

CRT News

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

Wednesday, January 20, 2016, 5:30-6:30 pm

Doors open at 5:00

United Way, 742 Delaware Ave., Buffalo

CRT's "Transit Revolution" Petition

One Region Forward Update

President's Annual Report

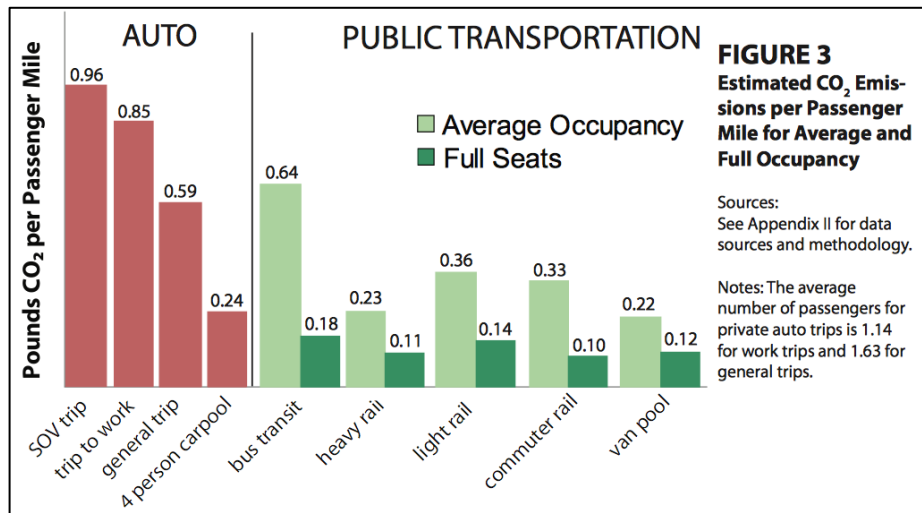
Free and open to the public

Paris Climate Conference Highlights the Need to Invest in Transit

Douglas Funke, CRT President

The 196 nations at the 2015 Paris Climate Conference signed an historic agreement to take action against climate change. The United States, for example, has established the goal to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 26% to 28% from 2005 levels by 2025. In the US, 27% of GHG emissions come from the transportation sector with 60% of these emissions from light duty vehicles. (<http://www3.epa.gov/otaq/climate/documents/420f15032.pdf>). The transportation sector will have to play a significant role if we are to meet these targets.

Public transportation can contribute to reducing GHG emissions. The chart below shows reductions possible by increasing vehicle load factors for both cars and public transit. The average transit load factor used in the figure is 28% of capacity, about 11 passengers for a 40 foot low floor bus. It is obvious from the figure that the passengers per vehicle (PPV) make a large difference in CO₂ emissions per passenger mile for both cars and public transit.



Source: <http://www.fta.dot.gov/documents/PublicTransportationsRoleInRespondingToClimateChange2010.pdf>

The GHG emissions for transit shown in this chart can be greatly reduced when green sources of electricity are used. For example, San Francisco’s BART system, powered by hydropower, uses 0.085 pounds of CO₂ per passenger mile (ppm) compared to the national average of 0.224 pounds of CO₂ ppm. (<http://www.fta.dot.gov/documents/PublicTransportationsRoleInRespondingToClimateChange2010.pdf>). Buffalo’s light rail gets a portion (about 6%) of its electricity from hydropower. An increased hydropower share would reduce CO₂ emissions further.

Transportation infrastructure investment decisions today will have long lasting impacts on GHG emissions for decades to come. They will be critical in determining whether we can meet the ambitious Paris climate goals. We call on our Buffalo-Niagara leaders to make decisions that move us away from more private vehicle use and towards less polluting transportation options such as public transit and bicycle travel.

State and Federal Public Transit Funding Update
Gladys Gifford, CRT Legislative Chair and Lynn Magdol, Newsletter Editor

There are two bills before the NYS legislature, which CRT has been following.

First, the DeFrancisco/Brennan bill S5967/A8242, introduced in June, 2015 offers a steady and increasing stream of revenue for the capital needs of transit and transportation infrastructure for upstate and suburban downstate transportation investment. The source of this revenue is a small percentage of the NYS personal income tax, and has no impact on the personal income tax rate. Rather, a small portion of the existing tax revenues would be redistributed to the transportation systems all across the state, for use in transit and transportation agencies. This bill will be considered as part of the budget negotiations. Therefore we have urged our WNY state legislators to become co-sponsors in each house, so that this bill will be a serious contender for the attention of Gov. Cuomo and the leaders of Senate and Assembly. We have succeeded with the NYS Senators, and have received favorable responses from our NYS Assembly members. To view the legislation, go to:

<http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/A8242-2015>. The main action for transportation funding in New York State will occur in the budget negotiations. The process includes several hearings in January, including one on transportation. CRT members should urge our legislators to submit testimony supporting greater funding for public transit systems.

Second, the O'Mara/Brindisi bill (S5794/A8202) improves the delivery of rural transportation, via the Interagency Coordinating Committee on Rural Public Transportation. Recent rulings by the NYS Department of Health (NYSDOH) have impacted rural transit systems, such as in Chautauqua County and parts of Erie County

where smaller bus systems have developed to serve the needs of both Medicaid clients and the general public. This bill would continue state transition funding to help rural transit systems impacted by Medicaid revenue loss, and would require the NYSDOH to implement administrative measures to increase use of public transit by Medicaid clients (rather than relying on taxis!). Note: this bill is not part of the budget negotiations; it can be passed and signed at any time. To view the legislation, go to:

<http://assembly.state.ny.us/leg/?term=2015&bn=S05794>

A five-year Federal transportation bill, the Fixing America's Transportation (FAST) Act, was approved by Congress and signed by the President in early December. The Act authorizes a little over \$300 billion, with 20% (\$60 billion) going to public transportation. For the first time in many years, the country has relatively long-term stable predictable funding. The new Act also increases the amount of pre-tax dollars allowed for transit riders, bringing their tax break up to parity with employees who drive to work and receive pre-tax benefits for parking expenses.

Thanks to the last-minute efforts of Senator Charles Schumer and other Western New York representatives in Washington, the FAST Act restored the funding formula that gives extra weight to states with higher population density, and thus presumably greater need for transportation dollars. This benefit, favoring New York and other Northeastern states, had been removed from a previous draft of the bill.

On the downside, the new transportation act has not raised the gas tax, leaving transportation without a sufficient dedicated long-term fund. Much of the funding in the FAST Act comes from general tax-payer dollars, and thus it continues to fund transportation in a less than optimal way.

CRT at work for Western New York
Compiled by Lynn Magdol, Newsletter Editor

The **CRT Quarterly Meeting** was held on October 22. State Assemblyman Sean Ryan and Nadine Lemmon of the Tri-State Transportation Campaign's spoke on future funding options for public transit. The discussion following their presentations spawned a number of innovative and creative ideas to be pursued in the future. State Senator Tim Kennedy appeared briefly to reiterate the importance of transit and to thank us for our activities.

CRT Board members **met with New York State Senators and Assembly representatives** (or their staff) at their district offices, to brief them on transportation funding issues for the upcoming sessions. Gladys Gifford, Doug Funke, and other Board members attended the meetings to ask the WNY delegation to co-sponsor a bill proposing an allocation from NYS income tax for transportation. A letter by the New York Public Transit Association (NYPTA) outlining their transit budget recommendation for the next NYS budget was emailed from CRT to all fourteen WNY State representatives with a request to sign it and send it to Governor Cuomo.

Petition for sustainable public transportation. We continued to collect signatures from community organizations and local municipalities for our petition calling for e an "Integrated Sustainable Public Transportation System." Doug Funke and Elizabeth Giles took the lead on this campaign. The petition will be unveiled at our Annual Meeting in January along with plans for its dissemination.

CRT continued to attend meetings of the **Niagara River Greenway Commission (NRGC)**. We submitted a **proposal for a feasibility study for a sky gondola** to connect Buffalo's Inner and Outer harbors.

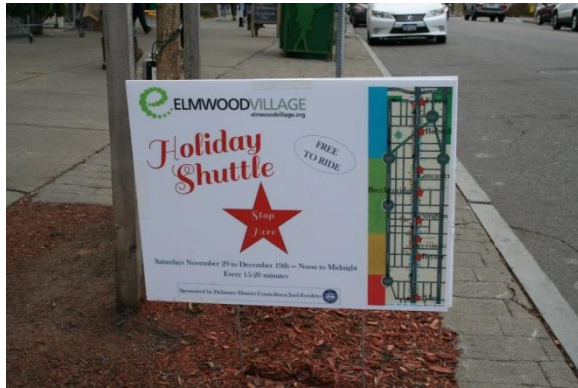
We participated in the creation of the 2016 Community Agenda of the **Partnership for the Public Good**, to be announced on January 15.

Board members of CRT sent **letters to the Buffalo News** regarding various aspects of public transit.

We continued to search for **grant opportunities** to sustain and expand our activities, and explored possibilities for attracting **student interns and interested volunteers**.

We attended **transit-related meetings** of other organizations, including the NFTA, The GBNRTC, Buffalo Place, and the WNY Environmental Alliance.

Keepings Cars off the Road in Buffalo: Recent Developments We Applaud These Efforts



Source: CRT



Source: Elmwood Village Association

During the holiday season, a shuttle bus ran on Elmwood Avenue from Bryant to Forest on Saturdays from noon to midnight, enabling shoppers and others to leave their cars elsewhere. The shuttle was sponsored by the Elmwood Village Association, with support from the City of Buffalo.



Source: CRT

The new transit hub and park-and-ride lot at Niagara and Ontario Streets opened in December. It provides connections in all directions via five bus routes: #5 Niagara-Kenmore (goes to UB South Campus and Metro Rail University Station), #23 Fillmore-Hertel, #32 Amherst, #35 Sheridan (goes to UB North Campus) and #40 Buffalo/Niagara Falls.

Citizens for Regional Transit 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



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.

Calendar

January 15 – Partnership for the Public Good 2016 Community Agenda Rollout., Merriweather Library, 1324 Jefferson Avenue, Buffalo, NY

January 20 - CRT Quarterly Public Meeting, 5:30 – 6:30 pm, United Way, 742 Delaware Ave.

February 2 – Transit Awareness Day, Albany.

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

return service requested