

Groundbreaking for Alton Regional Multi-Modal Transportation Center marks historic moment

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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ALTON - Immense excitement was in the air at the groundbreaking for the new **Alton Regional Multi-Modal Transportation Center** along Homer Adams Parkway on Monday morning.

The groundbreaking was well attended by nearly every key area federal, state and local politician. There were many representatives from government, labor organizations, community groups and businesses.

Alton Mayor **Brant Walker** said Monday was definitely “historic” for the city and the region.

He said the new 9,000-square-foot Alton Regional Multi-Modal Transportation Center, “will be ten times larger than the existing station, possesses upgraded amenities, shall serve as an important entry point to our community and state, and will be a catalyst for the development of the remaining 33 acres here at the Robert Wadlow Town Centre.”

Walker said Alton has been blessed with its strategic location and because of that, it can move products nationally and internationally. He said this is one more step in that direction.

He said Alton’s strategic location puts it near federal interstates, airport facilities, barges and also with the expansion some of the top rail facilities of any city its size in the country.

“This should have huge economic impact on the region,” Walker said.

In addition to Mayor Walker, Madison County Board Chairman **Alan Dunstan**, State Representative **Dan Beiser**, State Senator **Bill Haine**, Representative **Mike Bost**, **Cameron Yost** representing Senator **Richard Durbin**, and **Marc Magliari** representing Amtrak spoke at the groundbreaking. Speakers praised the work of Senator Durbin, Former Representative Jerry Costello, and the numerous regional business, labor, transportation, and community organizations that collaborated to help secure funding for this project.

The City of Alton received a \$13.85 Million federal TIGER (Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery) Grant in December 2011. In addition, the City received an Illinois Green Infrastructure Grant for approximately \$550,000 for riparian restoration. The Illinois Department of Transportation previously received federal funds for upgrading rail infrastructure to accommodate high-speed trains. In the Alton area, this amounted to approximately \$6.4 Million.



Dunstan said the new transportation center will be a great economic engine for the City of Alton, Madison County and the entire region as a whole.

“Madison County supports two high-speed rail stops in the St. Louis area, one in St. Louis and one here in Alton,” Dunstan said. “This is high-speed rail and the less stops the better. Alton has done a tremendous job and the county is thrilled what this will do for economic development and for the area.”

Dunstan mentioned that not only will Madison County residents use the new transportation center, but many from North St. Louis will also catch the train here.

“This will put Alton on the map,” Dunstan said.

Magliari said Amtrak and Alton has been partners for many years and the network has continued to grow.

“This rail system is important in Chicago, but it is even more important down state for people who come from North St. Louis County and get on a train and the Alton area,” Magliari said. “Parking is free in Alton vs. Downtown St. Louis where it is not. The

City of Alton has been a great partner expanding parking each time. The TIGER Grant competition is so great, there are six to eight times the applications as grants to the award.”

Magliari also said in a year, when the new transportation center is finished, many additional people throughout the country would become familiar with Alton.

Cameron Yost, representing U.S. Senator Richard Durbin, spoke of how Durbin was instrumental in TIGER Grants becoming a reality. Since 2009, Congress has dedicated more than \$4.1 billion for six rounds of TIGER grants to fund projects. She also said Durbin wanted to convey this is a great example of what can happen when a community works together to accomplish a common goal. Rep. Yost agreed that this is certainly a huge milestone for this area and he is excited to see it become a reality.

[SEE VIDEO BELOW OF GROUNDBREAKING:](#)

Rep. Beiser may have had the most memorable remark of the day when he joked that many of his old golf balls from the old Robert Wadlow Course may be dug up because he had so many land outside the fairway.

On a serious note, Beiser said he viewed Monday as a great day, not only from his position as a state representative but as an Alton citizen.

“It is one of our premier changes for the better in Alton,” Beiser said.



Beiser praised former Secretary of Transportation Gary Hannig for his commitment to the project, along with Dale Stewart and organized labor, along with all the others who worked on the project to make the project a reality in Alton. He also mentioned Mayor Walker and the initial commitment to the project of former Alton Mayor Tom Hoechst and Phil Roggio.

He said with the organized labor from the area that will be used, he knows the project in the end will be “top notch.”

Illinois Sen. Haine echoed Beiser’s remarks, saying, it was “a great day.”

“This is not just an asset to the City of Alton, but it is a regional asset,” Haine said. “This is the beginning of a process to re-establish Alton as a pivotal part of the Chicago-St. Louis corridor.”

