

# CRT News

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## CRT Annual Meeting

**January 21, 2015, 5:30 pm**  
**Innovation Center, 640 Ellicott Street, Buffalo, NY**

### **“State of Transit in Buffalo-Niagara”**

**CRT President Douglas Funke, speaker**

Douglas Funke will present accomplishments from 2014 and lead discussion of ongoing projects and priorities for 2015.

The meeting includes election of CRT officers and Executive Board members for 2015.

Doors open at 5 pm for refreshments and networking.

Directions:

Innovation Center is at 640 Ellicott Street, between Goodell and Virginia Streets, Buffalo

FREE and OPEN TO THE PUBLIC



**“Federal gas tax revenues are dropping and prospects of returning to robust national investment are uncertain, at best. States that want to continue investing will have to explore new ways to raise funding for transportation on their own.”**

*—T4America director, James Corless*

## MEET NOMINEES FOR THE CRT BOARD

The CRT Board is pleased to present three new nominees for the Board. Here are their bios:

**Derek King** is an Architectural Historian at Preservation Studios, a small consulting firm in Buffalo, NY that specializes in historic tax credit projects and historic districting.

He moved to the Buffalo in June of 2012 from New Hampshire, and immediately fell in love with the architecture, people, and potential he saw around him. Since arriving, he has volunteered with the West Side Environmental Defense Fund, Buffalo's Young Preservationists, and with 21st Century Park on the Outer Harbor, focusing primarily on issues of social justice through various campaigns that mixed grass-roots organizing with tactical urbanism and traditional and new-media outreach.

**Rebecca Reilly** is currently the Director of Operations for the Creative Problem Solving Institute. With a background primarily in logistics as a bike messenger for 10 years and in the USMC for eight.

She wrote a book about the bike messenger industry and oral history of the community, [Nerves of Steel](#). She also holds a Master of Science in Creativity from Buffalo State. Occasionally, she consults with organizations to use the creative problem solving process to solve complex issues requiring innovative solutions.

**Jason Kulaszewski** is a recent (2012) graduate from Buffalo State's Regional Planning and Urban Analysis program. He is a "Core" member of Buffalo's Young Preservationists (BYP), and has been advocating for transit dependent students at ECC with the Young Citizens for ECC— which is an all volunteer advocacy group that has been working with City, County, and State officials to reconsider the \$30 million investment in STEM programs at North Campus in favor of the more accessible City Campus location.

He is a docent at Buffalo's Central Terminal as well as the Richardson Complex, where he holds a seat on the Community Advisory Group that helps guide the Richardson Complex Board toward a shared community vision for the redevelopment of the Historic Richardson Complex.

Lastly, as a staff member of PUSH Buffalo he works within a community that struggles with issues involving our inadequate public transportation system on a daily basis, and hopes to effectively advocate for a better comprehensive regional multi-modal transportation system in Western New York.

The full slate of officers and Board members will be elected at the CRT Annual Meeting, January 21.





## WNY Transit Faces a Critical Decision: “Death Spiral” or Rebirth

by Douglas Funke, President

Public transit in Buffalo-Niagara is at a critical juncture. We can continue current inadequate budget policies or find a better way; one that can provide sustainable growth with secure, long-term financial health. The choice for sustainable budgets is not NFTA’s alone. It requires support and commitment from local, State and Federal governments. State support is especially important. Unlike NYC’s Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) all other NYS regional transit systems lack a state-supported multi-year capital program that provides predictable funding for infrastructure renewal.

### The current financial model is not working:

The NFTA is facing \$10M shortfall for 2015 and seeking funds from the State to avoid further cuts in service. But even this is a bare bones budget that continues to postpone needed capital investments. And postponed maintenance makes it harder to qualify for Federal funds, thus creating conditions that could cause the downward “death spiral” that NFTA Executive Director Minkel warns about.

### The Root Cause:

Total revenues (fares plus public subsidies) don’t adequately cover expenses; it’s as simple as that. Year after year the NFTA has to decide whether to use available funds for operations or for desperately needed capital projects. It’s always a devil’s bargain. Rather than cut services that Buffalo-Niagara citizens depend upon (30% of Buffalo households don’t own cars) the NFTA postpones needed capital expenditures. The bus fleet continues to age, escalators fail, tunnel liners degrade, etc. Symptomatic of the problem is this: the fund that was set up years ago to generate tax revenue to cover light rail capital needs has been used to cover both operational and capital costs and now is depleted.

### Encouraging Signs:

*The NFTA recognizes the problem.* On December 11th NFTA Commissioners met publicly to discuss the 2015 budget. The new NFTA CFO, John Cox, presented an honest and realistic fiscal overview. There was acknowledgement among Commissioners and Director Minkel that a new sustainable financial model is needed. They expressed a willingness to search for permanent solutions while seeking the \$10M needed for 2015. CRT stands ready to support this effort.

*Our region is rebounding.* The Buffalo-Niagara Medical Campus (BNMC) is becoming a reality, developments at Canalside promise a brighter future for downtown, groundbreaking for Solar City at Riverbend will bring 3,000 jobs to Buffalo and transform a brownfield into a new industrial center, Larkinville now employs more people than

when it was the headquarters for the Larkin Company. We are grateful to Governor Cuomo for his support and urge him to find a permanent solution for the foundational financial problems facing our transit services; services critical for sustaining economic progress.

*There is a growing understanding that public transit is an essential component for regional success.* The Buffalo Common Council recently, and unanimously, passed a resolution calling for public transit improvements including expansion of Buffalo’s light rail. Cheektowaga continues calling for expansion of the light rail to the airport, and in fact, their long-range plan requires it. The BNMC has made it known that its long-term success depends on improvements in public transit including extension of Buffalo’s light rail. The City of Buffalo is finalizing a new zoning code that allows denser mixed-use development that is critical to the success of “Transit Oriented Development” (TOD). Private developers are already investing in properties along the existing light rail line.

*Needed transit system improvements have been identified and some work already started.* The 2010 “Erie County Transit Service Restructuring and Fare Study-Strategic Assessment” studied ten candidate transit investment corridors and found at least three worthy of “further study for major transit investment”. The highest scoring corridors were the airport and Amherst corridors. The NFTA has started work building a foundation for major investments along these corridors.

- The Amherst Corridor: The NFTA has initiated a study of alternatives for connecting UB’s south and Amherst Campuses. They are also working with UB to rebuild the Allen Street Station that will serve BNMC (construction underway) and replacing rail beds as part of the cars-on-Main-Street project.
- The Airport Corridor: The NFTA is studying transit enhancements to Buffalo’s Cobblestone District. This will establish a foundation for extending the light rail into the NFTA-owned DL&W Terminal and beyond. This extension, when developed, can eventually provide light rail service to Larkinville, Riverbend, and the Buffalo-Niagara International Airport.

### Continued Progress on Transit System Improvements and Fixing the Structural Budget Problems Are Critical.

Cities across the US are finding ways to invest in their public transit systems (even bankrupt Detroit is deploying a new streetcar system). Buffalo-Niagara needs to keep pace. This means maintaining momentum on the above projects and fixing our short-term and long-term budget problems. Local, State, and Federal governments need to help in achieving these goals. The successful future of our region depends on it. And we all have a stake in that!



More than 2.7 billion trips were taken on U.S. public transportation in the third quarter of 2014, according to a report released today [12-17-14] by the American Public Transportation Association (APTA). This is a 1.8 percent increase over the same quarter last year, representing an increase of more than 48 million trips and the highest third quarter ridership since 1974 (the oldest third quarter APTA has available for comparison).

[apta.com](http://apta.com)

## Safety and Security on Public Transit

*a review, by Lynn Magdol*

"The New Transit Safety Narrative", Todd Litman, Journal of Public Transportation, Vol. 17, No. 4, pp. 121-141.

As advocates for public transportation, we know its advantages for the environment, the pocketbook, and social equity. Did you know that transit also has safety advantages? A recent article reviews the data on transit risks and recommends approaches for promoting transit as a safe choice.

The risk of dying in a crash on transit is infinitesimal when compared to the risk in an automobile. The rate is .11 deaths per billion passenger miles for bus riders and .24 for urban rail commuters, compared to 7.28 for cars. Safety advantages of transit extend beyond riders to all residents of transit-oriented places, which have about one-fifth the rate of traffic deaths as automobile-oriented places.

Another form of safety on transit is personal security. Automobile property crimes are more prevalent and more costly than those on transit. From 2000 to 2009, transit ridership increased by 10 percent while violent crime on transit declined. Transit can lower the crime rate when poor people use it for access to

employment. Surveillance on transit also reduces the opportunity for criminal activity.

In some communities, myths and misconceptions abound regarding safety on transit. This may be due to media coverage that overdramatizes occasional incidents and exaggerates their presence. It may also be due to the fact that people tend to underestimate the risks of auto travel. Transit authorities can present a positive image to counterbalance the media. They can also provide tips for riders to enhance their safety.

The full text of the article can be found at [http://www.nctr.usf.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/JPT17.4\\_Litman.pdf](http://www.nctr.usf.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/JPT17.4_Litman.pdf)

### Congress Omnibus Bill Enhances Pedestrian Safety

Buried deep within the FY2015 Omnibus bill, passed in December, was a simple paragraph enacting a directive to the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) to make the safety of people on foot or bicycle a criterion for measuring the performance of our transportation system.

This is very important! See [t4america.org](http://t4america.org) for details.

## KEEP US ROLLING FOR ANOTHER YEAR!!

2014 was a great year for CRT! You can keep it going in 2015!

**Join or renew now** via [www.paypal.com](http://www.paypal.com) to “[crtc@citizenstransit.org](mailto:crtc@citizenstransit.org)” or mail the form below with a check to Citizens for Regional Transit, 617 Main St., Buffalo, NY 14203.

CRT is a registered 501c3 nonprofit organization and all contributions are tax deductible.

Suggested donation levels:	
Corporate - (name and logo will be posted on our website)	\$250. or more
Group/organization	\$50.
Household	\$35.
Individual	\$25.
Student, senior, unemployed	\$5.

.In 2014, CRT was actively engaged in educational campaigns and planning efforts for public transportation in the Buffalo-Niagara Region.

We contributed to coalitions of like-minded community organizations. We met with elected officials to make the case for public transportation in the Buffalo-Niagara Region. We gathered petition signatures at MLK Park, June 14-15. We organized Mayor Brown’s Dump the Pump Day Proclamation, June 19. We hosted Transit-Oriented Development Panel Discussion, October 15.

Our many other activities are described on our website, [www.citizenstransit.org](http://www.citizenstransit.org). CRT relies on member dues for all ongoing expenses. We are entirely staffed by volunteers, so contributions go directly to promoting transit. Your membership fosters our continuing and expanded efforts.

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Citizens for Regional Transit Membership Year- January 1 thru December 31, 2015

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Amount enclosed: \_\_\_\_\_

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**New York Public Transit Association  
presents  
Transit Awareness Day  
February 3, 2015  
Albany, NY**

This pro-transit event will include an Invest in Transit rally, meetings with lawmakers, a legislative reception, and displays in The Well of NYS Legislative Office Building (LOB) in Albany. New York Public Transit Association (NYPTA) will partner with several transit unions throughout the state to come together and present a unified voice to communicate the importance of a strong state investment in public transportation.

The NYPTA will advocate for greater capital investment by the State in transit infrastructure. Their **Capital Needs Report** identifies large funding gaps for the immediate future. The upstate 5-year transit infrastructure need is \$604 million, with expected funding resources of \$287 million, which leaves an unfunded gap of \$317 million. The downstate suburban 5-year transit infrastructure need is \$409 million, with expected resources of \$149 million, which leaves an unfunded gap of \$260 million.

There is a multi-year capital investment program in place through NYS for the New York City systems (MTA). Through the **Capital Needs Report**, NYPTA raises awareness of the capital investment needs of the 100+ transit systems outside of NYC.

Read the whole report at: <http://www.nytransit.org/index.php/public-documents/133-2015-5-year-capital-needs-report/file>

*Calendar*

Jan. 21  
CRT Annual Meeting and Election of Officers (p. 1)

Feb. 3 Albany Transit Awareness Day, organized by NYPTA

April 9 Stand up for Transportation Day — an American Public Transportation Association event, details TBA

**CRT educates everyone concerning public transit in Western New York: see <http://citizenstransit.org>.**

**Please support our efforts with your dues and donations. Send your payment by **Paypal**, or mail to CRTC, 617 Main St., Buffalo, NY 14203**