
CRT News

Light Rail Conference Saturday, September 14, 2013

at
Montante Cultural Center, Canisius College

*The Case for Transit:
How light rail can be a vehicle
for sustainable economic growth*

Keynote speaker:
Dr. Nadine Lemmon, Legislative Advocate
with Tri-State Transportation Campaign

8:00 am, Coffee and registration open
9:00 am -2:00 pm, conference

Panel: Mark Croce, Hal Morse, Pat Wahlen, Howard Zemsky and more
Tour: 2:00- 4:00 pm, view proposed airport light rail extension route
including stops at D L & W Terminal and Central Terminal.

Free and Open to the Public
(Optional box lunch available, \$10)

Pre-registration (by Sept. 7) guarantees lunch and tour.
Register at crtc@citizenstransit.org or by mail to: CRT Conference,
289 Ashford Ave., Tonawanda, NY 14150.

Save the Date!
*next quarterly public
meeting*

October 16,
2013



*Citizens for
Regional
Transit*
meets at:

**237 Main Street at
Seneca Street, Buffalo, NY**

Follow signs, to the second
floor Mezzanine conference room

CRT is on Facebook!

Be a Friend, and join the conversation...

Atlanta Conference Demonstrates Transit Excellence

by Lynn Magdol, CRT Board



Midtown station sign, Atlanta, Georgia

In June, CRT sent me to the 2013 Transit Initiatives and Communities Conference in Atlanta, GA, offered by the Center for Transportation Excellence.

I attended many exciting and informative sessions and had numerous opportunities for networking with attendees from citizen advocacy organizations, transit systems, and bicycle organizations from around the country.

An extensive walking tour took us along the route of the new streetcar circulator line in Midtown Atlanta, currently under construction. Its route includes the Centennial Olympic Park, the Peachtree Center, Georgia State University, and the Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site and will serve visitors and students. Another tour viewed a mixed-use transit-oriented development on the site of a land parcel that is owned by MARTA, the local transit agency.

Conference-goers rode the train system on several occasions, including from and to the airport, a pleasant and easy 30-minute trip. A report on the conference sessions will be presented at a future CRT meeting.

Become a CRT member!

Benefits include: receive timely member alerts, support advocacy efforts, participate in education outreach.

CRT mission is to improve bus transit and to expand rail transit for all of Western New York through citizen involvement and education.

Membership dues are fully tax-deductible!

- group \$50.
- household \$35.
- individual \$25.
- student \$5.

Membership payable by check or via PayPal.

Send check to:
 Citizens Regional Transit
 c/o John K. Howell, treasurer
 289 Ashford Avenue
 Tonawanda, NY 14150-8563



Outer Harbor Tour Draws Crowd

by Gladys Gifford, editor

The June 29th tour of the Outer Harbor conducted by the League of Women Voters Buffalo-Niagara (LWVBN) drew more than thirty participants, who enjoyed a cloudy day driving along Fuhrmann Blvd. and Ohio Street.

Participants gathered at Dug's Dive and heard from Jim Carr, from the 21st Century Park committee, who showed how their proposal would provide great quality of life benefits for metro Buffalo. The 21st Century Park concept encompasses 140 acres of the Outer Harbor shoreline and preserves the bulk of the space as parkland accessible to the public.

Gladys Gifford distributed the auto tour guides, prepared by the LWVBN, and encouraged the group to explore on foot as well as by automobile.

Several CRT members attended the event, to learn first-hand how the Outer Harbor fits into the overall planning for downtown Buffalo.

Questions raised: How will transit riders access the Outer Harbor?

How will concert patrons travel to the Outer Harbor? Should large parts of the land be paved for parking? Should buildings be allowed?



Perhaps the most common reaction was to say that the Buffalo waterfront on Lake Erie is a very special place.

This place must be celebrated for its unique character and environmental benefits. Citizen voices must be raised to protect and enhance the natural features of this place, and then to find ways for all residents to access and enjoy fully this unique waterfront.

Outer Harbor Proposal Rejected by CRT

by Douglas J. Funke, President

On June 26, 2013, representatives of Citizens for Regional Transit attended the outer harbor stadium / convention center proposal presentation at the Birchfield Penny auditorium. CRT is strongly opposed to the proposals offered at this meeting.

Why?

Two chief objections are:

1. The outer harbor is one of the last remaining green spaces available on the great lakes. This can be reserved for parkland but not if we fill the land with parking and a stadium. A stadium can go anywhere. Waterfront green space can only be located on the waterfront.

2. If we did try to put a stadium on the outer harbor and provide adequate parking, the question of how to get the large numbers of cars to the outer harbor must be addressed. The plans presented showed bridges connecting to the outer harbor via city streets and makes vague references to extending the light rail line, with no funding streams identified for these additional projects.

Metro Buffalo has a unique opportunity to realize Olmsted's dream of a park on the waterfront, but not if we fill up the outer harbor with a stadium, parking, and associated congestion. Therefore, CRT is opposed to the proposed stadium / convention center on the outer harbor.

The Train to Somewhere: Transit Oriented Development *by Lynn Magdol, CRT Board*

I recently overheard our Metro Rail system referred to as “the train to nowhere.” This expression has been used by critics of our 6.2 mile system, in spite of its value in connecting riders to crosstown buses, the north suburbs, and downtown Buffalo.

Things are beginning to change as the demand for inexpensive and environmentally-friendly transportation continues to grow. Plans for the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus, with its limited capacity for parking, have sparked new interest in the Metro Rail as a way of getting to and from the University at Buffalo’s North Campus. The Buffalo News has reported a number of housing development projects along the route of the current Metro Rail line, in anticipation of growing demand.

We can expect more development as the proposed transportation enhancements to Amherst move toward reality. In other cities, new transit lines have spurred growth near stations as transit-oriented development (TOD) has become recognized as a way to create livable and sustainable communities. While much of this TOD has occurred in city centers, some has also been seen in suburban areas, especially those near

employment, such as business parks and shopping malls. TOD has also been documented in areas with wide streets, fast-moving traffic, and small retail complexes, close to neighborhoods of single-family homes. A transit enhancement in the Amherst Corridor is likely to pass through both of these types of TOD sites.



A report from the Center for Transit-Oriented Development provides more detail on opportunities for TOD in suburban and urban contexts, with examples from around the country. The report, *Downtowns, Greenfields and Places In Between: Promoting Development Near Transit*, can be found at www.ctod.org.

Subway Art Tours Offered



CRT was a co-sponsor of the Preservation Buffalo’s new addition to their tour offerings: Subway Art Tour.

When Buffalo's light rail opened in 1985, a bonus was unveiled: \$1.15 million of new public art installations, from artists throughout New York State, were installed at each station. Tour participants learned about the vibrant art and architecture found at each stop.

Preservation Buffalo’s tour guide described the many art pieces. CRT Board members were on hand at the start of each tour to share our vision of Metro Rail extensions.

Preservation and conservation of these important art works is an on-going concern. Several are in pristine condition, but a few need repair. Proposed changes at the Allen Street station should ensure careful placement of the three artworks installed there.

Nearly Two-Thirds of NY Statewide Capital Plan == Transportation Infrastructure

by Nadine Lemmon

The transportation sector is far and away the largest component of the **NY Works Task Force Statewide Capital Plan**, anticipating \$113.42 billion in spending on transportation over 10 years — 65 percent of the total \$174 billion. The plan, considered the first-ever long-term capital plan for the state of New York, proposes capital expenditures that cover the needs of 47 state agencies and authorities.



The plan's transportation investments are categorized as either "state of good repair," "capacity optimization" or "transformational initiatives," with the vast majority of transportation dollars proposed to be spent **on state of good repair** (78.6 percent or \$89.17 billion), though "state of good repair" is not substantially defined beyond stating that it is the "maintenance of existing infrastructure."

Some transportation highlights include:

MTA

The MTA plans to spend \$56 billion in the next ten years. But the Statewide Capital Plan fails to identify funding sources for roughly \$28 billion of that spending between 2016-2023.

NYSDOT

NYSDOT's new strategy of "preservation first" talks about investing in "infrastructure with the right treatment, at the right time in the life of the investment, and in a location that considers the overall travel system." Unfortunately, the plan anticipates a decreasing chunk of federal dollars to support the system, going from \$1.609 billion in FY2014 to \$1.225 billion in FY 2023, a decrease that is compensated in the plan by an increase in "pay-as-you-go" state funds.

The combined expenditures of the four upstate transit authorities would be \$1.5 billion over 10 years, in addition to the \$1.2 billion allocated to the transit, rail, aviation and port program through NYSDOT.

Although there are some notable gaps and several blatant political plugs, the 328-page document does a good job of making the connection between the state's economic vitality and the condition of its infrastructure. The plan clearly points out that poor infrastructure increases the cost of doing business and the stress levels of commuters in New York including that:

- * heavy congestion takes a toll, costing motorists an additional \$925-\$1,568 each year;
- * poor transit service in the New York City metro area causes 750,000 residents to endure commutes of over an hour.

Glaringly missing from the plan are infrastructure costs related to Superstorm Sandy resiliency (which a footnote states are "in the process of being finalized"), bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, as well as any discussion of the Tappan Zee Bridge replacement, though the plan's cover page includes an image of the bridge's new design, and the report includes numerous mentions of the project.

The most important steps remain outstanding, namely the formation of a financing council and a capital investment fund. And unfortunately, the plan only considers capital investments, saying nothing about a long-term plan for the transportation operating needs of the State, especially for the transit authorities.

...Ms. Lemmon will be the keynote speaker at the CRT conference, Sept. 14, 2013.

Above article published by Tri-State Transportation Campaign,

<http://blog.tstc.org/2013/07/12/nearly-two-thirds-of-ny-statewide-capital-plan-to-be-directed-towards-transportation-infrastructure/>



Federal legislative updates

Below reports courtesy American Public Transportation Association (APTA). The failure to achieve bi-partisan Congressional action on the appropriations bills spells extreme hardship for agencies who must plan and execute transportation projects. For more info, see apta.com....

[Before their August recess], the House began and Senate continued consideration of their respective Fiscal Year (FY) 2014 Transportation, Housing and Urban Development (THUD) appropriations bills. Both bills fully fund the transit formula programs and the federal-aid highway program, at the MAP-21 authorized levels.For transportation, the Senate bill provides higher funding for Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Capital Investment Grants, WMATA Grants, Amtrak, and TIGER Grants.

On Thursday [8-1-13], the Senate failed to invoke cloture (limit debate) on its THUD appropriations bill. Of the amendments filed in the Congressional Record, several were transportation related but few had been formally offered. The bill remains pending business on the Senate calendar, but will likely not see any further consideration until after the August Congressional recess.

The House of Representatives also began consideration of its FY 2014 THUD appropriations bill this week as well, but ended up pulling the bill from the floor mid-week. It had appeared that there were not sufficient votes to pass the bill.

.....

On Thursday [6-24-13], with every Senator voting in favor, the United States Senate unanimously confirmed Charlotte, NC, Mayor, **Anthony Foxx**, as the 17th **Secretary of the Department of Transportation**. As Mayor, Foxx was a strong advocate for public transportation in Charlotte and demonstrated that he understands the critical role public transportation plays in our communities.

Calendar

Aug. 7, 9:30 am

Planning & Coordinating Comm., GBNRTC, at NFTA, 181 Ellicott St., Buffalo

Sept. 14 One-day light rail conference, held at Montante Center, Canisius College (p. 1)

Free event; pre-register by **Sept. 4**, to 833-9543 or crtc@citizenstransit.org

Oct. 16, 12-1 pm

CRT Quarterly Meeting, 237 Main St., Buffalo

Citizens Regional Transit Corporation

617 Main Street

Buffalo, NY 14203

return service requested