

Citizens Regional Transit Corporation

Annual Report 2022

Submitted by:

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CITIZENS *for* REGIONAL TRANSIT

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Citizens Regional Transit Corporation

2022 Annual Report

Executive Summary

This report summarizes the accomplishments, milestones, and activities of Citizens for Regional Transit Corporation during 2022. Citizens Regional Transit Corporation is known as Citizens for Regional Transit (CRT). This shorter designation is used in this report.

During 2022 Citizens for Regional Transit was led by the following Board of Directors and Officers: Douglas Funke (President), Seth Triggs (Vice President), Rebecca Reilly (Secretary), and James Gordon (Treasurer). In addition the following persons served as members of the Board of Directors: Gladys Gifford, Carl Skompinski, Bradley Bethel, and Elizabeth (Betsy) Giles (through April). Also the Board appointed Patrick Whalen to complete Elizabeth Giles' term after her passing. Pat accepted and served as Board Member for the last half of 2022. Collectively these Board Members logged over 2,500 hours of service valued at over \$80,000 (using the volunteer hourly rate of \$33.17 from the NonProfitTimes, <https://www.thenonproffitimes.com/news/value-of-volunteer-hour-tops-28/>).

As of December of 2022 CRT had 57 members, including carryovers from 2021. Going into 2023 we have 40 members including 2022 carryovers (1 year grace period) and those who have renewed. The CRT Secretary and Treasurer maintain the names and addresses of CRT members. CRT has 718 Facebook likes (up 12%) and 263 Twitter followers (up 1%). Our newsletter email list has 1,563 recipients (up 377, 32%). Our media contacts list has 134 recipients.

CRT continued to advocate for an integrated multi-modal public transportation system that serves everyone fairly in WNY and is competitive with driving. 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, published 4 newsletters, and timely Twitter messages throughout the year. Seth Triggs managed the CRT website; Carl Skompinski managed our Facebook page. Rebecca Reilly was the CRT Newsletter Editor. CRT 2022 Committee Chairs were:

- Nominating Committee – Carl Skompinski
- Communications and Public Relations Committee – Rebecca Reilly
- Membership Committee – (committee was not active)
- Grants Committee – Jim Gordon

Conducted a wide range of projects and outreach activities including the following. We:

- Supported NY Public Transit Association's (NYPTA) 2022 "Transit Advocacy Campaign" We met with many NYS legislators and participated in the program's news conference.
- Met with political and community leaders throughout the year.
- Were awarded and led work of a paid Cornell / Partnership for the Public Good (PPG) High Road Fellow. The work expanded from the prior year's Fellowship examining equitable transit-oriented development (eTOD) potential of an East Side / airport extension of Buffalo Metro.
- Submitted a proposal for a plank to be included in PPG's 2023 agenda.



- Participated in the LISC (Local Initiatives Support Corporation) and GoBike Buffalo workshop series to explore eTOD opportunities along Buffalo Metro with major focus at LaSalle Station.
- Monitored work of, and provided inputs to, the NFTA and Greater Buffalo Niagara Regional Transportation Council (GBNRTC). Served on NFTA’s Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC).
- Attended public hearings and meetings throughout the year providing verbal and written comments.
- Served on Erie County Community Climate Change Task Force and Transportation Committee. helped develop the transportation chapter of the Erie County Climate Action Plan.
- Tabled at area festivals and events including: the Juneteenth Festival, the Elmwood Festival of the Arts, and the Unitarian Universalist Living Green Festival.
- Conducted a petition calling for (1) making transit a competitive alternative for everyone; (2) coordinate road diets with transit improvements; (3) studying and planning transit connections between Buffalo, Niagara Falls, and Southern Ontario; (4) integrating transit with all regional planning; and (5) fixing the transit funding problem. The petition received 517 signatures.

These projects are described in more detail in Appendix A. The full petition is reproduced in Appendix B.

We dedicated a bench and plaque at the Amherst Metro Station in honor of long-time CRT Board Member, Betsy Giles, who passed away in April. We thank the NFTA for providing the bench and support installing the plaque. We also want to recognize the passing of former CRT board member, Gregory Paul Stein who died in December 2022. (https://www.dignitymemorial.com/obituaries/kenmore-ny/gregory-stein-11079170?utm_source=share_obit&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=obit_detail&utm_content=view_obit_button).

CRT held three public meetings in 2022. These were held in January, April, and October. The January meeting included the CRT Annual Business Meeting. The January meeting was held virtually via Zoom. The April meeting was held on UB’s Amherst Campus. The October meeting was held at the Frank Meriweather Library at 1325 Jefferson Avenue. All of the public meetings were accessible virtually. All meetings were publicized, and open to the public. Table 1 gives a summary.

Table 1. CRT Quarterly Meetings

Date	Speaker	Summary
Wednesday, January 19, 2022	Douglas Funke, President, CRT James Gordon, Treasurer, CRT	Doug summarized the CRT annual report highlighting CRT successes and ongoing priorities. Jim discussed provided an update on the Amherst extension from CRT’s perspective.
Wednesday, April, 20, 2022	<u>Speakers:</u> Jeffery Amplement, NFTA Amherst Extension Project Manager James Gordon, Treasurer, CRT Kelly Hayes McAlonie, UB’s Director of Campus Parking <u>Panelists:</u>	Jeff provided an update on the Amherst Transit Extension Project. Jim provided an overview of CRT’s perspective on the Amherst project. Kelly presented UB’s perspective on the Amherst Project.



	Monika Che and Lawrence Mullen, UB graduate students	Monika Che and Lawrence Mullen responded to the presentations from a student perspective.
Thursday, October 27, 2022	Speakers: Douglas Funke, President, CRT James Gordon, Treasurer, CRT	Doug described the importance of transit for meeting NYS and Erie County climate action goals. Jim presented CRT's position on the NYSDOT Kensington capping project emphasizing the superior transit alternative.

The CRT Board is renominating the following returning board members for 2023: Douglas Funke (President), Seth Triggs (Vice President), Rebecca Reilly (Secretary), James Gordon (Treasurer), Carl Skompinski, Bradley Bethel, Gladys Gifford, and Patrick Whalen.

We are also nominating Thomas DeSantis as a new member of the board. Tom is the former Director of Planning and Environment & Economic Development for the City of Niagara Falls. He is a member of the American Institute of Certified Planners and a Certified Planner (AICP). His biography is more fully summarized in our January newsletter (<http://citizenstransit.org/sites/default/files/January%202023%20Newsletter.pdf>.) We are pleased and honored that Tom has agreed to join the CRT Board. Finally, the CRT Board is recognizing former longtime board members, Lynn Magdol and Joan Bozer as Emeritus Board Members.

The CRT budget is presented in Appendix C. Budget actuals for 2022 and the proposed budget for 2023 are presented and compared.



Appendix A

Expanded Highlights

Project Descriptions

- ***Submitted Plank Proposal for the 2023 PPG Agenda.*** Partnered with Buffalo Transit Riders Union (BTRU, part of the Coalition for Economic Justice) to propose a plank for inclusion on the 2023 PPG Agenda. Our proposal is to advocate that the City of Buffalo take responsibility for clearing snow on sidewalks and at bus stops. The plank calls for funding a pilot in the 2024 budget. We are pleased that PPG announced that our plank has been selected the 2023 agenda!
- ***2022 Cornell / PPG High Road Fellowship.*** We were awarded a paid High Road Fellowship again during 2022. This fellowship built on CRT's 2021 Fellowship results. During 2022 our Fellow was Darshana Subramaniam. She worked under the guidance of Carl Skompinski. She expanded and updated the 2021 results based on further outreach to East Side communities and the latest 2020 census data. The potential of equitable transit-oriented development (eTOD) for improving economic and social conditions on Buffalo's East Side was again the focus. A summary is being presented at our Annual Meeting and her report is posted on our website.
- ***Served on Erie County Community Climate Change Task Force and Transportation Committee.*** Erie County has committed to meeting the requirements of the NYS Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA) signed into law by Governor Cuomo. The Task Force has recognized the importance of improved public transit and reduced vehicle miles traveled (VMT) for meeting these goals. You can find the work of this task force at their website (<https://www3.erie.gov/climateaction/>). CRT will continue to serve on the Task Force as the county plan is finalized and implemented.
- ***Served as Invited Participant at the US State Department / International Institute Meetings.*** Met with representatives from Germany, US Chamber of Commerce, the Sierra Club, and others to share experiences and perspectives on transit.
- ***Worked to Oppose the NYSDOT Kensington Cap Project.*** We have spoken against the NYSDOT plan to spend over \$1B to put a cap over the Kensington Expressway in favor of restoring the Humboldt Parkway for a fraction of the cost and focusing instead on extending Buffalo Metro through the East Side and airport. Attended NYDOT public meetings. Submitted formal comments and worked with community organizations to solicit support.
- ***Participated in eTOD Workshop Series.*** Worked on LISC / GoBike Workshop series to identify eTOD opportunities at Buffalo Metro stations with a focus at LaSalle Station. Jim Gordon was our representative. Also attended associated public meetings. CRT was reimbursed for this work.
- ***Advocated Expansion of Buffalo Metro.*** Continued our efforts to advocate for extension of Buffalo Metro, first to Amherst, then through the East Side to the airport, and finally to the Southtowns. Argued that studies of the East Side and Southtowns extensions should be initiated immediately, simultaneously with the Amherst extension.



- **Advocated for Transit Connectivity Between Niagara Falls and Buffalo.** Continued our efforts to advocate for transit connections between Niagara Falls and Buffalo establishing Buffalo and Niagara Falls as a regional tourist destination. This work also advocated for transit connections between Buffalo, Niagara Falls and Southern Ontario.
- **Advocated for Making Transit Competitive with Driving.** Worked to improve transit making it competitive with driving and a viable transportation choice for everyone, not just those who can't afford a car. This means much more frequent bus service and bus shelters at all stops where there's room, in addition to expanding Buffalo Metro. This will continue to be our primary goal.

Community Education and Outreach

- **NYPTA Transit Advocacy Initiative.** Doug, Jim and Carl participated in the NYPTA Transit Advocacy engagements. Held virtually with state legislators / legislative staff during February and March. We met with offices of NYS Senators Ed Rath and Robert Ort, and NYS Assembly Members Karen McMahon, Pat Burke, and Michael Norris, and Monica Wallace. Also, our president spoke at NYPTA Press Conference on March 25th.
- **Political and Community Leader Meetings.** Met with elected officials and community leaders. In addition to the NYS legislators listed above. We met with Congressman Brian Higgins' staff member Chris Fahey and Ryan Miller of Bills in Buffalo and Jericho Road Health Center. Also met with several NFTA managers.
- **Training video.** Worked with Viva to develop a training video for how to use transit for immigrants who don't speak English to use. The video is made available to immigrants being housed at Viva.
- **Provided inputs to the NFTA and GBNRTC throughout the year.**
 - Attended all NFTA Transportation Committee / Board of Commissioners Meetings. Attendance was virtual during COVID as required by the NFTA.
 - Reviewed the draft NFTA 2023 / 2024 budget and provided comments. Attended the NFTA Budget Hearing (12/1/22).
 - Served on the NFTA's Community Advisory Committee (CAC). Provided ongoing inputs on NFTA projects and operational decisions.
 - Reviewed GBNRTC planning documents and attended GBNRTC planning and public meetings, offering comments and recommendations.
- **Worked with various partners to promote transit priorities.**
 - Coordinated with the Buffalo Transit Riders Union (BTRU), an organization within the Coalition for Economic Justice (CEJ), and with Our Outer Harbor (OOH) Coalition.
 - Participated on NYPTA-led Riders Coalition that brings together organizations from across the state. Meetings were held in February and March to coordinate statewide transit advocacy efforts.
 - Met by phone with Steve Straus, Executive Director, Empire State Passengers Association (ESPA) (3/22/21) and attended the ESPA Annual Meeting (2/12/22)
- **Attended Public Meetings and Community Events**
 - Federal Transit Agency (FTA) Webinar on Transit Priorities (1/8/22)
 - NYPTA Town Hall (3/1/22)



- Buffalo Common Council Committee Meeting on snow removal Resolution (3/2/22)
 - Empire State Passengers Association (ESPA) Annual Meeting (3/12/22)
 - Erie County Legislators Public Meeting on NFTA Service Cuts (3/15/22)
 - USDOT ITS4US Webinar (4/19/22)
 - GBNRTC Central Region Public Meeting planning future of the Scajaquada Corridor (5/4/22)
 - USDOT Transportation Equity Webinar (5/25/22)
 - Erie County Climate Action Public Meeting (6/10/22)
 - Broadway Filmore DRI Public Meeting (6/31/22)
 - Sierra Club Webinar Contrasting Electric and Traditional Buses (9/14/22)
 - NYS CLCPA Advisory Committee Public Hearing (4/28/22).
 - Town Hall Meeting: Wrecking Jefferson (11/12/22)
 - City of Buffalo / NFTA eTOD Workshop Public Meeting (12/6/22)
 - UB / NFTA Visualization Event (12/6/22)
- **Tabled at area Festivals.** Tabled at three area festivals during 2022. Solicited signatures on our petition and advocacy for improving transit generally. Also distributed transit information and our CRT brochure. Tabled at the following festivals:
 - Juneteenth Festival (6/18.22 – 6/19/22)
 - Elmwood Festival (8/27/22 – 8/28/22)
 - Unitarian Universalist Church of Amherst Living Green Festival (9/10/22)
- **Selected Correspondence**
 - Letter to Federal Transit Agency (FTA) (2/5/22). Letter to FTA clarifying our position and expressing our support for the Amherst Extension DEIS.
 - Letter to NYS Climate Action Council (6/30/22). Letter contained CRT detailed comments on the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA), now NYS law, Draft Scoping Plan. These comments contained chapter-by-chapter comments focusing on transportation and transit components of the plan.
 - Letter to NYSDOT (7/29/22). Letter documented our position on the proposed \$1B capping of the Kensington Expressway in favor the less expensive approach of filling in the Kensington trench and fully restoring the Humboldt Parkway and extending light rail.
 - Letter to Governor Hochul (5/12/22). thanking her for supporting the transit budget increases in the NYS final budget.
 - Letter to Senator Tim Kennedy and Assemblyman Magnarelli (5/21/22). Thanking them and their committees for proposing and passing increases in the NYS transit operating can capital budgets.
 - Letter to the NFTA (12/1/22). Letter documented our comments on NFTA proposed 2023/2024 budget
- **Radio and Television Coverage.**
 - Doug and Jim were interviewed on Channel 7 New, aired on 9/28/21. (<https://www.facebook.com/PPGBuffalo/videos/4172441793002872>)



- **Published editorials.**
 - 8/8/22. Gladys Gifford. Let the state reconnect neighborhoods, reroute 33.
 - 8/22/22 Douglas Funke. Restore Humboldt Parkway more like its original design.
 - 11/11/22 Bradley Bethel. “Buffalo’s Future Ride Towards Metro Rail Expansion”, full feature article in Buffalo Rising.
- **Published Quarterly Newsletter.** Published the CRT News. Four issues of the newsletter were published during 2022.
- **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.
- **YouTube Channel.** Established YouTube channel where CRT videos are posted. (https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLtusFbyu1yOTjyeA1TRb0uKAOVIR_hnwU)
- **Presentations to Outside organizations:** CRT president was a featured speaker at the UUCA Green Fair (9/10/22) and the Electrify 2.0 Drive your EV Celebration” event sponsored by the Sierra Club , National Grid, the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus (BNMC) and others . The event was held at the BNMC on 9/24/22.

Special Events:

Remembrance and Dedication Ceremony. Held dedication and remembrance ceremony for CRT Board Member, Elizabeth (Betsy) Giles, who passed away in April. The remembrance was held on 9/10/22 at the Amherst Station. We dedicated a bench and plaque that were installed at the Amherst Station, Betsy’s station. Doug and Carl spoke on behalf of CRT. Betsy’s daughters, Julia and Maria offered personal remembrances.
(https://buffalonews.com/obituaries/features/elizabeth-m-betsy-giles-58-peace-corps-volunteer-advocate-for-public-transit/article_21d39e56-dbc4-11ec-9ac9-9378b782f72a.html#tncms-source=login)



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Appendix B

Citizens for Regional Transit 2023 Budget

Budget Items	2022 Budget	2022 Actual	2023 Budget
Previous Yr Closing Balance M&T Bank		1,164.42	
Previous Yr Closing Balance PayPal		1,564.99	
Previous Yr Ending Balance Combined		2,729.41	
Capital Expenditures			
Computer (TBD consideration)			-800.00
Budget			
INCOME			
Donations	300.00	712	700
Dues	500.00	735	700
Grants	0.00	0	50
Totals	800.00	1,457	1,450
EXPENSES			
Copy & Printing	0	0	50
Office Supplies & Postage	40	0	50
Event Registrations	0	315	350
Conferences, Tickets, Transportation	600	0	200
Ads	0.00	0	0
Memberships (NYPTA, B-Preservation)	135	135	150
Miscellaneous (Betsy's Plaque)	100	410	150
Web Hosting / Domain Listing	250	453	500
Total Proposed Budget	1,125	1,313	1,450
Difference between income & expenses (2021 surplus = \$348.45)	-325.00	144.00	0.00



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Appendix C

Let the Transit Revolution Continue!

A 2022 Petition for Investment in Sustainable Public Transit

Whereas; political leaders from across Buffalo Niagara (including mayors, city/town/village councils and the Erie County Executive) have signed the CRT petition calling for a Transit Revolution!

Whereas; over 50 community organizations (including Coalition for Economic Justice, GoBike Buffalo, Housing Opportunities Made Equal, League of Women Voters, Network of Religious Communities, Partners of a Livable WNY, Partnership for the Public Good, PUSH Buffalo, Sierra Club, VOICE Buffalo) and a growing list of business leaders (including Carmina Woods Morris, Ciminelli Real Estate, Douglas Development Corp.) signed an earlier CRT petition for a Transit Revolution.

Whereas; transportation is the largest source (40%) of greenhouse gas emissions in WNY, meeting Erie County's commitment to the Paris Climate Accord and CLCPA goals will require moving from car-centered transportation to public transit, bicycles, eBikes, scooters, hoverboards, golf carts, walking and other forms of transportation.

Whereas; every \$1 invested in public transportation generates \$4 in economic returns and over 70% of public funding in public transportation flows to the private sector creating and supporting hundreds of thousands of jobs.

Whereas; public transportation for businesses and schools also aids those unable to travel by automobile (low-income, older, and disabled citizens) and other riders.

Whereas; hotels in cities with direct access to airports raise 11% more revenue per room than hotels in cities without direct transit access.

Whereas; Buffalo's has publicly owned rights-of-way (ROW) making extensions to Metro Rail among the most affordable in the country for transporting large numbers of people. Further, since the Eastside / Airport ROW is not on public roads; disruptions to businesses during construction will be minimal.

Whereas; The federal government has passed a sweeping, but time-limited, infrastructure bill that provides funding for transit projects.

Whereas; Public transportation is critical for closing the mobility equity gap that requires the 30% of Buffalo households that do not own cars to spend twice as long for commuting than those with cars.

Therefore, we call on the NFTA with the Governor and state, county, and municipal legislators to:



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1. Make transit a competitive alternative to driving *for everyone*.
 - a. **Extend Buffalo Metro** along heavily travelled corridors to provide fast, high-capacity network connecting major destinations (especially UB campuses, downtown, the airport, Highmark Stadium, Sahlen Field, Keybank Arena, Exchange Street Amtrak Station).
 - b. **Provide high frequency bus service** (e.g., 10-minute frequencies on core routes and 20-minute frequencies on secondary routes) and integrate buses with Buffalo Metro. This should include high-frequency weekend service!
 - c. **Increase service hours** on all major routes and Buffalo Metro.
2. Coordinate *road diets with transit improvements*, including:
 - a. **Restore the Humboldt Parkway in parallel with light rail extension** to the East Side and airport.
 - b. **Coordinate Scajaguada corridor improvements with high-frequency transit alternatives** connecting the many attractions along the corridor (e.g., museums, zoo, Darwin Martin House, Wegmans/Tops, Elmwood Village, Buffalo State College.) These should be integrated with Buffalo Metro.
3. Initiate formal study and planning for transit *connectivity between Buffalo, Niagara Falls, and Southern Ontario*, especially for tourism.
4. *Integrate transit with regional planning initiatives*.
 - a. IDA's should **mandate transit access when evaluating project incentive applications**, and incentive siting on Metro Rail using e-TOD principles.
 - b. Highway projects should **first consider transit alternatives**.
5. *Fix the transit funding problems*.
 - a. Fix the public transit and highway funding gaps.

