

THE BUSES ARE BACK! FILBERT STREET HOLDS THE KEY TO A SUCCESSFUL TRANSIT HUB

The DAG Steering Committee applauds the decisive action taken by Mayor Parker and her administration to end the debacle of the roving sidewalk bus “station” that travelers have endured since June 2023. While the planned reactivation of the abandoned Greyhound terminal is not an acceptable long-term solution, it will meet the needs of the city over the next few years while a permanent facility is planned and constructed. Best of all, it can be ready in time to provide visitors to Philadelphia with a proper welcome in 2026. This is good news for Philadelphia and puts a useful ingredient in the mix for the revitalization of Market East.

No one can deny the importance of providing a proper bus station, because tourism is vital to the Philadelphia economy. Over 44 million visitors last year spent over \$4.5 billion and supported almost 200,000 jobs.¹ Great cities recognize this impact and invest in “portals” like bus stations because the way you arrive sets the tone for your entire trip. And, of course, it’s not just about money. We should do the right thing for our guests.

While basic amenities (seating areas, toilets, and food and drink vending) are essential, they are not all that is required to create a successful terminal. A fresh coat of paint, new ceiling tiles, and a sign that says “BUS” won’t cut it when it comes to bringing the 1984 Greyhound terminal back to life. Interior and exterior work is required, and the reported \$1.5 million budget² will be stretched to accommodate the necessary building improvements alone.

The bleak 1000 block of Filbert Street is in similar need of upgrades, as it currently resembles a zombie movie set. It must be improved because much of the experience of a bus station is shaped by the surrounding city fabric, not just the building itself, and stepping out onto Filbert Street, as it exists, is no way to welcome visitors to Philadelphia.

The existing (empty) tree pits need replanting, benches and other street furniture should be installed, and we must have ample wayfinding for all the area’s functions and attractions. Dedicated loading spaces are required by taxi and rideshare services to avoid clogging Filbert.

The blank, 250-foot façade of the station should incorporate windows, and creativity must also be brought to bear on the equally featureless, facing wall of the Fashion District—with the sad hole that is the door of the Jefferson SEPTA station. This upgraded streetscape should extend beyond the block in all directions, to connect with the energy generated nearby by the Reading Terminal Market and Chinatown—and to help to bring life to Market Street.

Inside, the drab, low-ceilinged space calls out for smart, simple upgrades, focused on highly durable materials. New windows will not only brighten the interior; they can also provide connection to the improved streetscape. Rather than repair the existing, easily damaged acoustic tile ceiling, we should consider removing it and opening the full height of the limited space.

Our deserved reputation as a city of history and public art should be tapped in refurbishing the bus terminal, helping to signal clearly that you have arrived here in Philadelphia. The station could host rotating art and historic exhibits, highlighting events related to our nation’s 250 anniversary and featuring the work of recent graduates of our art programs and prominent Philadelphia artists.

For Mayor Parker, who campaigned and governs with a focus on a “Safer, Cleaner and Greener City, with Access to Economic Opportunity for All,”³ the empty bus station and this forgotten block of Filbert Street can become a model of how thoughtful design can make visitors feel welcome and Philadelphians proud.

The DAG Steering Committee

The Design Advocacy Group (DAG) is a public forum and advocate for design quality and equity in the planning, architecture, preservation, and physical development of Philadelphia. <https://designadvocacy.org/>

¹ 2024 Visit Philadelphia Annual Report, pg 4, https://www.visitphilly.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/2025.03.18_ANNUAL-REPORT_Digital_Web.pdf

² Fitzgerald, Thomas. November 3, 2025. The Philadelphia Inquirer. “What the PPA has planned for a revived Greyhound bus station” <https://www.inquirer.com/transportation/greyhound-station-filbert-street-philadelphia-ppa-20251103.html>

³ Office of Clean and Green Initiatives. May 31, 2024. <https://www.phila.gov/2024-05-31-mayor-parker-and-city-departments-launch-one-philly-a-united-city-citywide-cleaning-program/>