



11 January 2017

## **Position Paper on a New Train Station for Buffalo (updated)**

### **Acknowledgements:**

Citizens for Regional Transit (CRT) commends the leadership of Governor Andrew Cuomo and Mayor Byron Brown in convening a committee to identify a preferred location(s) for a new train station (or stations) to serve Buffalo. In addition, we are appreciative of Rep. Brian Higgins and Sen. Charles Schumer for their expression of support at the federal level. We also commend the support of other area leaders including NYS Assemblymen Sean Ryan, and NYS Senator Tim Kennedy and the Buffalo Common Council for adding their voices and leadership to the call for study and ultimate development of new Buffalo train station.

Finally we want to recognize the support from the Partnership for the Public Good (PPG) on this important issue. PPG endorsed and supported a CRT-sponsored plank in 2016 calling for the replacement of the Exchange Street station. We look forward to PPG's continuing support as we move forward.

### **Support for the Study**

There are many factors to consider before a final preferred train station site can be recommended. As a member of the Mayor's Train Site Selection Committee, CRT is committed to supporting the evaluation process, and working with the committee's consultant, to select the best train station solution after considering alternatives and the benefit tradeoffs among them.

CRT has been a proponent of Central Terminal as the eventual site of Buffalo's main train station, replacing the Depew Station. We agree with the Site Selection Committee that Central Terminal will be an important option to consider during the study. Central Terminal offers a grand architectural and historical venue with plenty of indoor and outdoor parking for both short-term and long-term; and it can serve all trains, including those to and from destinations to the west such as Cleveland and Chicago. Developments at Central Terminal will also help stimulate economic development on Buffalo's east side.

### **Selection Criteria**

We believe there are several requirements that need to be considered in evaluating locations and design for a new Buffalo train station. We offer these requirements as inputs to the Site Selection Committee's deliberations. Specifically, we believe Buffalo's new train station:

1. ***Must provide intermodal connections.*** This includes connections to transit, intercity bus, taxis, and air; as well as safe and comfortable links to pedestrian



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and bicycle modes. Connection with Buffalo's light rail is a major plus, especially for providing future connection to the Buffalo-Niagara International Airport.

2. ***Must be able to accommodate future high-speed rail.*** As an Amtrak station, any new station in Buffalo must be able to accommodate the needs of high-speed rail (HSR) in the future.
3. ***Must have adequate parking.*** The location must accommodate parking for Amtrak customers, some of whom will be making extended trips and leaving their cars.
4. ***Must be able to serve all Amtrak trains.*** The station must be able to accommodate all trains in and out of Buffalo. This includes trains to and from the west (Cleveland, Chicago), east (Albany, New York City) and north (Niagara Falls, Toronto). This may lead to the need for two stations like today, since downtown locations, like the current Exchange Street Station, can now only serve trains going to and from Niagara Falls and Toronto. If two stations are deemed necessary, one should be the main station providing a proud gateway to Buffalo and New York, while the second station can be a smaller, inexpensive "shelter station" (Amtrak Category 4 station) or "stop".
5. ***Should be located to facilitate regional tourism.*** The location should be able to serve tourists traveling between Buffalo and Niagara Falls and thus support Buffalo-Niagara as a regional tourist destination. Buffalo's waterfront, museums, architecture, and cultural attractions, together with Niagara Falls, already a world-renowned tourist attraction, can make our region a must-visit tourist destination. Connectivity with Buffalo's light rail and future consideration of commuter rail between Buffalo and Niagara Falls will enhance the ability to satisfy this need.
6. ***Should be able to serve sports and special events.*** The location should be able to support those coming to Buffalo to attend sports and cultural events such as Bills and Sabres games, and large concerts.
7. ***Should provide a proud gateway to the City of Buffalo and New York State.*** Any new station for the City of Buffalo should make a positive statement about our city, region, and state. Our new station should say, "welcome to Buffalo-Niagara" in a way that reflects our proud heritage and our successful present and future. It should also proudly say, "welcome to New York State."

### **Broader Considerations**

Finally we agree with Pat Whalen (Director, Niagara Global Tourism Institute) that more needs to be done than just build a new train station. Amtrak shares the rails with freight and in some places only one track is available. This results in poor Amtrak service statewide and low ridership. As Pat points out, we need a new train station (or stations) in Buffalo, but we also need better service, which will require investment in new track. (<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/railroad-stations-tracks-patrick-whalen>).

While these larger goals must be addressed, we can't wait for a statewide High Speed Rail (HSR) to be built before making improvements in Buffalo-Niagara. Instead, as both



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Pat and Rep. Higgins propose, we should begin to make regional rail improvements in the near-term. These expenditures should leverage the investments already made in the new Niagara Falls train station, and begin to establish a regional rail service that will stimulate tourism and economic growth.

Support for rail connections between Buffalo and the growing metropolis of Toronto (Canada's NYC) are especially important. The extension of Toronto's commuter GO trains to Niagara Falls, Ontario, and expedited border crossing made possible by the new Niagara Falls, NY multimodal transportation center, can make commerce and travel between Buffalo and Toronto easy and attractive. Improved passenger rail service between Buffalo and Rochester can also be included in plans. As Dan Leonard, Senior Director of Economic Development at the Buffalo-Niagara Partnership, points out, the Toronto-Buffalo-Rochester region has a combined population of 9 million people and a GPD of over \$400 billion. Decisions and plans for a new Buffalo train station need to consider these larger regional needs and opportunities.

This is no time to think small. Even if near-term budgets cannot cover all regional rail improvements needed, near-term investments must be made in a way that support and move us toward our long-term strategic goals.