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July 17, 2010

By Jeffrey Leib, Denver Post



Construction workers apply a waterproof membrane over a concrete slab poured for a "bus box" Friday at Union Station. (Andy Cross, The Denver Post)The group developing Union Station as an expanded transit hub for RTD got a major boost Friday when the bond-ratings agency Fitch assigned an "A" rating to a key component of the project's debt.

Board members of the Denver Union Station Project Authority broke out in cheers when their financial adviser Alexander Brown told them Fitch had just announced the medium investment-grade rating for a loan of up to \$155 million from the U.S. Department of Transportation.

The development group is borrowing that amount under one loan program operated by the Transportation Department's Federal Highway Administration, and a second subordinate loan of a similar amount from the department's Federal Railroad Administration.

The project needed the investment-grade designation on the debt to move the federal loan package forward, and Brown said the favorable rating "was made possible by the strength of the revenue pledge made by RTD."

Last year, the Regional Transportation District agreed to issue a sales-tax-revenue bond of about \$168 million to back the loan. That backing originated with the voter-approved 2004 tax measure that created FasTracks.

Winning up to \$310 million in federal loans has been a prerequisite for advancing the Union Station project, which is expected to cost \$480 million.

The project's board voted Friday to approve the loans, and officials said they hope a final closing on the deals can be signed Tuesday or Wednesday.

A redeveloped Union Station will be the hub of RTD's FasTracks-enhanced transit system that will include the new West Corridor light-rail line to Lakewood and Golden, a

commuter-rail line to Denver International Airport and most likely, train lines to Arvada/Wheat Ridge and south Westminster.

The West Corridor train line is under construction and is scheduled for completion in the first half of 2013. Late next month, RTD will break ground on the \$1.2 billion East Corridor line to DIA.

Now, construction at Union Station is underway on an underground bus station that will link a new light-rail platform on the west side of the project with a commuter-rail terminal next to the station.

July 21, 2010

By Rick Anstey

Current activity is all about building foundations for the bus terminal and the light rail station.

First, let's look at the bus terminal. The six-inch-thick concrete mud slab is expanding through the area occupied by the foundations for the two escalators and the elevator. The water-proof membrane is being installed over the portion of the mud slab that was poured last week. Likewise, rebar is being installed over the membrane.

I'll try to decipher the photo below that I took from the eighth floor of Glass House. To the right is the bare concrete mud slab. The dark area against the shoring wall is concrete covered by the membrane, which is covered by a very dense amount of rebar. Between the rebar area and the bare concrete is the area covered only with the membrane. It's identifiable by the light-colored grid. Work on the concrete, membrane, and rebar is continuing.

Considering the size of the rebar (it takes three men to carry one piece of it) and the fact that the floor will be four feet thick, it appears that the foundation will be a pretty solid.



Now for the light rail station. This part of the project is far less dramatic in scope than the bus terminal, but vital nonetheless. The following photo is from the Millennium Bridge and shows that the station foundations are now approaching the Union Gateway Bridge (in the background). The ground surface will be raised to the tops of the concrete foundations/walls. Then the tracks can be laid, and the passenger platform can be built.



July 22, 2010

By Rick Anstey, Denver Infill Blog

Cheyenne Frontier Days must be upon us. Steam engine 844 and the rest of Union Pacific's historic train is pulling into Union Station as I write this.

In past years, the train has backed into the tracks behind the station and broken itself into two pieces such that the front half parks on one set of tracks and the back half on another set. This year, there is only one set of tracks. As you know from previous DenverInfill blogs, the other tracks have been removed as part of the Union Station redevelopment project.

Amtrak's California Zephyr is due to arrive in a few hours from Chicago. Hmm. Where it will park?

Next year, it will be even more challenging. All the tracks behind the station will be gone and Amtrak will be using its temporary terminal on the other side of 20th Street. Hmm. Where will 844 park?

Here is a photo of the engine and train.



Shortly after taking that photo yesterday afternoon, the train pulled away and parked about a half mile to the northeast, out of sight of Union Station. It returns to Union Station on Friday (today) and Sunday for public display from 10am to 8pm each day. Union Pacific and Amtrak appear to be well coordinated on the use of the limited track space behind the station.