

DUS News Digest

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Construction activities to begin at Union Station

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Denver Daily News
February 22, 2010

The Denver Union Station Project Authority's contractor for the Denver Union Station redevelopment project, Kiewit Western, will begin early construction activities at Denver Union Station beginning today. Traffic will be redirected on Wewatta to one lane in each direction on the southbound side for a few weeks starting today. Traffic will then move to one lane in each direction on the northbound side. These traffic changes will require RTD bus stops to be relocated slightly either to the north or south on Wewatta. Additional pre-construction activities will be occurring over the next few weeks in preparation for the commencement of major construction at Denver Union Station. Be advised that all construction activities are weather-dependent and subject to change. For complete up-to-date information on upcoming construction activities, access the Construction Details Page on the Denver Union Station Web site at www.denverunionstation.com or call 303-209-9822.

February 22, 2010

By Charles Charvat, Denver City Hall Examiner

After being on hold for over a year, the planned renovation and expansion of Union Station is alive once more with the announcement, on February 6, of a \$304 million federal loan which completes the funding package for the new transit hub.

According to Westword, Bill Mosher, owner representative for the project, is all kind of excited - as he should be. Public agencies have been working for years to complete the funding for the renovation of the historic train station. In addition to cosmetics, there will be accommodations for light rail, Amtrak and the proposed FasTracks commuter rail services. Present plans call for a sleek new train room addition and an underground bus circular , plus additional tracks for a variety of different rail services.

Mosher expects to break ground sometime in April with the entire project to be completed in four years.

That's just great for Denver Light Rail and Amtrak - they'll be ready when Union Station is. FasTracks, on the other hand, is an entirely different story. RTD's ambitious commuter train system may not run a train into union station for many long years after the transit hub is finished. Why? Money, of course.

The Denver Post recently reported that RTD faces a funding gap of \$2.4 billion (with a "b") for the system. FasTracks was originally funded primarily through a .4 percent sales tax increase that was approved by voters in 2004. Now RTD would like the citizens to double their contribution so that FasTracks can launch in 2017 or, at the latest, 2019. It depends on which year the tax increase is approved by the voters. Also according to The Denver Post, "Failure to approve a tax increase could push FasTracks completion to 2040." That may make the new Union Station look as empty and forlorn as it does now - for years to come.

It is feared that this year may not be a good time to ask the voters to approve a tax increase. And, maybe next year isn't going to look much better. And, there's no guarantee that Fastracks costs aren't going to skyrocket again. Business leaders and the other usual suspects (labor, civic and environmental groups) have formed a group called the Coalition for Smart Transit who's purpose is to sell the tax increase to the electorate. They think they will need to raise \$4 million to create a campaign that will beat the voter over the head badly enough to get the votes needed for the tax increase.

If only RTD could budget and plan as well as they run political campaigns.

February 25, 2010

By Kevin Flynn, InDenverTimes ·

A group of rail transit advocates asked a federal judge on Tuesday to stop FasTracks construction at Denver Union Station until the court can rule in a lawsuit seeking to overturn the environmental approval for the work.

Colorail – the Colorado Rail Passenger Association – sued in U.S. District Court in Denver last May claiming the Federal Transit Administration should not have approved the Environmental Impact Statement that RTD produced for the \$480 million project. RTD, along with its partners Denver, CDOT and the Denver Regional Council of Governments, is converting Union Station into the hub of most FasTracks rail lines.

The Union Station Neighborhood Company, the master developer chosen to do the work, began early site construction this week in the large open area – where railyards used to be – north of Union Station where an underground bus transfer facility is planned. That is what prompted Colorail to file for the temporary restraining order.

Colorail has longstanding objections to the design of the transit facilities and maintains that it wasn't properly reviewed in light of requirements in the federal National Environmental Policy Act that requires such studies. The FTA issued its approval on Oct. 17, 2008.

Chief among Colorail's complaints is that the new design will rip up the existing light rail platform and relocate it two and half blocks north, near the pedestrian Millennium Bridge and along the freight railroad tracks, to make room for the heavy rail platforms of the north metro FasTracks corridors.

They would be connected by the underground bus station and grade-level plaza planned to run along the 17th Street axis. That is the site where early construction began this week.

Colorail wants a new environmental study.

Backers of the Union Station design, including RTD and Denver's newly created authority overseeing the redevelopment, Denver Union Station Project Authority, maintain that the law was properly followed. Delay at this point, RTD says, would delay completion of the station improvements necessary to stay on schedule with FasTracks corridors. The West Corridor light rail is currently under construction in Denver, Lakewood and Golden with an opening in mid-2013 that would bring its trains into the

station. The East Corridor heavy-rail commuter train to Denver International Airport is supposed to be done the following year.

The case is before Judge John Kane.

Judge denies attempt to stop FasTracks work at Denver Union Station

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Feb. 26, 2010

By Kevin Flynn, Inside Lane

U.S. District Judge John Kane today declined to issue an order that would have halted work that began this week on the conversion of Denver Union Station into the rail hub for the FasTracks network.

At a hearing this morning, the judge denied a motion by the Colorado Rail Passenger Association for a temporary restraining order.

Colorail sued RTD, the Federal Transit Administration and the Denver Union Station Project Authority last year over FTA's approval of the Final Environmental Impact Statement for the project. Colorado maintains that the final document, in differing substantially from the draft, did not follow the procedures in the National Environmental Policy Act that required it.

RTD and DUSPA respond that the process followed all of the rules and that the approval was proper. Earlier this month, FTA awarded the Union Station renovation project \$304 million in two loans RTD and DUSPA were seeking to get the total \$480 million project started.

Construction began Monday with earth work starting out north of the station property where the plan calls for an underground bus transfer station.

Among other things, Colorail said that the later inclusion of the bus station into the original plan entailed other changes, such as moving the light rail station two and a half blocks from the proposed heavy-trail commuter platforms. Colorail's position is that the change resulted in the possibility of irreparable harm to the historic environments and future transit needs of the facility.

RTD and DUSPA disagree and say the changes were fully analyzed and worked through during the environmental study.