



Citizens *for* Regional Transit

CRT News

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Citizens for Regional Transit Next Public Meeting

TBD Location

9 October 2024

6:00 – 8:00pm

You can also join us remotely:



Topic:

The Amherst Extension

Speakers:

TBD

Summary:

The Metro Transit Extension is moving onto final design. We are excited about this. Assuming the preferred alternative remains light rail, this will be the first significant Buffalo Metro Rail expansion since the current system opened. If bus rapid transit (BRT) is selected the project will fail.

This meeting will focus on the latest design for the Buffalo Metro Transit Extension Project and discuss key issues for making it work for everyone.

President's Column

CRT Is Suing NYS Department of Transportation for Their Failure to Follow NYS Environmental Laws on the Kensington Expressway Project

By Douglas Funke, CRT President

The Climate Threat is Existential. We now appreciate the threat and reality of climate change. The numbers and impacts are alarming: global temperature rising, the oceans getting warmer and acidifying, ice sheets shrinking, glaciers retreating, sea levels rising, and extreme weather events increasing in frequency and ferocity; with potentially catastrophic economic impacts. And the causes are known. It's human generated "greenhouse gases" being released to the atmosphere. (References 1-4.)

GLOBAL LAND-OCEAN TEMPERATURE INDEX

Date source: NASA's Goddard Institute for Space Studies (GISS). Credit: NASA/GISS

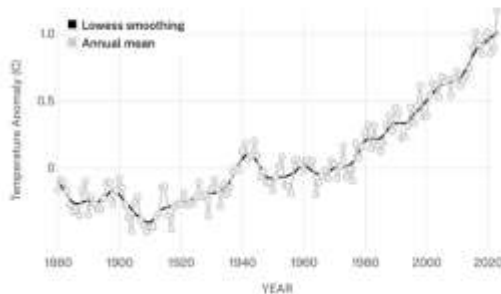


Figure 1. The last 10 years have seen the highest global temperatures in history (<https://climate.nasa.gov/vital-signs/global-temperature/?intent=121>). CO₂ levels are rising exponentially due to human activity (<https://science.nasa.gov/climate-change/evidence/>).

Mitigating Actions Have Been Promised. Our political and government leaders have passed legislation and established government guidelines to address the climate issue. (References 5-8.) The voters of NY even passed an Amendment to the NYS Constitution (by a 2 to one margin) that says: "each person shall have a right to clean air and water, and a healthful environment." But Governors change and agencies like NYS Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) don't respect and don't follow the new laws and guidelines. A prime example is the NYSDOT Kensington Expressway Project. Its Design Document / Environmental Assessment (DD/EA) says that the plan is "consistent with" the Climate Leadership and Community Protection (CLCPA) law because CO₂ is reduced by 0.04% by 2047. But the CLCPA requires 40% reduction by 2030 and 85% by 2050. The NYSDOT DD/EA Report also admits that particulate pollution near the portals goes up by 6%.

CRT Is Suing the NY State Department of Transportation. CRT has joined the Coalition for Economic Justice (CEJ) and WNY Youth Climate Council (WNYCC) in suing NYSDOT for violating the CLCPA and the NYS Constitution. Their Kensington Expressway Plan failed to conduct a comprehensive environmental analysis and will lock us into decades of car dependence. Their plan also perpetuates the pollution delivered every day to the disadvantaged community along the expressway. Sadly, the \$1B proposed to be spent on the Kensington would be enough money to extend Buffalo Metro Rail through the East Side to the airport and a Park & Ride near Transit Road – that’s all track, cars, stations, and signaling along the 10+ mile route vs. ¾ mile of expressway. This project also violates the public trust. The fact that the project violates all the Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration Project Emphasis Areas (PEAs. Reference 8) and they hid this fact by not including the project in the regional Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) (Reference 9) where the PEAs are addressed.

References.

1. *Fifth National Climate Assessment*. Crimmins, U.S. Global Change Research Program, Washington, DC, USA. 2023. <https://doi.org/10.7930/NCA5.2023.CH1>
2. *UN Climate Press Release*. New Analysis of National Climate Plans: Insufficient Progress Made, COP28 Must Set State for Immediate Action. 14 November 2023 (<https://unfccc.int/news/new-analysis-of-national-climate-plans-insufficient-progress-made-cop28-must-set-stage-for-immediate>)
3. *World Meteorological Organization*. The Global Climate 2011 – 2020. A decade of accelerating climate change. WMO-No. 1338. 2023. (<https://library.wmo.int/records/item/68585-the-global-climate-2011-2020>).
4. *Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)*. WMO and UN Environment Program. IPCC Sixth Assessment Report. (<https://www.ipcc.ch/assessment-report/ar6/>)
5. *NYS Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA)*. (<https://climate.ny.gov/Resources/Scoping-Plan>)
6. *NYS Climate Action Council*. *Scoping Plan, Full Report*, December 2022. (file:///Users/douglasfunke/Downloads/NYS-Climate-Action-Council-Final-Scoping-Plan-2022%20(8).pdf).
7. *USDOT Equity Action Plan*. September 2023. (<https://www.transportation.gov/priorities/equity/equity-action-plan>).
8. *FHWA and FTA Program Emphasis Areas (PEAs)*. <https://www.transit.dot.gov/sites/fta.dot.gov/files/2022-01/Planning-Emphasis-Areas-12-30-2021.pdf>
9. *The GBNRTC 2024 - 2026 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)*. <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/56ccbbfd3c44d8670dbd1d84/t/65dcf57d77c7566e091b994e/1708979583879/GBNRTC+UPWP+24-26+Final.pdf>

Transit News

Bus Location Tracking. GPS tracking on some NFTA buses is now working! NFTA buses provide location information to Google Transit (and we assume also to other platforms). This is a great feature. Check it out. You can see where the bus is in real time, but be aware that the actual location of the bus is about a minute behind its actual location, so the bus will arrive 1 minute earlier than shown.

Single Tracking Schedules. Metro Rail trains are now single tracking for system maintenance, which affects train schedules. Note the posted times are frequently wrong. Metro Rail times on the NFTA website and on the posted schedules at stations do not agree, and do not correspond with actual schedules. This makes making connections frustrating. Just remember trains are running every 20 minutes. We wish the NFTA would be more accurate, especially on the website. You can call the NFTA Customer Care line to report problems (716-855-7211).

Metro Rail Service Will Be Reduced for Maintenance in July. The surface portion of Metro Rail will be closed for maintenance for several days during July. Watch for NFTA announcements for details. Shuttle service will be provided.

Pedestrian Safety

Every transit trip starts as a pedestrian trip, and every bus trip requires crossing a street or road either before or after the trip. When that street or road is a busy arterial like Niagara Falls Boulevard (NFB) there is potential danger, especially if intersection infrastructure does not include pedestrian safety features. This was the case on NFB where several pedestrian deaths occurred, many when pedestrians were crossing to catch the #34 bus. CRT wrote to the Greater Buffalo Niagara Regional Transportation Council (GBNRTC) and Towns of Amherst and Tonawanda to recommend improvements.

This led to the formation of a multi-agency pedestrian safety committee led by Erie County and the Towns of Amherst and Tonawanda that met to discuss and recommend actions. CRT president, Doug Funke, served on the committee. The committee met periodically for over a year and generated recommendations for region-wide pedestrian safety improvements. NFB was selected for early implementation. These include:

- Lowered speed limits.
- Reduction of lanes and refuge islands to reduce crossing distance where feasible.
- Improved pedestrian crosswalk markings.
- Pedestrian crossing signals with “No Turn on Red” signs.

We commend the New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) and Towns of Amherst and Tonawanda for making these improvements.

Pedestrian crossing signals are now working at NFB and Willowridge Drive. They work well except for a few problems summarized in the figure below. In addition to these operational problems, we are calling for a delay in the green signal for cars turning right off Willowridge Drive when pedestrians are crossing. The way it is now, cars turning right onto NFB are looking left to see if anyone is running the light at the same time pedestrians are told it's OK to cross. This is unsafe.



Figure 2. Pedestrian crossing signals are working along Niagara Falls Blvd. but need some improvements.

We are working on a memorandum detailing these issues that will be send to relevant government leaders and posting on our website and social media. Keep an eye out for it. We are also calling for a thorough survey of all pedestrian crossing signals along NFB to make sure all are working correctly and whether any further improvements are needed. We thank NYSDOT and the Towns of Amherst and Tonawanda for their continued focus on pedestrian safety.

Get your yard Extend Metro sign!

Donate and get a free yard sign!

<http://www.citizenstransit.org/YES.Extend>

If you're near the Amherst corridor, we'll drop your sign(s) off. We can supply any quantity.

CRT Work Highlights

April - June 2024



Tabled at Juneteenth

Community Outreach and Education.

- Held Spring CRT Public Meeting. This was held on May 15th. UB architecture students presented their concept for revitalizing the Beltline with stations and community integration. Meeting was held at St. Philips Episcopal Church across from ECMC. Event was covered by several TV and radio stations.
- Tabled at Buffalo's Juneteenth Festival (June 15th - 16th).
- Attended PPG's Uniting on the High Road Conference at Burchfield Penny Center (June 20th – 22nd). Jim and Doug attended.
- Supported UB's Small Built Works Program that is designing potential Buffalo Metro stations along Buffalo's "Belt Line" and Buffalo Metro extensions to the airport.
- Attended Olmsted Network event on June 10th.

Continued Working with the East Side Parkways Coalition to advocate for restoration of Humboldt Parkway and to oppose NYSDOT's plans to partially tunnel the 6-lane expressway.

- Attended GBNRTC Policy Committee meeting where the FHWA and FTA were in attendance as part of the 2024 GBNRTC recertification evaluation. During public comments, we gave GBNRTC high marks generally but noted its utter failure on the Kensington Expressway Project by GBNRTC member NYSDOT.

- Writing comments to FHWA and FTA documenting GBNRTC's failure on the Kensington Project noting GBNRTC member NYSDOT's leading role. (Due July 10th.)
- Joined lawsuit with CEJ and others. (See article above.)
- Attended lawsuit press event.

Supported Buffalo Metro Amherst extension.

- Continued distributing "YES, EXTEND METRO" yard signs.
- If you would like a yard sign, contact us at our email: crtc@citizenstransit.org. We are requesting a \$10 donation so we can purchase more signs.

Regional Rail Promotion

- Met with WNY Rail Advocacy Group to promote implementation of high-speed rail (HSR) and regional rail improvements in WNY soon.
- Tom, Pat, and Jim attended a Regional Rail Summit Meeting in Erie, PA on June 13th to explore regional rail service improvement needs and opportunities. In addition to CRT, this was attended by representatives from GBNRTC AMTRAK, WNY, and Ohio.

Communication

- Sent letter to GBNRTC with comments on the BRT TIP in support with additional recommendations including consideration of Tactical Transit Lanes (TTL).

Ongoing Activities and Meetings. Continued to attend meetings of local public organizations, including the NFTA, GBNRTC and Buffalo Place. Also served on the Erie County Climate Change Task Force (ECCTF) representing transit issues and on NFTA's Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC).

Keep CRT On Track

To join as a new member, renew your membership, or make a donation please click on: <http://citizenstransit.org/join>. Thanks.

Can You Help Us?

We are looking for volunteers to help us be more effective. Can you help us plan and staff tabling events? Can you help us update and prepare outreach material? Can you help us with data entry tasks (e.g., maintaining our email lists)? Can you help us write grant applications? Please contact us at CRTC@citizenstrnsit.org if you want to help.

Calendar

Upcoming tabling events:

- National Night Out, Northland Beltline Taxpayers Association, Mt. Olive Baptist Church 701 E. Delevan. 6 August 2024, 6-4pm.
- UUCA 3rd Annual Living Green Festival. Unitarian Universalist Church of Amherst, 6320 Main Street, Williamsville, NY. 28 September 2004. 10am – 6pm.

9 October 2024. CRT Public Meeting on Amherst Transit (TBD venue).