Connecticut Department of Transportation

New Haven Union Rail Station Platforms & Canopy

State Project No. 0301-0522

Comment Response

CTDOT appreciates the time and effort taken by members of the public to provide comments on the Union Station Improvements Project (State Project No. 0301-0522). Comments were received following the Public Information Meeting held on April 14, and all comments have been reviewed and considered as part of ongoing design development.

This document encompasses CTDOT's responses to the most frequently raised questions and topics. It is organized by subject area to help readers locate information related to specific concerns and reflects the current understanding of the project and key considerations being evaluated as design progresses.

Project information is subject to change as design advances, and public input will continue to play an important role in informing coordination, refinement, and decision-making as the project moves forward.

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Tunnel

CTDOT appreciates the feedback and the strong sentiment expressed regarding the pedestrian tunnel and their importance to Union Station's identity and travel experience. The project includes improvements to the existing pedestrian tunnel, including waterproofing improvements to address water infiltration, interior aesthetic improvements, and code compliance upgrades. The project does not propose demolition of the tunnel structure. Public input emphasizing preservation of the tunnel as a defining and memorable feature of Union Station has been noted and will continue to be considered as design progresses, with the goal of balancing usability, maintenance, and code requirements within the overall project. Tunnel improvements are intended to address known water intrusion conditions that will improve long-term durability and maintainability, and code compliance upgrades are expected to include improvements to key access and life safety elements associated with the tunnel and platform connections, including upgrades related to elevators, stairs, and other tunnel access components. Tunnel ventilation and heating elements are also part of the tunnel improvement considerations as the design is refined to meet current requirements and support safe passenger movement. The tunnel aesthetic renderings shown at the Public Information Meeting were preliminary and are intended to inform further evaluation, and CTDOT will be convening a Design Advisory Team that includes stakeholders from various organizations interested in the tunnel to review tunnel aesthetic alternatives as the design is refined.

Purpose and Need

CTDOT appreciates the feedback regarding the purpose of the project and the need for improvements at Union Station. As presented, the project purpose is to replace the aging platforms at Union Station with new lengthened platforms and replace the existing platform canopies with a single full coverage canopy system, and the project also includes an upgrade of the Union Station pedestrian tunnel passageway and related station access elements. Many of these elements are reaching the end of their useful life and require replacement to ensure the station can continue to function safely and reliably for the traveling public. The benefits presented include enhancing pedestrian access and safety, protecting passengers on the platforms from the elements, supporting increased intercity rail service on the New Haven Main Line, and positioning the area for future economic growth. Improvements to platforms, access elements, and supporting infrastructure are also intended to provide more consistent and reliable conditions for passengers and to support the day-to-day operation of multiple rail services that use Union Station. The project is focused on replacing core station infrastructure that supports daily rail operations and passenger access, and comments regarding project priorities have been noted as design and coordination continue.

Cost

CTDOT appreciates the feedback regarding project cost, funding, and overall value. At the Public Information Meeting, CTDOT presented an estimated construction cost of approximately $402 million, and the funding approach may involve federal sources such as FTA or FRA as well as state funding. The scope of this project is focused on replacing and upgrading major station infrastructure elements, including platforms, canopies, and key access elements, which require large-scale capital investment to maintain safe and reliable rail operations at Union Station. These improvements involve full replacement of critical structural and operational elements of the station that support daily train service, and the cost reflects the complexity of performing this work in an active rail environment with multiple operators and continuous service. In addition to the platform and canopy replacements, the project includes associated rail, power, and utility improvements

needed to support long-term function and safety of the station. As design progresses and the funding pathway is determined, related steps such as environmental review requirements will be addressed and cost estimates and schedules will continue to be refined, and public comments regarding affordability and investment priorities have been noted as part of the project record.

Platform Canopy Design and Function

CTDOT appreciates the feedback regarding the proposed platform canopy system. As presented, the project includes complete replacement of existing platform canopies with a single full coverage canopy system intended to protect passengers on the platforms from the elements and improve passenger comfort. The canopy is part of the overall platform replacement and station infrastructure improvements required to address aging conditions at Union Station and is being developed in coordination with operational needs, safety requirements, and construction staging considerations. In addition to providing weather protection, the full coverage system is intended to create more consistent conditions across all platforms, particularly in a high-volume station that serves multiple operators and a wide range of train services throughout the day. The canopy design also reflects the need to support safe passenger circulation and accommodate longer trains and full platform usage over time. The canopy also supports long-term maintenance and durability goals by replacing multiple aging structures with a single coordinated system. As design progresses, considerations related to durability, maintenance, long-term performance, and passenger experience will continue to be evaluated as part of canopy design development, and comments regarding the scale and extent of the canopy coverage have been noted as part of that ongoing evaluation.

Air Quality and Diesel Exhaust

CTDOT appreciates the concerns raised regarding diesel exhaust, air quality, and the potential for exhaust or residue to accumulate beneath a full coverage canopy. CTDOT understands concerns that a large overhead structure could affect how diesel exhaust disperses on the platforms and could influence passenger experience. The project recognizes that a full coverage canopy has the potential to trap

locomotive exhaust without proper ventilation and potentially cause poor air quality without appropriate ventilation considerations. Airflow and ventilation conditions are being evaluated as part of design development and applicable safety requirements, including analysis of how exhaust, heat, and air movement perform under different operating and environmental conditions. The project also considers long-term maintenance, including the potential for residue accumulation on canopy structures in an active rail environment. Soot deposition on canopy finishes and continued evaluation of pollutant concentrations, airflow, and maintenance needs will be evaluated as design progresses. These considerations are being reviewed in the context of a busy, multi-operator station where train activity, dwell times, and weather conditions can influence platform conditions. Comments related to diesel emissions, air quality, and broader public health concerns have been noted, and decisions related to locomotive technology, electrification, and emissions reduction strategies are addressed through separate statewide and regional planning, funding, and coordination efforts beyond the scope of this station infrastructure project.

Platform Noise

CTDOT appreciates the feedback regarding platform noise, overall station atmosphere, and concerns that a full coverage canopy could change how the space sounds during train operations. CTDOT understands concerns that an overhead structure may reflect or carry sound differently, particularly in a station environment where multiple trains arrive, depart, and dwell throughout the day. Many comments also noted that Union Station currently has a relatively open and quieter feel compared to other stations, and that changes to the platform environment could affect that experience. As design progresses, considerations related to acoustics, material selection, and how sound travels within the platform area are being evaluated in the context of an active rail environment with multiple operators, regular train activity, and existing sources of noise such as train movements and station announcements. The intent of these evaluations is to better understand how the canopy may influence how sound is perceived within the space, rather than to eliminate noise associated with normal rail operations. Comments regarding

platform noise and the overall station experience have been noted and will continue to inform design development.

Accessibility and Station Access

CTDOT appreciates feedback regarding accessibility and ease of movement between the tunnel and platforms, including concerns related to elevators, stairs, luggage, and mobility limitations. The project includes improvements to existing elevators and upgrades to stairs and related enclosures serving the platforms. Station access to the platforms will be evaluated and upgraded as required with consideration to current code requirements and safety enhancements. These improvements are intended to support a wide range of passenger needs, including individuals with disabilities, travelers with luggage, and families with strollers, particularly in a busy station environment where platform access occurs continuously throughout the day. Under the ADA Standards for Transportation Facilities (ADASTF), accessible routes between levels must be provided through elevators or ADA compliant ramps. Also, escalators do not qualify as an accessible route or a required means of egress. Because of the height difference between the tunnel and the platforms and the limited space available within the existing station layout, providing a full ramp connection between levels is not practical, and elevator access remains the primary accessible route within the project. Maintaining reliable elevator access and improving overall access conditions is therefore a key part of the project as design progresses.

Construction Impacts

CTDOT appreciates concerns regarding construction impacts on commuters and daily station operations. Construction phasing is being planned with the intent to maintain rail service while work is underway and to minimize disruptions to passengers to the extent practicable. As presented, the project is expected to be constructed in stages, with work sequenced so that portions of the station remain in service while others are being improved. This approach allows train operations to continue throughout construction while necessary infrastructure work is completed and reflects the need to perform major improvements within an active rail station

that serves multiple operators daily. Work activities will be coordinated to maintain safe passenger movement and continuous access to platforms to the extent possible as construction progresses. Maintaining safe and reliable service during construction is a key consideration in project development, and comments regarding potential impacts on commuters have been noted as design progresses.

Amenities

CTDOT appreciates the feedback regarding passenger amenities and the overall station experience. As presented, this project focuses on improvements to the platforms, canopy, tunnel, and station access elements needed to replace aging infrastructure and support safe and accessible passenger movement, and it does not include a broader program of interior station building renovations. Within these improvements, platform amenities are included such as benches, security cameras, blue light phones, passive and digital signage, and trash receptacles, all of which are intended to support day-to-day passenger needs and improve the overall usability of the platforms. These elements are part of creating a safer, more functional, and more consistent environment for passengers using the station, particularly in high-traffic conditions. Comments regarding additional amenities and other improvements within the station have been noted and will be considered as design progresses within the limits of the project.

Signage

CTDOT appreciates the feedback regarding signage and wayfinding at Union Station. As presented, upgraded signage is included as part of the platform amenity package, and improvements to signage within the platform and tunnel areas are intended to help passengers more easily navigate between the station, tunnel, and train platforms. The project includes new and updated signage associated with the platform and tunnel improvements, and these changes are being developed to support clearer circulation, better visibility, and more intuitive movement for passengers as they arrive, transfer between platforms, or access trains. Improved signage is particularly important in a high-volume station where multiple services operate and passengers may be unfamiliar with the layout. While comments have

identified additional signage needs within the broader station building, the current project is focused on the areas directly associated with platform access. A separate station-wide interior signage overhaul project is currently in the design phase and will be coordinated with this Platform and Canopy Project as both efforts move forward.

Getting to Platforms

CTDOT appreciates the feedback regarding how passengers move through Union Station and access the train platforms. The project includes improvements intended to enhance pedestrian access and safety, including upgrades to the tunnel pedestrian passageway and improvements to stairs and elevators serving the platforms. These elements are part of the overall path that passengers use to move between the station building, tunnel, and platforms, and improvements are intended to make that process more straightforward and consistent for all users. In a busy station environment where multiple services operate and trains arrive and depart throughout the day, maintaining clear and efficient movement between these areas is an important part of overall station function. As design progresses, circulation patterns and connections between station spaces are being evaluated to support safe and reliable passenger movement. Comments regarding circulation, accessibility, and connections within the platform and tunnel areas have been noted and will continue to be considered as design develops.

Vehicular Access and Traffic

CTDOT appreciates feedback regarding curbside conditions, passenger pick-up and drop-off, and traffic circulation near Union Station. As presented, this project is focused on replacing and improving station infrastructure, including the platforms, canopy, tunnel, and access elements within the existing station and rail property. Traffic conditions, roadway layout, and curbside operations along surrounding streets such as Union Avenue involve additional coordination with the City of New Haven and other partners and are addressed through separate planning and design processes. These areas are influenced by a wide range of factors, including local traffic patterns, adjacent development, transit connections, and overall roadway

operations in the downtown area. While the current project does not include modifications to surrounding roadways or curbside configuration, comments related to traffic, access, and drop-off conditions have been noted and will be considered as part of ongoing coordination with the City and other stakeholders as planning efforts continue in the broader Union Station area. Additionally, comments related to vehicular access and traffic will be shared with CTDOT staff working on projects on Union Avenue and the area surrounding Union Station.

Operations (additional trains, schedules, service, etc.)

CTDOT appreciates the feedback regarding train operations, service levels, and the desire for additional rail service. Operational decisions such as train frequency, schedules, and service levels are managed through coordination among CTDOT rail planning and operations and its transportation partners. The New Haven corridor is served by multiple operators, including Amtrak and Metro-North, and service decisions reflect a combination of operational, funding, and systemwide considerations across those agencies. This project is focused on station infrastructure improvements, and while it does not directly determine how many trains run or when they operate, the improvements are intended to support reliable and efficient operations for the services that use Union Station. The benefits presented include supporting increased intercity and commuter rail service on the New Haven Main Line by providing improved platforms, passenger access, and station conditions that can accommodate current and future service demands. Infrastructure improvements and service decisions are related but are carried out through separate processes that require ongoing coordination among agencies. Public comments related to operations and future service expectations have been noted and will be shared with the appropriate rail planning and operations staff and partners as the project advances.

Electrification

CTDOT appreciates the feedback regarding electrification and broader rail modernization. Electrification refers to converting rail service from diesel-powered locomotives to trains that operate using electric power, which can reduce emissions, improve air quality, and support more efficient train operations. Comments suggesting that project funding be directed toward electrification instead of station improvements have been noted. This project is focused on station infrastructure at Union Station, including platforms, canopies, tunnel improvements, and station access elements that are necessary to maintain safe and reliable operations for existing service. While electrification is an important topic, decisions related to fleet technology and systemwide service changes are planned and implemented through separate statewide and regional efforts. These efforts involve different funding programs, infrastructure considerations, and coordination among multiple agencies. For this reason, electrification is not determined as part of a station infrastructure project, and this project is focused on improvements needed to support current and future rail service at Union Station.

Sustainability and Environmental Considerations

CTDOT appreciates feedback regarding sustainability and environmental considerations, including suggestions related to solar panels and other renewable energy features. CTDOT recognizes the importance of incorporating sustainability into transportation investments, and comments have highlighted interest in reducing emissions and expanding the use of clean energy. As discussed during the Public Information Meeting, the platform canopy is being advanced as a coordinated architectural and infrastructure element intended to provide consistent coverage, durability, and long-term performance for passengers and rail operations. While opportunities to incorporate solar infrastructure are being considered, the canopy is not currently being developed as a primary location for that type of installation, as its design is focused on providing a cohesive and durable structure for long-term use in a complex operational environment. Instead, additional opportunities for renewable

energy and related improvements are being evaluated as part of broader planning and ongoing work in and around the Union Station area, where those systems may be better suited for implementation and integration with other site improvements. As presented, the project also includes materials and systems intended to improve long-term durability and maintainability, and elements such as lighting, handrails, and related components will be evaluated and upgraded as part of the overall station improvements. Comments regarding sustainability, renewable energy, and environmental performance have been noted and will continue to inform ongoing coordination and future planning efforts.

Historic Preservation

CTDOT appreciates the feedback regarding Union Station's historic character and the importance of preserving defining features of the station experience. Union Station has long served as a central arrival point for New Haven, and public comments have emphasized that the sequence of spaces within the station, including the historic station building and the pedestrian tunnels leading to the platforms, plays a meaningful role in how passengers experience travel through the facility. Many comments noted that these elements contribute to a distinct sense of place that is different from other stations in the region, particularly the transition from the station building through the tunnels and onto the platforms, which has been described as a recognizable and valued part of the travel experience. These features are not only functional but are also closely associated with how people identify and remember Union Station. Comments regarding preservation of historic character have been noted and will continue to be considered as design progresses, with the goal of balancing preservation values with accessibility, safety, maintenance needs, and code requirements within the overall project.

Public Feedback and Support

CTDOT appreciates the positive feedback and support expressed for the Union Station improvements, as well as the broader input provided by the public throughout the comment period. Public input is an important part of the project development process and helps identify what aspects of Union Station are most

valued by riders, residents, and the surrounding community. In addition to concerns and questions, many comments highlighted features that contribute to the station's identity and overall experience, including its character, layout, and role as a central transportation hub. Several comments also reinforced the importance of maintaining a recognizable and consistent station experience while making necessary infrastructure improvements. This feedback helps inform how improvements are considered as design progresses, particularly in balancing new infrastructure needs with the elements that people associate with Union Station today. All comments, including supportive feedback, have been noted and will continue to inform project coordination and design development as the project advances.