

Downtown station taking shape

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ST. LOUIS - The public is starting to catch a glimpse of what a long-awaited Amtrak and Greyhound bus terminal will look like.

Last week, workers continued installing yellow, red, blue and clear panes of glass on the future transportation hub near the Scottrade Center. The building's distinctive look includes its zigzagging footprint and zinc exterior panels.

Because the long building was designed around piers and ramps for Highway 40 (Interstate 64), there are very few 90-degree angles where walls meet.

"When I show it to architects, they marvel at the ingenuity of weaving it under the pillars of Interstate 64," said Marc Magliari, an Amtrak spokesman.

St. Louis' new train-and-bus terminal is expected to open in February or March. It is estimated to cost about \$27 million, with funding from federal, state and local sources.

The project includes rebuilding nearby streets and creating a passenger drop-off loop in front of the terminal. A MetroLink station and a Metro bus transfer point are just a few paces away from the new center, providing a link to public transportation.

The new terminal will feature 10 bays for Greyhound's buses, replacing the existing depot on 13th Street.

In the meantime, Magliari said, St. Louis can expect a passenger rail terminal "worthy of the city it's in."

Amtrak passengers will take a covered walkway from the ticketing and waiting areas toward the train platforms. Magliari said there is still "a significant amount of track work that needs to be done."

Since the late 1970s, Amtrak passengers have been forced to arrive and leave through temporary stations. The first was made up of five trailers bolted together. It soon became known as "Amshack."

A second temporary station opened a couple of years ago.

Erica Jones of Richmond Heights, who bought a round-trip ticket to Chicago for the Labor Day weekend, said she was a little disappointed to find that Amtrak service wasn't more closely associated with Union Station.

"I am not the type of person who is going to be real particular about where I wait to get on the train, but I think that if they did improve the facilities, it would attract more people," Jones said the day before leaving on her first-ever Amtrak trip.

Kathy Johnson of south St. Louis County agreed that the current setup shouldn't be the first thing rail passengers see when they arrive in St. Louis.

"Because if you had never been here before and you got off the train and saw this, it wouldn't be a real good impression," Johnson said last week while picking up her 14-year-old granddaughter.

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