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Statement to the Buffalo Train Station Site Selection Committee

As a long-time advocate for improved passenger rail and public transportation services, I applaud the public initiative now underway to examine the potential options for new or substantially improved facilities to serve rail passengers and others traveling to and from the Buffalo area.

As a contribution to this process, I wish to address the following major points:

- I propose that a foundational question which needs to be addressed by the Selection Committee early on in the decision process is whether there should be one station or two stations serving the Buffalo/Erie County region?

While there are currently two stations (Depew and Exchange Street) serving Amtrak passengers that does not necessarily mean that there should be two in the future. Buffalo is highly unique among major US cities in having two intercity rail stations so close together. Their existence and continued use is primarily based upon the historical layout of the rail infrastructure passing through Buffalo and the geographical orientation of the City in relation to the rail lines running to & from the west of Buffalo.

There would be distinct benefits to having only one station, including...

- Consolidation of all rail services in one location would improve connectivity and reduce passenger confusion
- Lower capital, operating and maintenance costs for only one location

However there are downsides to having only one station, including...

- Presumably a single station would be located close to downtown, making auto trips to & from outlying areas more time-consuming & difficult, potentially negatively impacting rail ridership

I am assuming that any station would offer an enclosed, temperature controlled, waiting area, with restrooms, passenger information services and other amenities. Any station facility, either new or substantially improved, will have to be fully-ADA compliant, with high-level boarding platforms being a presumptive requirement.

- If the decision is made to have only one station, I propose that the following attributes are core requirements for the site selection of such a single facility:
 - A single station must be situated so as to be able to serve all current and future train service in to and out of the Buffalo/Erie County region
 - New York – Buffalo – Niagara Falls – Toronto rail travel corridor
 - New York – Buffalo – Cleveland – Chicago rail travel corridor
 - FUTURE Potential Cleveland - Buffalo – Niagara Falls – Toronto rail travel corridor

- A single station must have convenient highway and street access
 - A single station must have regional transit connectivity
 - A single station must have adequate safe and secure short-term & long-term parking
 - A single station should be located as close to downtown Buffalo's activity and development as possible
- If the decision is made to continue to have two stations, I propose that the following attributes are core requirements for the site selection for these two facilities:
 - One station must be situated so as to be able to serve all current train service in to and out of the Buffalo/Erie County region
 - New York – Buffalo – Niagara Falls – Toronto rail travel corridor
 - New York – Buffalo – Cleveland – Chicago rail travel corridor
 - This location must continue to be on or adjacent to the primary CSX east-west rail route
 - A second station could be situated so as to be able to serve the:
 - New York – Buffalo – Niagara Falls – Toronto rail travel corridor
 - FUTURE Potential Cleveland - Buffalo – Niagara Falls – Toronto rail travel corridor
 - This second station could be located as close to the core of downtown Buffalo's activity and development as possible
 - Both stations must have convenient highway and street access
 - Both stations must have regional transit connectivity
 - Both stations must have adequate safe and secure short-term & long-term parking
 - In analyzing potential specific stations locations, the proposed Seneca Street/Larkinville area site appears to best fit the desired attributes for a single station facility and this site also offers other tangible benefits.
 - A Seneca Street/Larkinville location could serve all current and future train service in to and out of the Buffalo/Erie County region
 - New York – Buffalo – Niagara Falls – Toronto rail travel corridor
 - New York – Buffalo – Cleveland – Chicago rail travel corridor
 - FUTURE Potential Cleveland = Buffalo – Niagara Falls – Toronto rail travel corridor
 - A Seneca Street/Larkinville area location would have convenient highway (I-190) and street access
 - A Seneca Street/Larkinville area location could be well served by regional transit
 - A Seneca Street/Larkinville area location is close to downtown
 - A Seneca Street/Larkinville area location could provide adequate safe and secure short-term & long-term parking
 - New York State already owns considerable property in the immediate Seneca Street/Larkinville area which could be used for parking
 - A Seneca Street/Larkinville area location would NOT be located on CSX's principal east-west freight routing. If a single Seneca Street/Larkinville area location were to take the place of the current Buffalo-Depew station, CSX's overall freight operations through Buffalo could stand to benefit, which could be helpful in the negotiations with CSX which will have to occur regardless of the final site(s) selected

As evidenced by the attached concept drawing commissioned by NYSDOT in 2009, the Seneca Street/Larkinville area has been recognized as a potential station site option for many years.

- Apart from the Site Selection Committee's stated task, I strongly urge the Committee to adopt a position calling on New York State, through the Department of Transportation, to complete the long-delayed Empire Corridor Tier One Environmental Impact Statement process as quickly as possible.

The Empire Corridor Tier One Environmental Impact Statement process will, when completed, identify a final preferred alternative for future passenger rail infrastructure and service improvements across New York State.

As is readily evident, the four daily round-trip trains currently available to Buffalo travelers provide mediocre and inconsistent service at best. Trains are routinely delayed on CSX, the freight host railroad over which Amtrak operates west of Schenectady and the trains themselves consist of cars many of which are over forty years old.

While indeed a new station facility for Buffalo is long overdue, it should be coupled with meaningful improvements to increase frequencies, reduce trip times, improve on time performance and enhance the overall passenger experience. Without such improvements, no matter how nice a new station may be or where it is located, ridership will not significantly increase.

New York State, as required by federal law, directly pays Amtrak for three of the four daily round-trip trains serving Buffalo and for the stations it operates across the state. Accordingly it is incumbent upon the State to take a leadership role in improving the service.

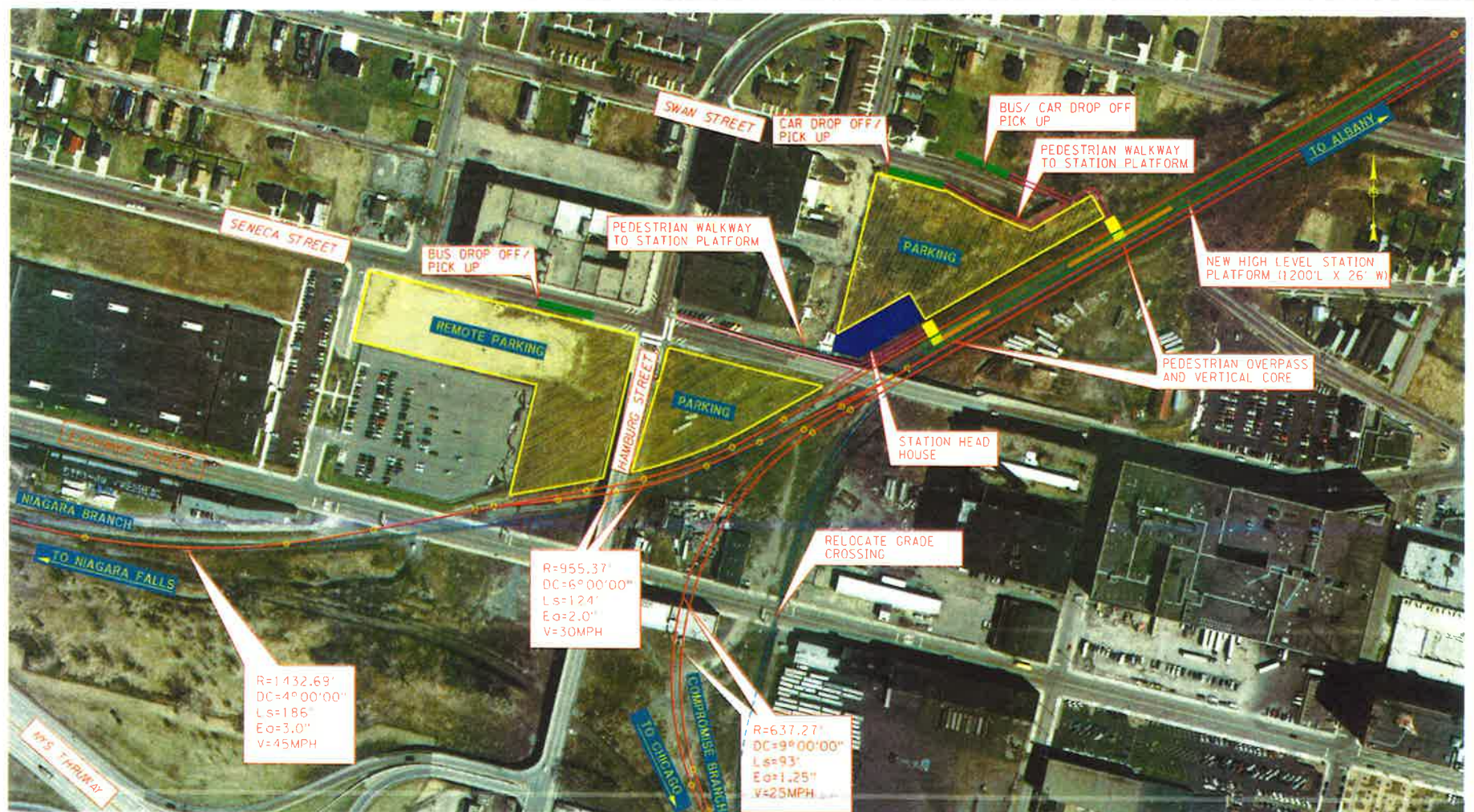
The Empire Corridor Tier One Environmental Impact Statement process commenced in 2010 and was initially expected to be completed in late 2012. After many delays, in March 2014 public hearings were held (including here Buffalo) on the Draft of the Environmental Impact Statement. Now almost three years later, there has been NO further public information released on the progress towards a final completion of this vital study process.

I thank you for this opportunity to contribute to the Station Site Selection process and I would be pleased to elaborate on my comments if this would be of assistance to the Committee.



Bruce B. Becker

R. DAVID, P. SULLIVAN, R. DAVID, P. SULLIVAN



NOTE:
EXACT LOCATION OF PROPOSED TRACK AND STRUCTURES TO BE COORDINATED WITH EXISTING BRIDGE PIER LOCATIONS.

PARKING SUMMARY	ACRES	CAPACITY PROVIDED
STANDARD PARKING	4.12	350 STALLS
REMOTE PARKING	2.83	300 STALLS
TOTAL	6.95	650 STALLS



DRAFT

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NYSOT EMPIRE CORRIDOR WEST RAILROAD TRANSPORTATION PLAN STUDY	CONTRACT NUMBER C0300590
BUFFALO STATION AT NIAGARA BRANCH WITH PARKING AT NYSOT PROPERTY - OPTION 2	DRAWING NO. CT-002 SHEET NO. 1 OF 1 DATE: AUGUST 28, 2009