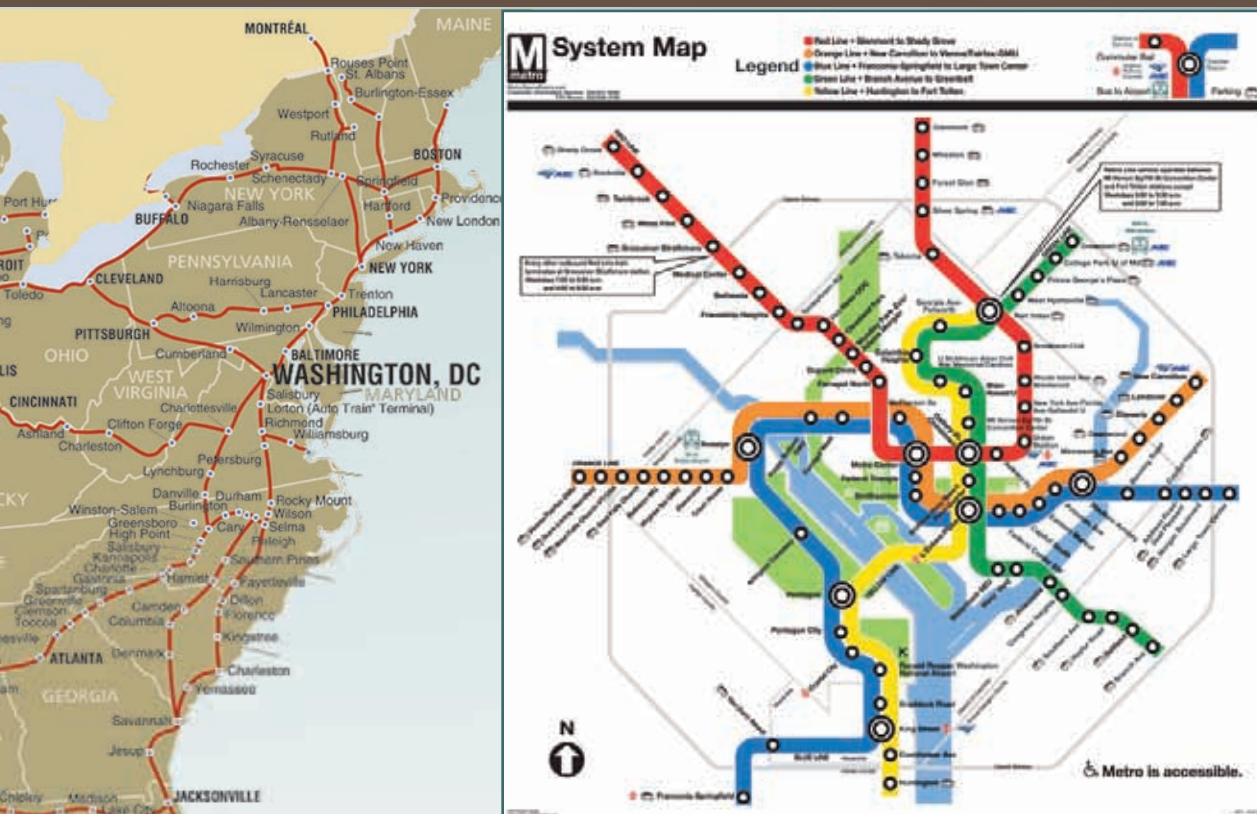
terminal building, which was considered outdated and expensive to maintain by the owners. This plan included covering the Union Station tracks with a new passenger rail terminal topped with a parking garage for 120 buses and 4,000 cars. Additionally, intracity buses, rail passengers arriving by car, charter buses, and taxis were to circle a new passenger terminal just off the H Street overpass, with access to and from H Street, and access to and from Massachusetts Avenue NE via ramps placed on either side of the historic terminal, which was to be converted to a National Visitor's Center. However, construction on this plan lagged far behind schedule and was eventually halted without completion in the 1970s.

Concern for the future of the station led to the creation of the Union Station Redevelopment Corporation (USRC), a non-profit corporation charged by Congress with protecting the federal government's interest in Union Station. The Redevelopment Act that created USRC sought "restoration and operation of a portion of the historic Union Station building as a rail passenger station,

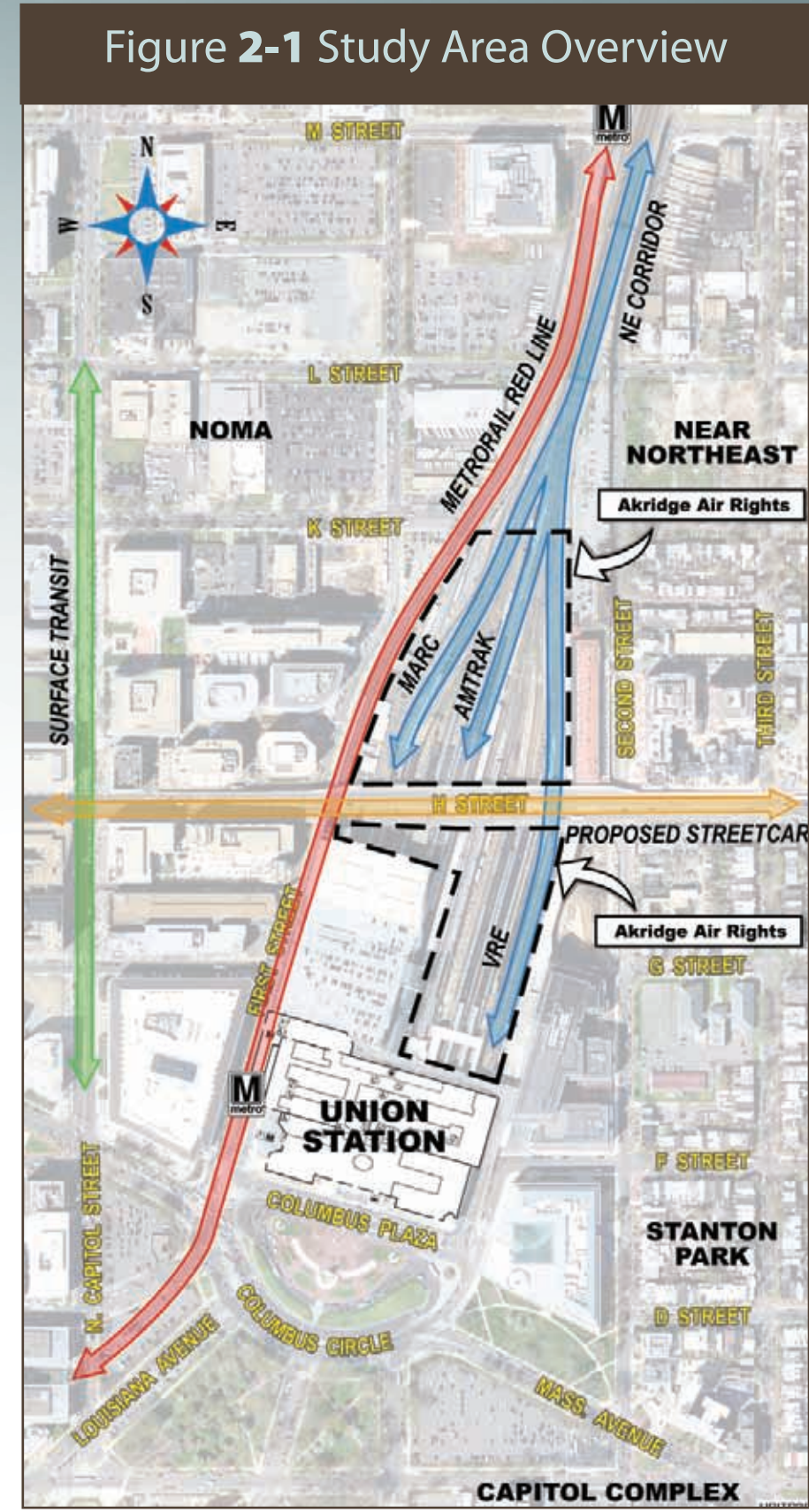


together with holding facilities for charter, transit, and intercity buses in the Union Station complex."

Subsequently, a 1988 act of Congress completed the restoration and transformation into the Union Station of today, with retail occupying the terminal and transportation-related spaces along the north side of the historic building. The station houses the most retail shopping of any U.S. rail station and merchants have enjoyed annual sales of more than \$130 million, serving local and traveling shoppers from around the region.



Map of Amtrak routes (left), Metrorail system map (center), and Metrobus map for areas around Union Station (right).



2.2 Geographical and Regional Significance

Amtrak Route Map

Union Station is one of the key hubs in a passenger rail network that not only covers all of the United States but also extends into Canada. The station serves a multitude of passengers, from long distance travelers to local commuters. For travelers on the Northeast Corridor, Union Station is the south end of Amtrak's Acela and Northeast Regional Train services, which served more than 850,000 riders in 2008. These services are attractive alternatives to air travel between cities in the Northeast. Additionally, intercity bus services operating just north of Union Station serve more than 3,500 riders a day traveling regionally and nationally.

For residents of the national capital region, Union Station is an essential part of a network of commuting services for more than 45,000 riders a day on commuter rail systems that cover three states (MD, VA and WV) and D.C. More than 34,000 people enter the Washington Metropolitan Area Transportation Authority's (WMATA) Union Station Metrorail station every weekday to reach jobs and homes in Maryland, Virginia, and D.C.

Union Station's role as the hub of these various transportation modes highlights its strategic importance in the regional and national infrastructure. The effective operation of services to, from, and through Union Station is critical for the nation's surface transportation network and the mobility of 4.2 million residents in the national capital area.

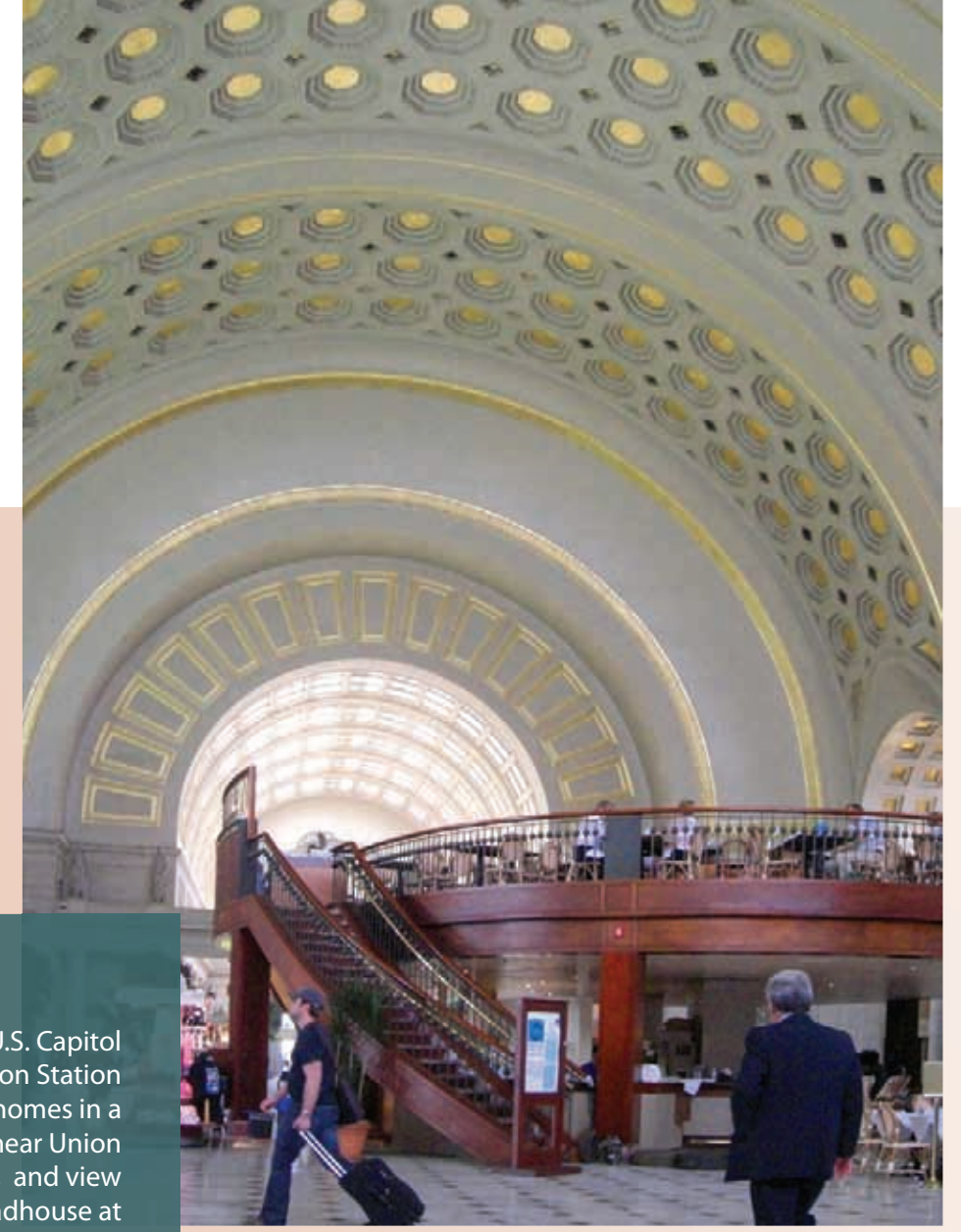
2.3 Study Area

Union Station is located in downtown D.C., situated north of Columbus Circle on Massachusetts Avenue and First Street NE, about one half-mile northeast of the U.S. Capitol.

The study area extends from Massachusetts Avenue on the south to Third Street NE on the east to M Street NE on the north to North Capitol Street on the west. **Figure 2-1** highlights the key features in the immediate vicinity of Union Station, including existing transportation facilities, proposed developments, and proposed transportation improvements.

The study area is located within the boundaries of Ward 6, Advisory Neighborhood Commission (ANC) 6C. Surrounding neighborhoods include the Union Station neighborhood, as well as NoMa, Stanton Park, and Near Northeast. Four distinct neighborhoods border the Union Station complex and the Union Station railroad tracks. These include:

- NoMa: Situated between Massachusetts Avenue to the south and New York Avenue to the north, the NoMa neighborhood is a redevelopment area that is focused on the New York Avenue Red Line Metrorail station. More than 20 million square feet of development is planned in the neighborhood over the next 15 years, including 8,000 residential units; 12,000 hotel rooms; 750,000 square feet of retail; and 10 million square feet of commercial office space.



View of the U.S. Capitol from Union Station (left), rowhomes in a neighborhood near Union Station (center), and view inside the Headhouse at Union Station (right).

- Near Northeast: A mix of light industrial and residential zoning typify this neighborhood. Development is generally one to two stories with town-homes and row homes comprising most of the housing stock.
- Stanton Park: The Stanton Park neighborhood is located due east of Union Station. In the study area, Stanton Park is composed primarily of row homes, although some commercial office space exists as the neighborhood moves closer to Capitol Hill.
- Capitol Hill: Capitol Hill consists of a mix of two to four story row homes and the U.S. Capitol complex, to which hundreds of thousands of staff arrive daily. A large portion of these employees arrive at Union Station via Metrorail, Metrobus, VRE, MARC, or Amtrak.

Developments in these neighborhoods, particularly NoMa, have and will continue to impact the demand for transit services at Union Station.

2.4 Physical Components of Union Station

The most widely recognized components of the Union Station complex are its original and historic Headhouse — or Main Hall, as it's better known — with 96-foot barrel-vaulted ceilings evenly interspersed with skylights; and the Historic Concourse, which is a smaller barrel-vaulted space immediately behind, or north of, the Headhouse, where three levels of retail and Amtrak ticket counters stand today. The modern Amtrak concourse is attached to, and located just north of, the Historic Concourse. Both the Headhouse and

the Historic Concourse currently contain retail and restaurant space, meeting rooms, and office space.

Other major components in the Union Station complex include:

- The parking garage with a bus/transit deck located on the lowest level
- Railroad tracks, platforms, and railroad service areas
- Columbus Plaza and Columbus Circle
- The H Street NE bridge located above the railroad tracks
- The partially completed North Pedestrian Walkway and H Street underpass located below the railroad tracks (two levels below the H Street overpass)

- WMATA's Union Station Metrorail station (Red Line)
- Air rights over the railroad tracks extending north to K Street

These components are shown in **Figure 2-2**.



2.5 Governance and Management

Several entities manage functions within the Union Station complex and in many cases, ownership and management are distinct. For instance, the historic components of Union Station, rail tracks, platforms, and service areas located on the property are owned by the federal government. The operations and maintenance of these facilities and areas are the responsibility of Amtrak, while management of these facilities is the responsibility of USRC. Additionally:

- Union Station Investco, LLC, a private entity controlled by Ashkenazy Acquisition Corporation, oversees the interior commercial use of the Headhouse, Historic Concourse, and the Amtrak concourse.
- Jones Lang LaSalle Americas, Inc. is the property manager for the commercial use areas.
- Ticketing, railroad operations, and passenger accommodation areas are controlled by Amtrak.
- Union Station Parking Garage, LLC is a joint venture between Colonial Parking and E-Park to operate the Union Station parking garage, which includes the main-level deck used for tour bus parking and transit buses. The garage is owned by the U.S. Department of Transportation and leased by USRC.
- The H Street bridge is owned and maintained by DDOT.
- Columbus Plaza, in front (south) of the historic Union Station Headhouse, is owned and maintained by the National Park Service.
- Columbus Circle, including Massachusetts Avenue NE, is located on federally owned property, but is maintained by DDOT.
- WMATA operates and maintains its Metrorail Red Line station and tracks, and its related operations and maintenance spaces.
- The H Street NE tunnel (or underpass) is currently closed to the public and used by Amtrak for various station maintenance activities. The tunnel is under the jurisdiction of DDOT.
- The air rights above the railyard at Union Station have been purchased by Akridge, a local real estate development company.