



February 10, 2009

Hector Santiago
Environmental Compliance Specialist
Midwest Regional Office
National Park Service
601 Riverfront Dr.
Omaha, NE 68102

Re: Nationwide Rivers Inventory Review
Minnesota's Union Depot, Saint Paul, Ramsey County, Minnesota
T28N R22W Sections 5, 6
T29N R22W Section 32

Dear Mr. Santiago:

The purpose of this letter is to initiate the review process for Nationwide Rivers Inventory (NRI) for Minnesota's Union Depot project.

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), in cooperation with the Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority (RCRRA) and the Minnesota Department of Transportation (Mn/DOT), are currently preparing an Environmental Assessment (EA) pursuant to the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 for the rehabilitation and reuse of Minnesota's Union Depot (the former Saint Paul Union Depot) as a multi-modal transit hub. The FHWA is the lead federal agency for the EA. The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) is a cooperating agency. Mn/DOT is the lead state agency.

URS is submitting information on the proposed project for NRI project review of potential impacts on federal NRI waters. A project description is attached along with maps of the project area and figures for the proposed project. The project site is adjacent to a stretch of the Mississippi River, between the St. Croix River and Lock and Dam #1. This stretch of the river is listed in the NRI. This segment was listed for the Outstanding Remarkable Values of Scenery, Recreation, Geology, Wildlife, and History (NPS 2005). In addition, the project site is located within the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area (MNRRA). There has been ongoing coordination with the MNRRA National Park Service (NPS) staff regarding potential impacts on the area that may be associated with the proposed project. Dr. John Anfinson, MNRRA cultural resource specialist, has been involved in discussions pertaining to the impacts on historic resources that are located within the MNRRA boundaries.

Please review this information and provide NPS comments relative to the NRI in the project vicinity. Please address your comments to Donovan Hart, URS Corporation, 100 Fifth Street, Suite 1500, Minneapolis, MN 55402-1210. Also, please feel free to contact me at 612-373-6525 if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

URS CORPORATION

Donovan Hart
Senior Planner

Enclosures:

Project Description

Regional Project Location Map

USGS 7.5 Minute Quad Map

Aerial photograph of project area

Photos of the view from the river (2)

Conceptual Site Plan

3D Conceptual Site Plan

MINNESOTA'S UNION DEPOT, SAINT PAUL, MINNESOTA

Project Description

The proposed project area is located on the north bank of the Mississippi River on the southeast side of downtown Saint Paul. It is generally bounded by Kellogg Boulevard on the north, Shepard/Warner Road on the south, Sibley Street on the west, and railroad tracks on the east (T28N R22W Sections 5, 6 and T29N R22W Section 32). The site of the proposed project is located in an urban environment with industrial and transportation land uses. The project area is located in close proximity to the Mississippi River, with only a narrow park, Warner Road, and three sets of railroad tracks separating them. The Union Depot is located in an urban developed area with a high percentage of impervious surface and very little natural vegetation.

Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority (RCRRA) is acquiring the Union Depot Concourse from the United States Postal Service (USPS) and intends to adaptively reuse the concourse as a multi-modal transit hub. The transit hub will accommodate Amtrak, intercity buses, Metro Transit buses, bicycles, pedestrian, taxi, personal automobiles, and possibly Central Corridor Light Rail Transit. RCRRA, with Mn/DOT, is currently examining alternatives for reusing the concourse. Currently, the Union Depot property does not include the head house located on Fourth Street because this building is in private ownership.

RCRRA has retained URS to provide conceptual engineering (30 percent development) for the proposed project. Conceptual engineering suggests that the multi-modal hub can be accommodated in the historic building with some changes to both the interior and exterior of the building. Exterior elements that will be added include ADA-compliant elevators, stairs, and escalators to provide passenger movement from the waiting room to the train/bus platforms on the eastern side of the building. To provide baggage facilities for Amtrak service, two freight elevators are likely to be located on the western exterior elevation.

To accommodate the proposed project, the USPS Annex Building, erected on top of the train deck of the elevated rail yard in 1978, is slated for demolition. This structure is located west of the concourse. Portions northern edge of the existing train deck would also require removal as part of the proposed project.

Under existing conditions, storm water is collected in a series of catch basins and is piped directly into the city's storm sewer system. The storm sewers discharge directly into the Mississippi River without treatment. The final design of the site would incorporate storm water drainage features and Best Management Practices that meet the Capitol Region Watershed District volume requirements. The proposed project will require a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit and Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP).

Borrow and disposal areas have not been identified at this stage of project development; however, borrow and disposal will not occur in wetlands, floodplains, or other sensitive areas.