



Citizens *for* Regional Transit

CRT News

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President's Column Loss of a Friend, Colleague, and CRT Board Member

By Doug Funke

We are deeply saddened at the loss of long time CRT Board Member, Betsy Giles, who recently passed away after a long battle with cancer. For those who knew her remember her energy and passion for better transit. She was a transit user and advocate. She walked the walk living car-free and using public transit exclusively for her day-to-day activities. She worked tirelessly as a CRT board member attending public meetings, tabling at area festivals, meeting with legislators, serving on transit-related committees (e.g., the NFTA Citizens Advisory Committee), authoring op-eds, and helping plan and lead CRT projects.

We are working with the NFTA to install a bench and plaque at the Amherst Buffalo Metro Station in honor of Betsy. We thank the NFTA for providing and installing the bench. CRT is providing the plaque. This was Betsy's station and a fitting place for her memorial. We plan to have a ceremony this during the summer. The date and time is still TBD. We will provide an announcement when we know the exact information.

Buffalo News Obituary:

https://buffalonews.com/obituaries/features/elizabeth-m-betsy-giles-58-peace-corps-volunteer-advocate-for-public-transit/article_21d39e56-dbc4-11ec-9ac9-9378b782f72a.html

Erie County Cremation Site:

<https://eriecountycremationservice.com/tribute/details/3037/Elizabeth-Giles/condolences.html#content-start>



Ridership Is Down, Management Up at the NFTA

By Doug Funke

Ridership is still down at the NFTA but improving as it recovers from COVID. Public money from the Fed and State has been applied to fill in the gap and even restore some of the service that was cut during the depths of COVID and as a result of recent labor shortages.

Recognizing the critical need for maintaining transit service during difficult times and for improving service as a way of mitigating climate change and overcoming the historical social mobility injustices that have been the norm for many years, the State has provided an increase in State Transit Operating Assistance (STOA). CRT worked with the NY Public Transit Association (NYPTA) to fight successfully for these increases. We met with many legislators and attended press events and workshops. As a result, the NFTA received a 19% increase in STOA this year. We had hoped for more but this is twice the increase we got last year. *We thank Senator Tim Kennedy and Assembly Member Bill Magnarelli (Syracuse), chairs of the Senate and Assembly Transportation Committees, and our local legislative delegation for supporting these increases.*

We are disappointed that the NFTA has decided to use some of this public money to expand executive management. A new layer of managers was created – a Vice President level between the Executive Director, Kim Minkel, and the Directors of transit, aviation, public affairs. etc. Tom George, Karen Novo, and John Schaefer are now Vice Presidents and new Directors have been named. James Morell is now the Director of Public Transit, Tom George's old position.

At a time when public tax money is needed and provided to shore up struggling transit services is not a time for adding NFTA executive managers. This shows a fundamental insensitivity to the struggling community they serve. We hope the remainder of the taxpayer-funded money will go to improving transit service – to buy more buses, hire more drivers (operators) and maintenance staff, and providing the local share for the many projects in works. That is to improve transit service.

CRT Welcomes Our 2022 Cornell University High Road Fellow

By Carl Skompinski

CRT would like to welcome Darshana Subramaniam, our 2022 Cornell University High Road Fellow for the summer. Darshana will be updating CRT's East Side Airport Metro Rail Extension Analysis paper created by a prior High Road Fellow. Her work will be updating census data in the document, doing comparative analysis of 2010 and 2020 census data, as well creating a community survey for collecting current public transit use data along the proposed East Side Metro Rail route. She'll be canvassing City Block Clubs, Church groups, and other neighborhood organizations along the proposed route, and formulating the data in usable form for publication.

Darshana grew up in Michigan and attends Cornell University's Industrial and Labor Relations School. A Dean's List scholar, she is working on her Bachelor of Science in Industrial and Labor Relations degree, with minors in Business, Spanish, and Law and Society.

Outside of her academic career, Darshana is an avid figure skater, coaching children ages 3-18 and adults on skating skills to pass United States Figure Skating Association basic and freestyle tests. Some of her community volunteer work includes Alumni Director and Volunteer Facilitator work for Community Development Advocates of Detroit, where she created, designed, and facilitated curriculum and workshops for their youth advisory council. Addressed issues youth see in their neighborhood and giving them resources and skills to address those issues. She worked closely on recruitment processes and other workshops to ensure that youth have access to educational and mental health resources.

CRT is honored to have Darshana working with the organization to help us in doing community outreach to further our mission to create better transit options for our community.



Darshana Subramaniam helping staff the CRT table at the Juneteenth Festival in MLK Park

CRT Work Highlights:

January - March 2022

Tabled at the Juneteenth Festival – CRT staffed a table at the 2022 Juneteenth Festival that was held on June 18th and 19th. The festival was held at Martin Luther King Park. We distributed CRT literature, engaged people about the importance of improving transit services and extending Buffalo Metro, solicited signatures on our 2022 petition (<http://citizenstransit.org/node/194>).

Cornell Cooperative Extension / PPG High-Road Fellow. We welcomed our 2022 High Road Fellow and began work on deep outreach to East Side communities and updating the 2021 results with the latest 2020 census data.

CRT Spring Public Meeting – Held CRT’s 2022 Spring Public Meeting on 4/20/22. Topic was an update on the Amherst Metro Transit Extension – Seeking the Final Design. Speakers were Jeff Amplement (NFTA Project Manager), James Gordon (CRT Treasurer), and Kelly Hayes McAlonie (Director, UB Campus Planning).

Attended Workshops and Public Meetings. These included Central Region and CLCPA Draft Scoping Plan Public Hearings and the USDOT ITS4US webinar.

Ongoing Activities and Meetings. Continued to attend meetings of local public organizations, including the NFTA and GBNRTC, NYPTA-led NYS Rider’s Coalition, and Buffalo Place. Also served on the Erie County Climate Change Committee representing transit issues and NFTA’s Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC). Most of these meetings have been via Zoom.

Served on the e-TOD Corridor Collective workshop series. This workshop series is evaluating equitable transit oriented development (e-TOD) opportunities at Buffalo Metro stations. Jim Gordon was our representative.

Central Region Project Comments. Submitted comments on the GBNRTC-led Central Region Project that is evaluating opportunities for reworking the Scajaquada Expressway. Our comments highlighted the opportunity for replacing the scajaquada with a hop-on, hop-off rubber-wheeled trolley that would connect Buffalo Metro at Humboldt and/or Amherst stations with the many high interest destinations in the area (e.g., the Buffalo Zoo, Darwin Martin House, History and art museums, Buffalo State College, Elmwood Village, supermarkets).
(<http://citizenstransit.org/sites/default/files/CRT%20Region%20Central%20Comments%20-%20FINAL.pdf>)

Submitted Comments on the CLCPA Draft Scoping Plan. The Draft Scoping Plan was developed by the NYS Climate Action Council (CAC) and lays out ambitious plans for reducing greenhouse gases by 40% by 2030 and 85% by 2050. We pointed out that the best (and only) way to meet these goals is to reduce vehicle miles travelled. This means extending Buffalo Metro, which is the only transit mode with the needed capacity and attractiveness. (ADD LINK WHEN POSTED)

Historic Train Ride. CRT board members took ride on the South Dayton Flyer historic train between Gowanda and Dayton, NY on June 4th.

Keep CRT On Track

To join as a new member, renew your membership, or make a donation please click here. Thanks.

Are you a member of an organization or company? Consider an organizational or corporate membership. Your organization's logo will be displayed on our website.

Calendar

Elmwood Festival: CRT will be tabling at the upcoming Elmwood Festival on August 27th and 28th. Let us know if you are willing to help us staff the CRT table. At least stop by and see what we're doing.

CRT Fall Public Meeting. Tentative date: Wednesday, October 19th. 5:30 – 7:00. (TBD location or via Zoom)