
CRT News

CRT Quarterly Meeting
Wednesday,
October 17, 2012
12:00-1:00 pm

“Planning for Transit Corridors”

Darren Kempner, NFTA Manager of Grants

Mr. Kempner works with federal, state and local government officials and private-sector partners to formulate projects and identify, secure, program and manage projects to meet NFTA goals and grantor requirements. He previously served as Erie County’s Deputy Commissioner for Environment and Planning.

Citizens *for* Regional Transit meets at:



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

Follow signs, to the second floor Mezzanine conference room

MAP-21 Disappoints...

The do-nothing Congress jury-rigged a new transportation bill, and President Obama signed it into law, July 6, 2012.

Officially a compromise, the law was a capitulation by the Senate to the extreme demands of the House.

Mercifully, the law will expire in 2014. (see p. 3 for the details)

In our region, the Greater Buffalo-Niagara Regional Transportation Council (GBNRTC) continues to make long-range plans for a sustainable transportation system, including a priority to fix the existing roads and bridges and rails first-- before any new builds.

But MAP-21 promotes new builds!

In our region, we completed a few Complete Streets and promoted Safe Routes to School.

But MAP-21 eliminates funding for these programs!

In our region, public transit needs to be expanded, especially light rail--

And MAP-21 supports public transit New Starts!

Hmmm. Anybody listening?

Meeting Schedule Changes at CRT!

from monthly-- to quarterly
from ten meetings-- to three meetings

Time is: noon-1:00 pm
Location is: 237 Main Street

Cars Sharing Main Street: Demolition-Ready

by Gladys Gifford, CRT President

In a final effort to alert the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) to the flaws in the Cars Sharing Main Street project, Citizens for Regional Transit sent a letter of complaint to the FTA administrator, Peter Rogoff, on July 7, 2012. This letter was co-signed by the League of Women Voters Buffalo-Niagara and by VOICE-Buffalo.

Here are the main points presented:

1. The Cars Sharing Main Street project imposes a disparate impact on transit riders, by eliminating the Theater Station. Removal of the Theater Station will impact the 2,000 daily riders who use this station, forcing them to either: use a car to reach their destination, walk to/from the next station on the line, or stop using transit. This station is currently the destination of choice for many patrons who attend the several theaters in the 600 block of Main Street in addition to serving those who work or live in the area. Each station on Metro Rail contributes to the high ridership of the rail line. Elimination of the Theater Station, or any other station, will place an undue burden on transit riders to reach the stations further along the line. Since the majority of transit riders in Buffalo are minority and low-income, elimination of a station on the light rail line constitutes an unintentional form of discrimination. Furthermore, elimination of the Theater Station restricts previously available access for the disability community and is contrary to the spirit of the Americans with Disabilities Act.
2. The Cars Sharing Main Street project violates its stated goal to increase light rail ridership, which is violated by eliminating the Theater Station. Metro Rail is already the most heavily used route in the NFTA system; therefore, the only way to increase ridership is to attract more people who ride by choice, i.e., to go downtown for an attraction. The theaters attract many patrons who travel by Metro Rail because the Theater Station drops them off within easy walking distance of the theaters. Elimination of the Theater Station eliminates this option for choice riders, hence reducing light rail ridership, not increasing such ridership.
3. The Cars Sharing Main Street project violates the mission of the NFTA. The NFTA declares that its core mission is "providing efficient and professional transportation services

that enhance the quality of life throughout the Buffalo Niagara region in a manner consistent with the needs of our community (website statement, 6-1-12)." The project violates the NFTA core mission since it removes part of the transit service (Theater Station) and inhibits the efficient operations of the transit system by allowing traffic to drive on the trackbed.

4. The Cars Sharing Main Street project has consistently ignored several less disruptive and discriminatory alternatives which allow vehicles on Main Street while supporting the transit system. For example, an early alternative (offered in 1998) would be: return cars to those blocks of Main Street which have no Metro Rail stations, and invest in transit-oriented development in the blocks which contain Metro Rail stations.
5. The Cars Sharing Main Street project is evidence of the failure of both the NFTA and of the FTA to conduct a proper evaluation of the project according to environmental justice guidelines.

The FTA responded, in a letter received August 20, 2012, to wit: "the project would not have disproportionately high and adverse effects on minority or low-income populations." In addition, the FTA stated that the NFTA "has discretion to establish guidelines or thresholds for what it considers a 'major' change to be."

So, both the FTA and the NFTA have signed off on the Cars Sharing Main Street project. CRT has done its best to raise a warning-- we can do no more.

Let the demolition begin!

- remove paving stones from the wide sidewalks
- remove the Theater Station
- allow fumes from engines to clog the downtown air
- increase hazards to pedestrians and bicyclists
- increase hazards for disabled and elderly
- reduce transit access for everyone going downtown, especially to the theaters

And when the dust settles, will the leaders who promoted this project be willing to evaluate the results? at one-year, five-year intervals? The project has goals: will it accomplish those goals?

We'll see.

MAP-21: A STEP BACKWARDS

By [David Goldberg](#), *Transportation 4 America*

We'll be honest: We were truly disheartened by the way the Senate's solid transportation bill was mangled in the late-hour, backroom negotiations with the House late last month, and our early commentary showed it. Now that the President has signed MAP-21 into law, we are able to take a more comprehensive look not only at what was lost, but was preserved and, in some cases, gained.

After digesting the 600-plus pages of the law, here are 10 key things to know about our new, two-year national transportation program. The question to keep in the back of your mind as you read is this: After two years and more than \$100 billion dollars, will we have made real progress on repairing our roads and bridges, making streets safer for all, and giving more people more options to get around quickly and affordably?

1. **Incentivizing costly new construction, making repair optional.** Under most circumstances, the required local match for building Interstate lanes drops from 20 percent to 5 percent. Meanwhile, dedicated funding for bridge repair disappears altogether.
2. **Steps toward accountability for performance, but few teeth.** In a positive step, MAP-21 does begin to set performance targets for goals such as highway and bridge conditions and safety. It's a good start, but there needs to be a broader set of goals and meaningful incentives for success as well as consequences for failure.
3. **A false promise of "flexibility".** Flexibility to spend federal transportation dollars on freight rail, local roads or expanding the frequency of buses and trains was dropped from the final bill. Many local governments will find their ability to meet needs as they see fit has been reduced.
4. **Less money, but more local control, to make streets safer for all users.** The bill eliminates the popular Transportation Enhancements, Safe Routes to School, and Recreational Trails programs and creates a new set-aside called Transportation Alternatives, at a third less funding. Larger metros will get the money directly, but smaller and more rural communities may see little to none of it, depending on their state DOT.
5. **Continued funding of transit "New Starts" projects.** In a victory for public transportation riders, MAP-21 will continue to fund new rail and rapid-bus projects at current levels, and with simplified approvals. The bad news is that the fund is wildly oversubscribed.
6. **More capacity to borrow, but less to innovate.** The bill expands the ability to borrow at low cost through programs like TIFIA, but it eliminates the TIGER program, which allowed local entities and others to apply for grants for innovative projects.
7. **Transit stays in the trust fund, with more accountability for repair and safety.** Fortunately, House leaders failed in their bid to remove federal dedicated funding for public transportation. New requirements will help to ensure that transit systems stay in good repair and are safe.
8. **Multiple changes to environmental and citizen review, with unpredictable impact.** One of the biggest and noisiest fights was over what House negotiators termed "streamlining", a euphemism for removing environmental and citizen protection around transportation projects. While wholesale elimination was averted, myriad changes to the rules will have impacts that only time will reveal.
9. **For rural communities, a seat at the table and a focus on the most dangerous roads.** The bill authorizes the creation of new rural planning entities that will represent smaller communities in state transportation planning. It also should make it easier to fix rural highways with high crash rates.
10. **Tolling for new interstate lanes and HOV sleight-of-hand, and an emphasis on public-private partnerships.** The short version: Restricting the ability to toll interstates to new lanes only misses a major opportunity to both manage traffic and generate revenue from thousands of miles of clogged urban interstates. U.S. DOT also is required to develop best practices for public-private partnerships, including ways to protect public and state and local government interests.

source: Transportation for America
<http://t4america.org/blog/2012/07/13/ten-key-things-to-know-about-the-new-transportation-law/#more-12523>

...on Track, Near and Far

Ohio Street, Buffalo, will finally be transformed into the boulevard envisioned in the 2006 Southtowns Connector project. Rep. Brian Higgins has alerted local officials to the risk of losing long-designated Federal funds now available to complete the work. CRT supports this effort, as an immediate and logical way to bring access to the Outer Harbor. Implementation is now led by the Erie Canal Harbor Development Council.

In July, Gladys Gifford, CRT President, gave her “Just Transportation” presentation to a group of students from **Christ the King Seminary, East Aurora**. Keen interest was evident, as students grappled with transportation as a social justice issue.

CRT participated in the **WNY Regional Sustainability Plan** public workshop, July 24, in Cheektowaga. The Plan is an effort to fulfill Gov. Cuomo’s “Cleaner, Greener Communities Program.” CRT suggested that light rail be extended as infrastructure that will reduce greenhouse gas emissions and support local jobs.

BART broke ground in April for a 10-mile light rail extension to **Santa Clara County, CA**. Slated to reach **San Jose, CA**, the project is supported by two sales-tax ballot initiatives approved in 2000 and 2008.

Miami-Dade Transit, FL, began rail service to the Miami International Airport on July 28.

[Amtrak breaks ridership records, but Congressional attacks continue](#)

narprail.org 9-12-12 By Sean Jeans Gail
[excerpted, see above link for full article]

Amtrak announced this week that it has experienced 11 consecutive monthly ridership records in the current fiscal year, setting its highest ever single month ridership record in the month of July. However, that good news didn’t stop Congressional critics from going through with a hearing attacking Amtrak’s involvement in commuter operations a day after the announcement....

Through 11 months of FY 2012 (October 2011 - August 2012), total Amtrak ridership is up 3.4 percent as compared to the same period last year. When the current fiscal year ends on September 30, Amtrak expects a new annual ridership record will be set, surpassing the current record of 30.2 million passengers established in FY 2011.

From FY 2002 to FY 2011, Amtrak ridership increased 44 percent and set new annual records in 8 of those 9 years. This long-term growth is occurring across the Amtrak national network and on all Amtrak business lines, including the Northeast Corridor, state-supported and other short-distance routes, and long-distance services.

The good news didn’t find its way into the statements made by Chairman Mica, who blasted Amtrak for its involvement in the commuter rail market in his prepared statements....

**Research conducted
for CRT**

by Lynn Magdol, CRT Board



CRT participated in the High Road Fellows Summer Internship Program of 2012 sponsored by Cornell University’s School of Industrial and Labor Relations (ILR) and administered locally by the Partnership for the Public Good.

The CRT asked that the student intern prepare materials to assist the CRT in preparing a ballot initiative aimed at providing a consistent and dependable revenue stream for public transit, in light of the recent budget crisis at the NFTA.

Carolyn Krupski, student intern, was assigned to work with the CRT. During June and July, Carolyn prepared a policy brief outlining best practices in other communities where ballot initiatives have been tried as a way to raise funds for public transportation. In weekly meetings, she consulted with CRT Board members Doug Funke and Lynn Magdol as her research took shape. (Pictured above: Doug, Carolyn, Lynn)

Her final paper summarized the successes and failures of recent ballot initiative campaigns. Among the successes she reported, some important features to note were: having a specific goal, collaborating with campaign experts, conducting voter surveys, building a coalition, raising funds, advertising, and writing a clearly-worded statement for voting.

A specific issue to consider for a campaign in the Greater Buffalo Area is its poor air quality rating, C on a scale of F to A, an argument for reducing traffic by encouraging mass transit. Another local issue is the need for a multilingual campaign, with the large immigrant population here.

The biggest barrier in New York State is the prerequisite that a petition be signed by 10% of the electorate before an initiative can even be considered for a vote.

Citizens for Regional Transit invites You...

Join us!

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!

- corporate \$150.
- 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





Congress for New Urbanism-- New York Retreat

at Chautauqua's Athenaeum Hotel
Friday, Oct. 12th to Sunday, Oct. 14th

Come to Chautauqua to meet the activists, developers, professionals and local officials who are leveraging the region's resources, infrastructure and setting to uncover the diamonds in the Rust Belt and make their communities better.

Help identify the issues that will be the core of the 2014 Congress for New Urbanism agenda, to be held in Buffalo, NY.

The team of presenters assembled for this event may be the largest number of nationally-recognized land use experts ever assembled at one time in Western New York – and they are only a small portion of the number who will be in Buffalo for the Congress for the New Urbanism in June 2014.

Accommodations (meals included) are at very favorable rates. Lodging at the Hotel is not required for attendees.

For more information and to register for the event, go to cnunewyork.org.

Calendar

No CRT meeting in Sept.

Sept. 21-23

Heritage Discovery Center
Festival, 100 Lee St., Bflo.
www.wnyhdc.org

Oct. 3, 9:30 am

Planning & Coordinating
Committee of GBNRTC
NYS Thruway, 455 Cayuga Rd.,
Cheektowaga

Oct. 12-14

Congress for New Urbanism
retreat, Chautauqua Institution
cnunewyork.org (p.5)

Oct. 17, 12-1 pm

CRT monthly meeting,
237 Main St., Buffalo
Analysis of Transit Corridors
with Darren Kempner, NFTA

Citizens Regional Transit Corporation
617 Main Street
Buffalo, NY 14203

return service requested