An Analysis of OnTrack Passenger Rail in Syracuse, NY

Abstract
The OnTrack Rail System was a unique transportation option for Syracuse, serving some of the city's largest attractions, before closing in 2008. The goal of this project is to analyze how the transit system functioned, understand what lead to its failure, & research how a new passenger rail system would prosper in its place.

History of OnTrack
Beginning in 1994 through an agreement between the NYS&W Railroad & Onondaga County, OnTrack provided transit service to several major Syracuse destinations: Carousel Center, Armory Square & the Syracuse University Campus. The trains provided 3 main services: passenger rail 6 days a week, Orange Express for SU athletic games in the Carrier Dome, & weekend excursion trips. OnTrack ridership started strong & exceeded expectations, however decreased over several years before only servicing 75 riders a day in 2008, the year in which the system was shut down.

Research Methods
Information was collected through various sources including personal interviews, historic newspaper articles, conducted site visits, & administrative data to compare successes & failures.

Syracuse in Transition
Since the closure of OnTrack in 2008, Syracuse has continued to experience a revival: Downtown has seen the construction of new hotels, offices, & residential spaces. Carousel Center has expanded into Destiny USA, becoming the 6th largest mall in the United States. SU & ESF have focused on expansion through the Connective Corridor & Campus West initiatives. Neighborhoods are coming back. Overall, the region has turned its attention to the city core, creating new life & an urban renaissance.

A lack of commitment from the NYS&W as well as Onondaga County led to the demise of OnTrack. The Park Street Bridge was not built, hindering the system from connecting to new stops. These challenges must be addressed, but all of the infrastructure remains, allowing passenger rail to return to Syracuse again in a successful manner.

Conclusions

Informational Sources
The Post-Standard http://www.syracuse.com
Onondaga County Public Library
Centro, CNYRTA
New York State Department of Transportation
Syracuse Metropolitan Transportation Council
The Daily Orange, University Newspaper
Finger Lakes Railroad
Transit Capacity & Quality of Service Manual
City-Data.com
United States Census Bureau & Data
Google Maps, Earth, & SketchUp
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