

AN INTER-CITY BUS TERMINAL IS CRITICAL CITY INFRASTRUCTURE

When Jessie Lawrence, the city's Director of Planning and Development, met with the DAG community in March 2025, he memorably described a visitor's arrival at an urban transit hub, like a bus terminal, airport, or train station, as a "handshake with a new city."

He's right. And buses serve a significant swath of the traveling population, including many Philadelphians, from long-distance travelers to those looking to make quick trips up and down the Northeast Corridor, and everyone in between.

But while we have world-class facilities for planes and trains at Philadelphia International Airport and 30th Street Station, those who arrive by bus are dumped onto a remote, barren sidewalk on Spring Garden Street. That is hardly the "handshake" we should be extending if we want to show off the best of our city. And with Philadelphia looking forward to hosting the world next year for our nation's 250th anniversary, we must address this problem immediately.

So, we are very glad that, in February of this year, City Council passed legislation to hold hearings, lamenting that Philadelphia "lacks a publicly owned, brick-and-mortar intercity bus terminal offering seating, bathrooms, ticket offices and other amenities." The legislation also notes that peer cities, including New York, Boston, and Baltimore, have what is, and should be, this standard piece of the infrastructure of a major city.

We at the Design Advocacy Group have studied a number of sites for bus terminals, as have many others. For a facility to be successful, we believe that the primary criteria must be these:

1. Proximity to additional public transit, including regional rail, subway, and city bus routes
2. Minimal distance between the interstate highway system and the site, limiting city street disturbance and congestion
3. Capacity to provide the necessary amenities, listed above

And we believe that such sites exist, close to 30th Street Station and the city-owned "Roundhouse," and elsewhere.

What we need now is bold leadership to identify both the best options for the short term (the current conditions are unacceptable) and a long-term strategy for a terminal that enables Philadelphia to greet visitors with a warm handshake, and pride.

The DAG Steering Committee

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