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BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, PUBLIC BUILDINGS AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Of The

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

On

WASHINGTON UNION STATION: DEVELOPING NEW INTERMODAL USES

July 22, 2009

Chairwoman Norton and Members of the Subcommittee, I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss Greyhound's potential plans to relocate to Washington Union Station. Greyhound is eager to move its Washington intercity bus operations to Union Station and has been actively engaged in discussions focused on making that happen. I greatly appreciate the strong support for that initiative shown by Chairwoman Norton and Chairman Oberstar and Ranking Member Mica of the full Committee.

When I appeared before you a year ago, I said that after years of off and on again efforts, forces were converging that made me optimistic that plans could be finalized for Greyhound to move to Union Station in the fairly near future. The Deputy Mayor's office was actively pushing for Greyhound to move to Union Station; there was a new landlord for the Union Station interior spaces who had plans for Greyhound to have it ticket selling facilities inside the headhouse; and there was strong congressional support for the move.

My optimism proved premature. Because of opposition from Amtrak, the landlord was not able to proceed with the plans to locate Greyhound's ticketing facilities in the headhouse. Greyhound then developed plans for a ticket selling facility at the head of the escalators leading from the bus deck to the headhouse. That design is the attached Option 2. Various parties opposed that design because of crowding on those escalators.

Greyhound then came up with an alternative design (attached Option 3), which would locate the terminal in the Southwest corner of the bus deck, that is, at the front of the bus deck, but on the other side of the bus deck from the existing escalators. The benefit of that design was that there is an old escalator shaft in the middle of that space, which

could be re-opened for new vertical access. However, various parties opposed that location because of congestion at the foot of those escalators and at the front entrance to the bus deck.

Then, we came up with a third design (attached Option 1), which would locate the bus terminal at the rear of the bus deck (north end, just south of H Street). This solved the congestion issue, but created a problem for Greyhound in that it would leave its passengers with an extremely long walk from the Union Station Metro station and the headhouse. Greyhound said that this location was acceptable if the existing tunnel running from the Metro station could be finished all the way to H Street with vertical access to the bus deck.

Various parties expressed concerns about this location also. The main concern was that it would take space from other vehicles that use the bus deck, primarily charter and tour motorcoaches. Those parties took the position that the bus terminal should not be on the existing bus deck, but rather should be located on an extension of the bus deck to be constructed as part of the long range Burnham Place and redevelopment plans for Union Station.

At this point, we dug our heels in. Our position was that, although we strongly supported the long range Union Station plans, Greyhound's move to the Union Station bus deck needed to be, and could be, completed in a much shorter timeframe. We also thought that there was room on the existing bus deck to accommodate both Greyhound and the other bus deck users.

In that regard, Greyhound conducted a survey of the number of buses (including Metro buses) on the bus deck at varying times and dates at the height of Spring break and the Easter Holiday, which is the busiest period for the bus deck. We found that of the 98 bus parking spaces on the bus deck, the most that were ever occupied with buses was 36 at 12:40 PM on Saturday, April 18. The average number of buses on the bus deck for the 37 times the survey was conducted was 15.

Soon after that survey, Chairwoman Norton and Chairman Oberstar and Ranking Member Mica of the full Committee sent a May 7, 2009 letter to USRC stating that "We want Greyhound to be moved to Union Station expeditiously, and urge you to continue working with Greyhound on a more immediate solution" than incorporation in the long-range Burnham Place development.

Since that letter, there have been a series of meetings and discussions involving the major relevant parties – USRC, the DC Department of Transportation, the Office of the DC Deputy Mayor for Planning and Development, Akridge, Washington Metro, and Greyhound. Out of those discussions, I believe a consensus has emerged on a plan to proceed expeditiously to create an intercity bus terminal on the existing bus deck. I cannot say definitively that all parties agree with all parts of the plan – hopefully, this hearing will help to clarify that – but here are the key parts of the plan, as I see it:

First, I believe that all parties are in agreement that the location of the intercity bus terminal on the rear of the bus deck is the preferred option (Option 1). That option would allow for approximately 51 bus loading zones unrelated to the bus terminal.

Second, there needs to be a feasibility study to determine any weight restrictions for the terminal and issues with regard to access of utilities to the bus deck. Greyhound and USRC have agreed to split the cost of that feasibility study. The study is about to start and we hope that it can completed in 30 days.

Third, the completion of the Metro tunnel to H Street with moving walkways and vertical access (escalators, elevator, and utilities) to the bus deck is essential to the location of the bus terminal at the rear of the bus deck. This also has major benefit to residents and office workers in NoMa in that it provides climate controlled, convenient access to Union Station, the Union Station Metro station, and the future Burnham Place.

Fourth, funding of the tunnel and vertical access is a critical issue. DDOT has indicated that it intends to make available existing federal planning funds for the design and engineering work on the tunnel and vertical access. Other sources of funding will need to be identified for the construction.

Fifth, existing easements that will be impacted by the tunnel and vertical access must be identified and addressed. As with everything at Union Station, multiple parties will be involved and the process will be complicated. The process needs to get started quickly.

Sixth, USRC and Greyhound must negotiate an agreement for lease of the space for the terminal and buses. Both parties have indicated a willingness to start negotiating in the near future.

Seventh, other uses of the bus deck must be addressed. DDOT has indicated an interest in moving all of the curbside bus operators to the bus deck so that it can be a complete intercity bus terminal like Boston South Station. Greyhound does not object to that approach, but it must be done in a comprehensive manner that provides equity in both access and cost sharing.

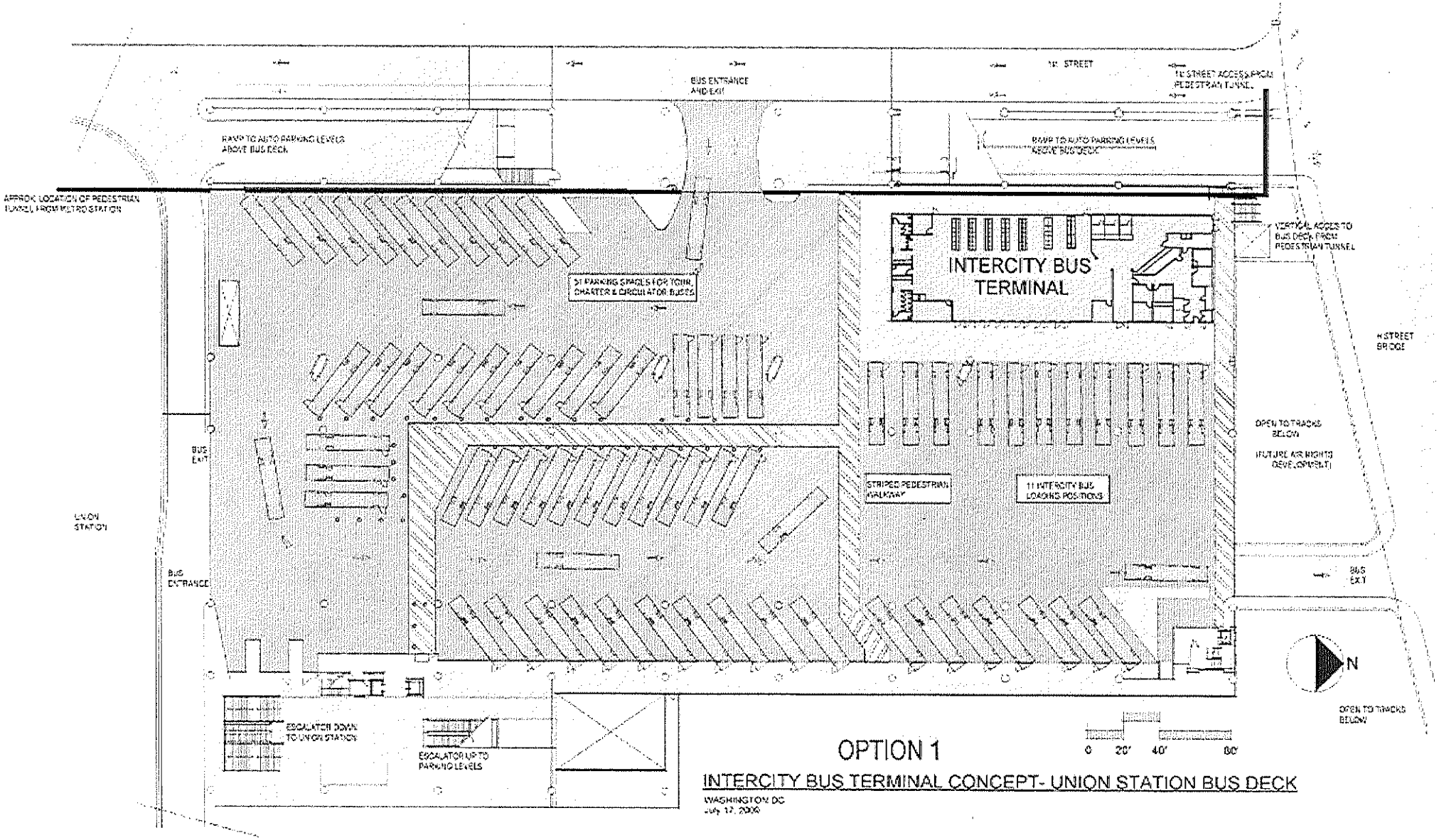
Eighth, the bus terminal must be constructed. Greyhound has committed to pay for the construction of the terminal if it is a Greyhound facility and has already expended considerable resources on design and location.

Ninth, timelines need to be identified and adhered to. Greyhound has suggested to all parties that a realistic goal for completion and occupancy of the bus beck bus terminal is 3 years from now – two years to complete the funding; design and engineering of the tunnel, vertical access, and bus terminal; and resolution of all legal issues, and one year for construction of the terminal, tunnel and vertical access.

Tenth, Greyhound must sell its NoMa location in order to free that property up for future development consistent with the City's long range plans. Greyhound fully intends to do so, although not until its future at Union Station is secure.

We have a lot of work to do to make an intercity bus terminal at Union Station a reality, but based on the recent developments I have outlined above, I have a renewed sense of optimism that it can be done. Chairwoman Norton, your strong support for this project has been essential to getting us to this point and will be critical to its successful completion. Thank you very much for that support.

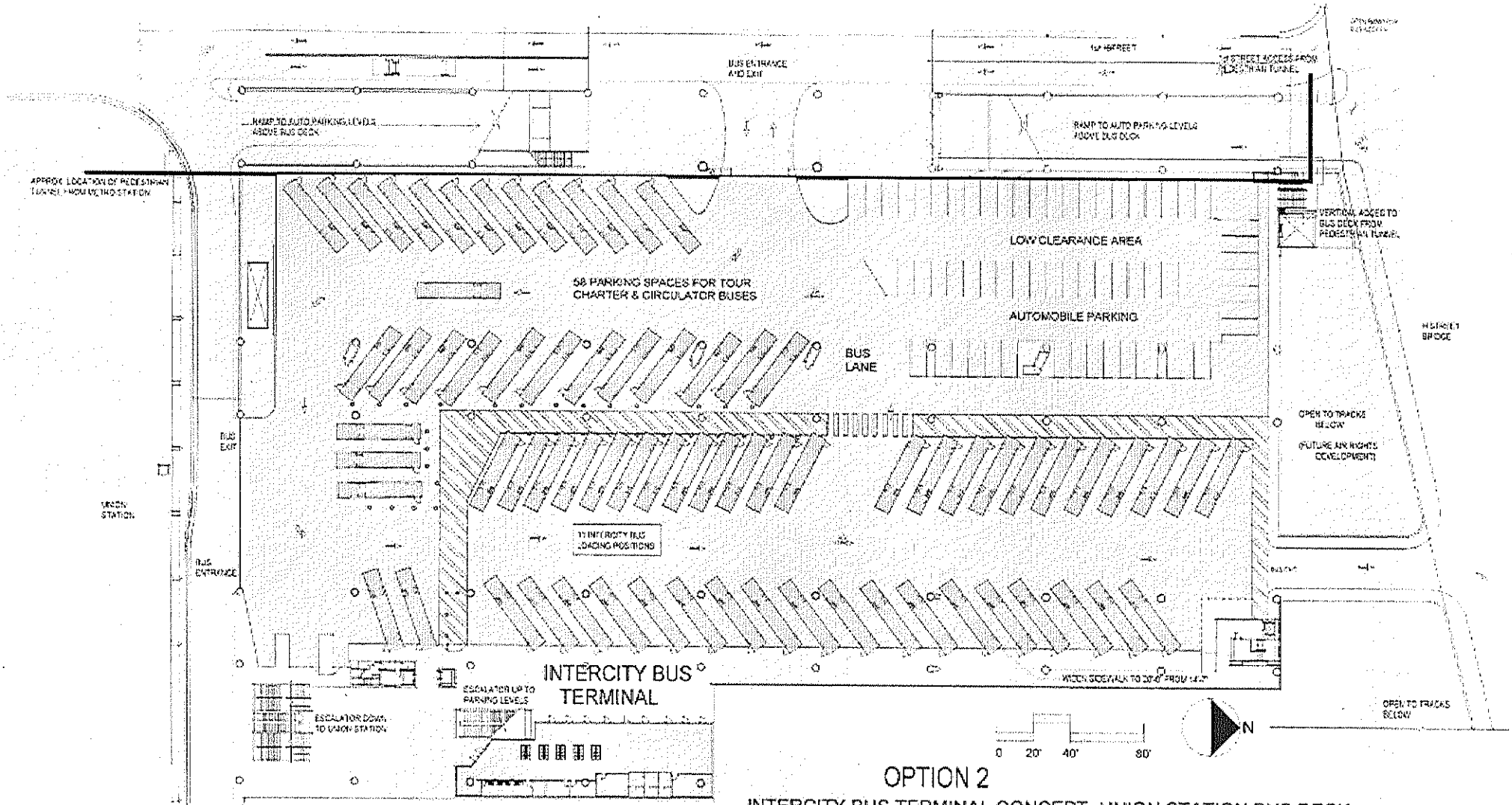
I would be happy to answer any questions you or other members of the Subcommittee might have.



OPTION 1

INTERCITY BUS TERMINAL CONCEPT- UNION STATION BUS DECK

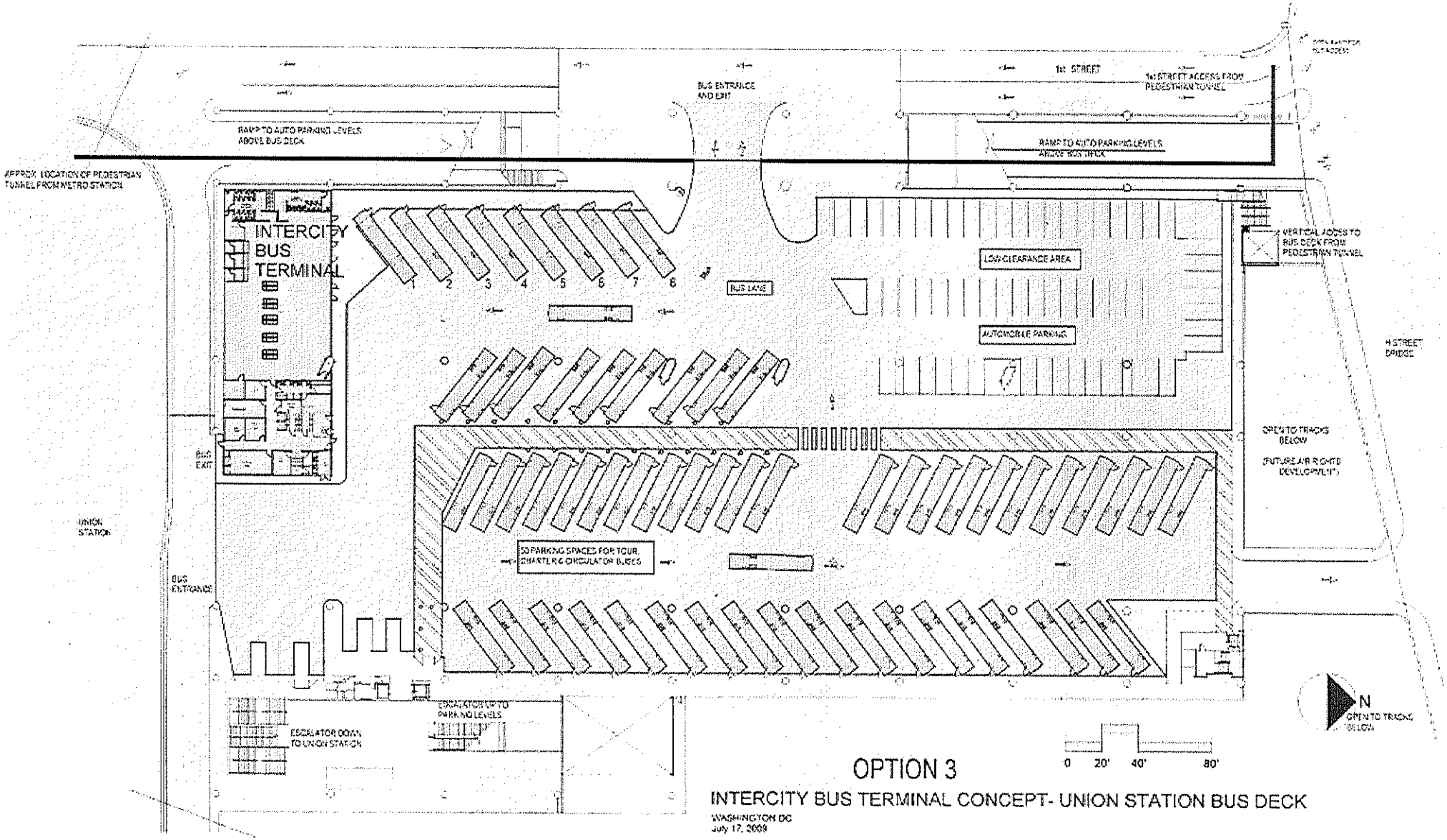
WASHINGTON DC
July 17, 2006



OPTION 2

INTERCITY BUS TERMINAL CONCEPT- UNION STATION BUS DECK

WASHINGTON DC
July 17, 2009



OPTION 3

INTERCITY BUS TERMINAL CONCEPT- UNION STATION BUS DECK

WASHINGTON DC
July 17, 2009