

Citizens Regional Transit Corporation

Annual Report 2017

Submitted by:

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CITIZENS *for* REGIONAL TRANSIT

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Citizens Regional Transit Corporation

2017 Annual Report

This report summarizes the accomplishments, milestones and activities of Citizens for Regional Transit Corporation during 2017. Citizens Regional Transit Corporation is known as Citizens for Regional Transit (CRT). This shorter designation is used in this report.

During 2017 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, Carl Skompinski, Derek King, and Jason Kulaszewski. Also, former CRT President Ed Deutschman, and former long-time CRT Board Member Joan Bozer served as Emeritus Board Members. Collectively these Board Members logged 2,441 hours of service to the community valued at \$67,347.19 (using the NYS volunteer hourly rate of \$27.59).

At the end of 2017 CRT had 58 members (up 18%). The CRT Secretary and Treasurer maintain the names and addresses of CRT members. CRT has 574 Facebook likes (up 7%) and 195 Twitter followers (up 28%). Our newsletter email list has 965 recipients (up 34%). Our media contacts list has 104 recipients (up 12%).

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 at large 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, 4 published newsletters, and timely Twitter messages throughout the year. Seth Triggs has continued to manage the CRT website; Carl Skompinski manages our Facebook page, Derek King lead the Twitter effort and Lynn Magdol is the CRT Newsletter Editor. CRT 2017 Committee Chairs were:

- Nominating Committee – Carl Skompinski
- Membership Committee – Derek King
- Communications and Public Relations Committee – Lynn Magdol
- Legislative Committee – Gladys Gifford
- Grants Committee – Lynn Magdol (interim, committee no longer active)

CRT held three public meetings in 2017 featuring guest speakers on topics relevant to public transit. The meetings were held in January, April and October at the United Way headquarters on Delaware Avenue.

Two new Board members have been nominated for 2018 – Stef McGraw and Maddie McCauley Replacing Derik King and Jason Kulaszewski who will be leaving the board. If Stef and Maddie are confirmed through election by the membership at the annual meeting on January 16th the 2018 CRT Board will be Douglas Funke (President), Seth Triggs (Vice President), Lynn Magdol (Secretary), and Carl Skompinski (Treasurer), Gladys Gifford, Elizabeth Giles, Stef McGraf and Maddie McCauley. Carl is replacing Bunny Malone as Treasurer who is also leaving the Board. Like last year, former CRT President Ed Deutschman, and former long-time CRT Board Member Joan Bozer will continue as Emeritus Board Members



Highlights of the Year

- **Transit Awareness Day.** Doug, Lynn and Gladys attended the NYPTA Transit Awareness Day in Albany on 31 January 2017. We visited with many State Legislators to promote transit and support increased state budgets for transit statewide.
- **The Mayor's Committee to select a location for a new Buffalo train station.** Building on our successful 2016 plank with the Partnership for the Public Good (PPG) calling for the replacement of Buffalo's Exchange Street Amtrak Station, CRT was selected to serve on Mayor Brown's committee to select a location for a new Buffalo's train station. CRT President, Douglas Funke represented CRT on the committee.
 - A CRT position paper was provided as input to the committee. It stated that Buffalo needs two train stations due to the geometry of Amtrak routes. One station should be located downtown serving trains to Niagara Falls and Toronto. This station would replace the dilapidated Exchange Street Station and should be built immediately. Our position paper also stated that Buffalo's main station serving all trains should eventually be located at a refurbished Central Terminal with the existing Depew Station serving this function in the interim.
 - The committee voted to build the new station in downtown Buffalo and did not address the question of a second station. It was clear from the committee discussions that two stations will be needed for the foreseeable future and that the Depew Station will continue to serve that need, at least for now.
- **Continued Organizations Petition Drive.** CRT petition drive for signing by community organizations and area municipalities has continued. The petition calls for (1) extension of Metro Rail along the highest-demand corridors with (2) intermodal connectivity to air and inter-city rail, and (3) establishment of long-term sustainable public transit funding.
 - So far a total of 55 community organizations, 12 businesses and 9 municipalities have signed. This effort will continue in 2018. We will also begin collecting individual signatures during 2018.
- **Worked to increase STOA.** We met with WNY State legislators seeking an increase to the State Transit Operating Assistance (STOA) that supports operation and maintenance of public transit. STOA for upstate agencies was increased, thus avoiding pending NFTA budget shortfalls that would have required service cuts. This was part of the NYS annual budget legislation. We will continue to advocate for additional STOA increases in 2018.
- **World's Greatest Waterfront.** CRT continued to promote transit connections along the Niagara River Greenway and between Buffalo, Niagara Falls and Youngstown. This work started in 2013 and has included partnerships with the WNY Environmental Alliance (WNYEA) and PPG. We have seen some positive outcomes from this advocacy.
 - Trolley service between Niagara Falls and Old Fort Niagara started on May 26th, 2016, operated by the Niagara River Heritage Area Association as a 2-year trial period. The service is offered for free. Over 30,000 riders used the service each year.
 - Funding for continued trolley operation has been obtained so the service will continue in 2018.
 - CRT served on the Niagara River Greenway Commission (NRGC) Transportation Committee and now serves on the NRGC Citizens Action Committee representing greenway transit interests and needs.
- **Initiated "bus stop cubes" project.** Worked with community organizations to explore the potential for installing cubes at bus stops for riders waiting for buses to sit on. The cubes can be sponsored by area businesses and community organizations and display sponsoring group logos.



The cube designs were inspired and are based on cubes deployed in Rochester. Maddie McCauley and Jason Kulaszewski led the effort, which will continue in 2018.

- **Provided inputs to NFTA and GBNRTC.** Reviewed NFTA draft proposed FY 2018-2019 budget. Requested clarification and provided feedback. Attended NFTA budget public meeting and several other NFTA public meetings. Reviewed GBNRTC planning documents and attended GBNRTC planning and public meetings, offering comment and recommendations.

CRT Membership Meetings

Three CRT membership meetings were held in 2017. These were held in January, April, and October. The January meeting included the CRT Annual business meeting. These meetings featured one or more guest speakers, were publicized, and were open to the public. Table 1 gives a summary.

Table 1. CRT Quarterly Meetings

Date	Speaker	Summary
Wednesday, January 18, 2017	Doug Funke, President, CRT	Doug summarized the CRT annual report and presented an update of the CRT “road show” highlighting CRT successes and ongoing priorities. The initial results of CRT’s organizations petition was presented.
Wednesday, April 18, 2017	Rachel Maloney-Joyner, NFTA Senior Transportation Planner, Eric (Rick) Gillert, Town of Amherst Planning Director, and Town of Tonawanda Supervisor Joseph Emminger	Speakers discussed the transit oriented development opportunities that may be realized as a result of the light rail extension to the UB Amherst Campus. The latest plans for the extension were also reviewed and discussed.
Wednesday, October 18, 2017	Dan Leonard, Buffalo Niagara Partnership Senior Economic Development Director, Dustin Earle, Lyft Corporate Partnership Manager, and Rob Jones, NFTA Manager of Planning	Speakers discussed the potential role of ridesharing for supplementing public transit. Discussions included summary of ridesharing coordination programs in other regions, specific transit partnering programs being implemented by Lyft, and the economic implications of ridesharing and enhancements to transit connectivity more generally.

Community Education

- **Hosted information table at area festivals and events.** Distributed the CRT brochure, promoting transit as an important component of the Buffalo-Niagara transportation system and a necessary tool for economic development and fighting climate change.
 - **Elmwood farmers market (6-10-17)** (with the Sierra Club, Niagara Chapter)
 - **WNY Earth Day Expo (6-24-17)**
 - **Dump the Pump Day (6-15-17)** (Tabled at Church Street Station)
 - **Elmwood Festival of the Arts. (8-26-17 – 8-27-17).**
 - **Car Free Day Table at Buffalo Country Market (9-21-17)** (led by Go Buffalo Niagara)
 - **World on Your Plate Conference. (10-6-17).**



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- **Conducted workshop at the annual World on Your Plate Conference.** (10/7/17). CRT President, Doug Funke again held a transit workshop at this conference highlighting the importance of public transit for healthy food access.
- **Addressed Buffalo Common Council** (2/14/17). Doug Funke addressed a meeting of the Buffalo Common Council to support the Council's proposal to form a Transportation working group.
- **ULI Future Central Terminal Study.** CRT participated in community leader interviews in support of ULI's evaluation of potential future uses of Central Terminal (CT). We emphasized the strategic CT location for serving light rail, Amtrak as well as other modes.
- **Radio and Television interviews.**
 - Doug Funke was interviewed by Charlotte Keith of the Investigative Post for a Channel 2 special on public transit in Buffalo with a focus on the light rail extension. The interview was aired in July on Channel 2 and WBFO radio.
 - Doug Funke was interviewed by local news at each CRT Quarterly public meetings.
- **Published editorials.** Published several letters-to-the-editor in the Buffalo News. A letter by CRT Vice President Seth Triggs on behalf of CRT, and individual letters from Board Members Elizabeth Giles, and Lynn Magdol.
- **Published Quarterly Newsletter.** Published the CRT News for the 18th year. Four issues of the newsletter were published during 2017.
- **Website, Facebook and Twitter.** Continued to maintain a CRT website (www.citizenstransit.org) and Facebook page. Also maintained a Twitter account where upcoming events are publicized and links to relevant information on transit are noted.

Made presentations to area community organizations including:

- Amberleigh Senior Center (1-23-17)
- UB Engineering Society / UB Student Joint Meeting (2-13-17)

We also had large pull-up map display for use at festivals made with CRT Logo. The large high-resolution map was developed by Seth Triggs based on the maps on the CRT brochure and website.

Participation on Committees and with Partner Organizations

- **NFTA.** Served on several NFTA citizen committees.
 - **Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC)** This committee includes membership from many community organizations. Plans and issues relevant to transit in the Buffalo-Niagara Region are discussed. Derek King was CRT's representative.
 - **NFTA Buffalo-Amherst Alternatives Analysis Project Advisory Committee (PAC).** This committee provided inputs on the Amherst alignment and design alternatives for providing efficient transit to the Amherst Campus. Doug Funke representative CRT.
- **WNY Environmental Alliance (WNYEA).** Worked with WNYEA including service on several WNYEA committees and working groups.
 - Served as member of the Transportation and the Energy and Climate Change Committees.
 - Participated in annual and quarterly WNYEA congresses.
 - Served on WNYEA / Sierra Club Our Outer Harbor (OOH) Working Group. Provided \$50 to help fund the next public meeting, still to be scheduled.



- Continued work on advocating green public transit along the Niagara River Greenway. This work was a continuation of our 2014, 2015 and 2016 WNYEA planks.
- **Partnership for the Public Good (PPG).** CRT continued participation in planning meetings and the plank selection process.
 - CRT submitted a competitive plank for 2017 to promote non-polluting transit along the Niagara River Greenway including a call for transportation planning for the outer harbor. The CRT plank for 2017 was NOT selected.
 - Attended the PPG Poverty and Transit presentation on 7-6-17.
- **Sierra Club – Buffalo Niagara Chapter.** CRT worked with the Buffalo Niagara Chapter of the Sierra Club to promote the NFTA purchase and evaluation of electric buses as a long-term replacement of pollution prone diesel and compressed natural gas (CNG) buses.
- **Buffalo Common Council Transportation Working Group.** Doug Funke served on the Buffalo Common Council Working Group on transportation. The committee worked on defining transportation guidelines for City of Buffalo projects.
- **Preservation Buffalo Niagara (PBN).** Distributed CRT brochures at PBN Buffalo Metro Art Tours.
- **VOICE Buffalo.** Gladys Gifford represents CRT on the VOICE Transportation Committee.

Fund raising

Participated in the United Way Spring it on campaign again this year and received a total of \$273 (after United Way portion was taken out) including several generous anonymous contributions. We also received two anonymous donors totaling \$700 through the Community Foundation of Buffalo. We extend our sincerest appreciation to all our donors as well as our members who have provided the largest single portion of our budget. We especially want to thank our first corporate member, Aaron Krolkowski. We plan to continue our campaign to attract more corporate members.

We also explored possible grant sources. For example, we attended a seminar of the Wilson Foundation. We haven't found a good match between grants available and our specific needs but will continue exploring outside sources of funding that might help fund our work. We are now registered with Smile Amazon and continue to encourage CRT members and friends to designate CRT as the designated charity when they purchase items through Amazon Smile.



Appendix A

Citizens for Regional Transit 2018 Budget

Budget Items	2017 Accepted Budget	2017 Actual	2018 Corrected Budget
INCOME			
Donations	900.00	1,451.09	1,000.00
Dues	1,300.00	1,510.54	1,400.00
Grants	600.00	0.00	400.00
Totals	2,800.00	2,961.63	2,800.00
EXPENSES			
Copy & Printing	870.00	32.50	900.00
Office Supplies & Postage	230.00	119.57	180.00
Festival Registration	100.00	155.00	150.00
Conferences - Tickets, Transp. etc.	900.00	693.00	770.00
Ads	150.00	632.70	300.00
Memberships	300.00	390.00	300.00
Miscellaneous	250.00	243.96	200.00
Totals	2,800.00	2,266.73	2,800.00
Difference between income & expenses		694.90	
CK Bal Oct 26, 2017		2,232.59	
Proposed balanced 2018 budget	2,800.00		2,800.00



Appendix B

Buffalo Needs A Transit Revolution!

A Petition for an Integrated and Sustainable Public Transportation System

We the undersigned call on the NFTA and our business and community leaders to take action to provide more comprehensive and sustainable public transportation service for the Buffalo-Niagara Region. Specifically, we call for: (1) extensions of Metro Rail along the highest-demand corridors with (2) intermodal connectivity to air and inter-city rail and (3) establishment of long-term sustainable transit funding.

Please add _____ to the list of organizations and municipalities supporting this petition.

Organization Authorizing Officer:

Name: _____ Position: _____

Address: _____ Phone: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Comment: _____

Why We Need It:

Attracting & Keeping Population - Growing numbers of Americans, notably young adults and baby boomers approaching retirement, prefer to locate in regions that have efficient multimodal mobility systems, including the option to live free of car dependency. The demand is for walkable, bikeable, mixed-use neighborhoods efficiently connected by transit.

Parking & Congestion - Transit moves people safely and cost-effectively to work, shopping, and recreation without scarring our waterfront, parkland, and downtown streetscapes with acres of parking. Providing park-and-ride facilities for commuters and visitors outside the central city provides a hassle-free commuting option while decreasing traffic congestion, air pollution, and on-street parking shortages.

Equity - Over 1/3 of Buffalo households do not own cars (2000 US Census). Rapid transit expands mobility **options** for all socioeconomic groups, including those who rely on public transportation to get to suburban jobs, shopping, healthcare, educational institutions, and all other personal needs. A household can expect to save \$5,000 to \$9,000 a year for each car it can do without (ConsumerReports.com).



Economics - Investments in light rail and bus rapid transit are transforming cities across North America and **stimulating** commercial and residential development along the improved transit lines (Transit-Oriented Development). Buffalo is blessed with existing, publicly owned rail rights-of-way along many heavily traveled corridors. These make expansion of our light rail system among the nation's most affordable. Comprehensive analysis of WNY's infrastructure needs and resources – and surveys of what our citizens want – led UB's Regional Institute and the Greater Buffalo Niagara Regional Transportation Council to recommend “making transit funding and system improvement a top priority” (One Region Forward Final Draft Plan, 2014).

The Environment - Automobiles in NYS collectively emit 70 million metric tons of CO₂ per year, more than carbon emissions from industrial, residential, or commercial sources (2014 Draft NYS Energy Plan). Of all transportation-generated greenhouse gases, 61% come from passenger cars and light trucks (US EPA, 2013). We must offer car-free options to combat global warming. Buffalo's light rail trains already run partly on clean hydroelectric power - with the potential to run on 100% non-polluting Niagara Falls waterpower.

We call for the NFTA and Buffalo-Niagara leaders to:

Extend Metro Rail

- To the airport – Prioritize extension of the Metro Rail from Downtown Buffalo to the Buffalo Niagara International Airport along our existing publicly owned rail rights-of-way. This extension will intersect many East Side bus lines while connecting the central business district with Larkinville, Central Terminal, Galleria Mall, Thruway Mall, and a Park-&-Ride off the I-90 in Cheektowaga.
- To the UB Amherst campus – Build on the ongoing NFTA study to connect all three UB campuses and to facilitate access to suburban shopping and jobs.
- Through the DL&W Terminal to Larkinville – Extend Metro Rail through the DL&W Terminal to Larkinville, a first step in taking the existing line to the Buffalo Niagara International Airport while enabling car-free access to the First Niagara Arena, Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus, our Waterfront, the Cobblestone District, and Downtown.
- To the Bills Stadium – Any investment in a new or refurbished Buffalo Bills Stadium should ensure Metro Rail access, folding any necessary Metro Rail enhancements into its financing. This will satisfy the intense travel demand on Bills game days while improving the experience for those who choose to drive and tailgate. Any stadium parking facilities could double as Park-&-Ride lots for everyday commuting year-round.
- To the Southtowns and Tonawandas – Preserve existing rail rights-of-way, so the original vision for a comprehensive network of light rail serving the Buffalo-Niagara Region can ultimately be realized.

Create Multimodal Amtrak / Metro Rail Stations

- Eliminate the existing Depew and Exchange Street Amtrak Stations and replace them with Multimodal Transportation Centers suitable for 21st century passenger service and eventually high-speed rail. These must feature a rapid transit connection to the airport and include bicycle and car share facilities. One station should be near Buffalo's waterfront and a second located further east where it can serve all Amtrak destinations. A restored Central Terminal should be a candidate for the second site.

Establish long-term, sustainable dedicated funding

- Establish permanent, reliable and sufficient funding streams for comprehensive multimodal public transportation in Buffalo-Niagara. This funding must be able to sustain the operations and maintenance of Metro Rail and all connecting transit services and infrastructure.



Appendix C

Community Engagement

Community Engagement

During 2017 CRT met with numerous legislators and community leaders, attended public meetings and workshops, and corresponded with area leaders on topics relevant to transit. Table C-2 below lists legislators and area leaders we met with during 2017.

Table C-1. Met with Legislators and Community Leaders and Supported Various Community Events

Category	Summary
Private sector	Paul Milstein and Doug Jemal, Douglas Development Corporation
Non profit	Rachel Heckl, Shared Mobility Joe Kocsis, WNY Railway Historical Society (by phone) Rebecca Reilly, former CRT Board Member and current Buffalo blogger. Blog from CRT interview was published in Rebecca's blog
GBNRTC	Hal Morse, Executive Director (explored potential transit funding sources)
City of Buffalo	Spoke at Buffalo Common Council meeting. Terrence Robinson, Green Party Mayoral candidate Brendan Mehaffy, Exec. Dir., Office of Strategic City Planning
US Congress	Office of Congressman Brian Higgins
Erie County	Bonnie Lange Lawrence, Deputy Director of Erie County Environmental Planning
NYS Assembly	Monica Wallace, Ray Walter, Sean Ryan, Michael Norris, Crystal Peoples-Stokes, Chris Jacobs, Robin Schimminger
NYS Senate	Tim Kennedy, Michael Ranzenhofer
NFTA	Tom George, Director. Surface Transportation Darren Kempner Grants Manager Helen Tederous, Communications Director Dave Cash, Advertising Coordinator and Media Buyer

Table C-2. Attended Community and Public Meetings

Date	Community Public Meeting
January 9 th	Governor Cuomo's State-of-the-State held in Buffalo
January 11 th	Buffalo Niagara Partnership Regional Transit Options meeting
January 25 th Aug 8 th	NYSDOT information and public meetings on the downscaling of the Scajaquada Expressway
February 28 th	ULI Transit Oriented Development and the Future without Parking seminars,
Mar 20 th	Wilson Foundation Grant application seminar
April 3 rd June 12 th	GBNRTC Policy Committee meetings
April 4 th	GBNRTC Transportation Summit
April 29 th	YIMBY Festival
May 4 th	VOICE Buffalo Annual Dinner
May 13 th	GBNRTC IRF Ideas Summit



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May 17 th	Amherst town planning public meetings
May 17 th	Partners for the Public Good open house
May 31 st	NFTA Public Meetings
June 15 th & Nov 28 th	Toronto to Niagara Falls GoTrain public meetings
June 21 st	ULI The Future without Parking
June 30 th	ULI Central Terminal Future Presentations
Numerous dates	GBNRTC TOD workshops
August 22 nd	Story telling workshop
September 28 th	Partners for a Livable WNY “Innovation Celebration”
Oct 11 th	United Way Fundraising workshop
Dec 11 th	NFTA Annual Budget Public Hearing
Numerous dates	NAPTA/CFTE webinars

Table C-3. Summary of Important CRT Correspondence

Agency	Summary of Communication
Greater Buffalo Niagara Transportation Council (with cc’s to affected agencies and municipalities)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recommended strong action on pedestrian safety, especially around transit stops. Expressed Support for the GoMom program that provides monthly transit passes for expecting mothers. Expressed Support for continued funding for rail car maintenance. Comments on public participation plan Comments on Kensington Ave. and Humboldt Pkw Intersection Safety Project.
Amherst Traffic Safety Board (ATSB) (with cc’s to affected agencies and municipalities)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expressed disappointment in the ATSB’s belief that pedestrian crossing displays along Niagara Falls Blvd. are operating safely. Provided US DOT references for recommended improvements
NFTA (with cc’s to affected agencies and municipalities)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Buffalo Niagara International Airport enhancement planning should consider future light rail service. Provided comments and questions on the proposed 2018-2019 NFTA budget. Expressed support for NFTA purchasing of electric buses for trial evaluation. Received letter from NFTA in response to our December 2016 letter answering our questions regarding electric buses and the fuel costs for buses and rail.
WBFO and WBEN News Directors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Letter requested coverage of transit as part of traffic reports when applicable.
ULI (with cc’s to affected agencies and municipalities)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Letter emphasizing the importance of transit and multi-modal transportation for the optimal success of a refurbished Central Terminal.
WNY Land Conservancy (with cc’s to affected agencies and municipalities)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expressed support for the DL&W rails to trails project as long as extensions of Buffalo’s light rail to the airport including a portion along the DL&W ROW can be accommodated.
Assemblyman Sean Ryan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Letter thanking Assemblyman Ryan for his leadership on legislation protecting the mortgage recording tax from incentives offered to businesses by IDAs, which was signed into law.

