

Upgraded train station chugging along

by Cory Davenport, Contributing Writer
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ALTON - A new high-speed rail system connecting Alton with **Chicago** is set to start operations by summer 2017, and comes with a new 9,000 square-foot Alton terminus station.

Most recently, construction on **Homer M. Adams Parkway** near **Golf Street** has caused traffic commotions and congestion. **Alton Mayor Brant Walker** said that construction is nearly complete. The southbound lanes have been poured on Golf Street, and the northbound turn road is now complete. Intersection work is still being done at this point. Walker said the current goal was to ensure the construction on the new station was "buttoned up" for more interior work throughout the winter. The projected completion of the station is March 2017.

"It will look like a modern take on a Frank Lloyd Wright building with brick and stone working with the surrounding land," Walker said.

When completed, the station will act as the start and end point for a high-speed rail connecting Alton with Chicago. That trip's estimated time will be as short as four hours. **Amtrak** will be the passenger rail line utilizing the track and station.

"In the very near future, you can go from Alton to Chicago in four hours," Walker said. "We're already seeing the tourism numbers grow because of it."

Walker said the high speed rail terminus will make a day trip to Alton a possibility for Chicago residents. He said **St. Louis** travelers going to Chicago may drive to Alton and

save time through the rail system. Walker said he was optimistic for the rail terminus helping expand and already-healthy **Beltline Corridor**.

"We have some of the best locations in the region for many of our retailers," he said. "Our **Applebee's** is something like number three in the region, and I think our **Lowe's** might be number one."

With the expansion of the train station from a 100-year-old, 900 square-foot station on College to a modern one 10 times that size, Walker said he expected more retail to move into the Beltline Corridor. New additions such as **Kay Jewelers** and a **Firehouse Subs** are just the beginning of what Walker sees in the area's future.

"Alton is turning into a regional shopping hub and retail destination," he said. "I think we will continue to grow, and we're seeing the opening stages of a renaissance."

The area around the new station will be utilized for retail after bids are taken before the end of the year, Walker said. Green space will also be integral to the new station. Walker said the city is working with the **Sierra Club** to create walking and bike trails in the former **Robert P. Wadlow Golf Course**. He said the city and the Sierra Club would plant native vegetation, which is low maintenance.

[CLICK HERE TO SEE AERIAL PHOTOS OF THE NEW TRAIN STATION, COURTESY OF THE NEW RIVERBENDER.COM SKY CAM DRONE:](#)



