

Citizens for Regional Transit Corporation

Annual Report 2014

Submitted by:

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Citizens for Regional Transit Corporation

2014 Annual Report

This report summarizes the accomplishments, milestones and activities of Citizens for Regional Transit Corporation during 2014. Citizens for Regional Transit Corporation is known as Citizens for Regional Transit (CRT). This shorter designation will be used in this report.

During 2014 Citizens for Regional Transit was led by the following Board of Directors and Officers: Douglas Funke (President), Seth Triggs (Vice President), Lynn Magdol (Secretary), and Bunny Malone (Treasurer). In addition the following persons served as members of the Board of Directors: Gladys Gifford, Elizabeth Giles, Betty Howell, Jack Howell, and Carl Skompinski. Also, former CRT President Ed Deutschman, former CRT VP Dick Olday and former long-time CRT Board Member Joan Bozer served as Emeritus Board Members. Collectively these Members of the Board logged 2,550 hours of service.

The Nominating Committee has nominated 3 candidate new Board Members. They are Derek King, Jason Kulaszewski, and Rebecca Reilly. If confirmed, these new Board Members will bring fresh perspectives and new energy to the Board. Jack and Betty Howell are expected to resign from the Board.

CRT currently has 48 members. The names and addresses of CRT members are maintained by the CRT President and Secretary.

CRT continued to advocate for an integrated multi-modal public transportation system that serves everyone fairly in WNY. We also continued to educate the public and leaders from both public and private sectors. We kept members and the public informed about transit issues and events via the CRT website and Facebook page and published 3 newsletters that were distributed to over 1,500 recipients. Seth Triggs has continued to manage the CRT website; Carl Skompinski manages our Facebook page, and Gladys Gifford is the CRT Newsletter Editor. We also held two membership meetings in 2014 featuring guest speakers on topics relevant to public transit. The membership meetings were held in January and April at 237 Main Street at noon.

Highlights of the Year

- ***NYS Transportation Equity Alliance (NYSTEA) Conference and Transit Awareness Day.*** (3/18/14 – 3/19/14). CRT Members attended the NYSTEA Conference and participated in the associated Transit Advocacy Days in Albany. The CRT Members Doug Funke, Gladys Gifford, and Lynn Magdol attended. CRT President Doug Funke, served on a panel that discussed regional transit advocacy lessons learned. The NY Public Transit Association (NYPTA) and NYS Transportation Equity Alliance (NYSTEA) sponsored the event. NYSTEA provided a partial subsidy for CRT attendees. We met with several Members of the State Assembly and Senate during the visit.
- ***Hands Across Buffalo.*** (5/17/14). CRT members Doug Funke, Gladys Gifford, Jack and Betty Howell, Bunny Malone, Al Schuster, Margot Shoemaker, and Seth Triggs, participated in the Hands-Across-Buffalo event. Nearly 5,000 people joined hands along Ferry Avenue from the Niagara Street to Bailey Avenue to demonstrated resolve in reaching across socio-economic and geographic boundaries to solve our regional problems.



- **CNU Conference.** (6/4/14 – 6/6/14). CRT participated in the Congress for New Urbanism (CNU) International Conference held here in Buffalo. Doug Funke, CRT President, and Gladys Gifford, Past CRT President, both made presentations at the conference emphasizing the importance of public transit to success of “new urbanism”.
- **Dump the Pump Day and Mayoral Proclamation.** (6/19/14). CRT partnered with the Sierra Club to participate in the national “Dump the Pump Day” to promote the use of public transportation. We partnered with the NFTA to distribute free newspapers to public transit users. Buffalo’s Mayor Brown issued a proclamation declaring June 19th as Buffalo Dump the Pump Day and highlighting the importance of public transportation to personal and environmental health. CRT and the Sierra Club held a joint informational table at Buffalo Metro’s Church Street Station to promote transit and solicit support for public transportation. Lynn Magdol and Doug Funke appeared on the Public Good Radio Show with Sam Magavern on WUFO AM 1080 to promote Dump the Pump Day, and transit in general. GBNRTC posted signs on area highway message signs promoting taking transit.
- **CNU Transportation Summit.** (10/1/14 – 10/3/14). CRT Board Members Doug Funke and Gladys Gifford attended the CNU Transportation Summit held in New York City. This conference focused on the role of public transportation on the success of new urbanism. The critical importance of transportation for the success of new urbanism was highlighted and validated with supporting research during conference presentations.
- **Panel Discussion on TOD. (10/15/14).** CRT held a panel discussion of Transit Oriented Development (TOD) at the Innovation Center DIG. Panelists representing the NFTA, the City of Buffalo, and private developers discussed how to make TOD work in Buffalo. Paul Ciminelli, CEO Ciminelli Real Estate, Chris Hawley, City of Buffalo Planner, and Darren Kempner, NFTA Grants Manager served as panelists. CRT President Doug Funke, moderated. The event attracted over 50 attendees from the public.

CRT Membership Meetings

The CRT Membership meetings were held on the third Wednesday of January and April. These were open to the public. They included a short business meeting and featured guest speaker. Table 1 gives a summary of the guest speakers featured at the 2014 membership meetings.

Table 1. CRT Membership Meetings

Date	Speaker	Summary
Wednesday, January 15, 2014	William Tuyn, VP / Director of Town Planning, Greenman-Pedersen, Inc.	Bill presented a preview of the CNU22 conference to be held in Buffalo in June. CNU22 is the 22nd Congress for New Urbanism. Bill’s presentation summarized some of the new trends in urban development to be highlighted at the conference.
Wednesday, April 17, 2013	Kelly Dixon, One Region Forward Project Manager, GBNRTC	Kelly presented interim results of the GBNRTC One Region Forward Project. The project involves review of previous regional planning documents, extensive community outreach, and formulation of shared regional vision and values for future regional development.



Community Education

- **Made presentation at the Buffalo Library.** (2/18/14). CRT Doug Funke and Hal Morse, GBNRTC Executive Director, shared the podium as part of the Imagine a Healthy, Wealthy Sustainable Community speaker series at the Buffalo and Erie County Central Library. Doug presented “the Case for Transit” calling for investments in Buffalo transit and Hal presented the government view of public transportation from a fiscal and political perspective.
- **Hosted table at the Juneteenth Festival.** (6/14/14 – 6/15/14). Staffed informational table at the annual Juneteenth Festival. Distributed information about CRT and our goals for expanding Buffalo Metro. Obtained signatures on a petition calling for extending Buffalo Metro to the Buffalo-Niagara International Airport. Gladys Gifford, Doug Funke, Elizabeth Giles, Lynn Magdol, Bunny Malone, Carl Skompinski, and Seth Triggs participated.
- **Made presentation to the Buffalo Place Board.** (6/25/14). CRT Doug Funke presented “the Case for Transit” to the Buffalo Place Board of Directors. The presentation emphasized the importance of public transit to the success of downtown Buffalo as well as the larger Buffalo-Niagara Region.
- **Hosted table at Elmwood Festival.** (8/23/14 – 8/24/14). CRT attended and staffed a table at the Elmwood Festival to distribute CRT literature and promote extension of Buffalo’s Metro Rail. Obtained signatures on the petition calling for extending Buffalo Metro to the Buffalo-Niagara International Airport. Gladys Gifford, Doug Funke, Elizabeth Giles, Bunny Malone, Carl Skompinski, and Seth Triggs participated.
- **Held Ben Ross Book Signing.** (10/1/14). Held book signing event and reception at Talking Leaves with Ben Ross, author of “Dead End: Suburban Sprawl and the Rebirth of Urbanism.
- **Hosted presentation of Gondola Applications for serving the Outer Harbor** (9/23/14). CRT joined with Citizens for a 21st Century Park on the Outer Harbor to sponsor a presentation of low cost gondolas as a possible transit solution for serving Buffalo’s outer harbor. A commercial gondola manufacturer made the presentation citing example deployments across the US.
- **Made presentation to the UB Emeritus Center (UCA)** (11/11/14). CRT President Doug Funke presented “the Case for Transit” to members of the UB Emeritus Center.
- **Published several editorials in local newspapers.** Published several letters in local media including the Buffalo News and Buffalo Rising. In addition to letters by CRT President Doug Funke on behalf of CRT, individual Board Members Gladys Gifford, Elizabeth Giles, Lynn Magdol, and Carl Skompinski had letters published.
- **Was interviewed on WBEN Radio.** (10/5/15). CRT President Doug Funke was interviewed on the Dave Debo show about public transportation. Doug summarized CRT transit priorities and the benefits of transit investments. This was a live show and several callers phoned in with questions and comments.
- **Published Quarterly Newsletter.** Published the CRT News for the 16th year. Five issues of the newsletter were published during 2014. Each newsletter included articles on transit topics relevant to Buffalo-Niagara and highlighted upcoming CRT events,
- **Maintained CRT Website and Facebook Page.** Continued to maintain a CRT website (www.citizenstransit.org) and Facebook page (“CitizensforRegionalTransit”) where upcoming events are publicized and information and links relevant to transit in Buffalo can be found. The website provides access to current and past newsletters. The Facebook page is most popular with millenials and has 343 likes (25% increase during 2014).



Participation on Committees and with Partner Organizations

- ***NFTA Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC)***. This committee meets monthly and includes membership from many community organizations. Plans and issues relevant to transit in the Buffalo-Niagara Region are discussed. Elizabeth Giles is CRT’s representative.
- ***NFTA Buffalo-Amherst Alternatives Analysis Project Advisory Committee (PAC)***. This committee is working under the leadership of the NFTA to provide feedback on the alternative alignment and design alternatives identified for providing efficient transit to the Amherst Campus. Doug Funke is CRT’s representative.
- ***Greater Buffalo Niagara Regional Transportation Commission (GBNRTC) – One Region Forward Program***. CRT served as member of One Region Forward Transportation Committee. This program performed strategic planning for the region targeting a 40-year timeframe (through 2050). This work included participation in public workshops. Gladys Gifford is CRT’s representative. Lynn Magdol, Elizabeth Giles, and Carl Skompinski attended the Citizen Planning School.
- ***WNY Environmental Alliance (WNYEA)*** – Served as member of the Transportation Committee and the Energy and Climate Change Committee. We also participated in quarterly EA congresses. Our 2014 plank with the Energy and Climate Change Working Group calling for green public transit along the Niagara River Greenway was renewed with small changes for 2015. Doug Funke, Elizabeth Giles, and Gladys Gifford have served as CRT’s representatives.
- ***21st Century Park Committee*** – This committee is promoting a state-of-the-art park on the outer harbor. CRT worked with this committee to explore transportation alternatives. Doug Funke, Gladys Gifford and Elizabeth Giles were CRT’s representatives.
- ***Partnership for the Public Good (PPG)*** – CRT continued participation in planning meetings and the plank selection process. CRT submitted a competitive plank that was adopted by the larger organization for 2015. The CRT plank will address issues contributing to recurring budget shortfalls plaguing the NFTA. Lynn Magdol is CRT’s representative.

Community Engagement

During 2014 CRT met with numerous legislators and community leaders, attended public meetings and workshops, and corresponded with area leaders on topics relevant to transit. Table 2 below lists legislators and area leaders we met with during 2014. Table 3 summarizes public meetings and workshops we attended and Table 4 lists relevant correspondence.

Table 2. Legislators and Community Leaders

Category	Summary
Buffalo Niagara Partnership	Dan Leonard (Director, Economic Development)
City of Buffalo	Testified at Buffalo Common Council meeting highlighting CRT opposition to Outer Harbor plans and the need for investing in public transit instead.
Erie County Legislature	Barbara Miller-Williams
NYS Assembly	Jane Corwin, Dennis Gabryszak, Mickey Kearns, Ray Walter, Sean Ryan
NYS Senate	Mark Grisanti, Tim Kennedy, Michael Ranzenhofer
US Congress	Brian Higgins, Chris Collins
US Senate	(Visits planned for 2015)



Category	Summary
NFTA	Margot Downey (NFTA Commissioner), Howard Zemsky (NFTA Chairman) (5/15), Phil Wilcox (NFTA Commissioner)
Community Leaders	Jim Sandoro (Owner, Buffalo Transportation Pierce Arrow Museum)
Visit Buffalo Niagara	Pat Kaler (President, CEO)

Table 3. Public Meetings and Workshops

Organization	Summary
Buffalo-Niagara Partnership (BNP)	Attended the BNP Transportation Summit.
Buffalo Place	Attended regular Buffalo Place Board Meetings.
Buffalo Urban Development Corporation (BUDC)	Attended the Downtown Public Visioning Workshop.
CFTE / NAFTA	Participated in webinar series on transit advocacy topics.
City of Buffalo	Attended Buffalo Energy Plan Meeting, an informational public meeting on the proposed Green Code, and an informational meeting.
City & State	Attended the New York - Canada Summit Meeting on the Bike Master Plan.
ECHDC	Attended meetings on preliminary plans for development of the outer harbor.
Grow 716	Attended Media Matters Workshop
Niagara River Greenway Commission	Attended regular Board meetings. CRT will serve on the newly formed Transportation Committee to start in 2015.
NYSDOT	Attended the High Speed Rail draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) public hearing and a meeting to present preliminary plans for downgrading the Scajaquada Expressway to a low speed parkway.
NFTA	Attended regular Surface Transportation Committee Board Meetings and Committee on the Disabled meetings. Attended Niagara Street Gateway Project public meeting, the annual NFTA budget public meeting, and the Buffalo-Amherst Alternatives Analysis workshops.
GBNRTC	Attended regular GBNRTC Planning and Coordinating Committee (PCC) meetings. Attended the MTP 2040 Public information meeting, the One-Region-Forward Community Workshops, the annual budget review Public Meeting, and Bi-Annual Policy Meetings
Community Organization Events	Attended numerous community organization meetings including meetings of the Allentown Community Organization, Parkside Community Organization, North Buffalo Community Organization, and Restore Our Community Coalition meeting on covering the Kensington Expressway.
CNU	Attended the CNU22 Preview Meeting and Smart Growth for Williamsville Seminar
PPG	Attended PPG's Buffalo's Green Economy Workshop



Table 4. Correspondence

Organization	Date	Summary of Letter Contents
Tops Markets	3/31/14	Recommended that transit be included in Tops customer incentive programs.
NYSDOT	4/28/14	Commented on NYS draft Environmental Impact Statement on NYS high-speed rail. Called for integration with Buffalo's light rail.
NYSDOT	4/15/14	Commented on preliminary plans for downgrading the Scajaquada to a low speed parkway. Recommended focus on moving people rather than cars and including transit as central component of the planning.
NFTA	5/20/14	Thanked Howard Zemsky for meeting with us and reiterated the importance of extending Buffalo's light rail and connecting any new or refurbished Buffalo Bills stadium with high capacity transit.
Visit Buffalo Niagara	7/7/14	Stressed importance of public transit for successful tourism. Noted places in the 2014/2015 Touring Guide where transit information is needed.
City of Buffalo	7/28/14	Commented on proposed Allen Street enhancements. Noted the need to include transit in final plans.
ECHDC	9/24/14	Commented on preliminary outer harbor development plans. Recommended against significant residential development that will require expensive transportation infrastructure. Recommended investments in light rail expansions to the airport and UB instead. Also called for more open planning process.
Terry and Kim Pegula	11/21/14	Stressed importance of including public transit, especially light rail, in any new or refurbished stadium plans.
NFTA	12/11/14	Submitted formal comments on the NFTA budget presented at their Board meeting.

Miscellaneous

- **Petition for extension of Buffalo Metro.** Conducted petition drive calling for extending Buffalo Metro to the Buffalo-Niagara International Airport. Received over 1,200 signatures.
- **CRT Archives.** Decided not to donate CRT archives to UB or the Historical Society at this time. CRT Secretary, Lynn Magdol, will maintain CRT Archives.
- **Purchased display tent.** Purchased new display tent for \$300. The tent will be used for CRT information tables at shows and events.
- **Niagara Falls International Railway Station Groundbreaking.** (6/9). Gladys and Doug represented CRT at this event celebrating the start of construction at the new Niagara Falls International Railway Station.



Appendix A

Citizens for Regional Transit 2015 Budget

Budget Item	2014 Actual	2015 Budget
INCOME		
Donations	\$1,000.52	\$1,000.00
Dues	\$1,043.64	\$1,200.00
Grants	\$0.00	\$500.00
Total	\$2,044.16	\$2,700.00
EXPENSES		
Copying & Printing	\$282.81	\$400.00
Postage	\$58.31	\$65.00
Office Supplies	\$318.83	\$250.00
Phone	\$14.53	\$20.00
Conferences - Tickets, Transportation Etc.	\$1,519.62	\$1,500.00
Ads	\$219.29	\$75.00
Memberships	\$190.00	\$190.00
Miscellaneous	\$495.45	\$200.00
Total	\$3,098.84	\$2,700.00
Difference between income and expense	(\$1,054.68)	\$0.00
Checkbook balance as of 11-27-14	\$1,477.99	
Projected balanced 2015 budget		\$2,700.00



Appendix B

Petition for Extending Light Rail to the Airport with Stops at the Galleria and Central Terminal



CITIZENS *for* REGIONAL TRANSIT

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