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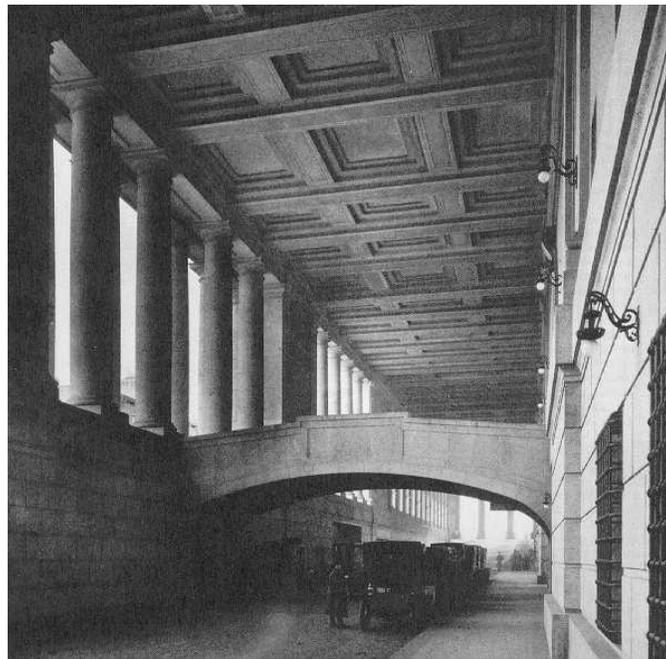
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ReThinkNYC Weekend Ruminations #3: A Continuing Series

Which Penn Station Proposal is Worthy of this City and Region?



The Original Penn Station's Carriageways

"The first thing I did when I got off at Penn Station, I went into a phone booth. I felt like giving somebody a buzz... Then I thought of calling this girl I used to go around with quite frequently, Sally Hayes, because I knew her Christmas vacation had started already--she'd written me this long, phony letter, inviting me over to help her trim the Christmas tree. Christmas Eve and all--but I was afraid her mother'd answer the phone. Her mother knew my mother, and I could picture her breaking a goddam leg to get to the phone and tell my mother. I was in New York. Besides I wasn't crazy about talking to old Mrs. Hayes on the phone. She once told Sally I was wild and that I had no direction in life... I ended up not calling anybody. I came out of the booth, after about twenty minutes or so, and got my bags and walked over to the tunnel where the cabs are and got a cab."

-Holden Caulfield, The Catcher in the Rye, J.D. Salinger (1945)



The Carriageways, then handling taxi service, as seen in Alfred Hitchcock's *Strangers on a Train* (1951)

The original Penn Station's carriageways, designed during the horse and buggy era, and the stuff of fiction and film ([see clip from Alfred Hitchcock's climatic chase scene in *Strangers on a Train*](#) which was actually filmed in the original Penn Station) lend themselves quite easily to solving one of the current Penn Station's greatest shortcomings, vertical circulation.

Proposal 1: ReThinkNYC's Rebuilt Original Penn Station: Former 31st and 33rd Street Carriageways

In ReThinkNYC's proposed recreation of the station the former carriageway/taxi ramps are converted into open air arcades (a rare feature in New York City) with pedestrian ramps on both 33rd and 31st Street (31st Street Rendering below) in order to revolutionize the experience of getting from track to street level. Vertical circulation would be greatly improved as would the streetscape in the area.



The once carriage and taxi-ways converted to street level,
open air arcades with pedestrian ramps.

Jeff Stikeman/Nova Concepts

Proposal 2: The Proposed Empire Station Complex: 33rd Street Means of Egress and Ingress

In contrast, the proposed Empire Station Coalition proposes to keep hundreds of thousands of commuters ambling through a predominantly subterranean station with occasional randomly designed openings for vertical circulation which apparently will have little consistency in design.



The newly constructed East End Gateway (left) pictured side by side with an MTA rendering of a proposed 33rd Street and 8th Avenue Entrance to Penn Station (right).

Wikimedia (left), MTA (right)

Our Thoughts

This is New York City and this is one of the largest train stations in the world. We do not need to look far to do better than what New York State is proposing. We need only look at what we once had, the original Penn Station, and retrofit certain aspects of it for today's uses. The arcades and pedestrian ramps proposed for a rebuilt Penn Station by ReThinkNYC will undoubtedly become a beloved part of our streetscape in the same manner as so much of Grand Central Terminal.

In the past some have accused us of zealously advocating for a brick by brick restoration of the original station. That has never been the case as evidenced by our repurposing of the carriageways and other changes we propose which are complementary to the original station's design but assist us in meeting today's needs. We think we can have the best of both worlds, one of the great buildings and train stations in history from the advent of the last century constructed today with modifications to take us confidently into the 21st century and beyond. Do not accept less.

Join the movement! [Rethink Penn Station NYC](#)

For details of the ReThinkNYC plan, [click here to see our complete proposal](#).

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ReThinkNYC is a New York City-based non-profit organization specialized in transportation infrastructure and how it relates to complex urban, governance and socio-economic issues.

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