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# CRT News

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## **CRT quarterly Public Meeting**

**October 15, 2014, 5:30 pm**  
**Innovation Center, 640 Ellicott Street, Buffalo, NY**

### **TOD in Buffalo— how to make it work**

A public discussion on how to make Transit Oriented Development (TOD) work in Buffalo.

Transit oriented development combines investments in high-volume transit together with zoning that allows denser mixed-use development. The combination has led to revitalizing urban areas and is beginning to take hold here in Buffalo. This discussion will explore how developers are working with the public sector to make TOD work in Buffalo.

Speakers:

**Paul Ciminelli, President and CEO, Ciminelli Real Estate Corporation**  
**Chris Hawley, City Planner, Mayor's Office of Strategic Planning**  
**Darren Kempner, Manager of Grants and Gov't. Affairs, NFTA**

Doors open at 5 pm for refreshments and networking.

Directions:

Innovation Center is at 640 Ellicott Street, between Goodell and Virginia Streets, Buffalo

FREE and OPEN TO THE PUBLIC



### **Defining TOD**

Transit-oriented development, or TOD, is a type of community development that includes a mixture of housing, office, retail and/or other amenities integrated into a walkable neighborhood and located within a half-mile of quality public transportation.

*...Reconnecting America*

## CRT Board Weighs-In on Outer Harbor Plans

by Douglas Funke, President

The Erie Canal Harbor Development Corporation (ECHDC) presented its “Preferred Preliminary Plan” for the Outer Harbor at a public meeting on September 9<sup>th</sup>. Several members of the CRT Executive Board attended this and previous public meetings. We found that the “Preferred Plan” and the process for public engagement both have several serious flaws.

The “Preferred Plan” calls for new “mixed-use” development on the Outer Harbor. This includes thousands of apartments and associated retail along with supporting new roads, sewer, water, electrical, etc. Who will pay for building and maintaining this infrastructure was not stated.

The presentation also stated that the light rail could be extended to the Outer Harbor to support the new planned housing and retail. We disagree, as summarized below.

We also found the public engagement process to be very unsatisfactory. There was no opportunity for the public to make statements at any of the meetings. All comments had to be made on “yellow stickies”, comment sheets, or in informal small group gatherings that followed the presentations. We are told that the Final Plan will be complete in a few weeks!

The CRT Board sent a letter to the ECHDC Board with copies to our local leaders detailing our disagreements. Some of the key points of our letter are:

1. We already have enough sprawl in WNY. Investment in new development is better made where there is already infrastructure, such as the Cobblestone District or First Ward.
2. We strongly support extending the light rail, but **not to the Outer Harbor**. Every NFTA study over the last 40 years (and there have been many) identifies the airport and Amherst extensions as highest priority in terms of ridership and need. We agree. We also support extension of the light rail through the DL&W Terminal and along the NFTA-owned DL&W right-of-way to Riverbend and/or Larkinville. This extension could eventually be extended to serve the airport.

3. We support the planned (and now approved) ferry that will connect the Buffalo Inner and Outer Harbors. This ferry will offer a high frequency service for people and bikes to and from the Outer Harbor. This is affordable and perfect for low-density uses such as a park and hiking trails, perhaps supplemented by a fun people mover like the tram at Niagara Falls and / or bike rentals. Portions of the Outer Harbor can even be left in a natural state to keep maintenance costs low.

You can find a copy of the CRT Board letter to the ECHDC on the CRT website ([www.citizenstransit.org](http://www.citizenstransit.org)). Please consider sending your own comments to the ECHDC (at [OuterHarborInfo@esd.ny.gov](mailto:OuterHarborInfo@esd.ny.gov)). The ECHDC website is [www.eriecanalharbor.com](http://www.eriecanalharbor.com).

Feel free to send comments on this or other topics to the CRT Board via our website or our email ([crtc@citizenstransit.org](mailto:crtc@citizenstransit.org)).



## Transit funding— State and National

### NYS Receives Windfall— Apply to Transit?

**The state is due to receive a windfall of \$4.5 billion** thanks to a string of legal settlements with banks and insurance companies. The question now is how the mountain of loot will be spent. **E.J. McMahon**, of the conservative-leaning Empire Center for New York State Policy, **said the state would be better off using the bulk of the windfall on one-time expenditures, such as mass transit and upstate transportation projects.**

Meanwhile, **NYPTA President Carm Basile has sent a letter to Governor Cuomo urging him to increase investment in public transit from the budget surplus created by the legal settlements.**

See the letter at <http://www.nytransit.org>

### Congress does Little, Again

*by Gladys Gifford, editor*

Federal funding for public transit relies on Congress to act in a bipartisan fashion, for the benefit of all. This Congress again has demonstrated its inability to make any bipartisan progress, especially in regard to public transportation infrastructure.

The Highway Trust Fund was about to be exhausted by the end of August; on August 1st Congress passed a bill that transfers \$10.8 billion from the General Fund into the Highway Trust Fund. This bill allows the Trust Fund to stay solvent through May 2015, and extends MAP-21 funding authorization and policies for highway, mass transit, and safety programs through May 31, 2015.

Reminder— Congress must pass a Transportation Act, in order to allow all transportation projects to receive funding. Earlier versions of the Act were designed for seven years, thereby ensuring that such projects are not victims of electioneering. MAP-21 is the current Act, first passed in 2013, and is designed for a two-year span. Hence, the current extension turns the Act into a three-year pact.

On September 19th, the House passed a continuing resolution to allow the Federal government to pay its bills through December, 2014. This action means that all transportation programs/projects are funded at FY 2014 levels, i.e., no adjustments for increased costs.

Congress is now in recess, with members working on the mid-term elections. Advocates for public transit will be using this time to connect with their Congressional delegations in order to ensure that improved funding will be enacted in December.

A bright light in this Congress is a bill introduced Sept. 18th, the “Innovation in Surface Transportation Act” which would give local communities more access to, and control over, a share of the federal transportation dollars that flow to their states. See more at [t4america.org](http://t4america.org).

For more detail on national legislative issues, see [apta.com](http://apta.com).

People's Climate March happened September 21, in NYC. Transit advocates were there, including Tri-State Transportation Campaign— whose work gives voice to transit equity in our region.

Here's their statement, sent 9-18-14, making the connection between transit equity and the People's Climate March.  
.. [blog.tstc.org/2014/09/18](http://blog.tstc.org/2014/09/18)



In the New York metro region, the transportation sector contributes significantly to greenhouse gas emissions – in New York and Connecticut, the transportation sector represents the second biggest contributor; in New Jersey it is the first – yet transportation solutions to mitigate greenhouse gases are often afterthoughts.

And the impacts of poor transportation decisions, much like the impacts of poor environmental decisions, on the poor or on communities of color are also ignored. Tri-State has worked for over 20 years in partnership with individuals and organizations to highlight the transportation inequities of car-dependent communities, such as:

- \*Concentration of unwanted transportation infrastructure and pollution in poor communities and communities of color;
- \*No or limited access to jobs and resources for those without a car;
- \*High pedestrian and bicyclist fatalities among seniors and children;
- \*Disproportionate share of household income spent on transportation/housing costs;
- \*Long and challenging commutes for those who are transit-dependent

Despite the environmental benefits of shifting people from cars to greener, cleaner transportation modes such as bikes, transit and walking, the transportation sector has not been fully adopted into the larger environmental movement, outside of the push for clean vehicles and freight.

Consider these multimodal transportation benefits:

- \*Key bus rapid transit features such as designated lanes, traffic signal prioritization and off-board fare collection helps reduce emissions by up to 40 percent;
- \*Walking and biking for short trips rather than driving can reduce emissions by up to 12-22 million tons annually, and by up to 9 to 23 million tons annually for longer trips;
- \*Hybrid buses can reduce emissions by as much as 75 percent compared to conventional diesel buses;
- \*An average household living near transit can reduce its transportation-related GHG emissions by 43 percent.

The People's Climate March is an opportunity to break down the silos we've created and join together as people working towards a shared goal: a more equitable, clean, sustainable world to enjoy today and leave behind for the generations to come. Our efforts combined are much stronger than our efforts separated.

**Wednesday, October 1, beginning at 5 pm  
Talking Leaves...Books, 3158 Main Street**

In conjunction with the Citizen's Regional Transit Corporation, Talking Leaves...Books is pleased to announce an appearance by

**Benjamin Ross,  
author of *Dead End: Suburban Sprawl and the Rebirth of  
American Urbanism* (Oxford University Press).**

Mr. Ross will give a brief talk and then autograph copies of the book. The event is free and open to the public; copies of the book will be available for purchase. Anyone wishing to have a book signed is expected to purchase it from Talking Leaves, as an act of support and respect for the author and the store hosting his talk.

More than five decades have passed since Jane Jacobs wrote her classic *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, and since a front page headline in the *New York Times* read, "Cars Choking Cities as 'Urban Sprawl' Takes Over." Yet sprawl persists, and not by mistake. It happens for a reason.

As an activist and a scholar, Benjamin Ross is uniquely placed to diagnose why this is so. *Dead End* traces how the ideal of a safe, green, orderly retreat where hardworking members of the middle class could raise their children away from the city mutated into the McMansion and strip mall-ridden suburbs of today.

Ross finds that sprawl is much more than bad architecture and sloppy planning. Its roots are historical, sociological, and economic. He uses these insights to lay out a practical strategy for change, honed by his experience leading the largest grass-roots mass transit advocacy organization in the United States.

The problems of smart growth, sustainability, transportation, and affordable housing, he argues, are intertwined and must be solved as a whole. The two keys to creating better places to live are expansion of rail transit

and a more genuinely democratic oversight of land use.

*Dead End* is, ultimately, about the places where we live our lives. Both an engaging history of suburbia and an invaluable guide for today's urbanist, it will serve as a primer for anyone interested in how Americans actually live.

Anyone who attended or followed the news surrounding June's Congress for New Urbanism Conference will find this talk interesting and informative.

Benjamin Ross was president of Maryland's Action Committee for Transit for 15 years, which grew under his leadership into the nation's largest grass-roots transit advocacy group. He is a consultant on environmental problems and served on committees of the National Academy of Sciences and EPA Science Advisory Board. He writes frequently on political and social topics in *Dissent Magazine* and is the author of *The Polluters: The Making of Our Chemically Altered Environment*.

For more information, Jonathon Welch, 716.837.8554, [tleaves@tleavesbooks.com](mailto:tleases@tleavesbooks.com)

## Amherst-Buffalo Corridor Public Meeting

**Tuesday, September 30th,  
4:00 to 8:00 pm**

**UB South Campus Allen Hall,  
3435 Main Street,  
Buffalo, NY.**

This meeting will be conducted in an open house format.

Drop in and learn about the study, view presentation boards about alternatives being considered, and provide comments to members of the study team.

The NFTA and its partners are conducting a study of public transportation options for the corridor connecting Buffalo and Amherst, called “Amherst-Buffalo Transit Options Study.”

Alternatives being considered include looking at an extension of Metro Rail, improvements to current bus service, or Bus Rapid Transit. These alternatives seek to offer transit options that make traveling around the region safer, more convenient, more environmentally friendly, and cost effective.

For more info, see <http://to.nfta.com>

### Calendar

Sept. 30, 4:00 pm UB Allen Hall  
NFTA presents alternatives developed  
by Amherst-Buffalo Corridor Analysis

Oct. 1, 5:00 pm Benjamin Ross at  
Talking Leaves, book-signing (p.5)

**Oct. 15, 5:30-7:00 pm**  
CRT Quarterly Public Meeting,  
640 Ellicott St., Buffalo (p. 1)

Jan. 21, 2015  
CRT Quarterly Public Meeting:  
Annual Meeting and Election of Officers

**CRT educates everyone  
concerning public transit in  
Western New York: see [http://  
citizenstransit.org](http://citizenstransit.org).**

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your dues and donations. Send  
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CRTC, 617 Main St., Buffalo, NY  
14203**