



Denver's Transportation Transformation Occurring Thanks to Federal Funding
Of the \$480 million Union Station project budget, nearly \$390 million were federal fund

The redevelopment of Denver's Union Station is part of an ongoing national trend to restore historic train stations as thriving centers where residents, commuters and visitors can live, work and play in the city core. Federal funding has been instrumental in making Denver's redevelopment not only, possible, but a success.

The Regional Transportation District (RTD) and its Union Station partners are changing the face of downtown Denver to a multimodal transit-oriented community as Union Station will be the hub to connect light rail, commuter rail, buses, Amtrak intercity rail, shuttles, bicyclists, taxis and pedestrians. In addition, 15 construction projects, comprising an estimated \$1 billion in development, are occurring on the 20 acres that surround Union Station bringing new retail, residential, office space, public plazas and a boutique hotel to lower downtown Denver.

RTD led the purchase of Union Station in 2001 for \$50 million. The 2004 ballot initiative vote approving the FasTracks transit expansion program gave the Union Station redevelopment the green light, and a financial plan that included 11 different funding sources is what took the project past the finish line – much of it federal dollars. Of the \$480 million project budget, nearly \$390 million is some form of federal funds.

“You cannot do this alone. It has to be a partnership that includes federal investment,” says Regional Transportation District CEO and General Manager Phil Washington. “This is really a collaborative effort and a great example of what we can do as a region with federal investment in our projects. The federal dollars are one leg in what I call the three-legged financing stool – local, federal and private funds all coming together to build our projects. It's the way of the future.”

The first FasTracks rail project – the West Rail Line or W Line – opened in 2013. That project was also made possible through a federal grant totaling \$308 million. Not only are federal funds

helping build transit improvements, but also translating into economic development opportunities all across the Denver region.

This funding model is how RTD is building out its Eagle P3 project, which opens in 2016. The public-private partnership is building three rail lines including the line to Denver International Airport – Denver’s first commuter rail line. Of the \$2.2 billion project cost, \$1.03 billion is through a New Starts grant from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA).

Federal funding is also giving life to yet another RTD FasTracks project – the \$207 million extension of RTD’s existing Southeast Rail Line. RTD has applied for a \$92 million FTA New Starts federal grant, which looks promising. RTD’s investment in the project would be \$66 million. Additionally, the local business community in the southeast metro Denver area has committed to contributing \$25 million in cash and \$15 million in right-of-way, permits and other in-kind contributions to get the light rail extension project completed.

During a recent visit to Denver, former U.S. Transportation Secretary Rodney Slater addressed the RTD Board of Directors and affirmed the agency’s history of completing projects on time and on budget, and the influence that has had on the federal government continuing to make investments in RTD’s projects.

“This is one of the most dynamic, visionary and capable cities in not only the country, but the world when it comes to some of the things you’ve done in transportation,” said Slater, who served as transportation secretary under President Bill Clinton from 1997 to 2001. “Continue doing what you’re doing.”