

Downtown station work gets \$2.5M in stimulus package

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ATTLEBORO - About \$2.5 million in federal economic stimulus cash has been awarded to the downtown's shovel-ready transportation related projects, Gov. Deval Patrick announced Friday.

The money is part of \$153.2 million authorized under President Obama's economic stimulus plan for dispersal statewide over the next four months, the governor said in a press release.

Obama's plan totals \$680 billion nationwide.

The Greater Attleboro Taunton Regional Transit Authority will get the cash. All told GATRA was awarded \$6.3 million for a variety of projects, but \$2.5 million is slated for use in Attleboro.

About \$1.3 million is to be spent on improvements to the commuter rail station and another \$1.2 million is to be spent on the construction of a direct connection to the station's northbound platform from downtown.

Mayor Kevin Dumas was jubilant over the news.

"We're very excited about it," the mayor said. "It's wonderful, it fits right in with what we are doing downtown."

The city has been working hand-in-hand with GATRA planning station renovations as well as the downtown connection which will start at the site of the former Peters Fruit Stand near Gilbert-Perry Square, Dumas said.

The city razed the stand last fall to make way for the walkway and ramp to the platform.

That project will improve the alley along the tracks which has been an eyesore for years and is often a hangout for the homeless.

Neither GATRA executive director Francis Gay nor ARA executive director Michael Milanoski returned telephone calls seeking comment on the infusion of cash Friday night.

Dumas said the improvements to the train station include enlarging the commuter waiting area, as well as roof and canopy reconstruction. The station will be made fully handicapped accessible. Historical guidelines will be followed in the renovation process, he said.

The remainder of the GATRA money includes \$1.4 million for improvements to its terminal in Taunton, \$1.1 million for the replacement of mini-buses and vans, \$740,000 for four new buses, \$350,000 for dispatching software and \$200,000 for card reader

equipment and software.

Patrick said the state is expecting to receive from \$6 to \$9 billion in stimulus money over the next two years.

Some of that money could go toward the industrial business park construction, Dumas said.

"This is just the first wave," Dumas said. "It doesn't mean the industrial business park is out."