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WRTA opens new hub – a monumental day for public transportation in Worcester

WORCESTER _ The Worcester Regional Transit Authority's (WRTA) new transportation hub is opening for business. On May 28, federal, state and local officials will cut the ribbon on a multi-million dollar federal and state funded intermodal project that gives a centralized transportation facility and enhanced transportation system to the City of Worcester and the surrounding region. Officials are touting this project as a testament of the investment to regional transit authorities by the state and federal governments.

“By working across all levels of government and with our partners in the public and private sectors, we are building a better downtown in Worcester that will benefit the city and surrounding communities,” said Lieutenant Governor Timothy Murray. “In doing so, we have also strategically invested in public transportation to help residents and businesses get from Point A to Point B in and around the city. The grand opening of the WRTA's new transportation hub will not only offer more transportation options but also open the doors for increased activity and future economic development in Worcester's growing downtown district.”

“Today marks the celebration of an important milestone for Worcester and the region. This new transportation hub will provide for easier and more convenient access for riders, and will play a key role in assisting the City in creating new, smart development opportunities,” said Senator Harriett Chandler.

“About a decade ago, several members of the board had a vision. This vision is now coming true. We weren't sure that this would ever happen, but one of our goals is being realized. Excited would be an understatement. We are confident that the new hub will be very beneficial to our passengers,” said William Lehtola, Chairman of the WRTA Advisory Board.

“The WRTA is delighted to offer a new state-of-the-art building to the community. Not only is our new building integrated into the city's urban core and design, but it positions the WRTA to offer a more robust service to its riders by leveraging our new technology, energy efficient vehicles, on-site customer service and amenities, along with seamless transportation options provided at Union Station, the region's multimodal transportation center,” said WRTA Administrator Stephen O'Neil. “It is an exciting time for transportation advancements not only in Worcester, but for the betterment of the entire region.”

The new hub stands adjacent to Union Station, with access to the commuter rail, Greyhound and Peter Pan buses, and bike paths, giving riders complete access to all modes of public transportation. It will now be the WRTA's starting and ending points for all fixed bus routes and offers riders a 14,000 square foot facility that houses the WRTA administrative offices, a customer service center, public waiting area, restroom facilities, coffee shop, ticket vending machines, covered bus bays, and eight WRTA bus slips.

“This new WRTA hub stands as a monument to what we can accomplish when local, state, and federal officials work together to satisfy a public need. Not only will this new facility serve as an improved, more functional hub for regional transportation service, connecting the WRTA system with Commuter Rail, Amtrak, and commercial bus service, it will also serve a crucial role in the ongoing economic redevelopment of downtown Worcester,” said U.S. Congressman James McGovern. “The ‘big idea’ behind CitySquare has always been to connect and include several neighborhoods – Main Street, North Main Street, the Canal District, and Shrewsbury Street – into a ‘new’ expanded downtown. This transportation hub, at the center of those neighborhoods, and at the foot of the newly reopened Front Street, will be a keystone in opening access to those areas – very practically connecting people from outside and inside Worcester with all our community has to offer.”

It also offers the latest technology, including Wi-Fi access, and enables riders to view electronic signs with bus route information and audio announcements. It is entirely handicap accessible and incorporates green building energy design concepts.

“The new WRTA Hub will provide riders with excellent amenities that will likely entice more people to ride. Providing one location to transfer, rather than having to crisscross the common area to catch another bus is one such amenity. Another is having a sheltered wait area where

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riders can grab a snack or a cup of coffee. The WRTA is also helping riders who want to transfer to the MBTA commuter rail and intercity buses. They are even providing bike racks and will be connected into the Blackstone River Greenway bike trail once the northern end is completed over the next couple of years," said Mary Ellen Blunt, Transportation Program Manager for the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission.

"The Governor and Lieutenant Governor see transportation investments as an essential component in creating jobs and building a strong economy," said Massachusetts Department of Transportation Secretary & CEO Richard A. Davey, "and the new WRTA transportation hub is a perfect example. This is great news for Worcester commuters and visitors, and I am especially pleased that this project will encourage travel across all modes of transportation."

The building was designed by Wendel Duchscherer Architects & Engineers, PC in Buffalo, NY.

"We see this project through a number of filters. First and foremost, a home and anchor for WRTA. Secondly, and equally important, it provides both an architectural transition from the historic Union Station to the new developments to the west, as well as a pedestrian connection among these three elements focusing on the green space to the north of the new structure as a key, passive, pedestrian connector. Particularly at night, the building will be a 'beacon' reminding us of these elements of urban connectivity," said David C. Duchscherer.

Consigli Construction Co. of Milford, MA was the construction manager on the project, which began 14 months ago. Skanska USA Building was the project manager.

"Consigli is thankful for the opportunity to work with a great team on such an important project for the WRTA. As a group, the team was able to overcome multiple obstacles and deliver a high quality facility that all can be proud of," said Ryan Jennette, Project Manager for Consigli.

"Skanska is thrilled to join the WRTA in celebrating the grand opening of Worcester's new, energy efficient Union Station Bus Transfer Center," said Paul Hewins, General Manager and Executive Vice President of Skanska USA Building's New England region. "It has been a great partnering with the WRTA, local workers and subcontractors in and around Worcester to provide its residents with a more efficient means of transportation that also reflects Skanska's commitment to green building and design."

"Our strategic investments and defined progress in mass-transit speaks to a bright future - for it is all about ease and affordability to connect - to and from work, to and from home and to and from the region and the world. We have to continue to position our City and Central MA region for this reality. The addition of the Worcester Regional Transit Authority's Main Transfer Station at Washington Square, close to our Union Station Intermodal Hub, is another great step forward. It is a state-of-the-art, customer-friendly facility, where a patron can access all WRTA's routes or walk into Union Station for all our other intermodal offerings - with connections into our Downtown, our neighborhoods, our schools, our businesses, our region and beyond. Great job by the WRTA Board, its Director and all involved to make this step possible," said Worcester City Manager Michael O'Brien.

For more information, visit the WRTA website at www.therta.com.