

Why Restore the CRR of NJ Train Shed at Liberty State Park?

by Bill McKelvey

This initiative was begun as a refinement of the conclusions of a two-year Rail Access Feasibility Study for Liberty State Park by Rutgers University Bloustein School of Planning. The study developed the need for a trolley shuttle service between the Hudson Bergen Light Rail line / Liberty Science Center and the Central Railroad of NJ Ferry Terminal as well as a rail shuttle from the Terminal to the south end of the Park.

Refinements demonstrated the need to terminate these services as close as possible to the Ferry docks and this could only be accomplished with the restoration of the deteriorated and fenced-off Train Shed. **We solicit your support of this restoration effort and welcome your additional supporting reasons or "Because."** Please send to **Bill McKelvey, via e-mail to wjmckelvey@hotmail.com or to 103 Dogwood Lane, Berkeley Heights, NJ 07922 Thank You!**

Because Liberty State Park was formerly a commuter rail Terminal, future use as a Park rail shuttle Terminal and rail display location would be most appropriate, advantageous and in keeping with the historic use of the structure.

Because the size and scale of the Central Railroad of New Jersey (CRR of NJ) Train Shed gives visitors a sense of the amount of traffic that passed through the terminal in its heyday.

Because the historic CRR of NJ Train Shed and Terminal was a grand setting for much of New Jersey's transportation history.

Because large numbers of daily commuters and long distance travelers used the facility in the past.

Because the Train Shed is an integral part of the interpretive history of Liberty State Park.

Because the restoration of the Train Shed could provide a weather and security-protected shelter for display of appropriate rail equipment (CRR of NJ, Reading, Baltimore & Ohio, and Lehigh Valley Railroads).

Because a vision for transportation within the Park with connections to New Jersey and New York mass transit is important for the future of the Park and Train Shed. It is the best way to open the Park's resources to more people without the detrimental side-effects of car access.

Because there is clearly a missing link between the Hudson Bergen Light Rail stop near the Liberty Science Center and the Train Shed/Head House/Ferry Dock complex. With a transportation connection here, New Jersey residents and tourists would have easy access to the Train Shed and ferries leaving for the Statue of Liberty, Ellis Island and Manhattan; and residents and tourists from New York would have easier access to such attractions as Liberty Science Center...*

Because the mission statement of Liberty State Park includes: "...provide public access to New York Harbor, provide an appreciation and understanding of its estuarine ecosystem, related transportation, and immigration history, and provide the opportunity to enjoy outdoor recreation

activities." The Train Shed provides an excellent opportunity to implement and further these goals. At present the Park is weak in providing an appreciation and understanding of the transportation and immigration history of the Park. The Train Shed's original use and history is an obvious way to remedy this.*

Because the adaptive reuse of the Train Shed for rail equipment display and rail transfer point would be most appropriate for this former passenger rail Terminal. The importance of the intermodal nature of the Train Shed should be kept in mind in developing re-use plans.*

Because the NJ State Historic Preservation Office favors the restoration and transportation related reuse of the Train Shed.

Because the Friends of Liberty State Park support the restoration of the Train Shed.

Because use of the presently unused area under the Train Shed as a park rail shuttle terminal will eliminate the need to occupy other park land near the Train Shed for this purpose.

Because the CRR of NJ Jersey City Terminal Train Shed, designed by Abraham L. Bush, was the largest of its type ever built.*

Because the CRR of NJ, Jersey City Terminal complex is significant as an early intermodal transportation center as clearly described in the National Register of Historic Places Inventory Nomination Form.*

Because the proposed future use of the Train Shed for the display rail equipment which was common to the area and as a Terminal for the Park rail shuttle service plus other public uses may help facilitate the long-overdue restoration of the Train Shed.

Because the Train Shed is an eyesore problem with safety concerns which must eventually be addressed and the longer action is procrastinated the worse the problem will get.

Because the 7.5 acre roof area of the restored Train Shed could support enough solar panels to provide most, if not all of the energy needs of Liberty State Park, thus making the "People's Park" an outstanding "Green," clean, and renewable energy-using operation. This would be a profound achievement and example for the New Jersey State Park System and Liberty State Park.

Because renewable and solar energy is being emphasized by both government and power utilities it would be most appropriate and timely for the State Park Department to implement this money saving and carbon emissions reduction technology for Liberty State Park.

Because the Train Shed could provide the highly desirable weather-protected area in which to load and unload rail vehicle passengers utilizing the proposed Liberty State Park trolley and rail shuttles. The present arrangement requires visitors to walk, exposed to the weather, up to 1,000 feet and more to get from parking lots to the Ferry Terminal.

Because the 2001 Train Shed Historic Preservation Master Plan by Curtis and Ginsberg has been completed. This was an important first step in the process of restoration.

Because the stabilization of the Train Shed would cost not much more than demolition it is the recommended action. The stabilized ruin would allow for safe access to the Train Shed area by the public*

Because Programming / Ideas for the Train Shed could include: Use of historic rail cars such as dining cars and lounge cars for interpretive experiences; Use of rail cars for exhibit venues, snack bar, gift shop, a small audio-visual theater, and/or public information; An exhibit on Railroad Terminals of the New Jersey - New York Harbor area; Use as a circulation corridor between the pay parking lot and the Ferry Terminal; Use as a Terminal for the in-Park rail transportation circulator; Use for exhibits related to the nearby Morris Canal; ferry development in the New Jersey - New York Harbor area; The railroads which used the Jersey City Terminal; Transportation technology and safety; and, Use of appropriate historic rail equipment for vintage ride experiences within the Park.*

Because there is a great need for public transportation in the Park and this need will only grow in the future. The Train Shed is a natural place to terminate such a service since it would connect the ferry service to other Park amenities (such as the Childrens Playground; Grove of Remembrance; Picnic Areas; Nature Interpretive Center; Public Boat Launch area; US Flag Plaza; Liberation Monument; the Richard J. Sullivan Natural Area; Fishing Areas; etc.) and would continue the original historic intermodal purpose of the Shed.*

Because appropriate historic rail equipment (CRR of NJ, Reading Railroad, Baltimore & Ohio Railroad, and Lehigh Valley Railroad) which used the Train Shed and the Jersey City Terminal area is available for display from the collections of the United Railroad Historical Society of New Jersey.

Because the Train Shed has the potential to create a memorable, enjoyable, public place that contributes to the exceptional collection of New Jersey / New York Harbor sites and monuments.*

Because the true tourism and economic impact potential, both locally and regionally, at Liberty State Park will only be realized upon the complete restoration of the CRR of NJ Terminal & the Train Shed.

Because if nothing is done to stabilize the Train Shed the continued deterioration will eventually result in collapse or will leave no alternative but to destroy the entire structure.

Because the NJ Division of Parks considers the Central RR of New Jersey Terminal and Train Shed, standing along with the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island Immigration Station "The Historic Trilogy," marking an important era in American history.

Because commuter auto parking in the Park should not be permitted, the trolley shuttle could be utilized to move people from the light rail and perimeter parking, closest to the Ferry dock by terminating under the restored Train Shed. In fact, the latter would give rail shuttle passengers an advantage over those arriving by automobile.

Because the guidelines for Transportation Enhancements Program (TEP) Eligibility Principle state that "an historic preservation project must demonstrate a relationship to surface transportation and result in the historic preservation of a site, building, structure or significant element of a historic district

consistent with the Secretary of Interior's Standards for Preservation Projects." The Train Shed eminently qualifies for the above.

Because the Train Shed preservation meets the two requirements for TEP funding: 1. It had a significant transportation-related function in the past and 2. It will serve a transportation function after the project is completed.

Because the Train Shed can be "restored" by returning the property to a condition that makes a contemporary use possible while preserving the significant historic features of the property.

Because the proposed Train Shed restoration work could be performed so as not to jeopardize the eligibility of the facility for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

Because the Train Shed restoration would meet the TEP funding requirement that the project "must be for a building, structure or facility historically used for a surface transportation purpose or function and must provide for public access and use."

Because the Train Shed restoration would include reconstruction and track rehabilitation needed to accommodate strictly non-commercial uses.

Because the restored Train Shed, per TEP requirements, would benefit the public interest and would grant access and use to the general public and be targeted to a broad segment of the general public. No fees would be charged to enter the structure. A nominal fare would probably have been charged, to cover operating expenses, to ride the rail shuttle vehicles operating to and from the Train Shed.

Because, the CRR of NJ Terminal & Train Shed is a metaphor for the wide distribution of the great wave of nineteenth century European immigrants that formed the blue-collar foundation on which America's industrial affluence is based. *Barry Howard*

Because, it was the local and regional rail systems, such as the Central RR of NJ, the Baltimore & Ohio and the Reading Railroad departing from the Jersey City Terminal/Train Shed that conveyed these new Americans to the small towns and rural byways of western New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Ohio, West Virginia and elsewhere. There they established new lives and contributed their unique heritages to the cultural diversity of a young nation that was and remains the basis of the American dream. *Barry Howard*

Because, in this time of an even greater wave of immigration, perhaps more subtle and longer lasting than the first, radically altering deeply rooted national political and social agendas, it is critical that we optimize historical icons like the CRR of NJ Terminal and Train Shed and the New Jersey side of Ellis Island to illustrate, explain and lend perspective to the multi-cultural fabric of the American experience. *Barry Howard*

Because, as global issues become increasingly complex and polarization of thought challenges the very foundations of our formative beliefs, we must strive to reinvigorate the principles of liberty, industry and compassion implicit in the acculturation that permeated the early years of the American century, and by which Americans have long been defined. *Barry Howard*

Because the Train Shed restoration work would be an economic stimulus and creator of many jobs for the local Jersey City and Hudson County area.

Because restoration of the Train Shed and its use as a terminal for inter-park rail shuttles would aid the objective of moving people, not motor vehicles in, out, and around the Park.

Because, it is an integral part of the crown jewel in the New Jersey State Park System.

Because, we are losing historic landmarks on a daily basis in our state.

Because, Americans love to visit historic sites.

Because, historic places are an essential part of our lives.

Because, we don't want this important part of the vibrant past of New Jersey and America to vanish.

Because, the restoration of the Train Shed will produce the greatest good for the greatest number of visitors to the Central Railroad of New Jersey Terminal.

Because, restoration of the Train Shed would necessarily be preceded by a required environmental cleanup to remove contaminants (asbestos in roofing materials) from the site.

Because, already performing intermodal functions between ferrys, the NJ Transit Route 305 park shuttle bus, charter buses, and autos, the Train Shed, when restored, will become an outstanding example of intermodalism with the addition of the Liberty Historic Railway and the Liberty Electric Railway under the Shed.

Because, with 35 to 40% of electric power lost through long distance transmission lines en-route to New Jersey consumers, the solar energy produced on the Train Shed roof would avoid this loss as it would be consumed locally.

**Liberty State Park Train Shed Historic Preservation Master Plan of 2001 by Curtis and Ginsburg*