

End of the Line: Alton Area Landmarks Association President discusses loss of old train station

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ALTON - Built in 1926, the former Alton train station located near College Avenue accepted its last passengers last night.

From now on, train passengers coming to Alton will enter and depart the city from the new multi-modal facility, located near Homer Adams Parkway, at the former location of

the Robert Wadlow Golf Course. But, what will happen to the old train station? Alton Area Landmark Association President Terry Sharp said Thursday afternoon the old station will almost assuredly be demolished. Sharp, accompanied by several Altonians, attempted to save the old station - but it proved to be much too challenging of a task.

Due to its proximity to the tracks, Union Pacific Railroad, which owns the building, required any potential takers of the building to move it. Stipulations also dictated the building be sold to a non-profit for the cost of a mere dollar. Sharp said the guidelines put forth by the railroad company were "somewhat complicated."

"We've been trying for two years to find an alternative to demolition," he said. "But, nothing has come up. It must be moved to be saved, and we explored all sorts of different ways both private and public."

Money, ultimately, was the top problem among several regarding the topic of moving the station. Sharp said moving the building would cost at least \$150,000, and viaducts and utility wires would make any route exceedingly difficult to undertake. Also, the building would need an interested party to buy it, a new place for it to go and a purpose once that place and buyer were determined.

"It's sad the building could not be saved somehow," Sharp said. "I think they have the money to tear it down. It's one of the ironies of life; I think they have the money to tear it down, but not any to move it. Every time they come with the new, there's never any consideration of what to do with the old. I hope as a community, we learn a lesson from this. Maybe we will put time and effort and money on buildings left behind."

Sharp said the old station, which is now vacant, holds so many memories of people coming and going from Alton. He said students and soldiers went away and home from that station, and it holds both a reserve of hellos and a reserve of goodbyes. He ultimately wishes Alton could have found a way to save it as many other municipalities had done with their old stations.

Alton Mayor Brant Walker said Union Pacific was moving ahead with demolition plans for the future. He said he could not give a definitive date, nor a time frame on when that demolition may occur.

The ribbon cutting for the new multi-modal station will occur Friday morning at 11 a.m.