



Memorandum

DATE: October 17, 2025

TO: Chair and Redevelopment Agency Board Members

THROUGH: Jackie Bryant, Executive Director
Ashley Turney, Assistant City Manager

FROM: Dan Tresley, Project Manager

DEPT: Redevelopment Agency

SUBJECT: Reno Southern Pacific Railroad Depot and Amtrak Station Updates

The City of Reno owns two parcels located at 280 University Way, consisting of two connected buildings: the Reno Southern Pacific Railroad Depot and a newer building constructed in 2005 as part of the ReTRAC project.

Built between 1925 and 1926, Reno's Southern Pacific Railroad Depot is the fifth passenger depot to stand at the same spot in the heart of downtown. In 2012, it was listed in the National Register of Historic Places for its direct association with Reno's historical development. Between 2003 and 2006, the ReTRAC project entailed the excavation of a large trench for lowering the railroad tracks immediately north of the Southern Pacific Depot; the building was shored up and stabilized to ensure its survival. The 1966 Turf Club addition at the Depot's west end was demolished, and a new two-story addition was completed in the same part of the property in 2005.

Amtrak has a long-term lease for the newer side of the building. The construction in 2005 brought passengers from street level down to the bottom of the trench for boarding trains, and included a new waiting area as well as an elevator, stairway, and new ticket office. The City of Reno purchased the Southern Pacific Railroad Depot from Union Pacific in December of 2006, taking over management of the building and maintaining a lease with Amtrak. The building has been used as a railroad passenger depot for 99 years, and the City of Reno intends to continue that use indefinitely. However, given the shifting of most of Amtrak's daily operations into the 2005 addition at the west end of the building, the historic Depot is available for additional new

uses in service of community and visitor needs. In 2013, the City hired Architectural Resources Group to prepare a Historic Structure Report for the Southern Pacific Depot. The report outlines the history and significance of the building, the conservation recommendations and preservation objectives that include potential uses for the historical portion of the building.

The historic side of the building has been vacant for many years and experiences frequent vandalism. The buildings are connected with no walls separating the spaces. In order to activate the historic side, multiple changes are needed, and funding was not previously available. For purposes of this memo and future updates, the two parcels and buildings will be referred to as “historic” for the Reno Southern Pacific Railroad Depot and “Amtrak” for the non-historic building.

The Redevelopment Agency Board (RDA) approved \$350,000 in the FY26 budget for capital improvements to the train depot where Amtrak is co-located. While the station is a City-owned asset, the RDA investment will allow for activation of an underutilized space that is instrumental to the downtown core, aligning with the RDA Plan. These improvements include constructing a separate ADA bathroom and a wall to divide the Amtrak entrance from the historic (rear) portion of the building. The changes are necessary as there is currently no ADA-compliant bathroom on the Amtrak side of the building. With these improvements, the historic rail depot side can be partitioned for potential lease or sale.

To date, the following actions have been completed or are underway:

- Staff has executed a contract with Architects Plus LLC to determine feasibility, design, and cost of the proposed improvements. The anticipated timeline is as follows:
 - October 15, 2025 – 30% design development documents received from architect
 - October 29, 2025 – City staff and Amtrak to provide initial review and comments on 30% design development set
 - November 26, 2025 – Tentative submission of approximately 60% construction documents to City from architect
 - December 12, 2025 – City staff and Amtrak to review and provide feedback on 60% construction documents
 - January 9, 2026 – Anticipated submission of approximately 90% construction documents to City
- Staff met with Amtrak representatives to discuss the potential purchase of their portion of the building, which is currently under lease. Amtrak is not interested in a sale at this time due to the active lease agreement. Staff will revisit this discussion as the capital improvement process progresses.
- A boundary line adjustment will be required to correctly align the parcels, as they are currently not configured to allow for the sale of either portion of the building/parcels, if City Council should ever choose to sell either side.

- Staff met with Reno Fire Department to review sprinkler requirements. It was determined that the addition of bathrooms on the Amtrak side does not trigger the need for a sprinkler system, as the use of the space remains unchanged. It is anticipated that when the historic side is developed, a sprinkler installation will be required, depending on the use and occupancy of the building. The cost of installation has not yet been determined, nor budgeted.
- Staff recently discovered that the Amtrak and historic sides of the building are not on separate electrical meters. As a result, Amtrak has not been billed for its power usage. Two electrical engineers assessed the situation and confirmed that the current electrical switchgear cannot support sub-metering. The following options were evaluated:
 - Replace the entire switchgear (cost-prohibitive)
 - Install new power service for the historic side (also cost-prohibitive)
 - Install a sub-monitoring system to track and bill Amtrak's usage (\$30,000–\$50,000 installation cost, plus \$1,500 annual subscription)
- Staff is getting cost estimates and exploring other possible solutions from the electrical engineer to separate the electrical.
- An Asbestos and Lead survey is underway, and results will be reported with the next update.

Next Steps:

- Determine most appropriate electrical sub-monitoring system. Once installed, Amtrak can be billed monthly for electrical usage per the terms of their lease.
- Obtain high-level pricing from Fire Sprinkler, Mechanical Engineer/HVAC, and General Contractors for the historic side of the facility for a general understanding of future costs expected in order to open and activate the space.
- Staff to attend an upcoming Historic Resources Commission meeting to provide an update. While no changes are being made to the historic side of the building, and staff has no direction from either the RDA or the Reno City Council to take action on the historic side of the building, we would like to keep the Commission informed of the adjacent projects.