



CITIZENS *for* REGIONAL TRANSIT

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2 June 2025

GBNRTC Staff
438 Main Street; Suite 503;
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(staff@gbnrtc.org)

Ref: Public Notice. Draft FFY 26-30 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and Draft Transportation/Air Quality Conformity Determination, which was posted on 5/2/25.

Dear GBNRTC Staff:

Citizens for Regional Transit (CRT) is a community-based transit advocacy non-profit organization in the Buffalo-Niagara region. We understand that the draft TIP is a summary of transportation projects planned for 2026 through 2030, and that public comment is sought.

Our new comments on this latest Draft FFY 26-30 TIP are at the beginning of this letter. Many are also reflected in the earlier comments that we submitted based on the TIP project list on or about March 31st. We stand by our previous comments, which are also included below.

Summary of some key points, some also reflected in our earlier comments (included below).

- The Kensington Project should be combined with the Scajaquada Project, as called for by the Governor. One budget covering the combined project should be provided.
- The draft TIP, as proposed, eliminates the Scajaquada project from current funding. It's only included as an illustrative project under the title "Engineering and Feasibility Study for Phase 2 of the Kensington and Scajaquada Expressways." There was budget for this project established, which should be restored.
- The Kensington project is broken into several sub-projects (551252, 551257, 551258, 55125A, 55125B, 55125C) that seem to reflect a predetermined design as a tunnel. The final design should be determined through the EIS process that is now required. By having a single budget for the combined project will allow the design to be determined with community involvement.
- Chapter 4 (Page 45) lays out the Transportation Conformity (Air Quality) requirements per the Clean Air Act. However, the Draft TIP does not specify the requirement for meeting the NYS climate laws including the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA), now NYS law. The CLCPA lays out requirements for reducing greenhouse gas production and associated pollution. The TIP should cite requirements for



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meeting NYS climate laws too. Projects in the TIP also must meet the “Green Amendment” of the NYS Constitution.

- Chapter 5 (Page 49) lays out Transportation Performance Management requirements of the US Code and cites specific goals including: safety; congestion reduction; and environmental sustainability. This section states that TIPs “shall include, to the maximum extent practicable, a description of anticipated effects ... toward meeting these performance targets...” We believe the Kensington tunnel proposal fails to meet these requirements. We look forward to working with the GBNRTC to maximize meeting these goals during the EIS.
- The Draft TIP fails to include intercity rail as a component of the transportation system. The TIP should be improved to include regional rail and eventually high-speed rail. Intercity passenger and tourism rail are eligible for funding for track, bridge, clearance, yard, and signal improvements to mention a few.

Some additional comments of a more specific detailed nature.

- Figure of Communities of Concern on Page 22 is unclear. It seems to combine many parameters on a single chart without distinguishing which are over thresholds.
- Pavement and bridge condition requirements are laid out on Page 52. Please note that electric cars are heavier and have more wheel torque that will accelerate the degradation of bridges and roads. The GBNRTC should be aware of these in planning highway budgets and favor projects like public transit that mitigates highway degradation.
- Title 6 Assurances (Page 59) highlight the goal of not negatively impacting areas of persistent poverty and outreach to those communities to make sure the community understands and has inputs to projects that could have negative impacts to those communities. The Kensington Project failed in this effort, which resulted in litigation with over 60 plaintiffs in effected area. We call on the GBNRTC to make sure the EIS for the Kensington and Scajaquada projects prioritize community involvement.

Thank you for considering our comments on the Draft TIP. We did our best to review this voluminous document and make informed comments in the short time available. Feel free to call for clarifications if needed.



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Prior Comments Being Resubmitted:

Below are the comments we submitted on or about March 31st.

We understand that these projects are constrained by available funding and can be expanded as more funding is made available. In this regard, we are pleased that the TIP includes illustrative projects that are identified as projects that should be accomplished when and if funding becomes available. We have suggested a few additional illustrative projects that should be added.

The first section of this letter provides our comments on the GBNRTC constrained project list followed by our comments on the illustrative list.

1.0 Proposed Constrained List Project List Comments.

This section contains our comments on the constrained project list.

NYSDOT Projects.

This section contains our comments on NYSDOT projects in the constrained list.

The following six projects (PINs 551252, 551257, 551258, 55125A, 55125B, 55125C) pertain to the Kensington (Rt. 33) Project. Do each of these six projects have independent utility if the Kensington Project is significantly altered through the upcoming EIS process? Separately listing them in this way locks-in an approach, design, and segmentation that may not be selected, optimal or meet the community's desires. We suggest that Kensington-related projects be combined into a single project, thereby better representing them to the public and allowing the best design to be determined by the EIS in a community-driven process that respects:

1. The results of the NYS Supreme Court judgement requiring that NYSDOT do a full Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) with emphasis on environmental and community health issues; and
2. The Governor's call for combining the Kensington Project with the Region Central "Scajaquada Corridor" (Rt. 198) Project.

We offer the following comments on the Kensington projects as listed in the draft TIP but believe they should be addressed within a single combined project.

Project Name: KENSINGTON CORRIDOR PROJECT

Sponsor: NYSDOT



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Municipality: Buffalo

Fund Source: Statewide

FFY: 2027

PIN: 551252

Description: THIS PROJECT PROPOSES TO IMPROVE THE VISUAL QUALITY AND NATURAL ENVIRONMENT OF THE HUMBOLDT PARKWAY NEIGHBORHOODS BY REASONABLY RECREATING A PORTION OF THE HISTORIC OLMSTED-DESIGNED HUMBOLDT PARKWAY WHILE MAINTAINING THE IMPORTANT TRANSPORTATION LINK THAT RT 33 PROVIDES FOR REGIONAL TRAFFIC.

Primary Work: Pavement Reconstruction

Total Project Cost (M): \$921.475

CRT Comment: In the context of the NYS Supreme Court ruling, the project objective needs to be redefined to allow alternatives other than maintaining the flow of existing traffic. This project will not likely go forward unchanged given that a full Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) needs to be conducted, and not only on this project, but on the equally significant project involving NY 198 Scajaquada expressway.

Listing separate projects gives the appearance of inappropriate segmentation with misleading descriptions and an intent to predetermine design. It would also be more appropriate to combine Rt. 33 and Rt. 198 projects together, with a specific acknowledgement of the community's preferred alternative, which is highway removal as Governor Hochul has publicly stated repeatedly.

The Environmental Impact Statement needs to consider all alternatives with full community involvement. Emphasis needs to shift to community health as called for in the judge's ruling and by the current environmental laws, especially the CLCPA and the New York State Constitution's "Green Amendment" mandating a clean healthful environment for all NYS residents.

Moving Forward 2050 calls for the region's transportation planners to take a holistic look in getting us to our shared vision for the region's future. That expressed framework for decision making should become the standard for identifying this project (and similar projects) as a "big move." A big move allows us to make progress in achieving the goals we have already set for ourselves, our economy, our communities, and our environment.

The legacy emphasis on re-constructing obsolete and failing highway infrastructure in pursuit of a singular traffic management objective needs to be replaced by a constructive emphasis on other goals and objectives including community, economy, and environment. Transportation objectives can and should make improvements to adjacent regional arterials, which have excess capacity to replace capacity lost in removing the expressways entirely and restoring Humbolt Parkway.

Given the new emphasis away from moving traffic and toward environmental safety and health we suggest consideration be given to changing the lead agency from NYSDOT to the City of Buffalo.



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The NY 33 Kensington Expressway project as currently described is only the NYSDOT-preferred alternative absent an EIS. As such, its description in the TIP should include the community-preferred alternative: “Remove and Restore.” Particularly given that there is clear community engagement already with a clear desire is to see the Kensington Expressway replaced altogether with a restored Humbolt Parkway combined with the Scajaquada Corridor EIS and highway removal project.

Project Name: BEST ST BRIDGE REPLACEMENT

Sponsor: NYSDOT

Municipality: Buffalo

Fund Source: Statewide

FFY: 2027

PIN: 551257

Description: THIS PROJECT WILL REPLACE THE BEST STREET BRIDGE OVER THE KENSINGTON EXPRESSWAY (ROUTE 33) AND INSTALL ROUNDABOUTS ON BEST STREET. THIS PROJECT IS LOCATED IN THE CITY OF BUFFALO, ERIE COUNTY

Primary Work: Bridge replacement

Total Project Cost (M): \$50.929

CRT Comment: This project is not needed. Funding for this project should be applied to a new project resulting from the combination of Rt. 33 and Rt. 198 projects.

Project Name: KENSINGTON CORRIDOR SUBSTATION – SITE/BUILDINGS

Sponsor: NYSDOT

Municipality: Buffalo

Fund Source: Statewide

FFY: 2027

PIN: 551258

Description: THIS PROJECT WILL CONSTRUCT A BUILDING COMPLEX TO SUPPORT UTILITIES IN THE COVERED SECTION OF THE KENSINGTON EXPRESSWAY. THIS PROJECT IS LOCATED IN THE CITY OF BUFFALO, ERIE COUNTY

Primary Work: Other

Total Project Cost (M): \$7.575

CRT Comment: This project is not needed. Funding for this project should be applied to a new project resulting from the combination of Rt. 33 and Rt. 198 projects.



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Project Name: KENSINGTON CORRIDOR SUBSTATION - HVAC

Sponsor: NYSDOT

Municipality: Buffalo

Fund Source: Statewide

FFY: 2027

PIN: 56525A

Description: THIS PROJECT WILL INSTALL HVAC TO SUPPORT UTILITIES IN THE COVERED SECTION OF THE KENSINGTON EXPRESSWAY. THIS PROJECT IS LOCATED IN THE CITY OF BUFFALO, ERIE COUNTY

Primary Work: Other

Total Project Cost (M): \$0.283

CRT Comment: This project is not needed. Funding for this project should be applied to a new project resulting from the combination of Rt. 33 and Rt. 198 projects.

Project Name: KENSINGTON CORRIDOR SUBSTATION - ELECTRICAL

Sponsor: NYSDOT

Municipality: Buffalo

Fund Source: Statewide

FFY: 2027

PIN: 56525B

Description: THIS PROJECT WILL INSTALL ELECTRICAL TO SUPPORT UTILITIES IN THE COVERED SECTION OF THE KENSINGTON EXPRESSWAY. THIS PROJECT IS LOCATED IN THE CITY OF BUFFALO, ERIE COUNTY

Primary Work: Other

Total Project Cost (M): \$4.290

CRT Comment: This project is not needed. Funding for this project should be applied to a new project resulting from the combination of Rt. 33 and Rt. 198 projects.

Project Name: KENSINGTON CORRIDOR SUBSTATION - PLUMBING

Sponsor: NYSDOT

Municipality: Buffalo

Fund Source: Statewide

FFY: 2027

PIN: 56525C



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Description: THIS PROJECT WILL INSTALL PLUMBING TO SUPPORT UTILITIES IN THE COVERED SECTION OF THE KENSINGTON EXPRESSWAY. THIS PROJECT IS LOCATED IN THE CITY OF BUFFALO, ERIE COUNTY

Primary Work: Other

Total Project Cost (M): \$0.144

CRT Comment: This project is not needed. Funding for this project should be applied to a new project resulting from the combination of Rt. 33 and Rt. 198 projects.

Project Name: I-290 @ MAIN ST, INTERCHANGE RECONFIGURATION - CMAQ

Sponsor: NYSDOT

Municipality: Town of Amherst

Fund Source: Regional

FFY: 2027

PIN: 558053

Description: THE OBJECTIVE OF THIS PROJECT IS TO IMPROVE THE OPERATIONS OF THE CORRIDOR BY PROVIDING ADEQUATE CAPACITY, I-290 IMPROVED SAFETY FEATURES AND ENHANCED MOBILITY ON I-290; EAST OF NY 324 (SHERIDAN DR) INTERCHANGE TO I-90 INTERCHANGE INCLUDING NY 5 (MAIN ST)/I-290 INTERCHANGE IN THE TOWN OF AMHERST, ERIE COUNTY

Primary Work: Pavement reconstruction

Total Project Cost (M): \$11.826

CRT Comment: According to the GBNRTC's UPWP, this project is scheduled for a PEL environmental analysis. Such an evaluation must include light rail rapid transit (LRRT) capacity as well as motor vehicle traffic demand. The traffic study should assume the existence of LRRT capacity of 6,000 passengers per hour during regular operation and 12,000 passengers per hour during peak operation. The LRRT alignment that should be used in the model is described by CRT here: <http://citizenstransit.org/sites/default/files/Airport%20Corridor.pdf>

This project is incorrectly identified in the TIP. The project is not pavement reconstruction. Rather, it considers adding lanes and assumes realignment. First and foremost, there should be a traffic study that includes LRRT to verify whether any highway reconfiguration is an appropriate transportation investment and whether highway realignment will yield progress toward stated long-term Metropolitan Transportation Plan goals. We think it is likely that non-polluting light rail extensions would in fact be the better long-term investment. The proposed roadway expansion must also consider the impacts of increased traffic due to induced demand. We remind GBNRTC that the expansion of widened roadways has more often than not resulted in more vehicles, more concentrated traffic with the same or worse congestion after construction. The



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TIP's existence demonstrates the failure of adding lanes, as that has already been accomplished with the result of increased congestion in the subject area. Let's not make this mistake again.

NFTA Projects.

This section contains our comments on the NFTA projects in the constrained list.

Project Name: Bailey Avenue battery electric bus (BEB) bus rapid transit - NAE

Sponsor: FTA

Municipality: NFTA

Fund Source: FTA Grant

FFY: 2025

PIN: 582613

Description: THE PROJECT WILL DESIGN AND CONSTRUCT A LOW OR NO EMISSION BUS RAPID TRANSIT LINE AND CONTEXT-SENSITIVE ROADWAY SAFETY IMPROVEMENTS ALONG THE ENTIRE LENGTH OF BAILEY AVENUE IN BUFFALO, NEW YORK

Primary Work: Transit

Total Project Cost (M): \$102.693

CRT Comment: We are excited to see this item on the list and fully funded. We need more like this.

Project Name: Railcar rebuild

Sponsor: Regional

Municipality: NFTA

Fund Source: Regional

FFY: 2025

PIN: 582227

Description: MID-LIFE REBUILD OF THE NFTA'S FLEET OF 27 RAIL RAPID TRANSIT VEHICLES THAT WERE PLACED INTO SERVICE IN 1984 AND HAVE EXCEEDED THEIR USEFUL LIFE.

Primary Work: Transit

Total Project Cost (M): \$3.7

CRT Comment: We understood that the railcar rebuild has been completed. If so, shouldn't this item be removed? In fact, there are several FFY 2025 NFTA projects listed. Perhaps a better, more accurate, description is needed.



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Project Name: Metro Rail Extension-SRC (NYSDOT State Rail Capital Funding)

Sponsor: Regional

Municipality: NFTA

Fund Source: Statewide

FFY: 2025

PIN: 582227

Description: THIS PROJECT WILL ALLOW NFTA-METRO TO COMPLETE NECESSARY ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEWS AND CONTINUE PRELIMINARY ENGINEERING FOR THE NFTA-METRO REIL EXTENTION.

Primary Work: Transit

Total Project Cost (M): \$23.638

CRT Comment: We are pleased the state has committed this money to complete the environmental reviews and preliminary engineering. This should be a fast-track priority. CRT stands ready to help further build community support.

Project Name: Purchase bus shelters.

Sponsor: Regional

Municipality: NFTA

Fund Source: Regional

FFY: 2026

PIN: 582541 and 582544 and 582622 and 582638

Description: Replacing existing shelters that have surpassed their useful life or purchasing new shelters.

Primary Work: Transit

Total Project Cost (M): \$0.659 + \$0.772 + \$0.691 + \$0.718

CRT Comment: This program needs to be accelerated and put on steroids. With only 30 shelters added each year it will take decades to have shelters at most stops. Even if 10% of the stops can achieve shelters, this leaves 90% without. If the stop a given transit rider uses doesn't have a shelter, the total might as well be 0% and the ability to attract new riders will be minimal. The goal should be a shelter at every inbound, heavily used outbound, and transfer stop or at least within ¼ miles from these stops. Should combine into a single PIN.

Other (non NFTA and NYSDOT) Projects.

This section contains our comments on the projects in the constrained list that are not associated with either NFTA or NYSDOT.

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Project Name: BUFFALO ROADWAY REHAB - PHASE 2

Sponsor: Buffalo

Municipality: Buffalo

Fund Source: Regional

FFY: 2027

PIN: 576325

Description: RESURFACE MAIN ARTERIAL STREETS AND PROVIDE ADA IMPROVEMENTS TO MAINTAIN PAVEMENT CONDITION. TARGETING HERTEL, E. NORTH, WILLIAM, WALDEN, WADSWORTH, KENSINGTON, E. FERRY, W. FERRY, ELMWOOD, AMHERST, MILITARY, SENECA, CLINTON, AND SOUTH PARK

Primary Work: Pavement Rehabilitation

Project Cost (M): \$7.000

CRT Comment: Given that this is a 5-year plan, it seems an overly ambitious description of work to consider \$7M as sufficient funding to resurface all these arterials and make them ADA compliant, except in some more limited fashion. Also, consider increasing budget and adding Main Street from 2809 to 3051 Main street.

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2.0 Illustrative Project List Comments.

This section contains our comments on the Illustrative Project list. The tables below contain comments on the illustrative project listed. This is followed by illustrative projects that should be added.

GBNRTC Member	Project Name	Description	Primary Work	Project Cost (M)
NFTA	Transit Access Improvement Block Fund	Transit Access Improvement Block Fund	Other	\$10.0
<u>CRT Comment:</u> While CRT applauds the move to fund this much needed work, it is not clear what work tasks are expected to be accomplished in this block of funding. We request more information and have some ideas of what might be included. Given Amherst extension analysis and the fact that there are several extensions that should be studied, the \$10M seems appropriate.				

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GBNRTC Member	Project Name	Description	Primary Work	Project Cost (M)
NYSDOT	Engineering and feasibility study for Phase 2 of Kensington & Scajaquada Expressways	This study will study alternatives for Phase 2 of the Kensington and Scajaquada Corridors in the City of Buffalo, Erie County	Study	Blank
<u>CRT Comment:</u> We agree that it is a good idea that Kensington and Region Central projects be combined as noted above. However, this should not be an Illustrative Project, particularly considering ‘phase-1’ not being clearly defined yet. It should be included as part of the funded Kensington Expressway ‘project description’ and given appropriate parity and priority. Finally, the combined project should not ‘only’ prioritize the movement of cars but rather include the restoration of parkland, the street grid, and prioritizing improving health outcomes in the adjacent neighborhoods. We also believe this project would be better led by the City of Buffalo, rather than NYSDOT, and perhaps drawing on the community outreach expertise of the GBNRTC staff as was done for the Region Central Project. We believe there is funding for this project, which should be noted.				

There are several projects that should be added to the Illustrative list of projects, if they can’t be added to the regular TIP project list. First is a recommended NFTA project with description followed by a simple list of projects recommended for NYSDOT and Niagara Falls.

GBNRTC Member	Project Name	Description	Primary Work	Project Cost (M)
NFTA	Analysis of High-Capacity Bus and Light Rail Extensions	Analysis of NFTA’s High-Capacity Bus and Light Rail Extensions and Updating Bus and Light Rail Expansion Plans.	Study	\$5
<u>CRT Comment:</u> There are multiple light rail extensions that have been part of the original Buffalo Metro Light-Rail Plan since its inception. At a minimum, there should be a study that ensures regular updating these plans. It is always important to be ready to take advantage of funding opportunities as they arise. NFTA must be able to multi-task implementation while also being in process on next (priority) light rail and/or BRT extension. To be always ready, NFTA must maintain consistent analysis, design, and preliminary engineering for future projects. To do that, the 2001 and 2010 studies of all extensions need to be updated. This				

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should not be delayed. Current funding should be made available to at least start this work, which is called for in the current NFTA long range plan and which should include evaluation of BRT opportunities as well.

Illustrative project list for NYSDOT and Niagara Falls.

GBNRTC Member	Project Name / Description	Primary Work	Project Cost (M)
NYSDOT	Planning and Preliminary Engineering Study, Phase-1 for: Niagara Branch Rail Improvements	Study	TBD
NYSDOT	Implementation of Phase-1 Niagara Branch Rail Improvements.	Rail	TBD
NYSDOT	Planning and Preliminary Engineering Study, Phase-1 for: NYS High Speed [Regional] Rail Project. Integrating WNY Niagara Branch passenger rail infrastructure improvements together with Empire Corridor HSR infrastructure improvements.	Rail	TBD
Niagara Falls	Downgrading and reconfiguration of the Niagara Falls LaSalle Expressway.	Other	TBD
Niagara Falls	Downgrading and reconfiguration of the Niagara Scenic Parkway (former Robert Moses Parkway) – Phase 3	Other	TBD
Niagara Falls	A traffic study of the “entertainment district” in Niagara Falls to reduce summer congestion and make the district pedestrian-friendly.	Other	TBD

CRT General Comment: Noticeable is the lack of illustrative Projects under consideration for Niagara Falls. This is an alarming failure of planning by GBNRTC given all the transportation improvements needed for all types of projects, especially those long-term improvements called for in past years and called for still in City of Niagara Falls Planning documents. Illustrative Projects such as, the removal of the Niagara Scenic Parkway (aka Robert Moses Parkway)



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between Niagara Falls and Lewiston; the reconfiguration of the Niagara Scenic Parkway Robert Moses Parkway between Hyde Park Boulevard and Quay Street and connection to Hyde Park Boulevard; the extension of JB Daly Boulevard to Pine Avenue, and; the downgrading and reconfiguration of the LaSalle Expressway along with its improved connection to I-190.

CRT General Comment: Also noticeable is the lack of any rail projects, constrained or illustrative, freight or passenger. While not as alarming, this is nonetheless a failure of planning by GBNRTC and by NYSDOT to simply exclude these projects from any and all discussion and/or planning by the WNY municipalities and regional agencies. Ignoring that these projects exist and that they will, at some point, be addressed and funded, at least in part, by public sources, and/or authorized by public agencies is an abdication of responsibility. Any known and/or contemplated rail projects in the region should be publicly listed in some meaningful way now and going forward.

Sincerely,

Douglas Funke

Douglas Funke
President, Citizens for Regional Transit