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# CRT News

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**Citizens for Regional Transit Next Public Meeting:**

**Wednesday, October 19, 2016, 5:30-7:00 pm  
(Doors open at 5:00)**

**United Way, 742 Delaware Ave., Buffalo**

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**Buffalo Needs a Downtown Multimodal Train Station**

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**Featuring:**

**Bruce Becker**

**National Association of Rail Passengers**

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**Free and open to the public**

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CRT President Doug Funke with Walter Simpson, Shaun Cleaver, and Chris Hawley, April 2016



## **Tourist Trolley Now Operational!** **Douglas Funke, CRT President**

A tourist trolley connecting Niagara Falls, NY with Old Fort Niagara began operations on May 26th, 2016. This is an important milestone! It is not just a study or modification to an existing service; it is a new service offered for the first time. It isn't often that we have been able to celebrate such a clear and important CRT success.

CRT, in partnership with the Western NY Environmental Alliance, has advocated for a tourist trolley connecting Niagara Falls and Old Fort Niagara for many years. In 2012 CRT sent comments to the Niagara Gorge Corridor Project team calling for public transportation between Niagara Falls and Old Ford Niagara and spoke at their numerous project public information meetings. We recommended it at our public transit conference held in October 2013, and it has been a major theme within our briefing materials ("Doug's Road Show") ever since. The idea has been featured in this newsletter and the subject of several published CRT letters to the editor. In 2014 we partnered with the WNY Environmental Alliance (WNYEA) to work on the issue. CRT together with WNYEA representatives met with Niagara Falls Mayor Dyster and his staff to present the concept in 2014. We also presented the idea to the Niagara River Greenway Commission (NRGC) and discussed the project with many Buffalo-Niagara leaders, including representatives of the WNY Region of the Empire State Development (ESD) Corporation and numerous elected officials.

The new "hop-on, hop-off" trolley is being funded by Niagara Heritage Area Commission as a two-year trial. The trolley is free during the trial period and stops at tourist points of interest along the route such as the aquarium, the Niagara Falls train station and Harriet Tubman Museum, Whirlpool State Park, the NY Power Project Authority (NYPA) Power Vista, Lewiston, Youngstown, and Old Fort Niagara. The service is similar to the WEGO transit service that has been operating on the Canadian side for several years.

The CRT-sponsored WNYEA plank specifically calls for the trolley to use green, non-polluting vehicles (e.g., hydro-powered electric vehicles). This initial 2-year pilot will use diesel buses. However, NYPA has indicated that they would like to see electric buses providing the service following the trial period to highlight the importance of clean NYPA hydropower.

CRT will continue working on this project through our participation in the new NRGC Transportation Committee. The NRGC is the only organization whose jurisdiction covers all stakeholders along the Niagara River Corridor and is uniquely positioned to assess how the service is working. The committee will provide outreach to stakeholders and recommend improvements that are identified, such as the use of green vehicles.

We are proud to have been successful in helping make this happen. We want to recognize our partner WNYEA who helped throughout the effort. We also want to recognize Mayor Dyster, who shared our vision for connecting the attractions along the river and provided strong leadership for the project with support from NYPA, the Niagara Heritage Area Commission, NRGC, and ESD.

## CRT at Work for Western New York Lynn Magdol, Newsletter Editor

The **CRT Quarterly Meeting** was held on April 20. Three very inspiring presentations on “Model Transit Cities” featured discussions of transit systems in Portland OR (Walter Simpson), Toronto ([Shaun Cleaver](#)), and Bogota ([Chris Hawley](#)).

We **presented information about local transit issues** to our WNY representatives in the State Legislature, the Board of Block Clubs, and the University District Block Club. We staffed information tables at the Central Terminaler bike race at the Central Terminal and the WNY Earth Day Expo at the Buffalo Zoo. We supplied CRT brochures for the downtown Buffalo LIVING Tour.



Central Terminal, June 4

We **submitted comments** to the Greater Buffalo Niagara Regional Transportation Council (GBNRTC) Federal recertification process and Transportation Improvement Program, the Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority (NFTA) proposed new service plan, and the Buffalo Green Code. We commented on the proposed changes to the Kensington Expressway in a letter to the editor, published in the Buffalo News.

We continued to work with the Partnership for the Public Good (PPG), meeting with Common Council members, the GBNRTC, and the Empire State Development Corporation to explain our vision for a **downtown Amtrak station** that would also serve as a multimodal transportation hub in the urban core. This will be the topic of our next public meeting in October.

We **attended meetings of transportation agencies and community organizations**, including NFTA, GBNRTC, Buffalo Place, WNY Environmental Alliance, PPG, VOICE-Buffalo, and Niagara River Greenway Commission.



Buffalo Zoo, June 25



## State Public Transit Funding Update Gladys Gifford, Legislative Chair

### New York State Budget — here's what we asked for, here's what we got:

\* Our focus at CRT was generally to increase funding for public transit. The promise of the enacted budget is that all parts of the State Transit Operating Assistance (STOA) did receive increased funding. However, the mechanisms for providing those funds were not changed. The Brennan/DiFrancisco bill which we supported would have changed the structure so that revenue streams for STOA would grow. This bill was not included in the budget process.

\* Similarly, appropriations for capital projects were increased. A long-awaited 5-year capital plan for the NYSDOT was approved, to the tune of \$27 billion. This plan covers all transportation modes outside of the MTA. A nearly equal amount was approved for the MTA, covering the next five years. Transit systems and jurisdictions must apply for these funds. Net result for transit systems will be to free up revenues to help cover operating costs.

\* Governor Cuomo and the Legislature will negotiate a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) which will define how and from what sources the funds will come. CRT will seek public access to that MOU.

\* The CRT and allies are concerned about rural transit systems that were impacted by the state Department of Health (DOH) rulings about transportation service for Medicaid clients. The enacted budget added \$4 million to the DOH budget to alleviate this problem.

### Legislative Contacts—

\* Outlook is good for the O'Mara/Brindisi bill (S5794/A8202) to pass the legislature during this session. This bill, "to improve Interagency Coordinating Committee on Rural Public Transportation", will help rural transit systems cope with Federal regulations regarding Medicare transportation funding. CRT and allies asked legislators to support this bill during our visit to Albany in February.

\* There is bi-partisan support for a new bill, Rozic/Lanza (S7608/A9872), to require the NYSDOT Commissioner to "develop and present to the governor and legislature a five-year capital plan, with defined projects, that is subject to public review prior to the passage of the state budget." In early June, the CRT and allies urged NYS legislators to support this bill, so that there is a clear understanding of the NYSDOT's funding needs prior to debate on the budget.



## Keeping Cars Off the Road: New Local Efforts



Discover Niagara Shuttle (source: NFNHA)



New bus shelter on Niagara Street - more to come! (source: NFTA)



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](http://www.citizenstransit.org)  
[crtc@citizenstransit.org](mailto: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*

May to October – Free tourist shuttle with multiple stops between Niagara Falls and Lewiston. For more information, see <http://www.discoverniagara.org> .

October 19 - CRT Quarterly Public Meeting, Buffalo Needs a Downtown Multimodal Train Station, 5:30 – 7:00 pm, United Way, 742 Delaware Ave.

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Citizens for Regional Transit  
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Buffalo, NY 14203

return service requested