

# Chicago Tribune

## \$7 million more to go toward Union Station fixes

By John Byrne | April 10, 2015



Michael Tercha, Chicago Tribune | Commuters fill one of the platforms as they enter the south concourse at Union Station.

Mayor Rahm Emanuel, Sen. Dick Durbin and other officials announced Friday that \$7 million has been earmarked to help plan fixes at aging Union Station.

Emanuel returned to his argument that the West Loop train station can be a key point as Chicago tries to attract businesses by expanding its public transit.

"As somebody that recruits companies all the time to come and relocate in the city of Chicago or expand here in the city of Chicago, there are two questions: workforce talent and educational capacity, and transportation," Emanuel said at a morning news conference at the station. "And this is a unique place in the city of Chicago."

Rebekah Scheinfeld, the city Department of Transportation commissioner, said \$3 million will come from a federal grant, while the city and state will kick in an additional \$2 million each. The money will be used for detailed planning, environmental studies and engineering work on possible ways to improve the station and the efficiency of the train tracks that converge there, Scheinfeld said.

Friday's announcement came after a January announcement by Amtrak that it plans to spend \$12 million this year for renovation work at Union Station. It marks the latest move

by Emanuel and transit officials to try to deal with problems at the station, which serves about 125,000 passengers per day.

Late last year, Metra unveiled a plan to block direct access to Union Station's cramped south concourse and reroute customers to a more spacious waiting area when trains are running late and during special events to try to deal with overcrowding.

And after frozen water pipes burst twice in the station in January, causing flooding, Amtrak announced plans to add new doors to stave off cold weather and protect the building's sprinkler system.

Ultimately, Emanuel hopes to secure as much as \$500 million in loans and grants to undertake a large-scale renovation of the station. The city will use the detailed plans paid for with the money announced Friday to strengthen its applications for that funding, Scheinfeld said.