



CRT News

Citizens for Regional Transit Next Public Meeting:

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**Wednesday, January 18, 2017, 5:30-6:30 pm
(Doors open at 5:00)
United Way, 742 Delaware Ave., Buffalo**

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From Gondolas to Trains: Moving Forward Strongly into 2017

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**President's Annual Report
Election of Officers and Executive Board
Budget Approval**

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Free and open to the public

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Exchange Street Amtrak Station



Buffalo-Niagara Needs a New Multimodal Transportation Center

Doug Funke, CRT President

In 2016 CRT joined with the Partnership for the Public Good in calling for the replacement of Buffalo's Exchange Street Station. The dire need for replacing the aging structure was made obvious in September 2016 when the ceiling of the aging building collapsed making the building unusable. In response to the need, Governor Cuomo has pledged \$25 million of State funds for a new Buffalo train station, and Rep. Brian Higgins and Senator Charles Schumer promised to seek additional federal funds to support the project. Buffalo Mayor Byron Brown accepted the Governor's challenge to select a preferred site for a new station within 6 months and formed a committee to conduct a study of alternative sites. CRT has been selected as a member of the committee and will participate in evaluating alternative site locations.

We are open to all alternative locations and look forward to working with the committee to evaluate the possible choices. CRT has been a proponent of Central Terminal as the eventual site of Buffalo's main train station, replacing the Depew Station, and believe that Central Terminal should be one alternative site considered. As an input to the committee's work, CRT has identified several requirements to be considered in evaluating alternative locations. We believe Buffalo's new train station:

Must provide intermodal connections. This includes connections to transit, intercity bus, taxis, and air as well as safe and comfortable links to pedestrian and bicycle modes. Connection with Buffalo's light rail is a major plus, especially for providing future connection to the Buffalo-Niagara International Airport. **Must be able to accommodate future high-speed rail.** As an Amtrak station, any new station must be able to accommodate high-speed rail in the future. **Must have adequate parking.** The location must accommodate parking for Amtrak customers, some of whom will be making extended trips and leaving their cars. **Must be able to serve all Amtrak trains in and out of Buffalo.** This includes trains to and from the west (Cleveland, Chicago), east (Albany, New York City) and north (Niagara Falls, Toronto). This may lead to the need for two stations, since downtown locations, like the current Exchange Street Station, can only serve trains going to and from Niagara Falls and Toronto. If two stations are deemed necessary, one should be the main station providing a proud gateway to Buffalo and New York, while the second station can be a smaller, inexpensive "shelter station" (Amtrak Category 4) or "stop". **Should facilitate regional tourism.** The location should be able to serve tourists traveling between Buffalo and Niagara Falls and thus support Buffalo-Niagara as a regional tourist destination. Buffalo's waterfront, museums, architecture, and cultural attractions, together with Niagara Falls, already a world-renowned tourist attraction, can make our region a must-visit tourist destination. **Should serve sports and special events.** The location should be able to support those coming to Buffalo to attend sports and cultural events such as Bills and Sabres games, and large concerts. **Should provide a proud gateway to the City of Buffalo and New York State.** Any new station for the City of Buffalo should also make a positive statement about our city, region, and state. Our new station should say, "welcome to Buffalo-Niagara" in a way that reflects our proud heritage and our successful present and future. It should also proudly say, "welcome to New York State."

There are environmental, social, and economic benefits of intercity trains that are connected with a complete network of transportation alternatives for the region. **Environmentally**, trains with options for connecting with alternative transportation modes can lead to cleaner air and thus a healthier environment. **Socially**, options for accessing intercity rail are fair to a larger swath of the population when less expensive and more widely available alternatives (bus, rail, and bicycle) are served. **Economically**, this public transportation investment will stimulate private investment and employment opportunities in the region. The extent of this benefit may depend in part on the location(s) chosen for the station.



CRT at Work for Western New York

We continued to work with the Partnership for the Public Good (PPG) on our vision for a **downtown Amtrak station** that would also serve as a multimodal transportation hub in the urban core. Our quarterly public meeting in October featured Mayor Paul Dyster (City of Niagara Falls), Bruce Becker (National Association of Rail Passengers), Tom DeSantis (City of Niagara Falls), and Dan Leonard (Buffalo Niagara Partnership). Selected presentations from the meeting are posted on our [web site](#).



Speakers: October CRT meeting



Audience: October CRT meeting

As a result of our yearlong efforts, CRT President Doug Funke has been appointed to Mayor Byron Brown's Train Station Study Committee. With increased excitement about possible locations for the train station, Board members toured the Central Terminal grounds and Grand Concourse.



CRT Board members touring Central Terminal

Our President, Doug Funke, **presented information about local transit issues** at the Riverside Salem United Church of Christ and the Unitarian Universalist Church of Amherst. He also spoke at the "World on Your Plate" annual food-related event at Daemen College, focusing on inequities in transportation and food access.

We sent letters. Board members **wrote to the Buffalo News** about improving public transportation as a response to traffic congestion in downtown Buffalo, about public transportation as an alternative to ride-sharing services (uber and lyft), and about the choice of location for the new train station. We **wrote to Governor Cuomo** urging him to support Assemblyman Ryan's bill restricting exemptions of the transit portion of the IDA Mortgage Recording Tax, at the request of the NFTA. The bill was passed and signed into law! We **submitted oral and written comments to the NFTA** regarding their budget for 2017-18.

We **attended meetings of transportation agencies and community organizations**, including Buffalo Place, Buffalo Transit Central (telephone video conference), Center for Transportation Excellence (online webinars), Coalition for Economic Justice, Greater Buffalo Niagara Regional Transportation Council, Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority, Niagara River Greenway Commission, Partnership for the Public Good, Transportation for America (online webinars), and WNY Environmental Alliance (Climate Change Working Group and Transportation Working Group).



Transit Politics and Funding Outlook

In Buffalo:

The Coalition for Economic Justice is organizing a new group, Buffalo Transit Riders Union (BTRU), to champion the needs of Metro Bus and Rail users and “to make the NFTA more accessible and accountable to all Buffalonians.” CEJ’s Kirk Laubenstein recently spoke about the new group on “The Public Good,” the radio show of the Partnership for the Public Good.

The web site and Facebook page for Buffalo Transit Central (BTC) are now up and running. BTC posts items of interest for both transit advocates like CRT and transit consumers like the BTRU. Check them out at www.buffalotransit.site/.

In New York State:

CRT Board members, along with transit groups from around the state, are gearing up for the annual trip to Albany to participate in Transit Awareness Day on January 31, sponsored by the New York Public Transit Association (NYPTA: www.nytransit.org). CRT representatives will meet with State Legislators from Western NY to discuss the needs of the Buffalo-Niagara region for more and better public transit options. NYPTA has also arranged a rally with speakers from transportation agencies, organizations, and businesses.

Around the Country:

According to Transportation for America (www.t4america.org), 2016 was a great election year for local and state transit funding measures. A large majority (71%) of these passed, generating \$150 billion in transportation spending. In some cases, voters approved revenue from sales tax increases, in others the source was property taxes or bonds.

At the Federal level:

President-elect Trump is expected to aggressively pursue improvements in infrastructure, as promised during his campaign. The new administration will define infrastructure more broadly than in the past, extending beyond traditional areas like roads/bridges/highways/transit to such areas as power/energy and broadband/information access.

Mr. Trump’s approach is heavily weighted toward private investments and public-private collaborations. According to Mr. Trump, his plan is “revenue neutral,” that is, it will save money. The Trump Transition Team appears to be open to working with Democrats on transportation, an area that has been seen in the past as non-partisan. An example is the idea of a national infrastructure bank, viewed positively by Democrats and recently considered by the Trump Team. Elaine Chao has been named as the incoming Secretary of Transportation, but her views on public transit are unknown at this time (from www.t4america.org/news-and-blog, www.citylab.com and www.thehill.com).



LOCAL HAPPENINGS: Racial Equity Report and a Remembrance

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A comprehensive report was recently issued by the Buffalo Racial Equity Roundtable. The report was compiled by an impressive group of local experts in diverse fields. It covers many topics, divided into sections on education and job readiness; criminal justice and safety; quality of life and neighborhoods; and income and wealth.

Racial inequities in access to transportation are highlighted in the following excerpts:

Places impact income by increasing burdens to job access. Lower cost housing is concentrated in primarily high poverty urban neighborhoods, and the dearth of commercial activity in these communities contributes to a geographic jobs/housing mismatch that disproportionately impacts people of color. The hub-and-spoke style of the region’s public transportation system is more conducive to first shift commuting from the suburbs to downtown than to reverse commutes to the disbursed service sector jobs often found in suburban communities and often taking place outside of traditional 9-to-5 hours. Coupled with lower auto-ownership rates in neighborhoods of color, job access and income suffer.

Fewer than a third of the region’s jobs are accessible by public transit. Workers of color are much more likely to be affected by this limited access.

	<u>% of region’s workers</u>		<u>% of region’s transit commuters</u>
People of color	16%	→	65%
Whites	84%	→	35%

The complete report can be found at <https://racialequitybuffalo.org>. A print copy can be requested via the website or by calling (716) 936-7474.

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David Tocke, a longtime active member of CRT, passed away in October. Gladys Gifford, past-President, offered these memories:

David Tocke was an active member of CRT in the 90’s. He was eager to volunteer, so we gave him the assignment to literally walk the designated corridors for the proposed light rail routes. He did so, several times, and brought us important information ... He was energetic about soliciting signatures for our petition drives; and very apologetic when he felt he had not done enough. A warm and generous man ...



Citizens for Regional Transit (CRT) seeks to educate the public, public officials, their authorities and agencies in the Buffalo–Niagara region about the benefits of a comprehensive transportation system including an expanded Metro Rail.

! www.citizenstransit.org
crtc@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.

Calendar

January 18 - CRT Quarterly Public Meeting – From Gondolas to Trains: Moving Forward Strongly into 2017 - 5:30 – 6:30 pm, United Way, 742 Delaware Ave.

January 31 – Transit Awareness Day in Albany.

April – CRT Quarterly Public Meeting – details TBA.

Citizens for Regional Transit
617 Main Street, Suite #201
Buffalo, NY 14203

return service requested