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MUNICIPAL ART SOCIETY CALLS FOR GREATER PUBLIC VOICE IN MOYNIHAN STATION DEVELOPMENT

\$1 Billion-Plus Public Investment Requires Public Oversight, Participation

New York, NY, October 23, 2007 — The Municipal Art Society today called for greater public oversight and a transparent public review process for the development of the new Moynihan Station following the release of a “scoping document” on the project by the Empire State Development Corp.

The MAS strongly supports the concept of the project, including the relocation of Madison Square Garden into the rear of the Farley building. However, the MAS also released guiding principles for the development to ensure the protection of the character of the historic Farley Post Office while ensuring that the new station is an efficient transportation portal, and a great new work of contemporary civic architecture.

“This station is a great opportunity for New York,” said Kent Barwick, president of the Municipal Art Society. “It will serve as a beautiful new gateway for the city, a catalyst to development on the West Side, and an unprecedented opportunity to create a new east/west transit connection. Without proper public oversight, however, it is an opportunity that could be wasted.”

“The original Penn Station was destroyed against the public will, and we cannot allow the new Penn Station to be developed with the same disregard for the residents and commuters who will use it,” said Barwick. “The city deserves a grand train station that will serve as an inspiring gateway to New York without becoming overwhelmed by Madison Square Garden.”

Barwick said the release of the “scoping document” yesterday that did not include conceptual plans or images of the project makes public participation more difficult and promotes cynicism rather than enthusiasm. “This project relies on \$1 billion in public financing and will serve millions of residents and commuters — the public must be fully involved in all aspects of planning,” he said.

The Municipal Art Society’s involvement with the Farley Post Office Building dates back to the 1980s, when Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan first initiated the concept of building a new rail station within McKim, Mead & White’s Post Office. The Municipal Art Society has supported the expansion of Penn Station throughout the planning process and continues to support it today. Earlier, MAS led the fight to save Grand Central Terminal and initiated plans to revitalize it as the lively station it is today.

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Municipal Art Society

Page Two

The MAS guidelines for development include:

- Support for an expanded station located on both sides of Eighth Avenue to accommodate the current commuters and an expected future increase in commuter traffic;
- Effective public oversight in the project, which will use approximately \$1B in public funds.
- Excellence in design throughout. The train hall in the Farley building should be a grand, distinguished and sunlit space preserving the historic architectural features. It should not be a forecourt for Madison Square Garden; and the new station across Eight Avenue should be an example of outstanding contemporary design.
- The beautiful lobby of New York's premier post office should continue to be used as a post office.
- Protection for the architectural integrity of the Farley building's facade from advertising. Advertising inside the new stations should be limited.
- Retail in the Stations should conform to the standards developed for Grand Central Terminal.

"Moynihan Station must be developed as an inspiring work of contemporary civic architecture," said Barwick. "New York deserves a dynamic Penn Station that enhances access for our growing population of commuters while complementing the magnificence of our city."

The Municipal Art Society also released results from a recent poll that demonstrate commuters and mass transit riders overwhelmingly favor a Penn Station redevelopment that enhances access to accommodate increased traffic, that the public wants a voice in the redevelopment and that they feel they are not fully informed about current plans for the Farley Post Office building.

Poll respondents overwhelmingly felt that Penn Station should be expanded to accommodate the expected increase in passengers and that the current Penn Station must be improved aesthetically, architecturally and functionally. More than 66 percent of all respondents would rather travel through a train station that looks like Grand Central Terminal than Penn Station.

In addition, there was strong public support for using the 1990s renovation of Grand Central Terminal as a model for the future renovation of Penn Station. Nearly 90 percent of respondents agreed with Metro-North's decision to remove billboards blocking the natural light and architectural details of the building. And at least 85 percent of respondents felt that Madison Square Garden should not be allowed to cover or block the exterior of the Farley building with advertising.

While almost all participants are residents of New York City and its suburbs, their awareness of plans to renovate Penn Station was low. Despite consistent media coverage on the issue since 1999, only 40 percent of respondents had heard about plans to build a new Penn Station and only 40 percent were aware of a plan to expand Penn Station across Eighth Avenue to the Farley Post Office building.

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Municipal Art Society

Page Three

Notably, 92 percent of respondents believe the public should have a chance to see the renovation plans before they are endorsed by the governor and mayor. Additionally, 80 percent of participants want public oversight of the renovation. Nearly all respondents stated it is important for the city and state of New York to preserve beautiful historic buildings and more than 90 percent believe it is important to preserve the Farley Post Office building in particular.

Nearly 75 percent of respondents would prefer to use the grand entry hall and historic exterior of the Farley Post Office for Penn Station rather than for Madison Square Garden, and a full 80 percent agreed that expanding Penn Station into the grand entry hall of the Farley Post Office building, with its high ceilings and abundance of natural light, will allow Penn Station to re-establish some of its original greatness.

The poll, conducted by Whitman Insight Strategies, used online interviews to gather information and opinions from 500 New York commuters, including those who travel through Penn Station and those for whom Penn Station is not a primary hub. The poll was conducted from June 20 through June 25, and included responses from 160 Penn Station commuters and 340 commuters who live in the New York area and do not travel through Penn Station. Respondents were asked a series of open and closed end questions about their use of Penn Stations and Grand Central Terminal, and their preferences between the two stations.

The Municipal Art Society of New York is a private, non-profit membership organization whose mission is to promote a more livable city. Since 1893, the organization has worked to enrich the culture, neighborhoods and physical design of New York City. It advocates for excellence in urban design and planning, contemporary architecture, historic preservation and public art. For more information, please visit www.mas.org and www.newpennstation.org.

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