How the City of Yonkers Won an AMTRAK Stop...

After years of failed efforts

By Phil Pepe, Jr.

n Amtrak stop for Yonkers, New York? It made good sense. After all, Yonkers is the largest municipality in Westchester County and the fourth largest city in the state, with 200,000 residents. It's perched above the Bronx, with 1.4 million residents, and the Yonkers Main Station on the Hudson River Line is an historic and elegant edifice. Still, it would take the unwavering dedication of a committed mayor, Angelo R. Martinelli, the helpfulness of U.S. Senator, Alfonse M. D'Amato and a chance remark by then Amtrak president, the legendary railroad man, W. Graham Claytor, to make it happen.

Earlier attempts to have the station designated as an Amtrak stop were declined by New York State over concerns about the running time between New York City and upstate New York, especially to Albany. If trains took too long, the thinking went, people would drive rather than take Amtrak.

In the 1970s, I was a new resident in Yonkers, working for the New York State Cooperative Extension. On several occasions, needing to travel to Albany, I elected to go on Amtrak, but my choices were either to travel south to New York City, board Amtrak, then ride north on those same tracks, or take a commuter train to Croton-Harmon and board Amtrak there. There had to be a better way.

In 1981, I ran for a seat on the Yonkers City Council. As a candidate I touted my idea to bring Amtrak to Yonkers. At the



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Please, Amtrak, Stop in Yonkers

By JOHN R. ZAKIAN

YONKERS to have become a commonplace occurrence for government bureaucracy. The absence of an Amtrak stop at the main Yonkers railroad station in the city's downtown district during this period of the gas crunch stands forth as a classic acree of this condition. a classic case of this condition.

a classic case of this condition.

Six months ago, Mayor Angelo R.
Martinelli initiated an effort to have his
city's downtown station designated as a
stop for Amtrak trains running between New York City and Buffalo.
Yonkers is the only major city in the
state without such a stop.

standing of the present deterrent that exists to using rail service such as Amtrak.

Several months ago, another factor entered the rail-transportation picture when Brock Adams, the United States Secretary of Transportation, announced plans to reduce the mileage of track used for rail-passenger service. While Mr. Adams's reduced-mileage plans have no direct effect on Amtrak plans have no order effect of Almatos service passing through the Yonkers station, a related incident shed more light on the government bureaucracy's strangling of efforts to increase rail-road ridership.

After the Secretary's ann Mayor Martinelli wrote to the Federal Department of Transportation to re-

This Westchester Opinion article, written by John R. Zakian, assistant to Mayor Martinelli and published in the New York Times, exemplified Yonkers' aggressive efforts to plead their case through the news media.

time, the Yonkers Main Station was used by one thousand commuters daily. Amtrak seemed a natural addition.

I lost the election but Angelo R. Martinelli, who was running to regain his seat as mayor, won. He liked my ideas and offered me a position as Assistant to the Mayor. He said, "We'll work well together."

Back in office, Mayor Martinelli prioritized commuting conditions. The Yonkers Main Station had fallen into disrepair. The mayor appealed to Metro North President, Peter Stangl, and MTA Chairman, Richard Kiley, arranging a personal tour of the station for both men, and got a promise from

The Yonkers train station, completed in 1911, was designed in Beaux-Arts style by renowned architects, Warren and Wetmore, who also created fascades and interiors for Grand Central Terminal. The exterior of the building is red brick with elaborate dentilled cornices, sculpted brackets, a partial copper roof and light-colored stone trim. This 1940s photograph shows a New York Central train at the station.