



Springfield's Union Station on track again for federal funding

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By **Peter Goonan, The Republican**

SPRINGFIELD – The Federal Transit Administration has lifted a freeze on funding for the **Union Station** redevelopment project, ruling that the Springfield Redevelopment Authority has satisfied requirements to become the “direct recipient” of grant money.

U.S. Rep. Richard E. Neal, D-Springfield, said this week that the letter of approval from the federal agency is a milestone that will help resurrect the \$71 million intermodal transportation project, serving bus, train and other forms of public transportation. Union Station, built in 1926, has stood dormant since it was closed as a railroad station in 1973.



The Republican file photo

The exterior of Union Station is seen in 2006 on Frank B. Murray Street in downtown Springfield.

“I think it signals the re-set for Union Station,” Neal said. “We have been assured by the (U.S.) Department of Transportation that once the forms are filled out, this gets the project back on target.”

The redevelopment authority “seems eager to meet the challenge,” Neal said. The project includes federal, state and private funding.

The Federal Transit Administration’s decision means the authority is now eligible to receive approximately \$29.7 million in frozen public funds for the project, including about \$26 million in federal funds, according to Kevin E. Kennedy, aide to Neal.

The Springfield Redevelopment Authority, which owns Union Station, has become the lead agency on the project. The authority will advertise for a project manager and will subsequently hire an architect.

In order to be deemed eligible for federal funds, the authority had to show through a lengthy process that it

has "the financial, legal and technical capacity" to move the project forward, Kennedy said.

Several years ago, the Federal Transit Administration froze approximately \$38 million in federal funding for the Union Station project after a 2005 audit showed questionable spending by the Pioneer Valley Transit Authority under former administrator Gary A. Shepard. .

The regional transit authority remains a partner in the project and the lead tenant.

The redevelopment has been pursued since the 1980s and was proposed in the past as a larger scale, \$115 million project.

Mayor Domenic J. Sarno said the selection of the redevelopment authority to directly oversee the project is good news. The city looks forward to make Union Station "a regional hub not just for transportation but for economic development," he said.

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