

## Final Report



View of interior of the Shed



View of Head House and Manhattan skyline beyond from roof of Shed

For more than 350 years the site of the Liberty State Park Train Shed has functioned as a transportation hub with a long history populated by ferries, steamboats, and railroads. Today the most prominent landmark of this rich heritage is the Central Railroad of New Jersey head house and Train Shed (now commonly referred to as the Liberty State Park Train Shed). The restoration of the Head House began the process of memorializing the significance of this gateway to the history of New Jersey and the growth of the nation. The State of New Jersey has recognized the necessity for an overall plan for the Train Shed to complete its mission begun with the restoration of the Head House.

The sheer scale of the Train Shed, covering more than 300,000 square feet, represents the number of immigrants, commuters, and visitors who have crossed the Hudson at this location. As one of the principal structures of the harbor and lower Hudson River the Train Shed offers spectacular views of Ellis Island, The Statue of Liberty and New York Harbor. Due to its current unsafe conditions, most people have not experienced the drama – the sense of scale and the connection with America’s past. This Final Report for the Liberty State Park Train Shed Historic Preservation Master Plan describes how this unique historic structure can be restored and adapted to new uses which will enhance the facilities at Liberty State Park for new activities that complement those of the Head House and generate revenue. The project team has worked with a number of dedicated employees of the State of New Jersey to develop a viable plan to bring new life into the Shed. This report details these findings and recommendations. It is divided into six sections which are briefly summarized below.

### History

The shed is on the National Historic Register and is the largest, and one of the few remaining, Bush type sheds ever built. It is a vestige of a bygone era when trains were the primary means of transportation connecting the gateway to the United States with the rest of the country. The Shed, and Liberty State Park, have a long history, much of it transportation-related.

- A ferry between the site and New York began operating in 1661.
- A steam engine factory was the base for the first steamboats on the Hudson River.
- The Hudson River and the Morris Canal are directly north of the Shed site.
- In 1864, the first terminus to the Jersey Central Railroad was built on the site.

The shed was constructed between 1912 and 1914. It was a major connection for immigrants coming from Ellis Island, as well as for commuters going to and coming from New York City. The Shed was closed in 1967 and has been an unused part of Liberty State Park since the mid 1970’s due to its dilapidated and hazardous conditions.

### Condition Assessment Survey

The team has surveyed and arranged for a number of tests of the material in the structure. The Shed is in a deteriorated condition for a number of reasons; major ones include over 50 years of heavy use as a train station, and over 30 years of abandonment where no maintenance has occurred. Of particular interest is the team’s conclusion that the Black Tom explosion of 1916 caused significant damage to the cast iron columns of the shed. This, tied with drainage being run within structural columns, has created significant damage to the supporting structure. A comparison of the survey done by the team with one done in 1976 shows that settlement of the structure, a major concern in previous reports, is not a significant issue. The concrete roof structure is not salvageable and will need to be replaced as part of the restoration. As part of the conditions assessment, an environmental study was done indicating contamination in the soil, but not to such a degree that major remediation would be required.

### Design Approach / Space Use Recommendations

The Shed offers an excellent opportunity for the State of New Jersey to enhance the amenities and mission of Liberty State Park, particularly by better relating the park to its transportation history. Based on analysis of the structure and the site, as well as interviews with people operating the Park and adjacent institutions, we analyzed and added to previous proposals for the use of the Shed. From this we have developed a Master Plan with a

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number of proposed uses for the Shed:

- An exhibition space to be used by the Park and/or other entities and a pedestrian connection from the parking lot, west of the Shed, to the Head House and Ferry slips to the east of the Shed.
- A covered open space to be used for large exhibitions, gatherings, shows etc.
- A space for interpretive initiatives to present the terminal/park transportation history.

No single use could successfully fill the entire Shed space. We also feel that a variety of uses is more likely to lead to successful redevelopment of the Shed than a reliance on one activity which, if unsuccessful, would leave the Shed entirely empty.

**Preservation Restoration Recommendations**

We have reviewed the following alternate restoration schemes:

1. Full restoration.
2. Creation of a stabilized ruin with the removal of all concrete, which could be an intermediate step to full restoration.
3. Demolition. This is not recommended by the consultant team.
4. Do nothing and let the structure continue to deteriorate and collapses. This is not recommended by the consultant team.

**Phasing/Estimate**

Restoring the structure and infrastructure of the Shed will be an expensive undertaking of approximately forty eight million dollars. In addition, demolition of the structure, an option that we do not recommend, would cost approximately ten million dollars; hence, the cost of restoring the structure vs. demolition will be approximately thirty eight million dollars. Given availability of funds, we have proposed phasing of the work so that it can be accomplished over a number of years. The stabilized ruin would allow for safe access to the shed area by the public and would cost approximately thirteen and one half million dollars, not much more than demolition.

**Scope of Work**

As part of our work for the State of New Jersey we have developed a separate scope of work for the design and construction documents required for the preservation and restoration of the Shed.

**Conclusion**

It is a testament to the engineering design of the Train Shed that it has withstood the affects of heavy usage, a major explosion, harsh environment, and years of deferred maintenance. The shed's significance in the history of New Jersey and the United States demonstrates the need for its preservation. We feel that this report is a critical first step for preserving and restoring the Shed so the public can use and appreciate this wonderful, historic structure.

