

Philip J. Briatico  
9 Union Street  
Batavia, NY 14020

City of Buffalo Train Station Site Selection Committee  
Committee Meeting  
Thursday, January 19, 2017  
Beginning at 10:00 AM  
Buffalo Common Council Chamber  
City Hall, 13<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Buffalo, NY

Members of the Train Station Site Selection Committee, members of the Buffalo and Greater Buffalo area, good morning. My name is Philip Briatico and I am from Batavia, NY. I thank you for this opportunity to speak today and express the following thoughts as to where the new Buffalo train station should be located. I think that the train station location is of importance to not only the immediate community, but to our entire region.

It is my opinion that the new Buffalo train station should be located where the New York Central Terminal was built at 495 Paderewski Drive.

When I attended the tree lighting event hosted by the Central Terminal Restoration Corporation (CTRC) this past December, I learned that the reason the Central Terminal was built where it is outside of downtown was for access to the track necessary for efficient travel. Travelers and trains going in either direction were easily accommodated with the platforms at this location.

The apparatus and acreage needed to support such an operation is still in existence and the construction, or rather re-construction, would have a minimal disruptive impact on the site and area surrounding the station. At the same time, we would be maintaining the historic character of this landmark and making it an operational asset to the community.

Additionally, the impact on the area can only help improve conditions for the Buffalo community and area surrounding Central Terminal. Improvements that will impact the immediate future and beyond. Everyone in this room, can only begin to imagine the positive benefits a train station in an accessible area would have for the community.

It would provide a place to work, a historic destination for travelers to first experience Western New York, a place for commerce, and a catalyst to improve the surrounding areas. The formula is tested and has worked at Canal Side, Larkinville and other areas of the city. Areas such as these are existing and growing because of vision like this. We are at a point in our history that an opportunity like this cannot be ignored.

As the Honorable Governor Andrew Cuomo mentioned in his State of the State address this past week, the Buffalo Billion Squared will bring East side development to rejuvenate the city further and help create new jobs. The relocation and rehabilitation of the station at Central Terminal would be a welcomed addition to this plan.

It is not often that we as a community are able to right a wrong from the past in such an authentic and symbolic way. How many great and magnificent structures are no longer here? Thankfully Central Terminal is not on that list. Just go to the Buffalo Historic Society and look through the exhibits, or look at the columns at the UB North Campus. How often do we find ourselves as a community saying, "Well, it was here and now we are going to build something that looks like what was here, to help capture the legacy or time period or feeling." The answer is often, all too often. Not only could this really incredible historic landmark be used, but it can be reused for its original purpose.

Relocating the train station to the Central Terminal site not only makes logistical, economic and practical sense, but would also make Central Terminal a symbol to the area and region of better things yet to come.

With talk of a new Buffalo and the restoration of old spaces for new uses, can we genuinely say we are the "real thing" if we ignore this space and this once in a lifetime opportunity? We can correct an error from 38 years ago. Central Terminal should never have been closed in the first place for its historical significance, architecture, quality, the aesthetic value it adds to its community and traveling experience. The form and function of this location is ideal. There is room for expansion to use the space for a variety of things beyond a train station such as a bus terminal, for taxis, park and ride and other uses that will come with time. Even though the space might be larger than what rail travel currently dictates, the space can be used for a variety of purposes if it was mixed use space.

Every big-ticket component of what makes train stations work is there. All parts are there with minimal construction or disruption to the surrounding area. Yes, there is repair needed, but the track, platforms, quality materials and acreage are all there. These component parts are of a quality that will not pass this way again. The craftsmanship and scale are from another era and are deserving of our stewardship.

If I understood correctly, the current plan from the Central Terminal Restoration Corporation, the addition of the station and redevelopment of the facility, would be done as separate projects. The developer has expressed interest in planning on following through train station or not. Having the revenue stream and activity of train station would create a synergy to the project and make development even more viable. For the short term, the train station part of the terminal and concourse can be used exclusively without needing the entire facility.

None of this would have been possible without the work of the Central Terminal Restoration Corporation and the long and sustained efforts of its volunteers. After the building was closed and fell into disrepair, this organization has stabilized, worked to clean and seal the building off from the elements. I have written grants and volunteer hours put into this project is added value to the building and this idea.

These efforts have put the structure in exceptional positioning for assessment of the facility, repair work, renovations and long-term development. Without the efforts of these dedicated and ambitious people this option would not be possible.

With the addition of events at the terminal, public support for the station has grown as the CTRC has welcomed the public to see and enjoy the building. They have brought the terminal to the forefront of the public's mind and made it a destination in its own right.

Although the location is ideal for train travel, some may say it is still a distance from downtown. A direct bus line or other means could connect the terminal to downtown, canal side or hotels. From what I can tell, it is about a twelve to fifteen-minute drive to downtown from the Central Terminal which is similar to, but closer than, the distance of the Buffalo Airport to downtown, which is about twenty minutes.

Now the response to these ideas can be one of many things, its too far-gone, it will take too much work, it will take too much money. My response to that is the following.

Having been born in Buffalo, worked in Buffalo, participated in the Buffalo community, received my education at the exceptional Buffalo State College and University at Buffalo I know the following.

When a Buffalonian puts his or her mind to something, the job gets done. We are to the point in our history that our community is what we make of it and we have a great opportunity to preserve and grow yet another part of the city. After a certain point it gets to be a choice.

Thank you again for inviting me to speak before the committee and share my thoughts, but more importantly listen to others. While there are many ideas, I do hope sustained conversation leads to finding the best place for the new train station and before I conclude my comments today I would like to share a story from the Christmas Tree lighting event last month.

As I was entering the terminal, in line to collect my postcards to send in support of this building, I overheard a conversation between a mother and her daughter. The young lady must have been around 10 years old or so. While in the midst of all these people she asked her mother, "Is this a movie theatre?" I smiled to myself after I heard the question.

Being so close I could not help but hear her mother's response as she said, "No, it is an old train station."

Central Terminal is in a unique position, not only geographically, but also in a position to become what it once was, an invaluable asset to its immediate community, the region and beyond. Concurrently, we are in a unique position to make this happen. I hope this process and our time here helps guide the committee in making the best recommendation for our community. Central Terminal can become an even brighter symbol of Buffalo's past, present and future.