



Testimony of the Municipal Art Society
Before the Empire State Development Corporation
By Lisa Kersavage, Senior Director, Preservation and Sustainability
Regarding Proposed Amendment to the Moynihan Station General Project Plan
Wednesday, April 28, 2010

My name is Lisa Kersavage, and I am speaking on behalf of the Municipal Art Society. MAS believes that Moynihan Station is one of the most critically important civic projects in New York City today. A new Moynihan Station will create construction jobs in the near term; improve the capacity of Penn Station and the whole Northeast Corridor; and, once complete, will be a catalyst for development on Manhattan's far West Side.

We urge the adoption of the Proposed Amendment to the Moynihan Station General Project Plan (GPP). We believe Senator Moynihan's vision can finally be realized through this rational and achievable plan, which prioritizes the development of the public spaces and improving infrastructure, then followed by private development.

The General Project Plan's proposed phasing is what makes this project more manageable and achievable. Phase 1 will improve circulation and access to the platforms, laying the foundation for the construction of the new train hall. For the construction of the train hall in Phase 2, design elements in earlier plans can certainly provide inspiration, especially for features like allowing natural light to reach the platforms. We urge the preservation of the steel trusses in the new train hall, as they can contribute to the architectural character of the new station.

We are very pleased to see that this plan brings back the "32nd Street Pedestrian Corridor" and creating an entrance on 9th Avenue. Providing such an entrance anticipates future growth on the Far West Side, where we have the potential of a new business and residential district the size of downtown Seattle to grow.

The plan identifies Amtrak as the primary transportation tenant in the new station, something MAS and other civic groups have long advocated for. Amtrak is the ideal tenant, and the train hall can be designed to support the needs of their intercity rail travelers.

We applaud the Moynihan Station Development Corporation's stated commitment to preserve the landmark Farley Post Office building. The plan to pursue Federal Historic Tax Credits is a good one, as it will ensure the preservation of the building and bring valuable federal funds to the project. Finally, we recommend the project to go through

New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission review, as the original Moynihan Station project did in the late 1990's.

We assume the development of the annex will take place in Phase 3, which is beyond the scope of this GPP. MAS believes the annex offers a truly unique opportunity for an exciting reuse, and we urge MSDC to consider uses beyond big box retail. MAS would like to be a part of creating a vision for the reuse of the annex that would offer a sustainable economic development solution.

For more than a decade MAS has been advocating for Senator Moynihan's vision to create a grand train station worthy of our great city. This is the right plan to realize his vision and we urge you to adopt it.

The Municipal Art Society of New York is a private, non-profit membership organization whose mission is to fight for intelligent urban design, planning and preservation through education, dialogue and advocacy.