

ARCHITECTURAL NARRATIVE

The City of Rochester has long appreciated the glory days' of passenger rail travel and the key contribution it made to Rochester's' civic pride. Over the past several years grassroots community planning efforts have endeavored to ensure that this significant earlier era is represented in the new station plan in a meaningful way.

Rail Station History

In 1852 several smaller rail lines were consolidated to form the New York Central and Hudson Railroad, transforming Rochester from a canal port into a vital railroad junction. In 1854, New York Central Station was constructed on Mill Street at the brink of the falls. This station served as the community's transportation center for 30 years.

In the 1880's the railroad tracks were elevated and the station was relocated to the east side of the Genesee River (on Central Avenue at St. Paul Street) among the thriving breweries and clothing factories.

This second station served New York Central's needs for just over 20 years, when they decided to build a new station on the north side of Central Avenue, between North Clinton Avenue and Joseph Avenue. New York City architect Claude Bragdon designed the third station, referred to as Union Station or the Bragdon Station, and it opened in 1914.

Bragdon gave particular attention to the design of the indoor public space, including a large, general waiting room with a domed, ornamental ceiling and a lunch counter to serve waiting passengers. Bragdon incorporated the motif of driving wheels of a great locomotive into three large arched windows. He utilized other railroading details geometrically in the decoration of the brick and the tile interior.

Unfortunately, the grand station, busy for four decades, lost most of its passengers to the airlines and an ever growing roadway infrastructure. The fall off in rail use caused passenger rail service in Rochester to end in 1959. Bragdon Station was demolished in 1965 to make room for a parking lot.

The Rail Passengers Service Act of 1970 created Amtrak to operate and revitalize the nation's inter-city passenger rail service. Most of Amtrak's resources were needed to updating trains, with little funding available to upgrade the stations. However, in 1978 the current Rochester Amtrak Station was constructed on the site of the former Bragdon Station.

Existing Station

The Rochester Amtrak Station structure is approximately 8,000 square feet in size and incorporates the following in the floor plan:

- Ticketing office
- Ticketing area
- Waiting area
- Baggage storage
- Private office/work area
- Restrooms
- Mechanical room
- Miscellaneous utility spaces



The station ticket office, train service and waiting rooms operate twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. Services at the station offered by Amtrak include:

- Staffed station
- Quik-Trak ticket machine
- Checked baggage service
- Baggage assistance
- Enclosed waiting area
- Restrooms
- Payphones
- Free short-term parking
- Vending
- Partial accessibility to persons using wheelchairs.

The station waiting room has seating for about 50 passengers. Maps and brochures are provided in the station to direct passengers to City of Rochester destinations. Refreshments are available from vending machines.

Future Intermodal Station

The primary Rochester Intermodal Station design goals are to create a facility that relates to the rich history of train travel in Rochester and at the same time responds to the dynamics of modern day high-speed rail service. The station would also allow the addition of an intercity bus terminal to create an intermodal facility. Station design criteria and goals established include:

- Safety and security
- Adequate and secure parking
- Access for all types of travelers, including flexible site circulation and drop off zones
- Comfortable and clean restrooms
- Comfortable seating
- Work areas for business travelers

Another important goal of the design is to create a visual landmark and attractive gateway to the City of Rochester and Monroe County that includes:

- Incorporating the spirit of rail travel from its 'Golden Era' into the design
- Actual and perceived connection to the downtown central business district
- Leveraging future economic development potential
- Gateway image and character

The concept plan proposes the construction of a new building south of the existing station building on the current site. The design increases the station size to 12,000 sf., a portion of which can be used as lease space. Ultimately, the station could be expanded to 20,000 sf. (for inter-city bus operations and true intermodal activities), while maintaining operational functionality and the architectural integrity of the station.



The façade of the building employs heavy use of glass to enhance visibility and openness. Three arches recall, with a sense of reverence and authenticity, the spirit of Claude Bragdon's 'Union Station'. The positioning of the new station re-establishes the relationship of the building to the adjacent urban district. In this way the entranceway reflects the history of train station architecture in Rochester while at the same time accommodating the dynamics of modern day high-speed rail. The facility would have new restrooms, improved seating, improved visibility of train schedules and ticketing, and lease space for vending type services. The station will be linked to a new raised passenger platform via an overhead pedestrian bridge spanning the tracks. By moving the building closer to Clinton Avenue, the building structure creates a landmark that would be visible from Main Street along Clinton Avenue as one travels from south to north through the City.

- *Passenger Access*
The station is linked to the proposed passenger track(s) platform by an overhead pedestrian bridge spanning the tracks.
- *Secure Parking*
The concept plan creates new secure parking with room for expansion.
- *Cityscape Improvements*
Portion of the current parking lot located on the south side of Central Avenue can be converted to an urban park while maintaining a quantity of parking spaces. The streetscape along Clinton Avenue will be improved through the use of new landscaping and friendly pedestrian signing and sidewalks.
- *Intermodal Connection*
A shuttle link between the Intermodal Station and the planned Downtown Bus Transportation center is anticipated to be provided.

The design concept can accommodate large travel coaches and/or transit buses at the pick-up or drop-off point. The characteristics of the site and the design allows for expansion of the building to accommodate future transportation needs while maintaining full functionality and architectural integrity.

Links to the Center City

To ensure full integration with the City of Rochester, clear connections between the Rochester Intermodal Station, the proposed Downtown Transportation Center and Main Street are anticipated. The Inner Loop acts as a physical and perceptual barrier separating the Rochester Intermodal Station from the Center City District, accordingly additional design strategies will be employed to reinforce the desired connections.

Pedestrian Link

The goals of creating pedestrian links between the Rochester Amtrak Station, across the Inner Loop, to Main Street and the proposed Downtown Transportation Center include making walking safer, more appealing and accessible to all. This pedestrian corridor is primarily along North Clinton Avenue.

Designs that enhance public space (including the streetscape, sidewalk and open spaces) create an environment that is enriching and friendly, with a unique character. This makes walking more appealing, encouraging people to come use the space, and enhancing security by having more people around.



There are a number of ways the pedestrian link can be improved, including the following:

- Sidewalk Activity Areas – Create activity areas by installing information kiosks, benches and bicycles racks.
- Trees and Other Landscaping – Soften the atmosphere visually and environmentally through the introduction of large, appropriate trees along the sidewalk. Trees give texture to sunlight, frame views and soften the surrounding built environment.
- Lighting – Improving street lighting enhance safety and the visual environment, establishing a pedestrian-friendly zone. The lighting on North Clinton Avenue is anticipated to be replaced with lighting of better quality (whiter and brighter), appropriate for pedestrians (lower), complementary to building and trees (building and ground lighting), and to the area’s historic context. Bollard lighting is anticipated to supplement overhead lighting in high-use areas, particularly at the sidewalk extensions crossing the Inner Loop.
- Signals – Pedestrian countdown signals should be considered at intersections to improve safety, notably at the North Clinton Avenue and Inner Loop crossing. Pedestrian countdown signals are made up of two parts: the top section, showing the familiar “Walk” and “Don’t walk” symbols, while the lower section counts down the number of seconds from the beginning of “Walk” to the end of the period when it is safe to cross.
- Signage – Create unique signage for the corridor with a transportation district theme and clear directional and destination information.

Shuttle Link

A shuttle between the Rochester Intermodal Station and the proposed Downtown Transportation Center is anticipated to begin as a simple and efficient service that runs between the two stations on the existing transportation system. A shuttle is a comfortable and reliable way to transport passengers and their luggage to and from the Rochester Intermodal Station.

Parking

The existing Rochester Amtrak Station has 70 free short-term parking spaces. The current peak occupancy is 60%.

Future parking demand estimates have been based on high-speed rail ridership projections and the design alternatives. The station design includes 70 secured parking spaces, which is more than adequate to serve the projected needs. However, there is additional room for future expansion across Central Avenue.

Top priority is given to the security of Rochester Intermodal Station parking. The design for the perimeter of the parking area includes gated and secure decorative metal fencing designed to complement the station architecture.

