



**6 June 2018**

## **Position Paper on the design for a New Train Station for Buffalo** (Corrected version)

Citizens for Regional Transit (CRT) has reviewed the latest NYSDOT plan for the New Exchange Street Train Station. Our position, based on this review and prior analyses, is described below.

This position paper is organized in two parts. First, we state our overall position on the NYSDOT station design and location. Second, we summarize our evaluation of the NYSDOT station plan based on the CRT train station location and design requirements that we submitted as members of the Mayor's 2017 Train Station Location Selection Committee.

### **1.0 CRT Position on NYSDOT's Train Station Design**

The following points summarize CRT's position on NYSDOT Plan for the new Exchange Street Train Station.

1. ***The proposed downtown station design is a major improvement over the existing Exchange Street Station*** (admittedly a very low bar). The proposed design is very attractive, right-sized and affordable. It can well-serve Buffalo's downtown station needs while allowing us to invest over the longer term in making Central Terminal Buffalo's main train station, as we recommend (see below). This makes the most sense as described below and because Central Terminal was clearly the public preference for Buffalo's main station during the Mayor's train station siting committee evaluations.
2. ***Buffalo requires a two-station solution.*** The downtown location can only serve trains originating or terminating at Niagara Falls or Toronto. It cannot serve trains connecting with cities to the west, like Chicago.
  - a. The downtown station is needed for travelers coming to Buffalo's business and tourism centers. It will serve the Amtrak trains traveling between NYC, Buffalo, Niagara Falls and Toronto (Empire Service and Maple Leaf trains). This station location is also needed for serving future commuter rail between Buffalo and Niagara Falls. The ability to support commuter rail between Buffalo and Niagara Falls is important for enabling and promoting Buffalo-Niagara regional tourism.
  - b. The Depew Amtrak station should continue to serve temporarily as Buffalo's second station until Central Terminal is ready to resume service as our main, multimodal transportation center. NYS is investing in the restoration NYC's Penn Station. Similar long-term investments are needed to restore Central Terminal, Buffalo's proud legacy station.
  - c. Central Terminal is best able to serve as Buffalo's main station for several reasons. It can serve cities to the west, like Chicago, which require a location that is upstream of where westbound tracks branch off. Central Terminal also provides an urban location with space to support a truly multimodal facility (e.g. car and bike rental, long-term parking, bus service). It is also located on a publically owned right-of-way (ROW) that connects with the airport and the planned new downtown train station. This ROW is available for extending Buffalo's light rail (as originally planned). This location would allow the two



train stations (Central Terminal and the planned downtown station) and the airport to work together as part of a multimodal network.

- d. Investments at Central Terminal will serve as stimulus for east side development providing significant return on investment.
  - e. Governor Cuomo’s pledge of \$5M for Central Terminal improvements is a good first step toward eventually making Central Terminal Buffalo’s main multimodal station. We thank the Governor for making this initial investment.
3. ***The downtown station must provide Long-term parking and facility staffing.*** The downtown station must include long-term parking and full-time facility staffing. A new improved station does no good if it is closed when needed, like the existing Exchange Street station. The parking garage across from the proposed train station location can and should be used to satisfy the long-term parking need.
  4. ***There are potentially better downtown locations for the new train station,*** like the one proposed by Mr. Tim Tielman. Locating the new station on Washington Street, as Mr. Tielman suggests, should be evaluated. If feasible and affordable, this location should be selected over the Exchange Street location. If the Exchange Street location is the only one that will work due to spatial constraints, great emphasis must be given to improved pedestrian connections from the station to Washington and Main Streets (e.g., covered, well lighted and landscaped walkway)

We were disappointed that downtown station design process did not provide an opportunity for public review and outreach. Unlike the Mayor’s Train Station Location Selection Committee work, the design and final location designation was done by NYSDOT outside of public view and is now being presented as a final design. There should have been opportunities for public input and comment. We hope the comments received now can be considered and integrated as best serves Buffalo’s long-term needs.

**2.0 Evaluation of the NYSDOT Train Station Design relative to the CRT train station location and design selection requirements.**

In our 11 January 2017 position paper on the need for, and siting of, a new Buffalo train station, we laid out several design and location selection requirements. Here is a link to our 2017 Position Paper: <http://citizenstransit.org/sites/default/files/CRT%20Train%20Siting%20Position%20Paper.pdf>

Table 1 evaluates the latest NYSDOT downtown train station plan relative to the CRT location and design selection requirements that was submitted to the Mayor’s train station location selection committee in 2017.

**Table 1. Evaluation against the CRT Train Station Location and Design Requirements:**

<b>Train Station Functional and Location Selection Criteria</b>	<b>Score</b> (1 = poor, 3= adequate, 5 = excellent)	<b>Comment</b>
1. Must provide intermodal connections	3	The Exchange Street site is 2 blocks from Buffalo’s light rail, Canalside and our sports arenas. Less visually isolated locations closer to Main Street and Canalside would be better.
2. Must be able to accommodate future high-	4	If high-speed rail is eventually implemented between NYC and Toronto, the proposed station



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speed rail		must be able to accept the high-speed trains. The proposed design appears to accommodate this.
3. Must have adequate parking	5	Assuming that the parking garage located across Exchange Street will be made available for Amtrak customer's long-term parking needs, this criterion is well served.
4. Must be able to serve all Amtrak trains	3	Buffalo needs a downtown station and therefore requires two stations (as described above). Assuming there will be a second station, preferably at Central Terminal, this need can be satisfied by the proposed plan.
5. Should be located to facilitate regional tourism	3	The location is near Canalside, HarborCenter, KeyBank Arena and the Buffalo Transportation Pierce Arrow Museum. While a location closer to Main Street in a less visually isolated setting would be preferable, this location will adequately satisfy this need.
6. Should be able to serve sports and special events	3	The location is near Keybank Arena and the Bisons Baseball Stadium. Closer to the arena in a less visually isolated setting would be better, but at just over ¼ mile distance, the proposed Exchange Street location provides walkable proximity, especially if provision for safe attractive pedestrian connections is made a priority.
7. Should provide a proud gateway to the City of Buffalo and New York State	4	Assuming Buffalo will continue to have two stations with Central Terminal as the main station serving all trains, Buffalo will have a proud gateway for Amtrak customers. And for those arriving at the new downtown station, the proposed NYSDOT design is attractive and highly functional.

**Recommendations:**

1. Evaluate locating the new station on Washington Street. This location is less visually isolated and closer to Canalside, KeyBank Arena and Buffalo Metro. Locating the station on Washington Street, if feasible, will also avoid the requirement for moving the existing tracks over to make room for an ADA-compliant platform.
2. If the Exchange Street location is required due to spatial constraints, great emphasis must be given to providing attractive, safe pedestrian connectivity between the new Exchange Street station and Washington and Main Streets.
3. Keep Buffalo's downtown train station on the fast track, but don't rush to meet an artificial deadline. If it takes an additional 6 months to evaluate the Washington Street location, it is worth the additional time.
4. Make a formal commitment to Central Terminal as Buffalo's main train station, long term, with Depew Station continuing as a temporary solution as Buffalo's main station serving all trains.