

THE WINDSOR STAR

Plans for \$6.3M Windsor Via station unveiled

BY DALSON CHEN NOVEMBER 9, 2010



Yves Desjardins-Siciliano - Via Rail General Counsel & Secretary, along with Dave Van Kesteren - MP for Chatham-Ken-Essex, and Windsor mayor Eddie Francis, unveil the new Via Rail station to be built next to the current station.

Photograph by: Jason Kryk, The Windsor Star

WINDSOR, Ont. — Windsor's new train station will boast more parking, more seats -- and a striking similarity to the downtown bus terminal.

There's no denying the resemblance. Whether it's the long, curved roof or the airy main floor, there's something familiar about the plans unveiled by Via Rail Canada and the federal government on Monday.

But the two buildings have different designers. The bus station was designed in 2006 by Glos Associates, while the new train station is the work of London architect Myk Wasylko.

"I'm not sure where he got his inspiration from, but it does look similar to the bus station," agreed Christian LeFave, president of Loaring Construction, the Windsor based firm contracted to build the train station.

According to LeFave, construction of the \$6.3 million facility will begin next week -- just next door to the old train station at Walker Road off Riverside Drive East.

About 12,000 square feet in size, the new building will feature in-floor geothermal heating, solar panels, a translucent roof and a "living wall."

There will be a passenger lounge with seating for 125 people and uninterrupted views of arriving and departing trains.

Outside the building, the site will have 110 parking spots, including long-term parking and an area reserved for taxis.

There will be a 12-metre tall Via sign and room for a future parkette.

Yves Desjardins-Siciliano, general counsel and secretary of Via Rail, noted that Windsor's old station dates back to the 1960s -- "and it shows," he said.

"The current station is just too small, too awkward, and does not represent the potential of the city of Windsor and the region as a whole."

Windsor's train station is the sixth busiest across the country in terms of passengers. An estimated 210,000 people boarded or disembarked at the Windsor station in 2009.

"I think it's probably safe to say that it's about time we did something," said Dave Van Kesteren, MP for Chatham-Kent-Essex.

When the project was announced in March, construction was hoped to begin by June.

But Desjardins-Siciliano said he's not aware of any delay. "I'm not sure what the expectation was," he said.

"Projects of this magnitude, if there is a delay of three or four months -- it's not that significant, it seems to me."

Mayor Eddie Francis said he's glad that Via Rail and the federal government took the extra time. "I'm very pleased," he said. "We will now have a facility that is not just a normal facility. This is a facility that goes above and beyond the standard that you'd expect to see in stations across the Via network."

Asked how the new station figures into the city's plan for rail consolidation -- given that the location of the station won't change -- Francis replied that rail consolidation is a "long-term vision" that will take time to bring to fruition. "Until then, we certainly welcome investments of this nature in our community."



Architectural drawings of the new Via Rail station to be built next to the current station.

Photograph by: Handout, The Windsor Star