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CRT News

A Quarterly Publication of Citizens for Regional Transit
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Citizens for Regional Transit Next Public Meeting

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CRT Quarterly Meeting for April Canceled:

Due to the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) and our interest of promoting public safety, we have decided to cancel our Quarterly Meeting for April.

Next meeting in October, topic and location TBA.

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CRT in the audience at meetings all over Western New York.

NFTA CRAM Program Offers Good Value But Not All Colleges Take Advantage

By CRT President Doug Funke

The NFTA “College Riders Accessing Metro” ([CRAM](#)) transit passes at *\$50 per semester* offer great value to college students. These passes allow students at participating colleges unlimited use of NFTA buses and light rail. When compared to the normal cost of NFTA monthly passes, \$75 per month (*\$300 for a 4-month semester*), \$50 is hard to beat. The problem is that less than half of area colleges participate. Participating colleges are Bryant & Stratton, Buffalo State, Canisius, Erie Community College (ECC), and the UB Medical School. Students attending UB (other than medical students), Daemen, D’Youville, Villa Maria, Medaille, Trocaire, Hilbert, and Niagara University (all served by NFTA transit) have to purchase transit passes at retail prices or find other transportation means (e.g., drive, bike, walk, ride share services).

And it can be worse than just paying monthly retail prices for transit passes, because when transit-reliant students at non-participating colleges are unable to afford the cost of a monthly pass, up-front, they sometimes buy \$5 day passes instead. According to a [recent WFBO article](#), this frequently happens to Villa Maria students Erick Vazques and Jay Reeves.

So why aren’t more area colleges using the CRAM pass program? The reason we’ve heard is that colleges are required to buy a CRAM pass for every student, regardless of whether or not they use it. This can seem like a wasted expense if few students use transit. However, the program encourages use of low-polluting transit at a very affordable cost and the colleges are able to pass these costs on to students, like most do. For example, ECC students are charged a \$75 per semester transportation fee that covers the NFTA CRAM pass and the ECC shuttle service, and Buffalo State charges \$3 per credit hour.

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congestion-causing cars at home.

UB may be excused for not making CRAM passes available to its students since they are providing the Stampede bus service between and around the Amherst and Main Street campuses, at significant expense. This satisfies the transit need for most UB students and the UB medical students who need to get to the downtown campus are participating in the CRAM program. UB students currently pay about \$200 per year for transportation, which includes the Stampede and other campus shuttles. We assume that UB will adopt the CRAM program for all students when the light rail is extended to the Amherst and becomes the main, and most convenient, transportation service between the campuses.

We encourage all area colleges not already using the NFTA CRAM pass, to get with the program! This is a small cost, compared to tuition, and can be passed along to students as a transportation fee. It can be a game changer for those can't afford to drive, and it encourages all students to use transit rather than drive, pollute, congest roads, and demand parking. Given the need to reduce climate-damaging pollution, encouragement to use transit should be a value that all colleges want to promote.

Provide your students – your customers – with affordable mobility while at the same time making a statement about reducing pollution from transportation, the largest greenhouse gas-producing sector.

CRT at Work for Western NY: January - March 2020

We held our quarterly public meeting and annual business meeting. Kelly Dixon of the GBNRTC gave an [update on One Region Forward](#) and CRT President Doug Funke presented his [annual report](#). Elections were held. Maddie McCauley has resigned from the Executive Board and former Board member Rebecca Reilly has re-joined. [Rebecca](#) will be assisting with the Secretary's duties, primarily issuing minutes of monthly Board meetings and editing the quarterly newsletter.



Elizabeth Giles speaks with Howard Zemsky

We worked on policy issues.

We presented our plank at the public rollout of the [2020 Community Agenda](#) of the Partnership for the Public Good. . Doug Funke and Betsy Giles took the train to Albany for Transit Awareness Day, where they met with and/or left informational packages for all Western New York representatives and the chairs of the Senate and Assembly Transportation Committees.

We wrote letters.

We wrote to Governor Cuomo about funding transit to fight climate change. We sent comments to the GBNRTC in support of new funding for (1) escalator work, improvements to garages, and the new Customer Service Center and (2) preparing for the new DL&W Metro Rail Station upgrades at existing stations, and the new fare collection system. We sent [extensive comments](#) to the NFTA about the proposed light rail extension to Amherst, an effort spearheaded by Board Member Jim Gordon. CRT President Doug Funke wrote to the NFTA to thank them for their actions during the COVID19 pandemic, including free fares, rear boarding, maintain full service, and regular cleaning/sanitizing.

We were at transit-related community events.

We attended an update on plans for the Skyway. Doug gave a presentation at the Unitarian Universalist Church about transit and climate change. We attended a community meeting about the NFTA's Amherst Extension project (see link above for our response). We attendee a City of Buffalo transportation planning conference sponsored by the Congress for New Urbanism. We attended a public meeting about development of the Outer Harbor. We attended a meeting in Rochester about transportation and climate change sponsored by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation.

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Elizabeth Giles delivers the CRT policy plank at the Partnership for the Public Good

We attended meetings of transportation and community organizations, including Buffalo Place, Buffalo Transit Riders United, Erie County Community Climate Change Task Force, GBNRTC, NFTA (Board of Commissioners and Citizens Advisory Committee), and the Niagara River Greenway Commission.

Transit on the Ballot: March Primary Review

In California, Michigan and Ohio, transit initiatives have been put on the ballot to increase transit access and improve roadways.

California:

- A sales tax increase is on the ballot in Contra Costa, Marin and Sonoma counties.
- An exemption on transit stops being subject to slow growth building ordinances is being considered in Redlands.

Michigan:

- Millage funds are being reviewed in: Lansing, Clare City, Saginaw and Kalamazoo.

Ohio:

- A renewal of levies for transit is being considered in Lucas County (Toledo).
- Tax designation for transit (which source it will be funded from) is being considered in Hamilton County.

Remembering Mark Croce & Daryl E. "Rasuli" Floyd

Mark Croce's tragic passing is very sad news. In addition to speaking at our CRT conference he spoke out passionately against the need for more downtown parking at Buffalo Place Board meetings. He was a big supporter of the work of the Citizens for Regional Transit and signed the petition for an expansion of light rail. Doug Funke remembers, "When I asked him to sign, he just said give me a pen and signed immediately. He then thanked us for our work in improving transit in Buffalo." He had an impact on discussions about the location of a new or revamped convention center - which, like the stadium issue, is relevant enough to transit access for us to pay attention to. It is rumored that the development of the Statler Towers was intended to integrate with the expansion of our existing convention center. Mark bought Statler City, mostly out of loyalty to the city he loved, to save it from a future where it almost

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He was a developer who was willing to take on money-losing projects out of principle.

He served on a CRT panel discussion skipping a Jewish holiday to attend. Croce will be leaving Ciminelli as the only major developer who believed developments could be successful without parking.

Daryl E. “Rasuli” Floyd: worked three decades as one of the main voices of the NFTA. He died on January 24, 2020 of complications from Parkinson. A well-travelled man, he became manager of policy development and acting director of public relations for the NFTA in 1984. Promoted to manager of public relations in 1987 and retired in 2008. He served on several local civic and cultural boards and institutions. He was a longtime teacher and practitioner of Tai-Chi and organizer of Kwanzaa celebrations and was part of the original group that were among the very first promoters of Kwanzaa, nationally.

“When I came in '88 (to the NFTA) he took me under his wing” said James Morrell the Deputy Director of Public Transit for the NFTA. “He was a great communicator. What he did was he brought individuals together, especially within our community, but not only within our community” Morrell added

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