



Citizens *for* Regional Transit

CRT News

**A Quarterly Publication of Citizens for Regional Transit
Vol. 27, Issue 2, May 2025**

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***Help us achieve the Transit Prime Directive:
Make Transit a competitive alternative to driving for everyone!***

CRT Spring Public Meeting

21 May 2025

330 Student Union, UB North Campus

6:00 – 8:00pm

(NFTA Buses #35 or #44, free parking in the Furnas lot, doors open at 5:30)

The Buffalo-Amherst Metro Transit Extension Environmental Review and Design Update

Speakers

Jeffery Amplement, MUP, Planning Project Manager, NFTA, is leading the Buffalo-Amherst Metro Transit Extension Project

Nicole Hill, MUP, Senior Transportation Planner, NFTA, is leading the Bailey Avenue Bus Rapid Transit Project

Christopher Austin, CAPP, Director of Parking and Transportation Services, University at Buffalo

Sean T. Brodfuehrer, Assistant Director, Campus Parking

For over 60 years we have dreamed of a light rail centered regional transit network. Important steps in achieving this goal are now being accomplished by the NFTA: (1) the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the Amherst light rail extension will be released this summer; (2) Buffalo's first bus rapid transit (BRT) line will be deployed along Bailey Avenue over the next 5-years; and (3) Buffalo Metro Rail is now being extended into a new indoor station inside the old DL&W terminal. Our NFTA speakers will provide updates on these projects and our UB speaker will provide the UB perspective of potentially having all three campuses connected with high-capacity, high speed transit.

Join us to see the progress for yourself.

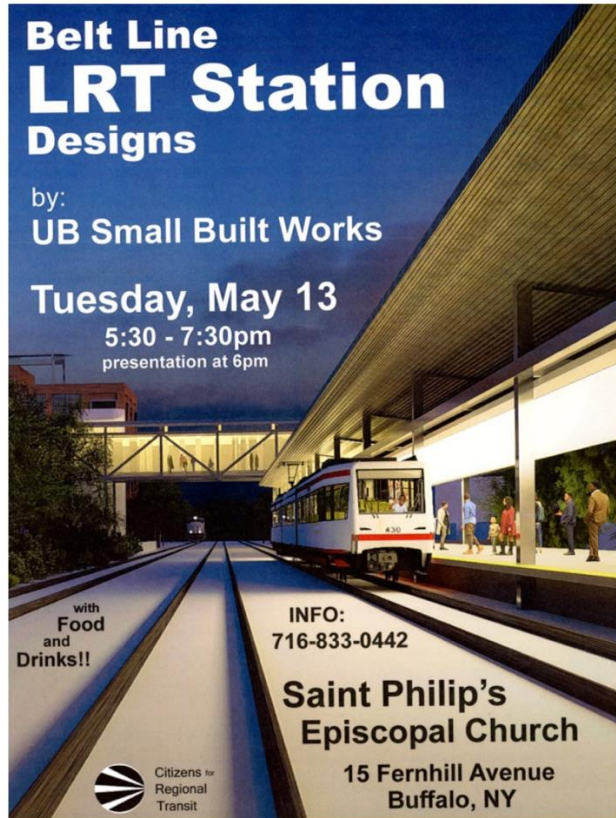


Join the meeting

Meeting ID: 228 663 228 419 7

Passcode: wq7Hc7vm

UB Small Built Works
Student Presentations

A poster for a presentation titled "Belt Line LRT Station Designs" by UB Small Built Works. The background is a photograph of a modern light rail train station at night, with a train stopped at the platform and people waiting. The text is overlaid on the image.

**Belt Line
LRT Station
Designs**


by:
UB Small Built Works

Tuesday, May 13
5:30 - 7:30pm
presentation at 6pm

with
**Food
and
Drinks!!**

INFO:
716-833-0442

**Saint Philip's
Episcopal Church**
15 Fernhill Avenue
Buffalo, NY

 Citizens for
Regional
Transit



[Join the meeting](#)

Meeting ID: 295 383 387 255 8

Passcode: 9LM9mo7D

President's Column

Exciting Opportunities in Orchard Park

By Douglas Funke, CRT President

I call for restoring America's greatness in areas where America was great – like public transportation – while avoiding relapse in areas where America was not great – like racism and sexism. Restoring our great public transportation systems will also help overcome the remnants of some past negatives like redlining.

In the old days public transit was ubiquitous, frequent and affordable for everyone. Buffalo and Niagara Falls, like most cities had a network of streetcars running high frequency schedules with long hours of service. Below is list of Buffalo streetcar frequencies from the post WWI period.

Route name	Route travelled	Base service	Night service?
Abt - Abbott	Abbott & Woodside, Abbott, Bailey, Seneca, Swan to Erie, returning Erie, S. Division, Chestnut, Swan, Seneca, Bailey, Abbott to Woodside.	10 min	service stops 1:00 am
Bst - Best Street	Erie & Pearl, Erie, S Division, Ellicott, Tupper, Elm, Best, Walden to Lathrop, returning Walden, Best, Elm, Swan to Erie.	10 min.	service stops 12:15 am
4-Broadway	South Division & Ellicott, Ellicott, N Division, Washington, Broadway, City Line, Broadway, Washington to S Division.	5 min	yes
2-Clinton	Erie & Pearl, Erie, S Division, Ellicott, Eagle, Michigan, Clinton, City Line, Clinton, Emslie, Eagle, Michigan, N Division, Washington, Swan to Erie.	8 min	yes
Con- Connecticut	Niagara & Connecticut, Connecticut, Normal, Jersey, Plymouth, Cottage, Days Park, Allen, Main, Virginia, Elmwood, Allen, Wadsworth, Fourteenth, Normal, Connecticut to Niagara.		service stops 12:00mid
12-East Utica	Ferry & Genesee, Ferry, Kehr, French, Fillmore, Utica, Main, Seneca, Michigan, Exchange, Main, Utica, Fillmore, French, Kehr, Ferry to Genesee.	6.5 min 5:30– 8:25 am 2:05– 7:30 pm	yes
E -Elmwood	Exchange & Michigan, Exchange, Ellicott, Seneca, Franklin, Chippewa, Elmwood to Hertel, returning Elmwood, Chippewa, Franklin, Seneca, Michigan, to Erie and NYC depots.	4 min	yes

Table 1. Buffalo Streetcar frequencies following WWI. Source:
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_routes_of_City_of_Buffalo_streetcars

But times have changed. Today we have sprawl and climate change. Sprawl makes car access necessary in low density / sprawled areas while climate change calls for Park & Ride collection points for access to high capacity, low polluting public transit.

In Buffalo, we still have the publicly owned rights-of-way from the original 1971 and subsequent 2001 and 2010 updates of the NFTA plans for a 46-mile light rail rapid transit (LRRT) network, and now even more reason than ever to implement it now. (References 1, 2 and 3.)

One Buffalo development screaming for the extension of Buffalo Metro Rail is the new Buffalo Bills stadium in Orchard Park. Orchard Park has new zoning now and hopes to make the stadium area a year-round destination, like has been done at other NFL stadiums. CRT has updated the NFTA's original Buffalo Metro Rail maps to the Southtowns to: (1) take advantage of the large stadium parking lots available as Park & Ride lots; and (2) leverage Orchard Park's rezoning that will allow more dense commercial development like hotels, restaurants and mixed-use high-density housing. Figure 1 shows this updated map.

In low population density areas car ownership is high. Residents drive personal vehicles to wherever they need to go. But when everyone drives downtown to work or attend events using area expressways like the Kensington, we have a problem. Congestion is frequent, pollution is maximized and concentrated in the neighborhoods the expressways go through, and acres of parking are needed. The One Region Forward report indicates that while our population has decreased (now rebounding some) we are using 78% more land and ***82% of our population commutes alone by car.*** (Reference 4.) The alternative is shared transit using Park & Ride lots.

Transportation now accounts for the largest source of greenhouse gases (GHG) emissions in Buffalo-Niagara at 41%. While on road GHG emissions in Buffalo Niagara are down by 8% in 2024 compared to 2010, vehicle miles traveled (VMT) is unchanged. (Reference 5.) ***Some may argue that because we are moving toward electric vehicles that the pollution problem is solved.*** This ignores several inconvenient facts:

- Every car (electric or hybrid) has 4 tires that wear out creating a wide range of pollutants including micro plastics and “PM 2.5” and “PM 10” emissions. A recent Yale School of the Environment report indicates that car tires and brakes emit 100 times the amount of volatile organic compounds as a modern tailpipe. (Reference 6.) And tires are virtually impossible to recycle and end up filling landfills and long-term storage facilities.
- Tire emissions are 20 percent higher from electric cars than fuel cars (Reference 6.).
- Cars require acres of lane miles and parking lots that themselves have their own environmental problems (e.g., every ton of cement generates a ton of CO₂ and modern cars are 50% plastic).
- Electric cars are heavier than gas-powered cars and so will wear out roads and bridges is much faster.

The Scoping Plan for meeting the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA), now NYS law, and the Erie County Climate Action Plan both call for reducing vehicle miles traveled (VMT) and investing in clean efficient public transit. (References 7, 8, and 9.) We are excited that the NFTA is extending Buffalo Metro Rail to Amherst and into the DL&W terminal

and is deploying Buffalo's first bus rapid transit (BRT) system on Bailey Avenue and studying other BRT deployment opportunities. These are great first steps that we support. But more is needed.

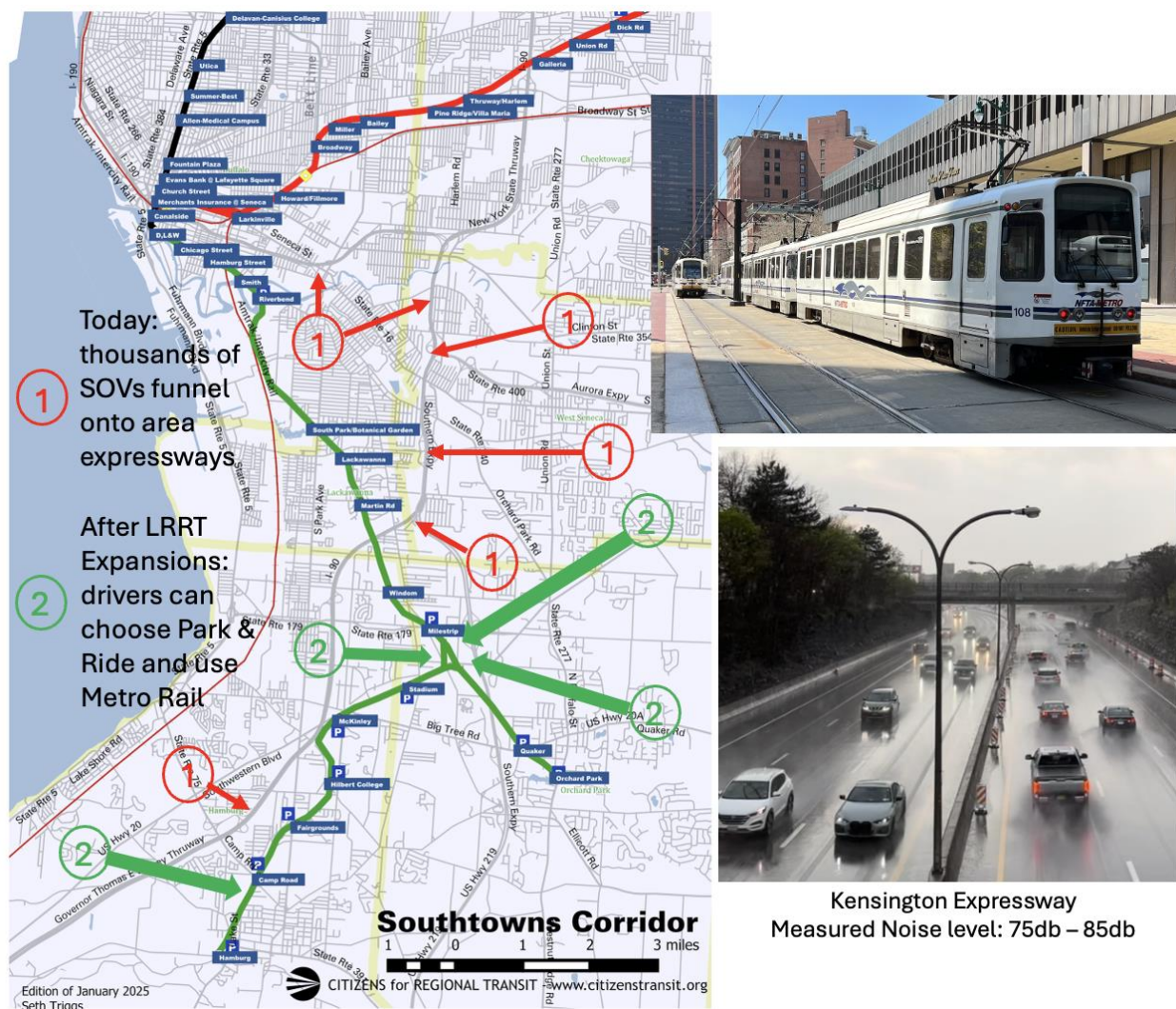


Figure 1. CRT's proposed LRRT Southtowns Extension Alignment with transit hub Park & Ride at the new Bills Stadium. Can minimize stops and achieve 50MPH between Buffalo and Orchard Park (a 25-minute ride) and to Hamburg (another 25 minutes, competitive with driving).

We call on the NFTA to study all extensions as originally planned. CRT stands ready to support this effort. These evaluations should look at ridership, transit-oriented development stimulation, and the environmental impacts. The highest Buffalo Metro Rail expansion priorities after Amherst and the DL&W are the:

1. East Side / Airport extension.
2. Southtowns extension (shown in Figure 1).

Extension to the Tonawandas and Niagara Falls should also be evaluated as longer-term opportunities along with the potential of eventually restoring the old Belt Line high capacity transit that encircled the city of Buffalo. CRT is working with the UB School of Architecture to evaluate and envision a scenario that restores the old “Belt Line” that would provide even more ubiquitous, convenient coverage. Come to our public meeting with the UB School of Architecture on May 13th at St. Philips Church across from ECMC below for more information.

Regarding the Bills Stadium developments, we are pleased to hear that a bus transit hub is being developed at the stadium. This will be needed while evaluations and plans for extending Buffalo Metro Rail as called for in the Community Benefits Agreement (CBA) are undertaken. As the CRT video shows, buses just don’t have the capacity for serving the stadium long term.



(<https://youtu.be/5HNIM0Tj8Cc?si=HbmXBU3Y0kZyFNzY>) In the near term, buses to the stadium should use contraflow on unused opposite-direction lanes to speed bus travel.

These LRRT extensions when accomplished will make Buffalo-Niagara’s public transit great again. See our website for detailed maps and descriptions. (www.citizenstransit.org.) CRT stands ready to work with the NFTA to support these efforts.

References

Reference 1. Niagara Frontier Mass Transit Study, Federal Project No. NY-T0-4, NY State Project No. 5820.00, November 1971.

Reference 2. Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority Strategic Transit Assessment Working Paper, August 27, 2001.

Reference 3. Erie County Transit Service Restructuring and Fare Study – Strategic Assessment, Final Report, August 2010. (<https://app.box.com/s/vhju03f9iqrwnl91mc9439k53xd5xm1n>)

Reference 4. One Region Forward Report Final Plan. GBNRTC, NFTA, UB Regional Institute, Buffalo Niagara Partnership

Reference 5. Regional GHG Inventory Overview. GHG Emissions in Buffalo Niagara, 2024. One Region Forward, UN Regional Institute, GBNRTC.

<https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/0d1c77d6083c43dabbbf4d64b8a1a148/page/Regional-GHG-OverviewGHG>

Reference 6. YaleEnvironment360. Published at the Yale School of the Environment. <https://e360.yale.edu/features/tire-pollution-toxic-chemicals>.

Reference 6. NYS Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA)>. (<https://climate.ny.gov/Resources/Scoping-Plan>).

Reference 7. NYS Climate Action Council. Scoping Plan. Full Report. December 2022.

Reference 8. Erie County Climate Action Plan, 2023.

Update and History of the Scajaquada Corridor Project

By Alan Oberst, CRT Board Member

With the Kensington Expressway issue grabbing everyone's attention for almost two years now, the Scajaquada Expressway project has largely fallen off the radar. But it shouldn't.

There have also been attempts recently to characterize the Kensington and Scajaquada Expressway projects as being "at the same stage." But the two projects are at the same stage in the same way Danny DeVito and Arnold Schwarzenegger are "Twins." The DOT's proposed Kensington Expressway project, having utterly failed to gain anything remotely resembling community consensus, even at the conceptual level, is being sent back to the kitchen. Yet the Scajaquada project, thanks to the Region Central planning process overseen by Hal Morse, former director of Greater Buffalo-Niagara Regional Transportation Council (GBNRTC), actually advanced over two years ago to the point of achieving community consensus.

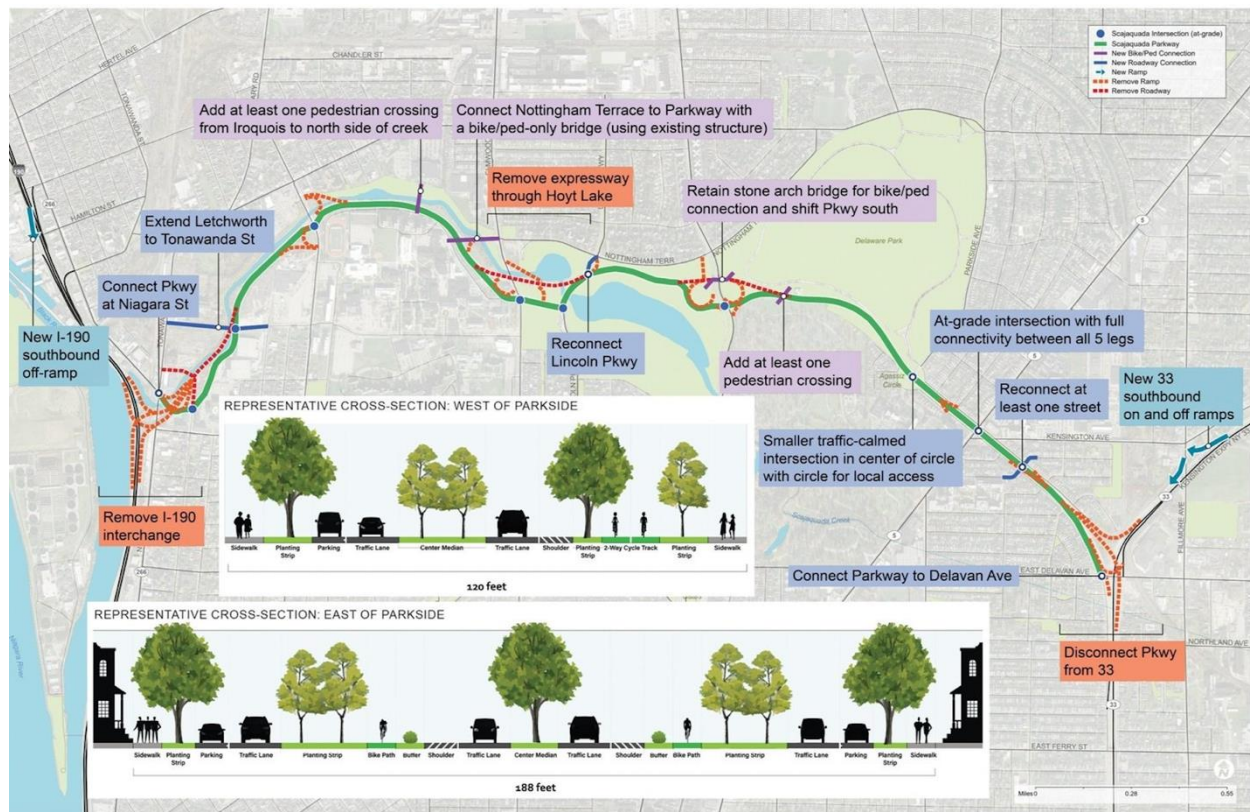


Figure 2. Overview of the plan from the Region Central Report.

About Region Central, while it may seem counter-intuitive, it is essential to understand that the planning process did not result in an actual plan, per se. Region Central was an attempt to find a consensus on a conceptual framework for a path forward for remaking the Scajaquada corridor—specifically, as the process recommended, making the corridor a parkway from end to end. In

January 2023, the Region Central team (consisting of GBNRTC and a consulting team led by Stantec) presented a “preferred scenario” that embodies this framework, along with the diagram that accompanies this article. Even though the diagram resembles a plan, and many (including the Buffalo News) have characterized it as a plan, it is most definitely *not* a plan. Figure 2 shows the Region Central concept that actually disconnects the Scajaquada from the I-190 and NY33.

For one, “parkway” means different things to different people, and has meant different things in different contexts over time. Also, if you talk with the Region Central team (and I did, in depth, frequently throughout the process) they will readily say that the Region Central framework could be implemented in various ways for the various segments and nodes of the Scajaquada corridor.

So although the Region Central process had many strengths, it also had weaknesses. And, in the end, was incomplete. Perhaps most significantly, Region Central did not recommend any path forward. It did not include a “roadmap” to advance from Region Central to a design that could be engineered and implemented. And, especially of interest to Citizens for Regional Transit, there was little to no transit planning included in Region Central.

In many ways, Region Central is a political statement. The goal was to produce a conceptual framework that would gain consensus, which means, essentially, no loud and substantial objections from any key stakeholders. Accomplishing that required not just planning but also diplomacy on the part of the Region Central team. Gaining that consensus was a strength for finding a path forward, but a weakness in that the nitty-gritty of finding workable, doable, real-world designs for each segment and node of the corridor is left to future stages that the Region Central team didn’t even map out.

It also needs to be said that an inherent weakness in the process over which Region Central had no control is that the two expressway projects really need to be planned as one. Each affects the other. But politically that wasn’t possible. DOT wanted to do their own thing with the Kensington, and told GBNRTC that “their presence was not required” at the Kensington stakeholder meetings.

A good example of this is that the eastern portion of the Scajaquada functions as a kind of on-ramp to the Kensington Expressway. The Scajaquada also punches through the “green wall” of Delaware Park and Forest Lawn Cemetery, providing the only access point to the 33 for much of the city west of Main Street. As a result, the eastern end of the Scajaquada corridor has expressway levels of traffic, without being surrounded by a street grid that could absorb the traffic if it were “downgraded” to a boulevard. So as long as the Kensington remains an expressway, and the Scajaquada corridor directly connects with it, it will have to handle significant traffic loads that can’t simply be wished away. However, if the Kensington were to be eliminated as an expressway, that would substantially change how the eastern end of the Scajaquada corridor could be planned.

But waiting for the Kensington is no excuse for inaction on the Scajaquada. There is substantial planning work to be done to bridge between the Region Central preferred scenario and a final design. There is significant work for planners to do along with the community. The former leader of the Scajaquada Corridor Coalition (SCC), Brian Dold, recognized this, and in the spring of

2023 he initiated an extensive planning process taking the Scajaquada corridor section by section. There were probably a dozen meetings held, very well attended, and literally hundreds of person-hours were invested.

But when Brian left the Olmsted Conservancy (co-chair of the SCC) in July, 2023, all of that work came to a halt. It is essential to pick it back up, so that we don't suddenly find ourselves back at the mercy of the NYSDOT. Over the last two decades Buffalo has been down this road, so to speak, with the NYSDOT too many times, where the DOT and their well-paid consultants put out designs no one asked for and no one wants, resulting in the necessity for a public battle in which institutional players, often dependent on state funding, are caught in the middle and feel pressured to compromise rather than cross powerful state officials.

So we need to be proactive now to avoid getting yet another plan for the Scajaquada that doesn't meet the community's needs and aspirations, lest we be forced back to another campaign with meetings, slogans, t-shirts, signs, and press conferences. The campaign on the Kensington has shown an example of citizens taking control of the destiny of a large infrastructure project without waiting for, or depending on, the NYSDOT, GBNRTC, elected officials, and institutional players.

The community taking the lead is exactly what we need to see on the Scajaquada corridor, as well—and sooner rather than later.

WNY Transit News

Single Tracking Finished (again)! Metro Rail trains ended its latest single tracking between Amherst and University stations, which was in place for system maintenance through much of March and April. Above ground service will be shut down on May 3rd and 4th. A bus shuttle will be provided.

Amherst Extension EIS Expected in August 2025. The updated draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) that was supposed to be released in early fall is now expected to be released for public review in August or September of 2025. Come to our May public meeting to see a preview.

Get your yard Extend Metro sign!



Donate and get a free yard sign!

<http://www.citizenstransit.org/YES.Extend>

If you're near the Amherst corridor, we'll drop your sign(s) off. We can supply any quantity desired.

CRT Work Highlights

January - April 2024

Community Outreach and Education.

- Attended PPG's grand reveal highlighting the 2025 agenda winners. Note CRT was partnered with ESP and won first place focusing on restoring Buffalo's Humboldt Parkway system with the East Side Parkway Coalition (ESP).
- Updated CRT maps. See CRT website for the latest maps.
- Attended NFTA's Bailey Avenue BRT open house.
- Attended PPG's City Budget 101 educational meeting.
- Attended NFTA LaSalle TOD public meeting.
- Attended Orchard Park Bills Stadium Public Meeting.
- Tabled at the Erie County Earth Day celebration hosted by the Erie County Climate Action Committee (April 22nd, Northland Workforce Training Center, 683 Northland Ave.)
- Attended the Niagara Falls Local Waterfront Program (LWRP) public meeting.
- Participated in NY Renews Mass Call advocating for NYS implementation of cap and invest part of the CLPA law implementation. So far cap and invest not included in NYS budget.
- Continued support to UB's Small Built Works Program that is designing potential Buffalo Metro stations along Buffalo's "Belt Line" and Buffalo Metro airport extensions.
- Served on Scajaquada Community Coalition advocating for optimal Region Central implementation.

CRT Public Meeting

- CRT Annual Public Meeting held on held on 22 January.

Continued Working with the East Side Parkways (ESP) Coalition to advocate for restoration of Humboldt Parkway and to oppose NYSDOT's plans to partially tunnel the 6-lane expressway.

- Won our Lawsuit with ESP and others against NYS DOT. NYSDOT is not planning to appeal and will conduct a full Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).
- Attended community workshops soliciting community support for full restoration of Humboldt Parkway.
- Attended mayoral Candidates forum.
- Attended Buffalo Common Council Meetings when the Humboldt Parkway was discussed.

Supported Buffalo Metro Amherst extension.

- Continued distributing "YES, EXTEND METRO" yard signs.
- If you would like a yard sign, contact us at our email: crtc@citizenstransit.org. We are requesting a \$10 donation so we can purchase more signs.

Regional Rail Promotion

- Encourage GBNRTC to reinstate Regional Rail Committee meetings. Were told they will resume shortly.

Communication

- Met with Senator Cooney's office on 3 January
- Sent comments to GBNTC on numerous proposed TIP modifications relating to transit expenditures.

Ongoing Activities and Meetings. Continued to attend meetings of local public organizations, including the NFTA, GBNRTC, and Buffalo Place. Also served on the Erie County Climate Change Task Force (ECCTF) representing transit issues and on NFTA's Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC). Also, served on SCC committee advocating Region Central next steps and as a supporting member organization of NYRenews advocating for implementation of CLCPA cap & invest legislation, not currently in the 2025/26 State Budget.

Opportunities and Upcoming Events

Keep CRT On Track. To join as a new member, renew your membership, or make a donation please click on: <http://citizenstransit.org/join>. Thanks.

Can You Help Us? We are looking for volunteers to help us be more effective. Can you help us plan and staff tabling events? Can you help us update and prepare outreach material? Can you help us with data entry tasks (e.g., maintaining our email lists)? Can you help us write grant applications? Please contact us at CRTC@citizenstrnsit.org if you want to help.

Upcoming Events

- 13 May. CRT / UB School of Architecture Student Presentations on potential rail stations along the old Belt Line. St. Philips Episcopal Church. See above notice with TEAMS link
- 21 May CRT Public Meeting. See above notice with TEAMS link.