



CRT News

A Quarterly Publication of Citizens for Regional Transit

Citizens for Regional Transit Next Public Meeting
East Side Development and Transit Access

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Thursday, October 17, 2019
5:30 - 7:00 p.m. (doors open at 5:00)

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Merriweather Library, 1324 Jefferson Avenue, Buffalo (at East Utica Street)
Take #18 or #12 bus: roughly 3/4 mile by foot from Utica Rail Station

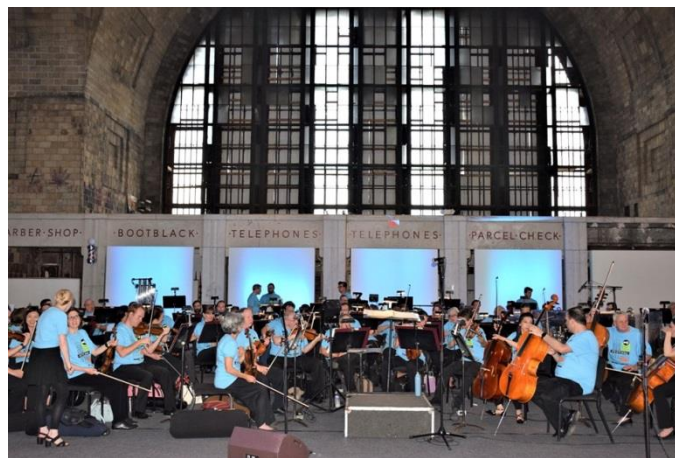
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CRT President Doug Funke will present a proposal for a light rail line through the East Side to the Buffalo Niagara International Airport, with responses from local experts on economic development, planning, and government. An extensive question-and-answer period will follow the presentation and panel discussion.

Paul Tronolone, VP of Policy & Planning, Empire State Development
David Franczyk, Buffalo Common Council (invited)
Tim Kennedy, NY State Assembly (to be invited)

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FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC



The BPO at the East Side Festival, Central Terminal, July 13



The Amherst Extension Needs to Be Part of an Integrated Plan

Doug Funke, CRT President

We are very excited about the progress toward extending Buffalo’s light rail to Amherst and into the DL&W terminal! This moves us closer to the original goal of a region-wide light rail network and Amherst is a good place to start. It has consistently scored highest in ridership potential (doubling ridership the day it opens) and a close second in economic development potential behind the Eastside/Airport extension (1, 2). More recently, the latest GBNRTC/WSP transit oriented development (TOD) study indicates that the Amherst extension, when coupled with new zoning (e.g., Buffalo’s Green Code), will lead to significant private investment and development near the line in both the city and Amherst. In fact, we’ve already seen some private sector investments in the city and similar plans being initiated in Amherst. The report estimates that this transit investment will lead to increased tax revenues for both Buffalo and Amherst (3). CRT strongly supports these priorities.

However, we believe that the Amherst extension and DL&W development should be accomplished as part of a larger comprehensive plan. They should be the first steps in a long-range vision based on the original NFTA plan for a 46-mile light rail network (4). The Amherst and DL&W investments should be the first steps in a plan that includes all high-priority extensions, especially the Eastside/ Airport and eventually the Southtowns line. In fact, environmental and preliminary engineering design studies for these subsequent extensions should be completed during the construction phase of the preceding extension. These studies add very little cost to the ongoing light rail construction, but will significantly shorten the overall schedule allowing subsequent construction phases to start as soon as funds are available. This also provides the public with a vision of the larger goal for a complete system from the start.

In this regard we are pleased that the NFTA has put forward a long-range plan for improving NFTA-METRO operations (4) and has included a southern/eastern light rail extension study in this long-range plan. We recommend that this plan be expanded to include all subsequent Metro Rail extension phases as shown in the figure below. The potential of Metro Rail to address climate change, equitable access, and transit-oriented development can only be fully realized when a comprehensive region-wide light rail network is built. The Amherst extension and DL&W development are first steps and should be accomplished in the context of the larger vision and plan.

References:

- (1) Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority Strategic Transit Assessment Working Paper, August 27, 2001.
- (2) Erie County Transit Service Restructuring and Fare Study – Strategic Assessment, Final Report, Aug.2010.
- (3) [Comprehensive Transit Oriented Development Final Report](#). GBNRTC / WSP. August 2018.
- (4) A Transit Development Program for the Niagara Frontier Region. Niagara Frontier Mass Transit Study. Federal Project No. NY-T9-4. NY State Project No. 5824. NFTA. November 1971.
- (5) [NFTA-METRO Transit Development Plan](#), April 2019.

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032	2033	2034	2035
Amherst Extension (6 miles)																			
Alternatives Analysis																			
Environmental Review (EIS) and Preliminary Design																			
Metro Rail Expansion Engineering (30% Design)																			
Engineering / Design (100%)																			
Construction																			
Metro Rail Expansion Opens (M = Milestone)																			M
DL&W																			
DL&W Terminal (design)																			
DL&W Terminal (Construction Begins)																			
DL&W Terminal (construction Continues)																			
DL&W Terminal Station Opens to the Public (M)																			M
Eastside / Airport (13 miles)																			
Southern / Eastern Light Rail Extension Study Initiated																			
Environmental Review (EIS) and Preliminary Design																			
Metro Rail Expansion Engineering (30% Design)																			
Engineering / Design																			
Construction																			
Metro Rail Expansion Opens (M = Milestone)																			M
Southtowns (Hamburg: 13 miles; Orchard Park: 12 miles)																			
Environmental Review and Preliminary Design																			
25% - 30% Design																			
Engineering / Design (10% of construction)																			
Construction (Orchard Park)																			
Construction (Hamburg)																			
Metro Rail Expansion Opens (M = Milestone)																			M



From Transportation for America, posted by Emily Mangan, 16 Sep 2019: Federal Transportation Policy is Undermining Any Progress on Climate

The conversation on climate change tends to focus on a few big things—electric vehicles, renewable energy, putting a price on carbon. But no matter how much progress we make on those fronts, Democrats and Republicans remain deeply committed to antiquated policy that undermines any action we take on climate change: spending billions to build new highways, encouraging more and more driving.

Transportation accounts for the largest share of carbon emissions in the U.S., and those emissions are rising—even as other sectors have improved. As federal policy and funding encourages more and wider highways, people live further away from the things they need and the places they go. We’re driving further and further every year just to get where we need to go. Emissions have risen despite increases in fuel efficiency standards and the adoption of electric vehicles. Despite an admirable 35 percent increase in the overall fuel efficiency of our vehicle fleet from 1990-2016, emissions still rose by 21 percent. Why was that? Because the total amount of miles traveled increased by 50 percent in that same period. Simply put, we’ll never achieve ambitious climate targets if we don’t reduce driving.

We don’t have a money problem, we have a policy problem

Politicians (and the media) love to bemoan our “crumbling roads and bridges.” That must mean we need more money to fix them, right? Here’s a secret: most of the billions we spend every year on our infrastructure never go to repair. Despite the rhetoric, there is nothing in federal law that requires states to repair the roads we already have, so most federal money goes to building more highways. That’s a problem that more money won’t solve.

Even the National Academy of Sciences, through the Transportation Research Board, has called for massively increasing highway spending to as much as \$70 billion annually to accommodate (or encourage, as it were) an additional 1.25 trillion miles of driving each year—blatantly ignoring what this would do to our emissions. California, Hawaii, and Minnesota have all found that even with a fleet of electric vehicles, they will still fail to reach their aggressive climate targets without an accompanying effort to reduce driving.

A better federal policy would be to invest more in climate-friendly transportation options like transit, walking, and biking, and to stop stacking the deck so that local communities have to choose between easy money for a highway or an uphill slog for transit cash. While we guarantee states over \$40 billion annually for highways, only \$2.6 billion is available for new or expanded public transit, and this funding is not guaranteed. Further, while the federal government will cover 80 percent of the cost of a highway project, it will only pay for up to 50 percent of the cost of a transit project.

With limited funding for transit and the national rail network and federal dollars for walking and biking overwhelmed by the billions spent on highways, federal policy is designed to keep us in our cars. Further, highway funding is distributed by Congress to states based on how much fuel is burned. The more gas is burned in a state, the more money states get to spend on highways. It should hardly be surprising that this has forced people to drive more over the past decade while making the climate impacts of transportation worse.

READ MORE: <http://t4america.org/2019/09/16/federal-transportation-policy-is-undermining-any-progress-on-climate/>



CRT at Work for Western NY: July - September 2019
Compiled by Lynn Magdol, Newsletter Editor

We met with elected officials. We worked with the Partnership for the Public Good, continuing to campaign for our [plank](#) with the PPG's 2019 Community Agenda. We presented our proposal to Maria Whyte, Erie County Deputy County Executive, who gave us valuable feedback on how to hone our campaign for transit funding and service improvements in the region. We also met with New York State Assemblywoman Monica Wallace to brief her on transit issues.

We prepared public statements. We submitted comments to the GBNRTC in support of new funding that was recently received for electric bus infrastructure (charging capabilities).

We attended transit-related community events. These included a workshop on driverless vehicles and an open house on the NFTA's Amherst Metro Rail expansion.



We staffed information tables at community events. These included the East Side Festival at Central Terminal and the Elmwood Festival of the Arts. We acquired over 450 signatures on our [petition](#) at the Elmwood Festival.



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, NY State Department of Transportation (Pedestrian Safety Action Plan), and the Niagara River Greenway Commission.



From Transportation for America (T4A): Questions for Candidates

CRT's nonprofit tax-exempt status precludes working directly on election campaigns or endorsing specific candidates. However, we frequently meet with elected officials, once they are in office, to brief them on transportation issues. The following list of questions was posted by T4A prior to the September 4 debate on climate change among ten Democratic presidential candidates. The list is useful when talking to any public official. For more details on each of the questions posed below, see <http://t4america.org/2019/09/03/10-questions-every-presidential-candidate-should-answer-about-transportation-and-climate-change/>

- 1) How does your plan to respond to climate change allow people to make fewer and shorter car trips?
- 2) What are the ways in which we can change development patterns to place jobs and other essential services closer to the people who need them?
- 3) As President, what will you do to ensure the United States measures greenhouse gas emissions in transportation?
- 4) How should Congress rethink how federal highway dollars are spent?
- 5) How does your plan orient more investment toward transit?
- 6) How would you shift the program to promote and reward efficiency and reduced emissions?
- 7) What should change in the federal transportation program to support walkable communities which are better for the economy and the environment?
- 8) How does your infrastructure plan address this pedestrian safety epidemic and make it possible for people to take more trips by walking and biking?
- 9) How would you support communities that are shifting their transportation systems to integrate more transit?
- 10) As President, what would you do to strengthen and support Amtrak's existing long distance and inter-city network?



Another Way to Donate: Amazon Smile

When you shop online at Amazon, you can donate to CRT using a special log-in for Amazon Smile. Log in to www.smile.amazon.com and specify "Citizens Regional Transit Corporation" for your donations **before selecting your purchases**.

Calendar

- October 1 – CRT Executive Board monthly meeting, 12-1:30 p.m., PPG classroom.
- October 17 - CRT Quarterly Public Meeting, 5:30-7:00 p.m., Merriweather Library, see p.1.
- November 5 - CRT Executive Board monthly meeting, 12-1:30 p.m., location TBD.

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

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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.