

Final

# Citizens Regional Transit Corporation

## Annual Report 2018

Submitted by:

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President, Citizens Regional Transit Corporation

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**CITIZENS *for* REGIONAL TRANSIT**

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# Citizens Regional Transit Corporation

## 2018 Annual Report

This report summarizes the accomplishments, milestones and activities of Citizens for Regional Transit Corporation during 2018. Citizens Regional Transit Corporation is known as Citizens for Regional Transit (CRT). This shorter designation is used in this report.

During 2018 Citizens for Regional Transit was led by the following Board of Directors and Officers: Douglas Funke (President), Seth Triggs (Vice President), Lynn Magdol (Secretary), and Carl Skompinski (Treasurer). In addition the following persons served as members of the Board of Directors: Gladys Gifford, Elizabeth Giles, Maddie McCauley and Stef McGraw (first half of the year). Also, former CRT President Ed Deutschman, and former long-time CRT Board Member Joan Bozer served as Emeritus Board Members. Collectively these Board Members logged 2,049 hours of service to the community valued at \$57,494 (using the NYS volunteer hourly rate of \$27.59).

At the end of 2018 CRT had 53 members. The CRT Secretary and Treasurer maintain the names and addresses of CRT members. CRT has 615 Facebook likes (up 8%) and 235 Twitter followers (up 18%). Our newsletter email list has 1,128 recipients (up 17%). Our media contacts list has 104 recipients (up 1%).

CRT continued to advocate for an integrated multi-modal public transportation system that serves everyone fairly in WNY. We also continued to educate the public at large and leaders from both public and private sectors. We kept members and the public informed about transit issues and events via the CRT website and Facebook page, 4 published newsletters, and timely Twitter messages throughout the year. Seth Triggs has continued to manage the CRT website; Carl Skompinski manages our Facebook page. Lynn Magdol is the CRT Newsletter Editor. CRT 2018 Committee Chairs were:

- Nominating Committee – Carl Skompinski and Gladys Gifford
- Communications and Public Relations Committee – Lynn Magdol
- Legislative Committee – Gladys Gifford
- Membership Committee – (committee was not active)
- Grants Committee – (committee was not active)

CRT held three public meetings in 2018 featuring guest speakers on topics relevant to public transit. The meetings were held in January and April at the United Way headquarters on Delaware Avenue and in October at the Erie County and Buffalo Public Library, downtown branch.

Two new Board members have been nominated for 2019 – Jim Gordon and Eddy Campany replacing Stef McGraw and Rebecca Reilly who left the board during 2018 and 2017, respectively. If Jim and Eddy are confirmed through election by the membership at the annual meeting on January 17<sup>th</sup> the 2019 CRT Board will be Douglas Funke (President), Seth Triggs (Vice President), Lynn Magdol (Secretary), Carl Skompinski, Gladys Gifford, Elizabeth Giles, Maddie McCauley, Eddy Campany and Jim Gordon. The Treasurer position is still to be decided. Carl Skompinski, our 2018 Treasurer, will continue serving as Treasurer until a new Treasurer is in place. Like last year, former CRT President Ed Deutschman, and former long-time CRT Board Member Joan Bozer will continue as Emeritus Board Members.

### Highlights of the Year

- **Attended Transit Awareness Day Conference.** Doug, Lynn and Maddie attended the NYPTA Transit Awareness Day in Albany on 23 January 2018. We visited with many WNY State Legislators to promote transit and support increased state budgets for transit statewide.



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- ***Celebrated and Promoted Dump the Pump Day (DTP).*** (6/15/18). Participated in DTP day. CRT Board members took the DTP pledge to not drive on DTP day. We helped staff an information table at the downtown farmers market with Go Buffalo Niagara publicizing the effort and the importance of using public transit.
- ***Continued Organizations Petition Drive.*** CRT petition drive calling for a TRANSIT REVOLUTION has continued. The petition specifically calls for: (1) extension of Metro Rail along the highest-demand corridors with (2) intermodal connectivity to air and inter-city rail, and (3) establishment of long-term sustainable public transit funding.
  - So far a total of 57 community organizations, 16 businesses, 9 municipalities, and the Erie County Executive have signed. In addition to the Erie County Executive we added the Lackawanna City Council and the Mayor Moses of Hamburg during 2018.
  - We also collected over 400 individual signatures on the petition during 2018.
  - This effort will continue in 2019.
- ***Met with political and community leaders.*** We met with legislators, mayors, and community leaders to build support for improving transit services through light rail extension, improved operations and maintenance budgets, and programs that encourage use of transit. We will continue to advocate for better transit infrastructure and services.
- ***Completed “bus cubes” project.*** Worked with community organizations and volunteers to build and install cubes at bus stops for riders waiting for buses to sit on. The cubes were be sponsored by area businesses and community organizations and displayed sponsoring group logos along with the CRT logo. The cube designs were inspired by and are based on cubes deployed in Rochester. Maddie McCauley conceived and led the effort including: soliciting support of sponsoring organizations; organizing workshops to build and decorate the boxes; applying for approvals from City of Buffalo public Art Commission; placing prototypes at key locations for trial use; and finally putting the boxes into storage for the winter. Special thanks go out to GoBike Buffalo and the Buffalo City Council who provided substantial support to the project. GoBike Buffalo will take over the project in 2019.
- ***CRT plank selected for PPG 2019 agenda.*** The CRT proposed plank to the Partnership for the Public Good (PPG) was selected for inclusion in the 2019 PPG agenda. The plank calls for Erie County to make additional financial contributions to improve public transit as a way to achieve its commitment to meeting the goals of the Paris Climate Accord within the county. Specifically, the plank calls for the county to support a study of extending the light rail to the airport and increasing the portion of county sales tax designated to transit operations to 3/8 percent so the NFTA can increase the frequency of buses.
- ***Continued pedestrian safety advocacy.*** Every bus trip starts or ends with the requirement to cross a road. In some places, like along Niagara Falls Boulevard (NFB) this can be a dangerous undertaking. We have made it a CRT priority to promote improving pedestrian’s safety, especially near bus stops. We have written letters, attended public meetings, spoke at GBNRTC planning meetings and met with town and NYSDOT officials describing the problem and suggesting solutions. We are pleased to report that NYSDOT has finally convened a stakeholder committee to work on improving pedestrian safety with a focus on NFB. CRT president, Doug Funke, has been invited to serve on this stakeholder committee, which will be a focus during 2019.
- ***Invited to serve on Erie County Community Climate Change Task Force.*** Erie County has formally committed to meeting the green house gas reduction (GHG) goals of the Paris Climate Agreement and formed a Community Climate Change Task Force on which CRT has been invited to serve. It is clear that the transportation sector and public transportation will play a key role in meeting the Paris goals.



- **Attended Rail-Volution Annual Meeting** (10/21-24/18). Betsy represented CRT at this annual conference held in Pittsburgh. Betsy brought back a wealth of information about the latest in public transportation and transit advocacy.
- **Provided inputs to NFTA and GBNRTC.** Reviewed NFTA draft proposed FY 2019-2020 budget. Requested clarification and provided feedback. Attended NFTA budget public meeting on 12/1/18 and several other NFTA public meetings during the year. Reviewed GBNRTC planning documents and attended GBNRTC planning and public meetings, offering comment and recommendations. Provided formal written comments where appropriate. Also met with Bill Vanacek, Manager of the Buffalo Niagara International Airport (BNIA) to discuss issues associated with eventually connecting the BNIA with light rail.

### CRT Membership Meetings

Three CRT membership meetings were held in 2018. These were held in January, May, and October. The January meeting included the CRT Annual business meeting. These meetings featured one or more guest speakers, were publicized, and were open to the public. Table 1 gives a summary.

**Table 1. CRT Quarterly Meetings**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Speaker</b>	<b>Summary</b>
Tuesday, January 16, 2018	Doug Funke, President, CRT Hal Morse, Executive Director, Greater Buffalo Niagara Regional Transportation Council (GBNRTC)	Doug summarized the CRT annual report highlighting CRT successes and ongoing priorities. Hal presented a preview of the upcoming Buffalo-Niagara 2050 Metropolitan Transportation Plan.
Tuesday, May, 1, 2018	Brian Higgins, US Congressman, Bruce Becker, Vice President Operations National Association of Railroad Passengers, Pat Whalen, Director, Niagara Global Tourism Institute of Niagara Falls	Speakers discussed the opportunities and challenges of implementing commuter rail between Niagara Falls and Buffalo. The commuter rail would take advantage of the new train station in Niagara Falls and the one planned for 2020 in Buffalo, and would use the ROW now used by Amtrak.
Thursday, October 18, 2018	Doug Funke, President, CRT Bonnie Lawrence, Deputy Commissioner, Erie County, Gary Bennett, NFTA Service Planner	The focus of the presentations was the role of public transit for achieving Erie County's commitment for meeting the Paris Climate Accord goals. Doug presented the data describing greenhouse gas emissions associated with various forms of public transit. Bonnie described Erie County's plan for meeting the Paris Climate goals. Gary presented NFTA's programs for encouraging transit ridership and working with the county and other organizations to implement the corporate pass program.

### Community Education

- **Attended numerous public and community events**
  - DL&W ROW Reimagining focus group (1/5/18).
  - Erie County Paris Climate Agreement Press Conference (1/25/18).
  - Explore Buffalo Speaker Series – Re-Imagining Transportation by Katie O'Sullivan (Go Buffalo Niagara) (2/8/18).



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- Mayor Brown's State-of-the-City lunch and presentation (2/22/18).
  - Public meeting to review the draft Regional Transportation Plan (5/2/18).
  - Alternative Buffalo train station location presentation by Tim Tielman (5/12/18).
  - Town of Amherst's Niagara Falls Boulevard lighting public meeting (July, 2018).
  - ECHDC's Outer harbor public information meeting (7/11/18)..
  - PPG Transportation Justice information meeting (7/13/18).
  - NYSERDA low emission transportation meeting (8/16/18).
  - GBNRTC Transit Oriented Development Public Open House (8/29/18).
  - PPG Workshop on civic engagement (9/12/18).
  - CNU-NY Summit – reimagining the suburbs (10/12/18 – 10/13/18).
  - What's next for Buffalo? Hosted by UB School of Architecture (10/24/18 and 10/26/18).
  - Mall of the Future hosted by ULI WNY (10/31/18).
- ***Hosted information tables at area festivals and events.*** Distributed the CRT brochure, promoted transit as an important component of the Buffalo-Niagara transportation system and a necessary tool for economic development and fighting climate change. Obtained signatures on our petition.
    - Dump the Pump Day (6-15-17) (Tabled with Go Buffalo Niagara)
    - Elmwood Festival of the Arts. (8-25-18 – 8-26-18).
    - Party for the Planet hosted by WNY Earth Day Family Expo (rescheduled date 9/8/18).
    - Central Terminal Open House (9/22/18).
    - Environmental Summit hosted by Daemon College (9/29/18).
    - World on Your Plate Conference hosted by Daemon college. (10/5/18 – 10/6/18).
    - Matt Urban Outreach Event (10/23/18).
    - Outer Our Harbor (OOH) Public Conversation (10/29/18). OOH is described later.
- ***Radio and Television interviews.***
    - Seth Triggs was interviewed on a midday talk show for WXXI out of Rochester to discuss challenges facing WNY transit riders.
    - Doug Funke was interviewed on the PPG radio hour (4/24/18), which aired on WUFO and is available on the PPG website.
    - Doug Funke was interviewed by local news (TV and radio) at the CRT Quarterly public meetings.
- ***Published editorials.*** Betsy published an Another Voice (AV) articles in the Buffalo News (BN) on 4/23/18 calling for a truly multimodal train station at Central Terminal. Betsy also published an AV article on the role of public transportation in fighting climate change, which appeared on 1/3/19. Doug has a Buffalo News (BN) Letter to the editor (LTE) on February 6<sup>th</sup> commending County Executive Polencarz on his leadership in backing public transit as a way to fight climate change. Lynn had a BN LTE on how transit can overcome parking woes in Buffalo published on February 11<sup>th</sup>.
- ***Published Quarterly Newsletter.*** Published the CRT News for the 19<sup>h</sup> year. Four issues of the newsletter were published during 2018.
- ***Website, Facebook and Twitter.*** Continued to maintain a CRT website ([www.citizenstransit.org](http://www.citizenstransit.org)) and Facebook page. Also maintained a Twitter account where upcoming events are publicized and links to relevant information on transit are noted.



- ***Presentations to area community organizations:***
  - WNYEA annual congress public session (3-14-18). Doug made a “PechaKecha” presentation summarizing the importance of transit. Betsy also attended.
  - Erie County Environment and Planning Climate Change Working Group (3/15/18). Doug presented an overview of the importance of public transit for mitigating climate change. Betsy and Lynn also attended.
  - Lackawanna City Council (5/5/18). Doug provided an overview of CRT objectives and successfully solicited signature on our petition for a transit revolution. Gladys also attended.

## **Participation on Committees and with Partner Organizations**

- ***NFTA.*** Served on several NFTA citizen committees.
  - ***Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC)*** This committee includes membership from many community organizations. Plans and issues relevant to transit in the Buffalo-Niagara Region are discussed. Betsy was CRT’s representative.
  - ***NFTA Buffalo-Amherst Environmental and Preliminary Design Project Advisory Committee (PAC).*** CRT is serving on the advisory committee for the environmental and preliminary design phase of the Buffalo-Amherst light rail extension project. This is a continuation of the Amherst alignment and design alternatives study we worked on during 2018. Doug represented CRT.
- ***Sierra Club – Buffalo Niagara Chapter.*** CRT continued working with the Buffalo Niagara Chapter of the Sierra Club to promote the NFTA purchase and evaluation of electric buses as a long-term replacement of pollution prone diesel and compressed natural gas (CNG) buses.
- ***WNY Environmental Alliance (WNYEA / Sierra Club).*** Worked with WNYEA and the Niagara Chapter of the Sierra Club including service on several WNYEA / Sierra Club committees and working groups.
  - Participated in annual and quarterly WNYEA congresses.
  - Served on WNYEA / Sierra Club Our Outer Harbor (OOH) Working Group. Represented transit interests on the committee.
  - Continued work on advocating green public transit along the Niagara River Greenway. This work was a continuation of our 2014, 2015 and 2016 WNYEA planks.
- ***Partnership for the Public Good (PPG).*** CRT continued participation in planning meetings and the plank selection process.
  - CRT submitted a competitive plank for 2019 to encourage Erie County to designate part of its budget surplus for studying the extension of the light rail to the airport and to increase the portion of the Erie County sales tax that supports public transit from 1/8 % to 3/8%. This increase will be for the designated purpose of increasing the frequency of NFTA bus service in accordance with the NFTA 2016 service plan study. The CRT plank for 2017 was selected and will be worked on during 2019.
  - Attended the PPG Poverty and Transit presentation on 7-6-17 and advocacy workshop on 10-25-18..
- ***Coalition for Economic Justice (CEJ).*** Participation CEJ’s Buffalo Transit Riders Union (BTRU). Attended BTRU meetings and informed BTRU of upcoming transit events.
- ***VOICE Buffalo.*** Gladys Gifford represents CRT on the VOICE Transportation Committee.

## **Fund raising**

We received one anonymous donation during 2018. We extend our sincerest appreciation to our anonymous donator as well as our members who have provided the largest single portion of our budget.



We especially want to thank our only corporate member, Aaron Krolikowski. We plan to work to attract more corporate members and increase membership generally during 2019.

We continued to explore possible grant sources at a low level. We haven't found a good match between grants available and our specific needs but plan to continue exploring outside sources of funding that might help fund our work. We continue to be registered with Smile Amazon and continue to encourage CRT members and friends to designate CRT as the designated charity when they purchase items through Amazon Smile.



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# Draft

## Appendix A Citizens for Regional Transit 2018 Budget

Budget Items	2018 Accepted Budget	2018 Actual	2019 Proposed Budget
<b>INCOME</b>			
Donations	1,000.00	352.05	500.00
Dues (includes corporate memberships)	1,400.00	1,202.50	1,500.00
Grants	400.00	0	0.00
<b>Totals</b>	<b>2,800.00</b>	<b>1,554.55</b>	<b>2,000.00</b>
<b>EXPENSES</b>			
Copy & Printing	900.00	38.16	900.00
Office Supplies & Postage	180.00	111.15	120.00
Festival Registration	150.00	105.00	150.00
Conferences - Tickets, Transp. etc.	770.00	1,608.34	650.00
Ads	300.00	0.00	0.00
Memberships	300.00	125.00	130.00
Miscellaneous	200.00	331.00	50.00
<b>Totals</b>	<b>2,800.00</b>	<b>2,318.65</b>	<b>2,000.00</b>
Difference between income & expenses		<b>(764.10)</b>	
<b>CK Bal Dec 18, 2018</b>		<b>1,895.80</b>	
<b>Proposed balanced 2018 budget</b>	<b>2,800.00</b>		<b>2,000.00</b>





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# Appendix B

## *Buffalo Needs A Transit Revolution!*

### *A Petition for an Integrated and Sustainable Public Transportation System*

We the undersigned call on the NFTA and our business and community leaders to take action to provide more comprehensive and sustainable public transportation service for the Buffalo-Niagara Region. Specifically, we call for: (1) extensions of Metro Rail along the highest-demand corridors with (2) intermodal connectivity to air and inter-city rail and (3) establishment of long-term sustainable transit funding.

Please add \_\_\_\_\_ to the list of organizations and municipalities supporting this petition.

Organization Authorizing Officer:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Position: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Comment: \_\_\_\_\_

#### **Why We Need It:**

**Attracting & Keeping Population** - Growing numbers of Americans, notably young adults and baby boomers approaching retirement, prefer to locate in regions that have efficient multimodal mobility systems, including the option to live free of car dependency. The demand is for walkable, bikeable, mixed-use neighborhoods efficiently connected by transit.

**Parking & Congestion** - Transit moves people safely and cost-effectively to work, shopping, and recreation without scarring our waterfront, parkland, and downtown streetscapes with acres of parking. Providing park-and-ride facilities for commuters and visitors outside the central city provides a hassle-free commuting option while decreasing traffic congestion, air pollution, and on-street parking shortages.

**Equity** - Over 1/3 of Buffalo households do not own cars (2000 US Census). Rapid transit expands mobility **options** for all socioeconomic groups, including those who rely on public transportation to get to suburban jobs, shopping, healthcare, educational institutions, and all other personal needs. A household can expect to save \$5,000 to \$9,000 a year for each car it can do without (ConsumerReports.com).



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**Economics** - Investments in light rail and bus rapid transit are transforming cities across North America and **stimulating** commercial and residential development along the improved transit lines (Transit-Oriented Development). Buffalo is blessed with existing, publicly owned rail rights-of-way along many heavily traveled corridors. These make expansion of our light rail system among the nation's most affordable. Comprehensive analysis of WNY's infrastructure needs and resources – and surveys of what our citizens want – led UB's Regional Institute and the Greater Buffalo Niagara Regional Transportation Council to recommend “making transit funding and system improvement a top priority” (One Region Forward Final Draft Plan, 2014).

**The Environment** - Automobiles in NYS collectively emit 70 million metric tons of CO<sub>2</sub> per year, more than carbon emissions from industrial, residential, or commercial sources (2014 Draft NYS Energy Plan). Of all transportation-generated greenhouse gases, 61% come from passenger cars and light trucks (US EPA, 2013). We must offer car-free options to combat global warming. Buffalo's light rail trains already run partly on clean hydroelectric power - with the potential to run on 100% non-polluting Niagara Falls waterpower.

**We call for the NFTA and Buffalo-Niagara leaders to:**

***Extend Metro Rail***

- To the airport – Prioritize extension of the Metro Rail from Downtown Buffalo to the Buffalo Niagara International Airport along our existing publicly owned rail rights-of-way. This extension will intersect many East Side bus lines while connecting the central business district with Larkinville, Central Terminal, Galleria Mall, Thruway Mall, and a Park-&-Ride off the I-90 in Cheektowaga.
- To the UB Amherst campus – Build on the ongoing NFTA study to connect all three UB campuses and to facilitate access to suburban shopping and jobs.
- Through the DL&W Terminal to Larkinville – Extend Metro Rail through the DL&W Terminal to Larkinville, a first step in taking the existing line to the Buffalo Niagara International Airport while enabling car-free access to the First Niagara Arena, Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus, our Waterfront, the Cobblestone District, and Downtown.
- To the Bills Stadium – Any investment in a new or refurbished Buffalo Bills Stadium should ensure Metro Rail access, folding any necessary Metro Rail enhancements into its financing. This will satisfy the intense travel demand on Bills game days while improving the experience for those who choose to drive and tailgate. Any stadium parking facilities could double as Park-&-Ride lots for everyday commuting year-round.
- To the Southtowns and Tonawandas – Preserve existing rail rights-of-way, so the original vision for a comprehensive network of light rail serving the Buffalo-Niagara Region can ultimately be realized.

***Create Multimodal Amtrak / Metro Rail Stations***

- Eliminate the existing Depew and Exchange Street Amtrak Stations and replace them with Multimodal Transportation Centers suitable for 21<sup>st</sup> century passenger service and eventually high-speed rail. These must feature a rapid transit connection to the airport and include bicycle and car share facilities. One station should be near Buffalo's waterfront and a second located further east where it can serve all Amtrak destinations. A restored Central Terminal should be a candidate for the second site.

***Establish long-term, sustainable dedicated funding***

- Establish permanent, reliable and sufficient funding streams for comprehensive multimodal public transportation in Buffalo-Niagara. This funding must be able to sustain the operations and maintenance of Metro Rail and all connecting transit services and infrastructure.



# Appendix C

## *Let the Transit Revolution Begin!*

### *A Petition for Investment in Sustainable Public Transit*

(2018 version)

Whereas; political leaders from across Buffalo Niagara (including mayors, city/town/village councils and the Erie County Executive) ***have signed the CRT petition calling for a Transit Revolution!***

Whereas; over 50 community organizations (including Coalition for Economic Justice, GoBike Buffalo, Housing Opportunities Made Equal, League of Women Voters, Network of Religious Communities, Partners of a Livable WNY, Partnership for the Public Good, PUSH Buffalo, Sierra Club, VOICE Buffalo) and a growing list of business leaders (including Carmina Woods Morris, Ciminelli Real Estate, Douglas Development Corp.) ***have signed the CRT petition for a Transit Revolution!***

Whereas; transportation is the largest source (40%) of green house gas emissions in WNY and therefore meeting Erie County's announced commitment to the Paris Climate Accord goals ***will require moving from car-centered transportation to public transit.***

Whereas; ***every \$1 invested in public transportation generates \$4 in economic returns*** and over 70% of public funding in public transportation flows to the private sector creating and supporting hundreds of thousands of jobs.

Whereas; public transportation ***provides opportunities for those unable to travel by automobile*** (low-income, older, and disabled citizens).

Whereas; hotels in cities with direct access to airports raise ***11% more revenue per room*** than hotels in cities without.

Whereas; ***Buffalo's airport right-of-way (ROW) is available and publicly owned*** making an extension to the Buffalo-Niagara airport among the MOST AFFORDABLE in the country. Further, since the airport ROW is not on public roads, disruptions to businesses during construction will be minimal.

**Therefore; we the undersigned, call upon the Erie County legislature to:**

1. Designate \$1M of the \$9M Erie County budget surplus to initiate an ***alternatives analysis for extending Buffalo's light rail to the airport.***
2. Designate an additional 1/8 % (for a total of ¼ %) of the county sales tax to NFTA operations in exchange for NFTA ***commitment to increase bus frequency*** (e.g., to 10 minute weekday headways on core downtown routes and priority corridors) ***and to make service improvements*** recommended in the 2016 NFTA-METRO Erie and Niagara County Service Plan study, without reducing service to outlying areas.

Name (Printed)	Signature	Email Address (for our newsletter list)	Zip Code
1.			
2.			



<b>Name (Printed)</b>	<b>Signature</b>	<b>Email Address (for our newsletter list)</b>	<b>Zip Code</b>
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