

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

## *After years of failed efforts*

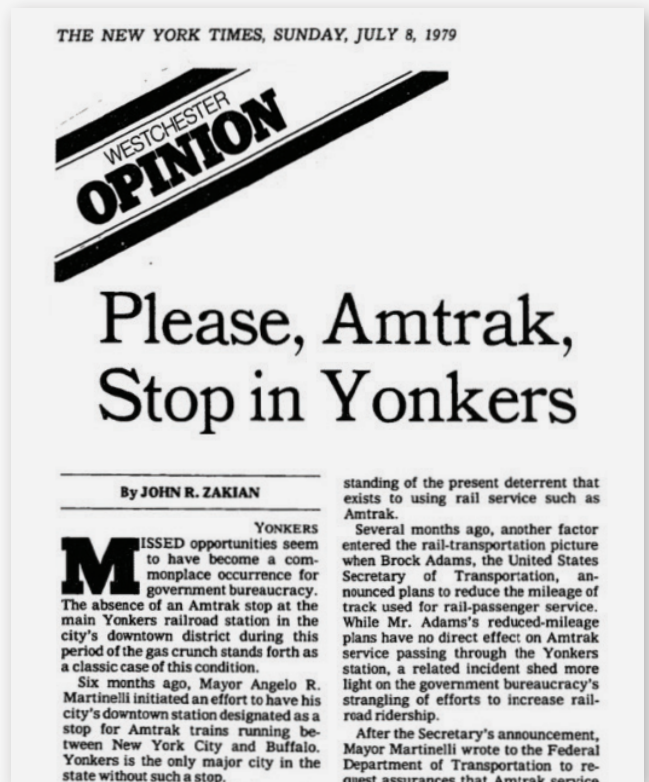
By Phil Pepe, Jr.

**A**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



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.