



CITIZENS *for* REGIONAL TRANSIT
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January 6, 2021

Mr. Steve Ranalli
President, Erie Canal Harbor Development Corporation (ECHDC)
95 Perry Street, 5th Floor
Buffalo, NY 14203

Ref. Buffalo Outer Harbor Civic and Land Use Improvement Project: General Project Plan.
November 9, 2020

Dear Mr Ranalli:

We are writing to offer our comments on the Buffalo Outer Harbor Civic and Land Use Improvement Project General Project Plan (GPP). Thank you for your work in putting this plan together and for extending the deadline for public comments. This is an important project that will define success of the outer harbor for many years and needs to receive careful review with public input and support. We appreciate the ECHDC's willingness to shift away from the original mixed-use development focus towards more nature-based approach. We offer the following comments on the latest GPP.

Public transportation needs to be part of the plan. Transportation to, from and along the outer harbor is an important consideration for the success of the project but is not adequately addressed in the GPP. There seems to be an assumption that access by car will be the norm (27 references to parking) with almost no consideration given for public transit (0 mentions) except for noting the existing bike ferry at the north end (11 mentions). We concur that the bike ferry is an important element for outer harbor access and success. We appreciate ECHDC's continued support for the bike ferry operations and improvements. But more comprehensive transportation planning that integrates public transit is needed. Even the, bike rack equipped #36 bus with existing service to the southern end of the outer harbor is not noted.

One of the GPP's stated Purposes and Needs is "minimize adverse impacts on communities and the environment by avoiding an inequitable distribution of impacts and maintaining neighborhood and community cohesion." With 30% of Buffalo households without cars and transportation the largest greenhouse gas contributing sector (mostly from cars), it is important that public transit play an important role in the outer the harbor transportation plan. Otherwise only those with cars will have preferential access to this public space. And there will be a danger of creating congestion and associated pollution when popular events are held.

The bike ferry at the northern end of the Outer Harbor together with the existing NFTA bus service that drops people at the southern end of the Outer Harbor at Ohio Street and Fuhrmann Boulevard provides transit access to both ends of the outer harbor. But the Outer Harbor is over 2 miles long. A transit solution needs to be evaluated based on expected demand for outer harbor sites and activities, especially during special events that may be planned. This could take the



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form of a green (electric) shuttle, redefining existing NFTA routes, and/or special service serving events.

Keeping the outer harbor car-free needs to be a design goal. We believe a key to the success of the outer harbor is to keep it as car free as possible. This means it must be accessible by all modes, especially public transit, as noted above. The use of cars to access the outer harbor should be minimized by design. Towards this end, CRT concurs with the Our Outer Harbor (OOH) coalition in calling for designating the outer harbor for natural and regenerative uses; a place for watching sunsets, bird watching, hiking, biking, meditation, and generally connecting to nature; essentially making the outer harbor part of the Olmsted Park network. Designating the outer harbor as a state park would help achieve these goals.

The plans for an amphitheater and event lawn as part of the lakeside complex will draw large numbers of people. This will potentially generate high levels of noise, which seems incompatible with the meditative, subset-watching outer harbor uses stated as design goals. Future plans for Terminal A also needs to be evaluated and included in the transportation plan. If the uses at Terminals A and B will frequently draw large crowds, a low cost gondola should be considered. A gondola would allow easy and enjoyable access from Canalside and will be an attraction, in itself, with great views of the lake, the outer harbor and the city. With tourism as a stated goal, a gondola may be the right solution to provide public transportation, avoid car congestion, and serve as an attraction for tourists.

Thank you for your attention to this priority project.

Sincerely,

Douglas Funke
President, Citizens for Regional Transit

cc. Our Outer Harbor Coalition