

A PROPOSAL FOR AN AMTRAK STATION IN DOWNTOWN BUFFALO

Submitted by: T. R. Allan, Hamburg, NY
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The above named recommend the new Amtrak Station in the City of Buffalo be constructed at Seneca and Exchange Streets. Sen-Ex Station (see attached area map) would be in the triangular shaped area formed by the existing tracks of the Niagara Branch, "Track Three" (formerly known as the Compromise Branch), and the third leg of the "wye" track historically known as the Avenue Running Track.

- 1 This site offers the opportunity to have an integrated, intermodal metropolitan and regional transportation system. A station at this location would serve the six daily Amtrak trains between Niagara Falls and New York City and would also serve the two daily Lakeshore Limited Trains which operate between New York City and Chicago. Plus, in the event service is ever expanded from Toronto/Niagara Falls/Buffalo in a westerly direction, a platform could be placed on the Avenue Running Track for trains using that route.
- 2 The Sen-Ex site can be easily rail-linked to the downtown stations and terminal of the Rapid Transit System, NFTA bus routes, Canalside, and existing as well as future sports, entertainment, recreational, civic, gaming, hospitality and business venues.
- 3 The Sen-Ex site takes advantage of existing track and switches and is not located on the high density freight route. It offers multiple access points to the Interstate Highway System in any direction. It does not obstruct future planning and would allow the integration of light rail or conventional service extensions to the east, south and beyond.

We believe a new station at Sen-Ex should not be limited to just serving Amtrak trains. Frequent and reliable train service is needed to link Toronto, Niagara Falls, Buffalo and the south towns of Erie County. To accomplish this, the role of the NFTA and/or Go Transit must be expanded or a new entity created to operate commuter service.

Millions of foreign tourists visit Niagara Falls each year. Many come from countries that rely heavily on rail transit, so these tourists are accustomed to using rail. To draw these tourists to Buffalo and surrounding areas, there must be frequent daytime service between Toronto, Niagara Falls and Buffalo. Amtrak is not set up to do that. Amtrak service is designed to connect Niagara Falls with New York City, 437 miles from Downtown Buffalo. Amtrak passes Exchange street going east at 4:30 AM, 7:25 AM and 1:05 PM (from Toronto). The westbound trains are scheduled to pass at 3:15 PM (to Toronto), 6:24 PM and 9:02 PM. This service schedule is not conducive to day travelers in the Buffalo Niagara Region.

This new commuter service would initially operate between Sen-EX and the New Niagara Falls Station. In time, this north-south regional route could be expanded to serve the South towns of Erie County and eventually on to Cattaraugus and Chautauqua Counties. This expansion would be accomplished by construction of a connection to a rail line already owned by Erie County. This line begins in the City of Buffalo at CP 1 (approximately 1.5 miles southwest from Sen-Ex) and extends southerly through the Towns of Hamburg, Eden, North Collins, and Collins. Ownership of the line by Cattaraugus County begins in Gowanda and extends toward Jamestown.

Trackage is in place and in active freight use. Construction of a passenger only "fly over" rail overpass connection at CP1 between the Erie County owned line and Track Three (former Compromise Branch) would not interfere with the heavily used freight corridors in the area. Lower cost pre-cast concrete stanchions could be used to cross over the mainline instead of a bridge at this location.

In summary, construction and use of the Sen-Ex Station would require relocation or re-purposing of a few existing commercial concerns. But this site is the most versatile, is close to downtown, is one block from Larkin Street, is off the heavy rail freight corridor. No major changes need to occur to the rail infrastructure at the site. Compare this to the proposal to re-use the Central Terminal as the Amtrak Station. We believe such a project would be impractical and enormously expensive. The terminal closed nearly 40 years ago. It was constructed at a time when 200 passenger trains departed the station every 24 hours. Today, only eight passenger trains pass by in a 24-hour period. The Central Terminal is in the middle of the major east west freight corridor and the Belt Line. When the terminal was shut down, the signal systems, switches and sidetracks necessary to service passenger trains and separate them from the freight network were all removed. In addition, the covered gangway that connected the main building with the platform area was removed to accommodate overhead clearance for freight trains. The gangway would have to be rebuilt with a higher overhead clearance and at least 12 new switches, track and signaling systems would have to be added. The local road system around the terminal is inadequate. Access to the interstate highway system is poor. While efforts to preserve and restore the building are admirable, financing of the estimated \$200 million it will take for the project is not in place at this time.

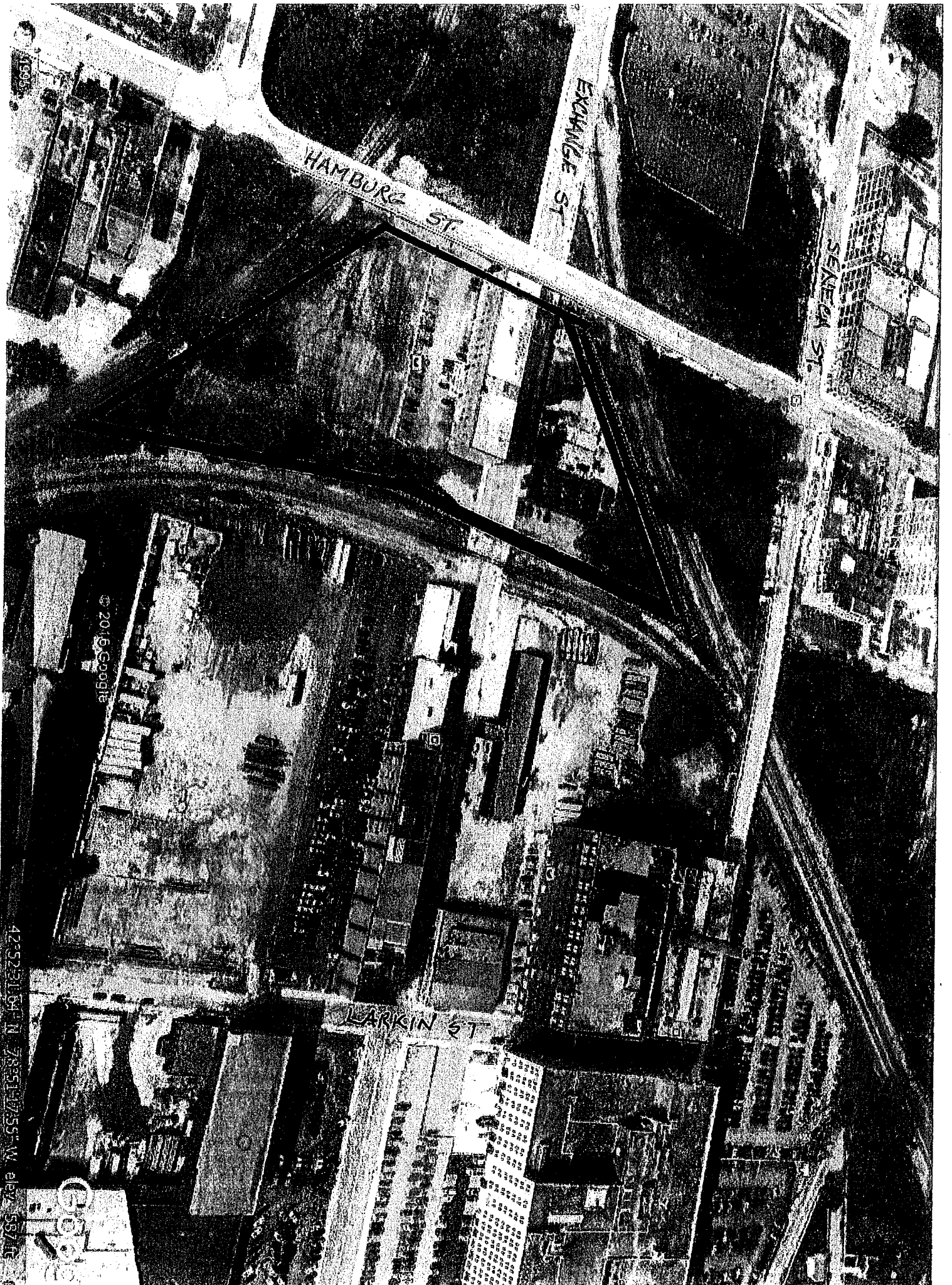
About the contributors: Timothy Allan, Ph.D. is Visiting Professor Emeritus from the History Department of SUNY Fredonia. A resident of Hamburg, NY, Mr. Allan spent ten years with the New York Central Railroad as a fireman and engineer in bulk freight service.

Edward Sheehy, retired, of North Collins, has over 40 years of experience in the Rail Industry. He served as the Northeast Director of Public Safety for CSX. He also was a locomotive engineer in passenger and freight service on the New York Central, Penn Central, Conrail and CSX.

Gerard Edwards, retired, of North Collins, worked professionally in the Rail Development for 35 years. In addition to working at ECIDA in Buffalo, he spent 8 years in the rail division of the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation. He also worked in real estate/development at Conrail, CSX and Canadian Pacific.

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42°57'31.04" N 78°51'47.55" W elev: 587 ft

