
CRT News

CRT Public Meeting Wednesday, October 16, 2013

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

***“Funding Public Transit”
2013 Transit Initiatives and Communities Conference
held by
Center for Transportation Excellence***

Lynn Magdol, CRT Board, and Darren Kempner, NFTA, attended this conference in Atlanta, GA, June 23-25. Come hear their report, full of great ideas and energy that will enhance CRT's efforts to work with the NFTA on a transit initiative for metro Buffalo.



**Citizens for Regional Transit
meets at:**

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

Follow signs, to the second floor Mezzanine conference room

CRT meetings are free and open to the public

Three Steps Forward...

by Gladys Gifford, editor

CRT has been the keepers of the dream for a very long time-- the dream to complete the vision of Metro Rail which serves the whole of metro Buffalo.

For far too long that dream has been deferred, chiefly because the NFTA Board of Commissioners did not share that vision. But the NFTA Board has changed, and there is hope that the dream may become real.

We see three recent items which give us hope:

- * open discussion by NFTA about any possible extensions of light rail

- * progress on the Alternatives Analysis to extend transit to Amherst

- * their application for a study of extending Metro Rail into the DL&W terminal at the foot of Main Street.

These three small steps forward now will allow great strides in the future.

Onward!!

CRT is on Facebook!

Be a Friend, and join the conversation...

Citizens for Regional Transit in Action Summer, 2013

The CRT Board dedicated many hours to organizing the conference, Making the Case for Transit. See following pages for conference report and details.

Other activities over the summer included:

- * co-sponsored and helped conduct the Metro Rail Art Tours conducted by Preservation Buffalo;
- * monitored meetings of the NFTA Board of Commissioners;
- * attended meetings of the Greater Buffalo

Niagara Regional Transportation Council;

- * partnered with the Energy and Climate Change Working Group of the Environmental Alliance to sponsor a plank supporting public transit along the Niagara River Greenway;
- * participated in transportation group meetings at One Region Forward;
- * participated in NFTA's Citizen Advisory Committee.

Progress in Downtown Buffalo?

Here is the scene, late September-- construction vehicles in downtown Buffalo, bringing progress, especially new railbeds.

However the construction work on the light rail system is putting great stress on our transit system:

- Because of single-tracking, trains are only running every 20 minutes (instead of 10 minutes).
- It's hard for Metro riders to figure out where to board the train, since only one track is operational.
- Because of these problems Metro Rail ridership is down 25% (from 23,000 riders per day to 17,000 riders per day)



NFTA expects to restore service to two tracks soon. This is welcome news.

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



Trouble in the Cobblestone District

by Douglas J. Funke, President

There is a problem in the cobblestone district.

Fortunately there is a solution at hand if we are able to embrace it.

The problem is that almost the entire cobblestone district is a parking lot (as is way too much of our entire waterfront). This is painfully evident from the figure below.



Courtesy of Mark Paradowski from the Preservation-Ready Sites

With most of the cobblestone district taken up with surface parking there is little room for the kind of mixed-use development that can make the cobblestone district a success. Given that so many people drive to Sabres games it will be hard to convince anyone that we can do with less.

A few local leaders including Congressman Higgins and Pat Whalen of the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus (BNMC) have put forward a proposed solution to this problem. They say extend the light rail into the mostly unused DL&W Terminal and to a multi-modal transportation center that includes a parking ramp to the south (not shown in the figure). We say yes to this idea! We are encouraged that the Buffalo Common Council unanimously supports this idea and that Mayor Brown is supporting a proposal to fund its evaluation.

The DL&W terminal will provide an indoor light rail station with a covered walkway to the First Niagara Arena (as well as convenient access to the waterfront and possible space for retail). This will encourage more people to take the light rail to Sabres games. The vertical parking facility to the south will allow Sabres patrons to park there and take the train to the arena. This parking facility can also serve as a park and ride for BNMC employees helping to solve the parking shortage around the BNMC. Finally, the proposed vertical parking facility to the south will make it possible to get rid of the surface parking throughout the cobblestone district thus opening this land for desperately needed mixed-use development.

This is a win-win for everyone.

Making the Case for Transit:

How light rail can be a vehicle for sustainable economic development

report from the conference by Gladys Gifford, CRT Board



September 14th was a bright and clear fall day, perfect for the conference: “Making the Case for Transit: How light rail can be a vehicle for sustainable economic development,” organized by CRT and co-sponsored by Canisius College.

One hundred participants gathered at the Montante Center on the Canisius College campus, Main Street, Buffalo, to hear speakers and view displays and gather over lunch.

The conference was followed by a bus tour of a potential light rail corridor alignment between downtown Buffalo and the Buffalo-Niagara International Airport (with stops at the DL&W terminal and Central Terminal).



Featured speakers were Douglas J. Funke, President of Citizens for Regional Transit (Buffalo); Chris Sandvig, Regional Policy Manager, Pittsburgh (PA) Community Reinvestment Group; Tom George, NFTA Director of Surface Transportation; Nadine Lemmon, Ph. D., Legislative Advocate for Tri-State Transportation Campaign.

The afternoon panel of Buffalo-Niagara leadership included: Mark

Croce, business developer; Dr. Daniel Hess, UB Department of Urban and Regional Planning; Hal Morse, Executive Director, Greater Buffalo Niagara Regional Transportation Council; Patrick Whalen, COO, Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus and Howard Zemsky, Chairman, NFTA Board of Commissioners.

In between speakers and during lunch the conference viewed videos from other regions where public transit investments have succeeded.

Douglas J. Funke opened the conference with an overview of public transit history and current status. He offered possible scenarios for the future of light rail transit, as well.

Chris Sandvig presented the years-long experience of metro Pittsburgh in making the case for investment in public transit as an economic engine for the region. He described how his organization, combining business and community organizations, worked through layers of statistics and investment strategies to arrive at the several investments completed and planned.

Tom George shared the current and future plans of the NFTA for transit investments.

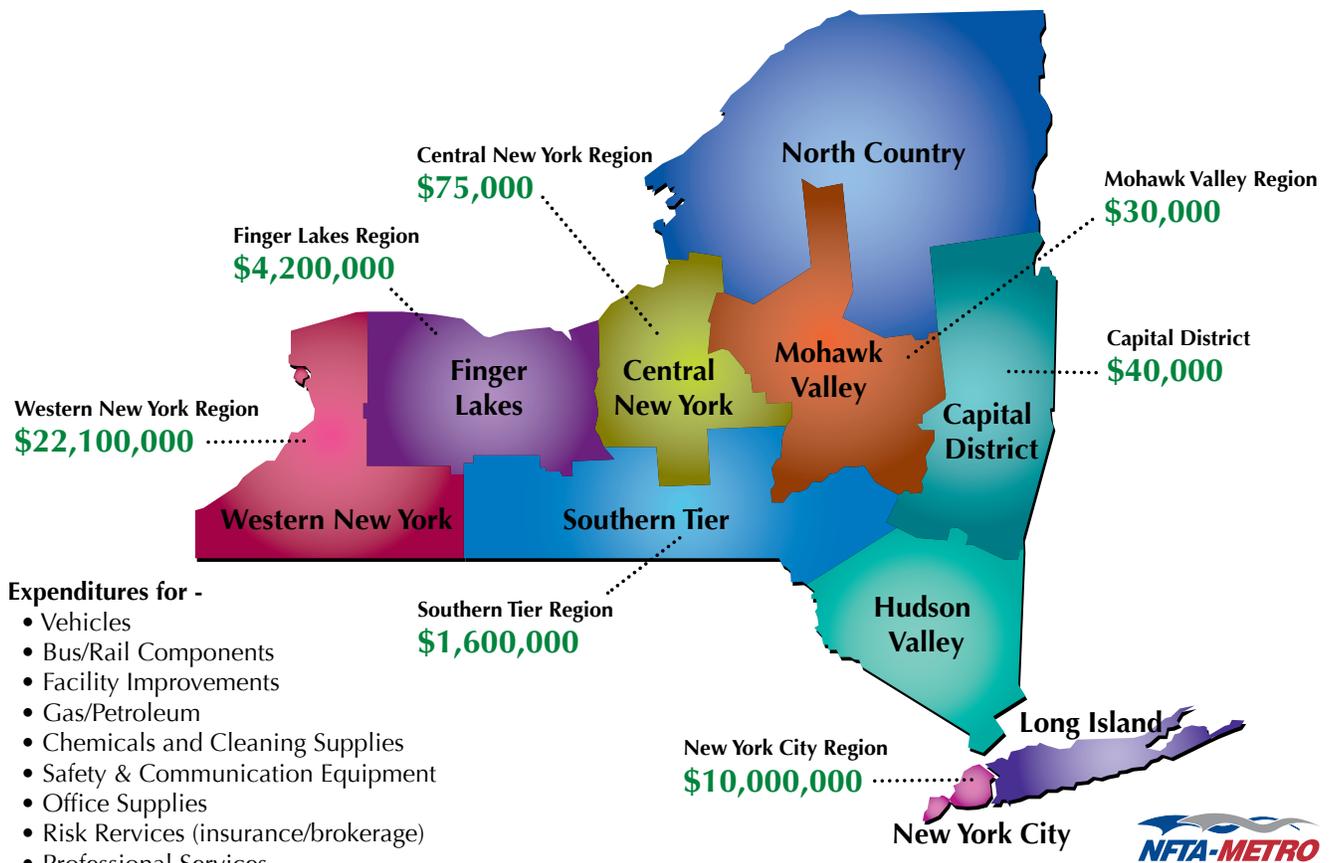
Keynote speaker, Nadine Lemmon, delivered a spirited challenge: brag about transit! She advised that the strongest argument for public transit is its economic power. Strong cases are made often for equity (social justice) and environmental benefits, but the case that moves community leaders is economic, i.e., “money talks.”

The afternoon panelists continued the positive tone of the speakers. The audience participated through q&a times throughout the day.

How Does Transit Support NYS Economy? --"Making the Case for Transit" *continued*

During her keynote address, Dr. Nadine Lemmon included data on how public transit benefits the whole economy in NYS. Below is a graphic developed by the NFTA showing the distribution of this economic benefit.

Where Our Money Goes Annual Metro Bus and Rail Vendor Spending in New York State



In a followup to the conference, Dr. Lemmon commented on the recent transfer of Outer Harbor land to the Erie Canal Harbor Development Corp. and NYS Parks. She argued that transit riders should benefit from this deal, since the NFTA will thereby lose \$1 million in revenue. She urged Gov. Cuomo to take steps to help stabilize funding for the NFTA: sign the lockbox bill; allocate part of the "Buffalo Billion" to transit; and find improved and alternative revenue streams.

See her article, Another Voice, published in the [Buffalo News](#) (9-25-13); also G. Stamm letter, 12-25-12.



BUILD UP TO CNU22

A FREE event to get Buffalo excited to host the **22nd Congress for the New Urbanism (CNU22)** planned for June 4-7, 2014.

Thursday, October 3, 6 p.m. BUFFALO & ERIE COUNTY CENTRAL LIBRARY

Cash bar social to follow at 7:30 p.m. at the Pan American Grill in the Lafayette. All are invited.

INFO ABOUT:

- ← Who will be at the Congress
- ← What tours of the region they will be taking
- ← What the Congress can do for Buffalo and the other communities of Western New York

JOIN US FOR:

- ← A screening of the video "Buffalo: America's Best Designed City" by award-winning Buffalo film maker John Paget
- ← Remarks by CNU President and CEO **John Norquist** and a presentation on current trends in transportation by **Norman Garrick**, transportation expert from the University of Connecticut and CNU Board member

Calendar

Oct. 2, 9:30 am

Planning & Coordinating Comm., GBNRTC, at NYS Thruway, 455 Cayuga Rd., Cheektowaga

Oct. 3, 6 pm

CNU presentation, at Buffalo Central Library, followed by social at Lafayette Grill (p. 6)

Oct. 16, 12-1 pm

CRT Quarterly Meeting, 237 Main St., Buffalo (p. 1)

Oct. 19, 9 am-4 pm

CNU summit, Syracuse, NY. see www.cnunewyork.org

Citizens Regional Transit Corporation
617 Main Street
Buffalo, NY 14203

return service requested