

At Metra stop, fresh foods to spice up ride

Starting next year, Metra commuters who pass through Ogilvie Transportation Center will be able to buy everything from fresh baked goods to produce at a French-style market that is one of two anchor tenants in the long-awaited MetraMarket project.

Operating under the name French Market of Chicago, Bensidoun USA Inc., an international operator of fresh-food marketplaces, has been selected to open the 15,000-square-foot market in the northern end of Ogilvie Transportation Center, said the firm's executive vice president, Sebastien Bensidoun.

"It's going to be like we do in the European markets with people selling fish, meat, poultry, baked goods, cheese and all that kind of stuff," he said.

Bensidoun said he is one of two tenants who have agreed to lease space in MetraMarket, a 200,000-square-foot restaurant, retail and parking development slated for the blocks bordered by Washington, Canal, Lake and Clinton Streets. U.S. Equities Realty expects to announce the tenants early next week, Robert Wislow, the firm's chairman and chief executive officer, told the Metra board Friday. The other tenant is an unidentified national retailer.

The leases mark a major development in the \$42 million project, which Metra first announced in 2001. The retailers will draw from the nearly 100,000 daily commuters who pass through Ogilvie, Wislow said.

Under the plan, two blocks beneath Ogilvie's elevated train tracks would become 43,000 square feet of restaurants, 70,000 square feet of retailing and ground-level parking.

Metra will contribute \$6 million and should receive \$29 million in rent over 25 years, officials said.