



CRT News

Citizens for Regional Transit Next Public Meeting:

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**Tuesday, April 18, 2017, 5:30-7:00 pm
(Doors open at 5:00)
United Way, 742 Delaware Ave., Buffalo**

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Plans for Metro Rail Extension to Amherst

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**Featuring Speakers from:
NFTA
Town of Tonawanda
Town of Amherst (invited)**

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Free and open to the public

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CRT President Doug Funke at Annual Meeting, January 2017



Every Transit Rider Starts as a Pedestrian

Doug Funke, CRT President

Every transit rider begins and ends as a pedestrian. For this reason, CRT has long advocated for better and safer pedestrian facilities as well as improved transit service. The recent rash of deaths to pedestrians crossing Niagara Falls Boulevard (NFB) is deeply concerning and makes a strong statement about the need to improve the ability to cross our area arterials safely. The Greater Buffalo Niagara Regional Transportation Council (GBNRTC) is initiating a pedestrian safety improvement program that will improve pedestrian crossings on state roads in the region. We applaud this effort. It can't start soon enough!

Most of the pedestrian deaths on NFB have happened when pedestrians were crossing to catch the #34, the NFB bus. It is not hard to understand why. The #34 runs every 30 and 45 minutes on weekdays and once an hour on weekends. If you see the bus coming and still have to cross NFB, there is a strong incentive to make a dash for it.

The recent installation of pedestrian crossing signals along NFB is a good first step but further improvements are still badly needed as evidenced by the continued fatalities. CRT evaluation of the pedestrian crossing signal at NFB and Willowridge has identified several deficiencies that need to be corrected as soon as possible:

- * The pedestrian crossing signal does not allow pedestrians to control the light phase. It just initiates the pedestrian crossing display and countdown timer when the light later changes according to the pre-defined schedule. This can be up to a two-minute wait.
- * The crossing signal is only initiated if the "I want to cross" button is pressed BEFORE the traffic light turns green. If pressed AFTER the light turns green, the countdown timer and pedestrian safety information is not displayed until the following cycle. No safety information is displayed during the current cycle and the cycle is not lengthened like when the crossing display is active.
- * The pedestrian crossing signal does not allow pedestrians who need some extra time to request a longer cycle (e.g., disabled).

The following roadway improvements to NFB should also be considered:

- * The speed limit on NFB should be lowered to 40 mph (from the current 45 mph).
- * Implement more visible crosswalk markings.
- * Install more signalized pedestrian crossings, especially near bus stops.
- * Install a median for pedestrians to wait safely half way across.

While these recommended improvements are based on analysis of NFB, they are applicable to all heavily trafficked arterials in the Buffalo-Niagara region.

Understandably, traffic control along NFB, and other area arterials, is designed to maximize traffic flow. This benefits both cars and buses. This is good policy and should be continued. However, the current design does not optimize the safety of pedestrians, when present. It's one thing for cars to wait an extra few minutes to enter NFB and quite another for pedestrians trying to catch an approaching bus. Today the system ALWAYS gives priority to cars over pedestrians. A better balance between these competing goals is desperately needed.



CRT at Work for Western New York

Our **Annual Meeting** was held in January. President Doug Funke presented CRT’s 2016 Annual Report, 2017 Budget, and vision for 2017. His presentation can be found on our website, www.citizenstransit.org.

We continued to work on our vision for a **new Amtrak station** that would also serve as a multimodal transportation hub in the urban core. Our President, Doug Funke, serves on a committee appointed by Mayor Byron Brown to determine a site for the new station. CRT Board members attended public meetings of the committee. The final choice of site for the train station is to be announced and sent to Governor Cuomo within six months from the initial announcement in October. More information about the siting committee’s work can be found at <https://www.ci.buffalo.ny.us/>



CRT Board members attended **Transit Awareness Day** in Albany on January 31, an annual event sponsored by the New York Public Transit Association (NYPTA). They held meetings at the offices of eight WNY legislators and dropped off printed material at the offices of four others. NYPTA held a mid-day rally with inspiring speakers.

Doug Funke presented his “Road Show” about transit at meetings of Amberleigh Learning Academy and Engineering Society of Buffalo. Doug is available to give this presentation to groups and organizations on request.

We **submitted comments** about local transportation projects. We wrote to the Greater Buffalo Niagara Regional Transportation Council (GBNRTC) regarding safety at pedestrian crosswalks. We also wrote to the GBNRTC in support of funding for Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority (NFTA) Metro Rail car maintenance and the Go Buffalo Mom project, providing transportation assistance for low-income pregnant woman. We wrote to the NFTA regarding the redesign of the airport, including the need for Park-and-Ride facilities and accommodation for future light rail. In addition, we sent public comments to the NFTA in support of renewal of funding for non-urban portions of current bus service. We spoke and submitted written comments to the Buffalo Common Council’s Community Development Committee, endorsing the formation of a Transportation Working Group for the City of Buffalo.



We **attended meetings of transportation agencies and community organizations**, including the Buffalo Common Council, Buffalo Place, Buffalo Transit Riders’ Union, GBNRTC, NFTA, Niagara River Greenway Commission, United Way of Buffalo and Erie County, and WNY Environmental Alliance (Climate Change Working Group and Transportation Working Group).



Transit Politics and Funding

In New York State:

The proposed budget is heading for a vote. Transit advocates held a press conference on March 22 in Albany calling on lawmakers to increase funding for transit. Their message emphasized that public transportation is a critical factor in the continuing health of NY State's economy. Attention is needed, they said, outside of the NYC area, in both urban and rural places. The complete press release can be found at <https://nytransit.org/press-room/press-releases>.

Included in the budget negotiations was the provision to allow ride sharing programs such as Uber and Lyft in the rest of the state, beyond the NYC area. A statewide entity to regulate these services has been proposed. Also under discussion is a portion of the proposed 4% tax on each ride, either 1% or 2%, to be dedicated to local transit systems ([Buffalo News, March 31, 2017](#)).

At the Federal level:

Transit advocates are working tirelessly to prevent the massive deductions in transit funding proposed by President Trump. Leaders in this effort include Transportation for America ([T4A](#)), the American Public Transportation Association ([APTA](#)), and the National Alliance of Public Transportation Advocates ([NAPTA](#)). Current information can be found daily at their websites and at [Streetsblog.org](#). CRT is participating in a national effort to collect quotable statements from Senators and Congressmen, to be posted at www.savetransit.us

Citizens for Regional Transit (CRT) seeks to educate the region about the benefits of a comprehensive transportation system including an expanded Metro Rail.

www.citizenstransit.org
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Please support our efforts with your dues and donations. Send your payment by [PayPal](#), or mail to Citizens for Regional Transit, 617 Main St., Suite #201, Buffalo, NY 14203.

Suggested donation levels:

Corporate: \$250.+ (name/logo will be on our website)

Group/organization: \$50.

Household: \$35.

Individual: \$25.

Student, senior, unemployed, etc.: \$5.

CRT is a registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization and all contributions are tax deductible.