

MICHAEL J. BILLONI  
MANAGING PARTNER  
BILLONI ASSOCIATES  
4178 EAST RIVER ROAD  
GRAND ISLAND, N.Y. 14072  
716.578.8948; mike@billoni.com

**January 19, 2017**

**COMMENTS AT THE OPEN HEARING FOR  
A BUFFALO TRAIN TERMINAL**

**HONORABLE MAYOR BROWN AND YOUR DISTINGUISHED  
COMMITTEE, THANK YOU FOR THIS PUBLIC HEARING.**

**I RECENTLY AUTHORED ANOTHER VOICE ARTICLE IN THE  
BUFFALO NEWS SUPPORTING THE CENTRAL TERMINAL  
REPLACING THE CURRENT DEPEW AMTRAK PASSENGER TRAIN  
STATION, HOPEFULLY AS PART OF AN OVERALL RENOVATION OF  
THE SITE BY A PRIVATE DEVELOPER.**

**I CAN ALSO SEE TRAILWAYS AND GREYHOUND BUSES, ALONG  
WITH THE NFTA HEADQUARTERS AND BUS TERMINAL MOVING  
THERE TO CREATE A WNY TRANSPORTATION HUB. THAT WOULD  
GIVE NFTA THE OPPORTUNITY TO SELL THAT VALUABLE  
DOWNTOWN PROPERTY AND HOPEFULLY PUT THE FUNDS  
TOWARDS CREATING SOME TYPE OF RAIL SERVICE FROM THE  
CENTRAL TERMINAL TO THE AIRPORT.**

**I ALSO ENDORSE KEEPING THE EXCHANGE STREET STATION BUT  
INSTEAD OF A NEW FACILITY, FIX WHAT WE HAVE AND IMPROVE  
THE EXTERIOR TO MAKE IT MORE INVITING TO GUESTS.**

**HOWEVER, SINCE THE ARTICLE WAS PUBLISHED, I HAVE SPOKEN TO MANY STAKEHOLDERS AND I AMMEND MY POSITION.**

**I COMPLETELY AGREE WITH THE VIEWS OF PAT WHALEN, WHO HAS SAID “SPENDING \$25 MILLION ON A NEW TERMINAL IS PUTTING THE CART WAY BEFORE THE HORSE.”**

**PAT, A LOGISTICS EXPERT, IS THE FORMER COO OF THE BUFFALO NIAGARA MEDICAL CAMPUS AND NOW THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE NIAGARA GLOBAL TOURISM INSTITUTE. ONE OF HIS TASKS IS TO FIND WAYS TO FILL HOTEL ROOMS IN NIAGARA FALLS IN THE WINTER. THEY HAVE CREATED “STAY ANOTHER NIGHT” TO ENCOURAGE GUESTS TO TRAVEL TO BUFFALO THE NEXT DAY TO VISIT OUR MANY CULTURAL SITES, MUSEUMS, ICE SKATING, AND RESTAURANTS BEFORE HEADING BACK TO THE FALLS.**

**SINCE NIAGARA FALLS OPENED A BEAUTIFUL \$43 MILLION TRAIN TERMINAL, PAT HAS TAKEN AMTRAK TO EXCHANGE STREET IN THE MORNING AND RETURNED TO THE FALLS IN THE AFTERNOON.**

**WHAT SEEMED LIKE THE PERFECT WAY TO TRANSPORT THESE GUESTS TO OUR CITY, BECAME PAT’S NIGHTMARE BECAUSE OF THE ON TIME PERFORMANCE OF THE TRAINS FROM BUFFALO TO THE FALLS.**

**AMTRAK PASSENGER TRAINS, TRAVELLING EAST FROM NEW YORK CITY MUST STOP ALONG THE WAY AND WAIT FOR CSX TRANSPORTATION FREIGHT TRAINS TO PASS. CSX OWNS THE TRACKS AND OVER THE PAST TWO MONTHS, AMTRAK HAS AVERAGED 61 MINUTES LATE IN ARRIVING AT THE EXCHANGE ST. STATION.**

**ON FRIDAY, DECEMBER 16, AMTRAK TRAIN #63 LEFT EXCHANGE STREET AT 7:31 P.M., 4 HOURS AND 17 MINUTES AFTER ITS SCHEDULED 3:14 DEPARTURE. ON CHRISTMAS, WITH CSX NOT RUNNING, AMTRAK WAS ONE MINUTE LATE ARRIVING AT EXCHANGE.**

**FOR A NIAGARA FALLS RESIDENT WORKING IN BUFFALO, THIS KIND OF PERFORMANCE ELIMINATES AMTRAK FROM BEING A COMMUTING POSSIBILITY. IF WE PUT A TOURIST TO THE FALLS ON A TRAIN TO BUFFALO, A DELAY LIKE THIS WOULD LEAVE A LASTING NEGATIVE IMPRESSION.**

**THE DELAYS HAVE PROBABLY BEEN THE REASON THE CURRENT LOW RIDERSHIP BETWEEN THESE STATIONS HAS DROPPED 5.5 PERCENT LOWER FROM 2015-16.**

**RATHER THAN FOCUS PRIMARILY ON SPENDING OUR TAX DOLLARS TO BUILD A NEW TERMINAL, I ENCOURAGE THIS COMMITTEE TO PRESENT THE GOVERNOR WITH A UNIQUE OUT OF THE BOX IDEA.**

**YOUR COMMITTEE INCLUDES CONGRESSMAN HIGGINS, THE GOVERNOR, MR. ZEMSKY AND REPRESENTATIVES FROM CSX AND AMTRAK. I SUGGEST DEAN SHIBLEY CONVENE A MEETING WITH THEM, ALONG WITH STATE TOURISM OFFICIALS AND MAYBE OTHERS TO FIND A WAY TO GREATLY IMPROVE THE ON-TIME PERFORMANCE OF PASSENGER RAIL SERVICE IN THE STATE.**

**MAYBE THEY RE-VISIT A NEW YORK PASSENGER RAIL SYSTEM, PROPOSED IN 2015 THAT WOULD USE SEVERAL THOUSAND MILES OF ABANDONED TRACKS SO WE CAN HAVE A SYSTEM SIMILAR TO FLORIDA, TEXAS, CALIFORNIA AND MANY FOREIGN COUNTRIES.**

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**ONCE ON-TIME PERFORMANCE IS RECTIFIED, NEW YORK CAN THEN HEAVILY PROMOTE TRAIN TRANSPORTATION AS A GREAT WAY TO SEE ITS MANY TOURIST ATTRACTIONS, INCLUDING THE WATERFRONT IN “NEW BUFFALO” AND OF COURSE, NIAGARA FALLS.**

**MY PRIMARY REASON I SUPPORT THE CENTRAL TERMINAL TO RECEIVE THESE STATE FUNDS FOR A TERMINAL IS SIMILAR TO WHAT CONGRESSMAN HIGGINS SAID IN A RECENT ARTICLE. “WE OWE THIS TO THIS COMMUNITY. IT WILL SERVE AS A CATALYST FOR THE REDEVELOPMENT OF THE BROADWAY-FILLMORE NEIGHBORHOOD. THIS COMMUNITY CAN RISE AGAIN.”**

**IN THE INFAMOUS ARTVOICE POLL OF WHAT WE WANT FOR 2017, THE CENTRAL TERMINAL WON QUESTION #4—WHERE THE NEW AMTRAK STATION SHOULD BE WITH 27 VOTES WHILE CANALSIDE RECEIVED 12. PETER HUNT SAID, “CENTRAL TERMINAL..HANDS DOWN. THE LAND IS TOO VALUABLE AT CANALSIDE.”**

**LARRY QUINN ADDS, “CENTRAL TERMINAL TOGETHER WITH A RELOCATED BROADWAY MARKET.” ALTHEA LUERSON SAYS, “THE EAST SIDE NEEDS HELP AND THE BUILDING IS AMAZING” AND ROBBIE TAKAC OF THE GOO GOO DOLLS, ADDED “CENTRAL TERMINAL, OF COURSE.”**

**AS FOR TRANSPORTING GUESTS ARRIVING AT THE VARIOUS TERMINALS, HOPEFULLY SENATOR KENNEDY AND ASSEMBLY MEMBER PEOPLES-STOKES CAN ENCOURAGE THEIR COLLEAGUES TO PASS RIDE SHARING FOR THIS PART OF THE STATE.**

**I JUST RETURNED FROM FLORIDA WHERE THE CITY OF ALTAMONTE SPRINGS IS OFFERING A 20 PERCENT SUBSIDY ON ALL UBER TRIPS THAT BEGIN AND END IN THE CITY AND A 25 PERCENT SUBSIDY ON TRIPS STARTING OR ENDING AT THE CITY’S RAIL STATION. WHY CAN’T WE DO THAT?**

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**I MENTOR AT MOUNT SAINT MARY'S ACADEMY AND AMANDA THOME, A JUNIOR, LOVES TAKING THE TRAIN BECAUSE OF THE FREEDOM IT GIVES PASSENGERS, THE DINING CAR AND THE ABILITY TO SEE SIGHTS IN THE STATE SHE CANNOT SEE FROM A PLANE. "THE TRAIN IS A GREAT WAY TO BOOST TOURISM," SHE SAYS.**

**SHE ALSO HAS SUGGESTIONS FOR AMTRAK—"PLEASE MAKE THE TRAINS CLEANER AND THEREFORE MORE APPEALING TO RIDERS. IF YOU CAN ALSO FIX THE MANY TRAIN DELAYS THAT OCCUR, TRAIN TRAVEL HAS THE POTENTIAL OF BEING A GREAT SUCCESS."**

**MR. MAYOR, THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR THIS OPPORTUNITY TO ADDRESS YOUR COMMITTEE.**

## Michael Billoni

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**From:** Amanda T <athome2018@msmacademy.org>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, January 18, 2017 8:00 AM  
**To:** mike@billoni.com  
**Subject:** Thoughts on train travel

Hello, I am Amanda Thome, the student from Mount St. Mary academy you spoke to about train traveling. I am so sorry I did not get this to you last night; I had a dentist appointment and then dance so I did not get home until very late at night. My address is 51 DoeHaven Circle, Depew, NY, 14043. Thank you so much and please let me know if there is anything else I can do to help!

"Hello, my name is Amanda Thome, and I am currently a Junior at Mount St. Mary Academy. I believe that the state should promote train rather than airplane travel. From personal experience, I would highly prefer taking a train over an airplane. Although some may say that train travel takes too much time, I do not find that a concern, for it is much easier to both sleep and do work on a train, compared to an aircraft. There is the added opportunity to enjoy good food with the cafe car as well. Also, in train travel, one does not have to wait in long lines to check in their bags, or once the ride is finished, to collect them. A train passenger is also permitted to take their luggage on with them, and therefore can get any necessities from there readily. In addition to this, the train ride sparks an interest among both the young and the old about parts of the state and country that they may not have otherwise seen. In this aspect, the train is a way to boost tourism.

Although I am a firm believer in train travel, I do believe that some work should be put into making them cleaner, and therefore more appealing to riders. I also believe that something has to be done about the many train delays that occur. With these improvements, train travel has the potential to be a great success. For example, my school business that I help run takes a trip to New York City each year. Although we have always taken airplanes in the past, there has been a great urge to try train travel next year. As students, we would be able to both catch up on our sleep and complete our homework on the train, without having to take time out of our trip to do so. The environment of a train also provides a bonding opportunity for the members of our group, which would most likely be lost in some other form of travel. Therefore, with some improvements, I truly believe that train travel should be promoted much more by the state."

On Mon, Jul 18, 2016 at 6:35 PM, Rick Greenberg  
<rickgrnbrg@yahoo.com> wrote:

I am writing this while sitting on Amtrak train 281 about 10 miles east of Syracuse. We have stopped waiting for traffic to clear for 2 hours thus far. I am told that I will have additional time to view the lovely CSX rail yard in Dewitt. Since CSX owns the track we have to wait for their freight trains to get through one of several work zones first.

A week ago when I went to stay with two of my grandchildren in Rockland County the train was merely one hour late. If we luck out we will only be three hours late on a scheduled seven hour twenty-two minute trip.

It could be worse, my fellow travelers going to Syracuse will have to get off and take a shuttle bus from the State fairgrounds. If they're going to Rochester it is only a small temporary platform. The fault is not with the Amtrak employees they are very polite especially given the conditions in which they work.

Two years ago I attended a meeting in Downtown Buffalo where the wonderful new New York Passenger Rail system was presented. Almost everyone there knew it was a joke to placate those interested in rail transportation systems that almost every other place in the world has. Even many states like Florida, Texas, and California have systems that work. I have taken the Autotrain between DC and Orlando several times without any serious delays. I also should note that both ways there were no delays between Albany and New York City. Should I be surprised?

There are several thousand miles of abandoned tracks in New York. In many cases the State Department of Transportation actually paid to have the rails destroyed.

Isn't there some politician who understands that rail transit made New York the Empire State and will put together a system that works for both Freight and Passenger transport instead of neither.

Richard Greenberg  
438 Starin Ave.  
Buffalo, NY 14216  
(716) 310-6951  
Rickgrnbrg@yahoo.com

Sent from Yahoo Mail on Android

Train 63 BFX to NFL:

Train 64 NFL to BFX:

Date	minutes late: Leaving BFX		minutes late: Leaving NFL		minutes late: Arriving BFX	
Saturday, November 12, 2016	4	1	0	4	1	
Sunday, November 13, 2016	40	3	0	0	1	
Monday, November 14, 2016	79	4	0	1	1	
Tuesday, November 15, 2016	43	3	0	4	1	
Wednesday, November 16, 2016	50	3	0	2	1	
Thursday, November 17, 2016	51	3	0	3	1	
Friday, November 18, 2016	32	3	0	9	1	
Saturday, November 19, 2016	42	3	0	4	1	
Sunday, November 20, 2016	159	7	0	2	1	
Monday, November 21, 2016	173	7	0	32	3	
Tuesday, November 22, 2016	99	5	0	52	3	
Wednesday, November 23, 2016	77	4	0	1	1	
Thursday, November 24, 2016	11	2	0	3	1	
Friday, November 25, 2016	32	3	0	2	1	
Saturday, November 26, 2016	0	1	0	2	1	
Sunday, November 27, 2016	51	3	0	0	1	
Monday, November 28, 2016	69	4	0	4	1	
Tuesday, November 29, 2016	59	3	0	8	1	
Wednesday, November 30, 2016	82	4	0	3	1	
Thursday, December 1, 2016	39	3	0	3	1	
Friday, December 2, 2016	45	3	0	18	2	
Saturday, December 3, 2016	46	3	0	2	1	
Sunday, December 4, 2016	17	2	3	25	2	
Monday, December 5, 2016	129	6	0	2	1	
Tuesday, December 6, 2016	145	6	0	4	1	
Wednesday, December 7, 2016	61	4	0	3	1	
Thursday, December 8, 2016	62	4	0	4	1	
Friday, December 9, 2016	123	6	0	4	1	
Saturday, December 10, 2016	85	4	3	5	1	
Sunday, December 11, 2016	55	3	0	1	1	
Monday, December 12, 2016	61	4	0	2	1	
Tuesday, December 13, 2016	51	3	0	3	1	
Wednesday, December 14, 2016	139	6	0	22	2	
Thursday, December 15, 2016	170	7	0	18	2	
Friday, December 16, 2016						
	70.0		34.0	0.2	7.4	

2	1	6% less than 10 min	28
2	2	6% 11 min to 30 min	4
14	3	41% 31 min to 60 min	2
8	4	24% 61 min to 90 min	0
1	5	3% 91 min to 120 min	0
4	6	12% 121 min to 150	0



3	7	9% over 151 min	0
34		100%	34