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City eyes \$2 million grant for Aurora Transportation Center project



A train stops at the Aurora Transportation Center. A proposed project would improve the Transportation Center site. (Antonio Perez, Chicago Tribune)

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The Aurora City Council is looking at approving an application for up to \$2 million in state grant money for the Aurora Transportation Center enhancement project.

Aldermen will hear details of the proposed application at the Committee of the Whole meeting at 5 p.m. Tuesday in the 5th Floor conference room at City Hall, 44 E. Downer Place.

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The city wants to apply for an Illinois Transportation Enhancement Program grant from the [Illinois Department of Transportation](#). The maximum possible grant is \$2 million.

The money would go toward the Aurora Transportation Center Regional Facilities Enhancement Project, an estimated \$14.6 million plan that includes renovating the downtown transportation center, moving the bus pulse point, redoing the entrance on Route 25 to the transportation center as well as Two Brothers and the Holiday Inn Express hotel, improving Route 25 and building a pedestrian bridge between the east and west banks of the Fox River, also crossing over Blues Island.

The bridge would connect RiverEdge Park and the Transportation Center on the east bank with several city parking lots on the west bank.

The project was once two separate projects, combined to be more attractive for federal transportation funding. It worked. The city secured about an \$8.65 million federal Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality grant to put toward the project.

The federal money is given to cover at least 80 percent of a project, with the local entity, in this case the city of Aurora, paying 20 percent. The \$8.65 million would cover only about 60 percent of the cost, which means the city can pursue third party funding to make up the difference to the 80 percent level.

The state money would go toward filling that gap. The Kane County Forest Preserve District has pledged \$2 million toward the bridge engineering and construction through an intergovernmental agreement and resolution, which can be used toward satisfying the city's 20 percent local match.

The state's Transportation Enhancement Program is designed to promote and develop alternative transportation options including bike and pedestrian travel. The federal funds are awarded competitively, and projects must be related to surface transportation.

Aldermen also will discuss hiring WBK Engineering, LLC for a little more than \$1 million for engineering on the second phase of the project.

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