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Lewiston-Auburn Railroad Co. breaks ground on Grand Trunk Railroad Depot historic renovation project

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Amidst the dirt and construction debris, government and local officials celebrated as the restoration of the historic Grand Trunk Depot officially began.

Located on the corner of Lincoln and Beech St., the ceremony took place between contractor's equipment and construction tools at the historic landmark where contractor Great Falls Construction is preparing the facility for an intensive restoration effort. Design was provided by The architect is Smith Reuter Lull Architects.

"We have been waiting for this day for a long time," said Gerry Berube, Lewiston and Auburn Railroad Co. president. "By collaborating with federal and local agencies, we were able to leverage our resources to move this project from an idea to a reality."

The 2,100 s/f facility was built in 1874 and placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1979. Abandoned for nearly 36 years, the roughly \$370,000 project is funded in part by the Lewiston and Auburn Railroad Co., a U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development grant, the city of Lewiston, and private funding.

Lucien Gosselin, president of the Lewiston-Auburn Economic Growth Council and Agent for the Lewiston and Auburn Railroad Co. said "this project would not have been possible but for the funding partnership with the USDA and the city of Lewiston's Community Development Block Grant program."

For over 100 years, the rail line served as the major entryway and cultural connector into Lewiston and Auburn. According to historical documents, in a study of French-Canadians in Lewiston who became U.S. citizens between 1920 and 1939, 81.8% of them entered the city via the Grand Trunk Railroad which totaled in the "tens of thousands," said Berube.

"The city of Lewiston is pleased to see this once abandoned building now become part of our grand downtown revitalization project," said Lewiston mayor Larry Gilbert. "To see these old, historic buildings once again become an intricate part of the Lewiston-Auburn framework is encouraging.

Those sentiments were echoed by city of Auburn mayor Dick Gleason. "The historic significance of this building cannot be stressed enough," said Gleason pointing to the old trestle, now converted into a footbridge that crosses over the Androscoggin River into Auburn. "Many of our industry leaders began their path to success by riding these very same rails into Auburn to take advantage of new business opportunities." Gleason said, "They defined the spirit and determination of what it means to be part of this community."

In a prepared statement, USDA Rural Development State director Virginia Manuel said, "I am pleased that USDA Rural Development could provide \$200,000 in grant funds to help the Lewiston

and Auburn Railroad Company restore one of Lewiston's historic landmarks, the Grand Trunk Depot, so that it can once again play an important role in supporting job creation and economic development in this dynamic area."

The restoration effort expects to be completed by the end of December.

Shown (from left) are: Lewiston and Auburn Railroad Co. president Gerry Berube; city of Auburn mayor Richard Gleason; city of Lewiston mayor Larry Gilbert; USDA Rural Development state director Virginia Manuel; Office of Senator Susan Collins State Office representative Chiara Ferrante; Office of Senator Olympia Snowe State Office representative Diane Jackson; Office of Representative Michael Michaud State Office representative Andrea Quaid; and Lewiston-Auburn Economic Growth Council president Lucien Gosselin.

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