



Michael Gilbert – Sabres VP of Administration, HarborCenter General Manager
Comments to Public Discussion of Potential New Train Station Locations in the City of Buffalo

Good morning everyone. It is a pleasure to be with you today. I'm Michael Gilbert from the Buffalo Sabres. I oversee the organization's day-to-day business operations as the Sabres vice president of administration. I also oversee the operation of HarborCenter, as that great facility's general manager.

It was almost 5 years ago when we first began to speak about constructing HarborCenter. Terry and Kim Pegula saw real potential in the Canalside district, and viewed the development of this district as a foundation for the revitalization of Buffalo's entire downtown area, and ultimately a major accelerator for the entire Western New York region.

Terry and Kim believe so heavily in the potential of Canalside, that they invested over \$200 million to build what has quickly become one of Buffalo's most popular destinations. Their intention is for HarborCenter to be one of many destinations in the heart of a densely populated downtown Buffalo. When I look out the window from my office at HarborCenter, I see people enjoying Canalside activities. I see people heading into Liberty Hound and Pizza Plant to eat. And at any given time, we have hundreds, sometime thousands of people coming into KeyBank Center and HarborCenter for everything from a hockey game to a banquet to a business convention.

Five years ago, envisioning what we have now would have been a dream. It has happened. And now, it's time to look ahead to the next five years – and how to take the momentum of what has been created and push forward to the next step in fully revitalizing our downtown. Our hope is that in the coming years, we will build a population density in the Canalside district that makes it into the anchor of downtown Buffalo. Doing this requires a continued commitment to developing additional destinations.

We have a golden opportunity in planning the location of Buffalo's next train station. If done correctly, this station can create another destination that will help to further our development, and bring more people into an emerging area.

This is why, on behalf of the Buffalo Sabres organization, I am here to advocate for a new downtown train station that will help us build on the critical mass that we have begun to establish. Building a new downtown station would draw thousands of additional people into our business district. It would give us the opportunity to

develop a creative way to further the utilization of our light rail system by connecting it to commercial train lines. This would greatly enhance access to downtown destinations for all visitors.

Each year, we estimate that around 2 million people visit KeyBank Center and HarborCenter. This spring, we will once again welcome thousands of basketball fans for the first and second rounds of the NCAA Tournament. The downtown that these fans will see is far different than what they saw when we last hosted in 2014, and it is light years different than the downtown they saw when we first hosted in the year 2000. But imagine if we were able to take the next step.

Imagine if a group of fans from Syracuse could hop on a train in their home city, arrive at a downtown Buffalo station, transfer to the light rail, take that to their hotel to drop off bags, get back on the same light rail, head to the arena for their game, and continue to use the light rail to get a post game dinner, go back to their hotel for the night, and travel back to the train station for their return home. A year from now, the hockey world will be here for 2018 World Junior Hockey Championship. Imagine a downtown Buffalo where a fan from Hamilton, Toronto, Detroit – could get all the way from their home city to their hotel by using solely train and light rail. It would significantly add to their enjoyment of the event and create an event pageantry that would help draw more and more large-scale events to our emerging downtown Buffalo.

On behalf of the Buffalo Sabres, we see an opportunity to use this train station to further the growth and development of downtown Buffalo and give our city another way to build on the momentum of our downtown resurgence. We urge the committee to select a location in downtown Buffalo where we can build a major asset that will fulfill transportation needs while helping to create more critical mass in our emerging city. Thank you.