



CRT News

CRT Public Meeting



Wednesday,
April 16, 2014

12:00- 1:00 pm
at

237 Main Street, Buffalo, NY

**“One Region Forward—Toward a
sustainable Buffalo Niagara”**

**a report by
Kelly Dixon, GBNRTC**

Hear how a new regional vision is shaping up at One Region Forward, which incorporates what citizens want our region to look like in forty years. For more info, see oneregionforward.org

HSR? Yes!

by Gladys Gifford, editor

Hear ye, hear ye!

The next step in bringing high/higher speed rail to upstate New York is upon us. The high speed rail hearing offered by the NYSDOT in Buffalo on March 6, will be held at the Pierce-Arrow Museum.

CRT was an active participant in the process which produced the NYS Rail Plan in 2009. Four years later, the Draft Environmental Impact Statement is ready. This is the next step to begin implementing that Plan.

This series of public hearings is the best opportunity to show that the public supports better passenger rail service across NYS. However, the **comment period closes on March 24, 2014.**

**Let's show NYSDOT—
make comments, attend hearings—
be there!**

Did you know.....?

From 1970-2010, in Erie and Niagara counties—

- * population dropped by 16%, while the developed land increased by 78%;
- * daily vehicle miles traveled per capita increased from 8 to 18 miles;
- * 525 miles of new roads were built, costing \$26 million per year to maintain...

Source: oneregionforward.org/what-the-data-tells-us

NYS Needs better Funding Source for Upstate Transit

The New York Public Transit Association (NYPTA) testified before the NYS Assembly Standing Committee on Transportation, December 5, 2013. Notable in their testimony was a proposal to rectify the structural deficiencies in the current revenue streams by which NYS supplies operating assistance to the more than sixty transit operators across the state.

The essence of the proposal: transfer to the upstate transit operators a portion of the existing NYS sales tax, as is currently done for downstate.

CRT views this idea as a proposal worth study and possible support. This issue will be reviewed at the New York State Transportation Equity conference in Albany, March 19, 2014.

Following are excerpts from the NYPTA testimony:

Upstate transit systems have been in the forefront of innovation and efficiency. NYPTA members have improved the efficiency of their operations and service to their customers. Upstate transit systems recognize their responsibility to evaluate the effectiveness of their organization before asking for more assistance from customers or government. Transit systems across the state are focused on efficiency and effectiveness, minimizing the need for governmental support....

New York State has long recognized the benefits of safe and affordable transit service. Unfortunately there is a longstanding imbalance in the way that the state funds upstate and downstate transit systems. State revenues dedicated to transit service upstate have been flat for many years and not inflation sensitive, causing less growth in upstate operating assistance as compared to downstate.

Revenue from the petroleum business tax, the primary funding source upstate, has grown only 8% in the past 10 years. This lack of growth has required upstate funding to be supplemented from the statewide transmission tax, general funds and the use of capital funds from the Dedicated Mass Transportation Trust Fund (DMTTF) for operations.

In fact, upstate transit systems received no increase in state operating assistance in the SFY 2013-14 budget, while downstate systems received a 9% increase. This disparity needs to be addressed if upstate transit systems are to meet the growing needs of their riders and communities they serve.

The structural imbalance in upstate funding has caused problems for many upstate systems. Service has been reduced despite ridership growth. Transit agencies are unable to meet the needs of new work trips and the growth in off-peak demand driven by workplaces that are not traditional 8-5 work schedules. The necessity to use capital funds for operations depletes capital resources needed to make infrastructure investments and purchases buses. Diverting capital funding to operations is not a sustainable strategy.

Several transit intensive states fund public transit with state sales tax revenue, as New York does for downstate transit. NYPTA believes that transferring a portion of the existing state sales tax revenue already collected in upstate counties would provide a sufficient fiscal base to fund upstate transit that is inflation sensitive. State resources currently funding upstate transit would be transferred to the general fund as an offset. DMTTF revenue now used for upstate operating assistance would be retained for their original purpose – to fund the capital needs for all non- MTA transit systems across the state. This proposal to swap state sales tax for current upstate funding sources is revenue neutral in that it will not increase state or local taxes....

NEW YORK STATE **TRANSPORTATION EQUITY** CONFERENCE



**MARCH 19, 2014
ALBANY, NY**

Organized by:

THE NEW YORK STATE TRANSPORTATION EQUITY ALLIANCE

3rd annual event

RSVP ONLINE AT: [HTTP://NYSTEA.NET/CONFERENCE2014](http://nystea.net/conference2014)

A one-day conference bringing together advocates, practitioners, policy-makers, and transit-riders from around the state to learn about the most recent transportation equity data, present their local issues, and network with other NYSTEA members for statewide action. Issues discussed will include transit finance, designing better bike/ped infrastructure, creating more transit manufacturing jobs, and building more equitable transit oriented development, among other things.

Participants Include:

WE ACT for Environmental Justice, Tri-State Transportation Campaign, Empire State Future, Alliance for a Greater NY, VOICE Buffalo, Transit Riders Action Committee, Community Voices Heard, state and local officials, and many more.

March 19, 2014

10:00am - 4:00pm

One Empire State Plaza
Albany, NY

More information at nystea.net

Free and open to the public.

Travel scholarships available.

An event by:

NYSTEA 
New York State Transportation Equity Alliance

With support from:

 **FORD FOUNDATION**
*Working with Visionaries on the
Frontlines of Social Change Worldwide*

How Local Communities can Fund Transit

a review by Lynn Magdol

Review of article:
Local Funding Options for Public Transportation
by Todd Litman

There are many ways for local communities to fund public transportation. A recent study from the Victoria Transport Policy Institute summarizes a wide range of options, analyzes their feasibility, and makes recommendations for the future. Of the eighteen financing methods in the report, many are familiar. Sales tax, gas tax, fares, and advertising are among the more widely used methods. In addition, the report presents some newer and less familiar approaches. Station rents, parking revenue, and development impact fees are examples.

Each of the funding methods is rigorously evaluated on a variety of important dimensions. Consideration is given to the amount and stability of revenue, fairness to nonusers and the disadvantaged, incentives to use transit more and automobiles less, compatibility with local planning objectives, public acceptance, and implementation hurdles. Each type of funding has distinct advantages and disadvantages. A dedicated portion of the sales tax, for example, can potentially bring in a substantial amount of money, but it is unpopular and difficult to initiate. A gas tax could discourage automobile travel and encourage transit use, but is regressive and thus not equitable to the disadvantaged. A parking levy added to commercial property taxes would be expensive to institute, but acceptable to the public.

The report concludes by recommending a mix of different funding approaches to insure stability and to balance the goals of fairness, increased usage, developmental sprawl, etc. The full report can be found at <http://www.vtpi.org/tranfund.pdf>.

New Officers at CRT

The CRT Annual Meeting was held January 15, 2014.

Officers elected were: Douglas J. Funke, President; Seth Triggs, Vice-President; Lynn Magdol, Secretary; Bunny Malone, Treasurer. Remaining on the board were Gladys Gifford, Betsy Giles, Jack Howell, Betty Howell, and Carl Skompinski. Past-president Gifford will continue to edit the CRT newsletter.

Annual Report available

President Funke presented the 2013 Annual Report, celebrating many fine efforts by CRT to promote light rail expansion in the region. The report is available on the CRT website: citizenstransit.org.

Join CRT!!

CRT relies on member dues for all ongoing expenses. Staffed by volunteers, all contributions go directly to promoting transit. Help us do more. Please consider donating at the levels listed below. Send your payment by [clicking here to use Paypal](#), or complete this form and mail it with your payment to CRTC, 617 Main St., Buffalo, NY 14203

CRT membership year- January 1 to December 31.

Name _____
Address _____
City/State/Zip _____
Email _____ Phone _____

All contributions are fully deductible

- Corporate - name/logo will be shown on our website \$250. - \$1000.
- Group/organization \$50.
- Household \$35.
- Individual \$25.
- Student, senior, unemployed, etc. \$5.

Higher Speed Rail —

March 6,
Open House 4-8 pm
Hearing, 6-8 pm

***Buffalo location: Pierce Arrow Museum,
263 Michigan, corner Seneca Street,
Buffalo***

Note— the comment period closes on March 24, 2014.
Hard copy of the document (DEIS) is in the downtown library.

CRT participated in the process which produced the NYS Rail Plan, 2009. This DEIS is the next step to implementing that Plan.

For more info: www.dot.ny.gov/empire-corridor

Calendar

Mar. 5, 9:30 am
GBNRTC Planning &
Coordinating Comm.,
Erie Co. Public Works Dept.,
Rath Bldg, Buffalo

March 6, 4-8 pm
DEIS hearings for High Speed
Rail, Pierce Arrow Museum, 263
Michigan, at Seneca St., Buffalo

March 19, 10 am - 4 pm
NYSTEAs conference, Albany

Apr. 16, 12-1 pm
CRT Quarterly Public Meeting,
237 Main St., Buffalo

June 4-7 CNU22 in Buffalo