



Editorial: Springfield's Union Station project hops on the fast track

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By **The Republican Editorials**



By Michael S. Gordon/The Republican

Artist rendering and blueprint of Union Station Regional Intermodal Transportation Center planned for Springfield's old Union Station on Frank B. Murray St. The design is by HDR, an architectural and engineering firm.

The plan to **renovate Springfield's Union Station** into a \$70 million intermodal transportation and retail center has been stalled for so long that any talk of moving the project forward is greeted with **skepticism**.

Over the last three decades, one grand design after another has fallen off the tracks due to legal complications, lack of funding and an uncooperative economy.

But like "The Little Engine that Could," advocates for the project refused to give up the idea of making the 1920s-era station into a modern transportation hub.

Last week, **Mayor Domenic J. Sarno**, assured city residents that the persistence is finally paying off. Sarno said "the stars are aligning" to put the project back on the track.

As proof that the project is moving forward, Sarno held a press conference at the old station to **introduce the head of the Boston architectural firm** that will earn \$4.2 million to come up with the basic design for a refurbished station.

Donald A. Warner, senior vice president of HDR Architecture Inc. in Boston, said the firm's first job is to find profitable uses for the cavernous and long-vacant depot.

"It's a historic project, but we need to remember we are building a 21st century facility," he said. Office and retail space are among possible uses for the old station, he said.

Plans call for renovations to the 200,000-square foot main terminal building and a refurbished passenger train platform. The existing freight building will be demolished and replaced with a 23-bay bus terminal and a 400-space parking garage.

With legal problems solved and new federal funding - **secured with the help of U.S. Rep. Richard E. Neal** - the project is finally moving to the fast track.

Warner said construction will begin in the summer of 2012 with the work slated for completion in 2015.

Considering how long this project has been on the drawing board, that's practically a nano-second.

We look forward to the restoration of **the station** to its former grandeur.

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Republican File Photo

An undated postcard of Union Station in Springfield taken from The Republican's photo archives.