



DEPARTMENT OF CITY PLANNING  
CITY OF NEW YORK

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

Testimony of City Planning Director Daniel R. Garodnick to the New York State  
Senate Joint Hearing on the Penn Station Revitalization Plan  
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As a regional gateway to New York City, Penn Station and its surroundings should inspire a sense of civic pride that stands in stark contrast with the existing station, and the City is actively working to ensure that the Pennsylvania Station Civic and Land Use Project GPP (“the GPP”) will help advance this goal.

The New York City Planning Commission, in a letter to the Empire State Development Corporation from January of this year, expressed support for the goals of the GPP while also highlighting areas where additional detail and elaboration in the plan were needed, specifically focusing on transit and public realm improvements. While conversations are still ongoing on the subject of a payment in lieu of taxes, or PILOT, for future development in the GPP area, and the potential benefit of such a PILOT to New York City, the Department of City Planning has worked closely with the Empire State Development Corporation and the MTA and made substantial progress to address many of the concerns previously outlined by the Commission.

Central to this entire conversation is a rehabilitated Penn Station. Far from a gateway deserving of NYC, the station lacks any sense of civic identity; it is difficult to navigate, it is overcrowded, raises questions of public safety, and is all around outdated. On June 9, Mayor Adams stood with Governors Kathy Hochul of New York and Phil Murphy of New Jersey, to celebrate the announcement of the RFP process for a reconstructed Penn Station. A re-built Penn Station will integrate train boarding and all public functions and amenities on a single level with broad concourses and high ceilings; create a main concourse on the east side of the station that will be larger than the areas of Moynihan Train Hall and the Great Hall at Grand Central Terminal combined; double the ceiling height of the public concourses; establish clear sightlines to

platform entrances to provide intuitive travel paths through the station; and increase by 33% the number of stairs, escalators and elevators to the station's 11 platforms.

Of course, a new Penn Station cannot possibly serve the public unless it is paired with a world-class hub of transit-oriented development in the area around Penn Station, and integrates other critical components of the transit infrastructure in the area, including the recently opened Moynihan Train Hall, the ongoing renovations to Penn Station and future new train hall, and the long-anticipated Gateway Project. The project, as proposed, also includes the potential of expanding track capacity one block to the south of Penn Station that would accommodate up to nine new tracks and five platforms, and additional below-grade transit infrastructure that will enhance rail capacity and intermodal connections.

The City will have an active role in the Penn Station Area Public Realm Task Force, which will be charged with developing an area-wide plan for public realm improvements in concert with the Department of City Planning. It will consider opportunities to revitalize and beautify the area around Penn Station, including reimagined streetscapes and new open spaces. It also will work to ensure that the project area is seamlessly woven together with the broader West Midtown neighborhood, where massive regional infrastructure and large-scale development projects are underway, including Manhattan West, Hudson Yards, Hudson Boulevard & Park, and the Port Authority Bus Terminal Replacement and Expansion.

To that end, we expect that the GPP will include a range of public realm improvements that will complement the increase in density at this transit-rich, central business district location. A high-quality public realm is widely accepted as being an essential component in achieving a range of economic, environmental, and social benefits that are synonymous with progressive and sustainable urban development. The public realm improvements that we expect will be outlined in the plan will help the City advance these goals through a range of strategies from simple widening of sidewalks, to signature new open spaces, to major transit entrances and below-grade connections. The Plan will lay out the essential requirements the public can expect and depend on, delivering a benefit to the public that is commensurate with the scale of development envisioned in the district. As the project is built out over time, the GPP will allow for the City to

negotiate further refinement of these design improvements on a building-by-building basis to ensure maximum public benefit is being delivered.

Let me also observe that there are few places more well-suited for the high-density commercial development envisioned by the GPP than the area around and directly above Penn Station, one of the most well-connected and busiest regional transit hubs in the nation. While the conversation about the future of office space citywide and across the region continues to be discussed and debated, the appropriateness of high-density office space at this transit-rich location is certain. Proximity to transit is among the highest priorities for workers and for companies looking to attracting and maintain talent. With planned office space located directly above Penn Station, companies could not be more well positioned for attracting and retaining talent that will help grow the city's economy.

As we contemplate enhanced commercial development in the area, the city and state need to ensure that any density bonuses offered to private industry are commensurate with the public improvements that are granted. The City has worked to ensure that every single required improvement is expressly delineated in the GPP. For example, new concourse connections below 7th Avenue and connecting to Herald and Greeley Squares will help alleviate congestion and respond to important commuter movements to points north and east of the station. At the street level, wider sidewalks, shared streets, and additional open spaces will not only create more space for people, but also transform an area of the city from one that is largely defined by traffic and congestion to one that prioritizes movement and places for people. Intermodal connections will be strengthened through strategically located enhanced station entrances, along with bike lanes, and high-capacity bike storage facilities. And, while not explicitly improvements, the plan also includes details around important topics such as signage, sustainability, and equity that will help establish a dynamic district that is centered around civic life and secure the city's future against the most pressing challenges of today and tomorrow.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to share this testimony with you today.