

# The Case for Transit

**Presented to the Torch Club**

**15 December 2020**

**By Douglas Funke**

**President, Citizens for Regional Transit**



# Topics

- **Citizens for Regional Transit**
- What we had and lost
- What other cities are doing to get it back
- The world's greatest waterfront
- Why extend Buffalo's Light Rail – the financial case
- Transit and the Environment
- Is there public support?
- Conclusion

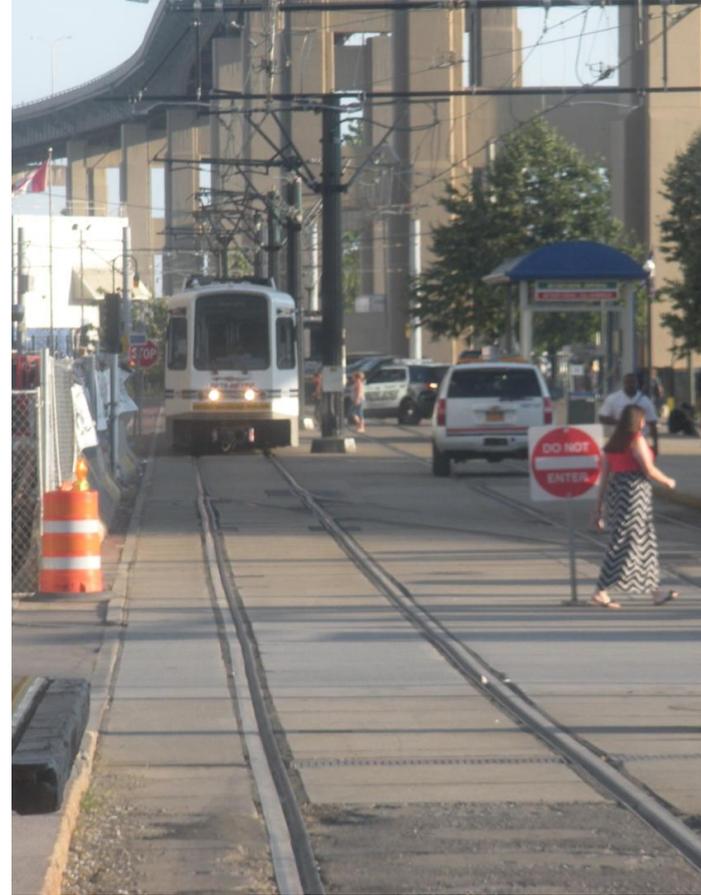




# Citizens *for* Regional Transit

- Grass roots, citizens' nonprofit organization that promotes the expansion of Metro Rail to serve all of WNY.
- Began in 1965 as the South Towns Area Rapid Transit (START) committee. Now known as the Citizens for Regional Transit (CRT).
- Our mission is to educate the public and community leaders about the features, functions, and advantages of a complete 46 mile Metro Rail system and efficient region-wide transit connections.

Email: [crtc@citizenstransit.org](mailto:crtc@citizenstransit.org)  
URL: [www.citizenstransit.org](http://www.citizenstransit.org)  
Facebook: "CitizensforRegionalTransit"  
Twitter: "WNYTransit"



# Our Mission: Connect Buffalo-Niagara with Transit



# Some of Our Accomplishments

- Averted sale of DL&W ROW
- Light rail extensions (worked on for 40 years!)
  - Amherst extension in planning
  - DL&W Terminal extension starting
- Trolley in Niagara Falls (CRT WNYEA plank)
- New multimodal train station in Buffalo (CRT PPG plank)
  - Served on Mayor's site selection committee
- WNY State Delegation Support for increased transit budget
  - Averted \$10M NFTA deficit (2018)
  - Increased State Transit Operating Assistance (STOA)
  - Increased capital funding (\$100M, 2020-2025)
- Legislation disallowing IDA forgiveness of Mortgage Recording Tax
- Pedestrian safety actions (e.g., Niagara Falls Boulevard)
- Successful petitions
- Proposed gondola study



Photos by Robert Kirkham/Buffalo News  
An Amtrak passenger arrives at the new \$28 million train station on Exchange Street in downtown Buffalo, which opened on Nov. 8.

Buffalo News. Saturday, November 28, 2020

# Topics

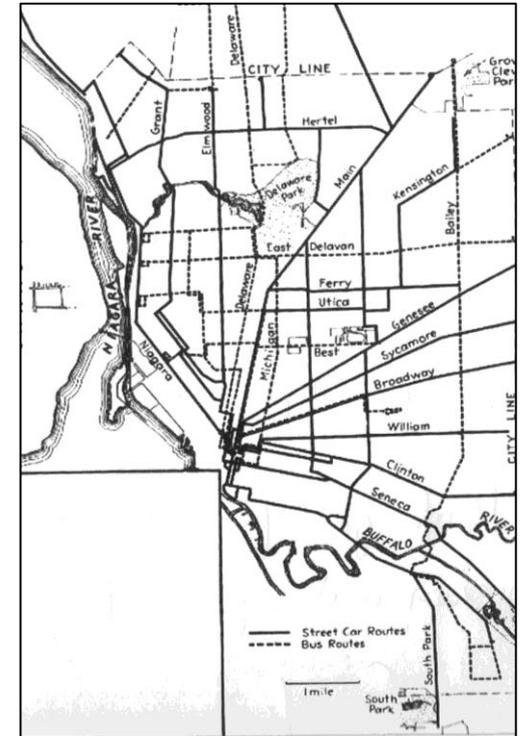
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# What We Had and Lost



Main Street, Buffalo, 1901. Source: Purchased from Buffalo History Museum



1939 Streetcar network



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# Cities Across the US Are Building and Expanding Their Metro Rail Systems

## Rail to the Airport

- Atlanta, GA
- Baltimore-Washington, MD
- Boston, MA
- Chicago, IL (O'Hare)
- Cleveland, OH
- Dallas/Ft. Worth, TX
- Denver, CO (planned-2015)
- Miami, FL
- Minneapolis-St. Paul, MN
- Newark, NJ
- New York City, NY (Kennedy)
- Oakland, CA
- Philadelphia, PA
- Phoenix, AZ
- Portland, OR
- Salt Lake City, UT
- San Francisco, CA
- Seattle-Tacoma, WA
- St. Louis, MO
- Washington, DC (Reagan)
- Washington, DC (Dulles) (planned-2018)

Source: More US airports add rail service to downtown. USA Today.  
Updated 6/5/09.  
[http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/money/industries/travel/2009-05-25-rail-lines-airport-city-center\\_N.htm](http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/money/industries/travel/2009-05-25-rail-lines-airport-city-center_N.htm)

## Trolleys

- Atlanta, GA (planned)
- Charlotte, NC (in Const.)
- Cincinnati, OH
- Dallas, TX (planned)
- Kenosha, WI
- Memphis, TN
- New Orleans, LA
- Philadelphia, PA
- San Francisco, CA
- Savannah, GA
- Seattle, WA
- Tucson, AZ
- Washington, DC (planned)

Source: Streetcars, trolleys making a comeback in the US. 4/25/12.  
FoxNews.com.  
<http://www.foxnews.com/us/2012/04/25/street-cars-trolleys-making-comeback-in-us/>

# 90% of Ballot Initiatives Successful in 2020

2020 Snapshot	
53	Public Transit Measures on the Ballot
47	Wins for Transit (90.38%)
5	Losses for Transit
\$1,884,911,547	Revenue Total
\$926,265,547	Known Transit Revenue
Revenue Types	
36	Property Tax
11	Sales Tax
4	Bond
1	Payroll Tax

- Sonoma, CA
- Fairfax County, VA
- Bellingham, WA
- St. Louis, Ithica, and Pine River Township, MI
- Austin, TX
- Newton County, GA
- Seattle, WA
- Portland, OR
- Bend, OR
- Wheeling and Bethlehem, WV
- Denver, CO
- San Antonio, TX
- Missoula, MT
- Durand, MI
- Shiawassee Township, MI
- San Francisco, Santa Clara and San Mateo, CA
- Monroe, MI
- Gwinnett County, GA
- Kalkaska County, MI
- Midland County, MI
- Escanaba, MI
- Genesee County, MI
- Friendship County, MI
- Clinton County, MI
- Arenac County, MI
- Oremaw County, MI
- Ludington and Scottville, MI
- Iosco County, MI
- Narquette County, MI
- Wexford County, MI
- Spring Lake Township, MI
- Statewide, Maine
- Parkersburg, WV
- Vienna, WV
- Huntington, WV
- Monongalia County, WV
- Fort Gratiot, MI
- Fort Huron, MI
- Lucas County, OH
- Belmont and Jefferson Counties, OH
- Hamilton County, OH
- Anchorage, AK
- Benzie County, MI
- Clare County, MI
- New Haven Township, MI
- Lansing, MI
- Kalamazoo County, MI
- Van Buren County, MI
- Saginaw Township, MI
- Manistee County, MI
- Marin and Sonoma Counties, CA
- Contra Costa County, GA
- Redlands, CA

APTA Center for Transportation Excellence.  
 (<https://cfte.org/initiatives/campaigns/?campaignyear=2020&startdate=1577858400&enddate=1609480800>)

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# Visitors Find Little to Do Here!

**The Buffalo News**  
**November 13, 2013**

**Mist opportunities: Visitors to Falls find little reason to stay**

BY: Aaron Besecker

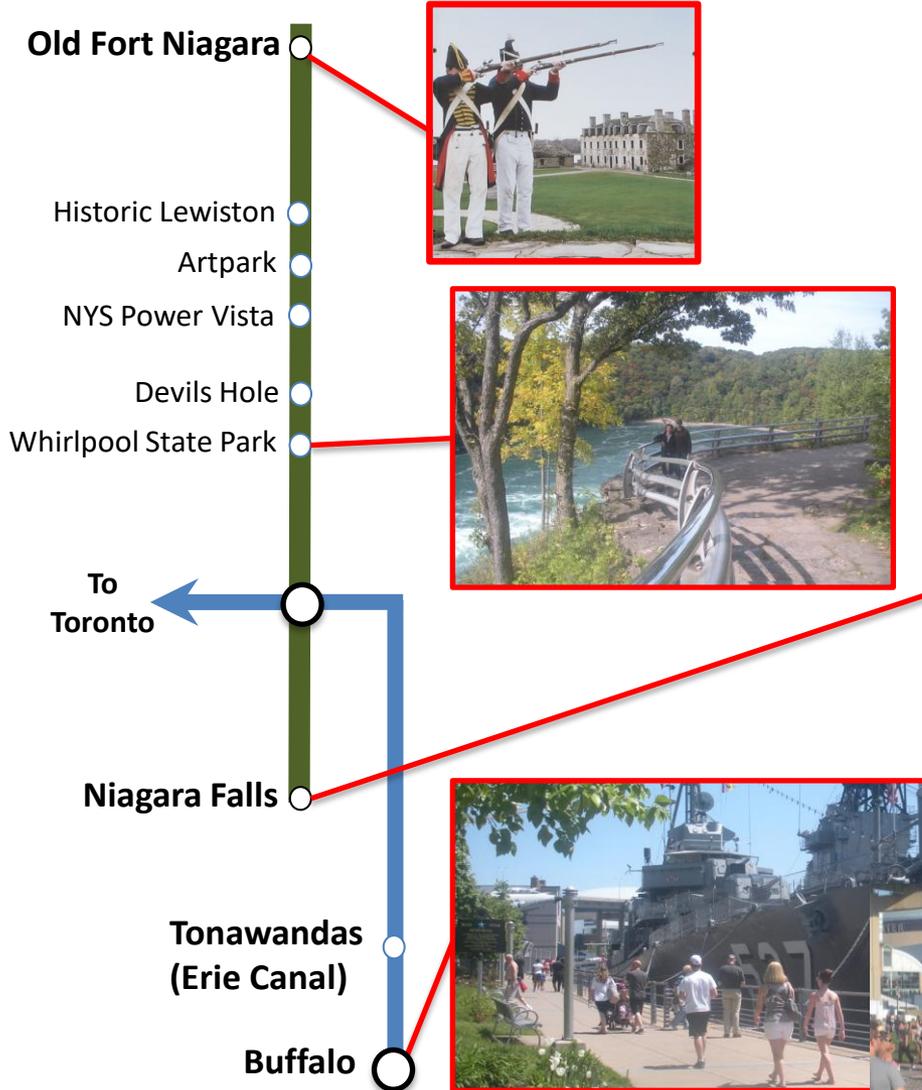


Crow's Nest in Niagara Falls is high on list for visitors to U.S. side, but the challenge is to make the list longer. Derek Gee/ Buffalo News file photo

Little to do?  
**Really...???**



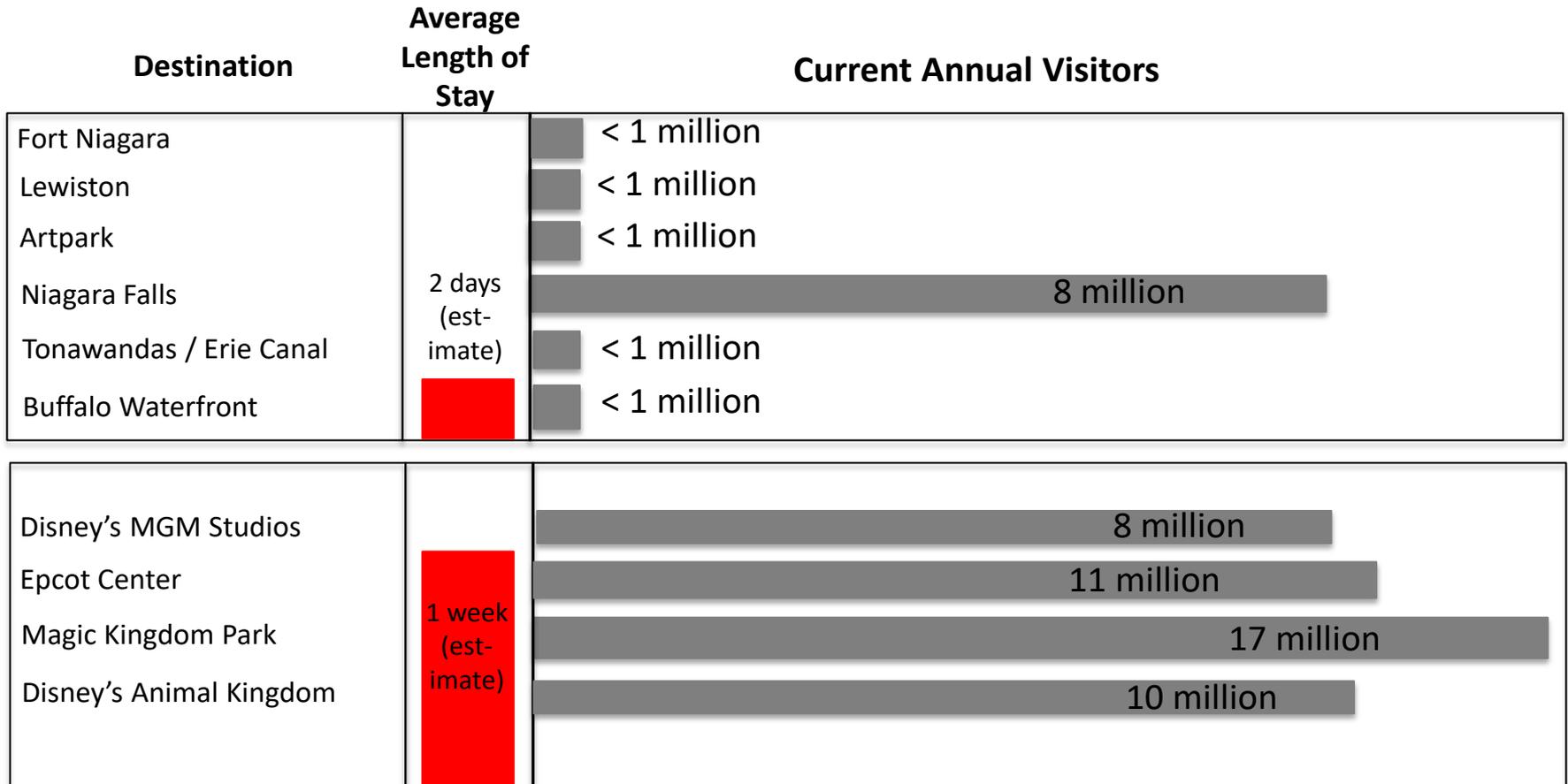
# Our Mission: Connect Our Waterfront



Buffalo News, November, 2013



# Connecting Our Waterfront with Transit Will Enhance Tourism (like it does elsewhere)



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- Transit and the Environment
- How You Can Help?
- Conclusion



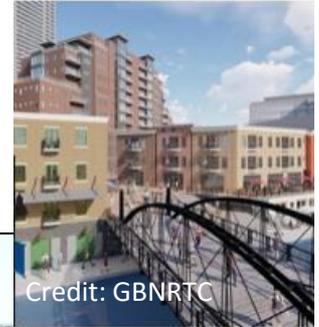
# Transit Oriented Development Stimulates Economic Development

An approach to development that focuses land uses around a transit station or within a transit corridor. Typically, it is characterized by:

- A mix of uses
- Moderate to high density
- Pedestrian orientation/connectivity
- Transportation choices
- Reduced parking
- High quality design

TOD occurs within one-quarter mile, or a five to seven minute walk of a transit station.

<https://www.gbnrtc.org/tod>



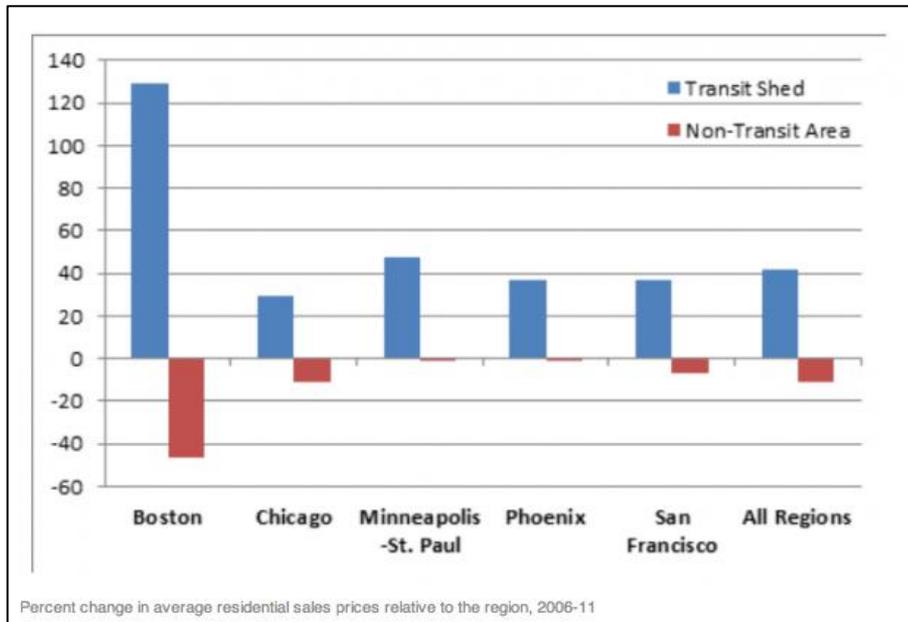
Credit: GBNRTC



Credit: NFTA

# Real Estate Tip: Buy Near Transit

## City Planner Tip: Build More Transit



“People are voting with their feet” ...  
“Consumers are looking for, and choosing. Neighborhoods that they’re able to find more walkable features, that have lower transportation costs, and really just looking at communities in a smart way.

- Sara Aiskerchen  
National Association of Realtors

Lisi, Tom. “Real Estate Tip: Buy Near Transit.”  
TransportationNation. 25 March 2013.

# Some Examples: Tempe, AZ

- Tempe, AZ
  - Positively transformed neighborhoods
  - Provided \$4B boost to the economy
  - Trolley circulator under consideration based on LRT success

“I’m a Republican, and I didn’t vote for Proposition 400. The light rail was a very expensive form of transportation. But the fact that it cleared up a blighted area and brought immense economic development is something that made me very interested... The light rail exceeded what it set out to do. There is value in these systems beyond just transporting people.

- Onnie Shekerjan, Tempe Councilwoman and  
Committee on Technology Chairperson

Tempe feeling many positive, unexpected benefits from light rail. <http://www.mnn.com/green-tech/transportation/stories/tempe-feeling-many-positive-unexpected-benefits-from-light-rail>



# Some More Examples

- Portland, OR

- Total rail cost so far \$512M
- Real estate investment stimulated \$3.8B
- \$76M per in property taxes generated

LightRailNow! Light Rail Progress.

[http://www.lightrailnow.org/myths/m\\_por\\_2006-01a.htm](http://www.lightrailnow.org/myths/m_por_2006-01a.htm)

- Cleveland, OH

- Euclid Corridor  
Transportation BRT

- \$220M BRT investment
- 6.8 miles dedicated ROW
- Transformed communities along the route  
(attracted \$5.8B investment)

Healthline Drives Growth in Cleveland by Jason Helendrung.  
Urbanland. July 13, 2012.

<http://urbanland.uli.org/Articles/2012/July/HellendrungHealthLine>



# Businesses Looking for Cities that Are Well Connected by Transit!

**TALKING TECH**  BUZZ VIDEO PODCASTS NEWSLETTER

## Amazon gets 238 proposals for its second headquarters

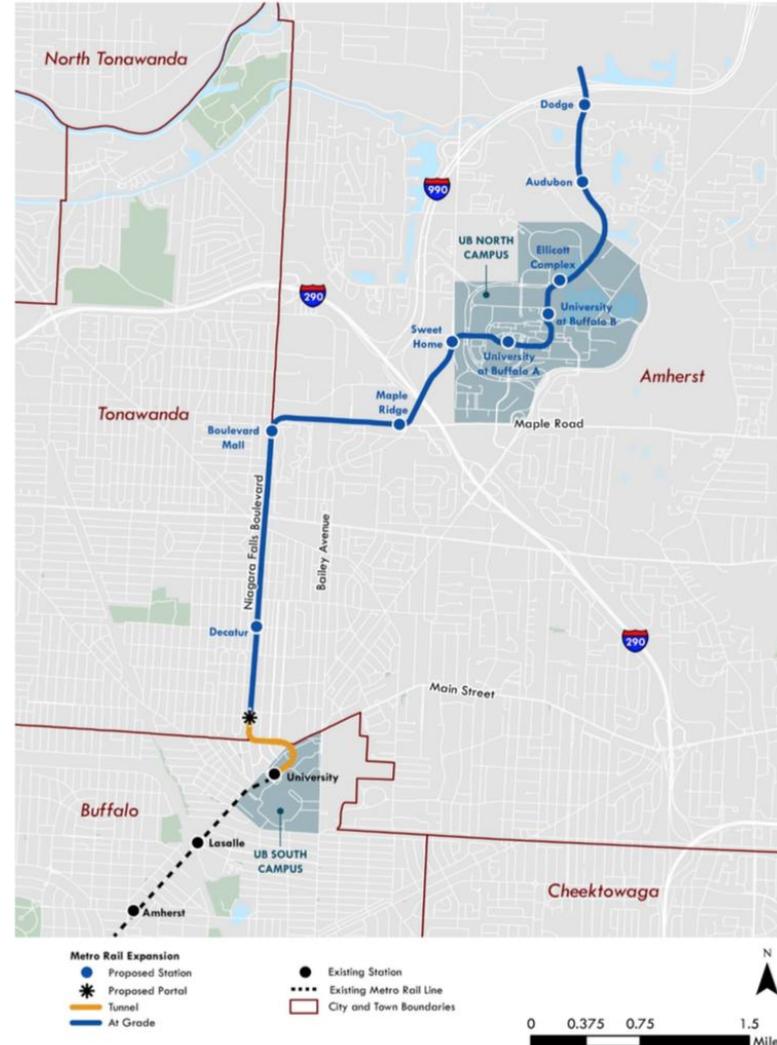
[Mike Snider, USA TODAY](#) Published 11:34 a.m. ET Oct. 23, 2017 | Updated 5:45 p.m. ET Oct. 23, 2017

**Amazon HQ2 Core Preference:**

“Access to mass transit – direct access to rail, train, subway/metro, bus routes”



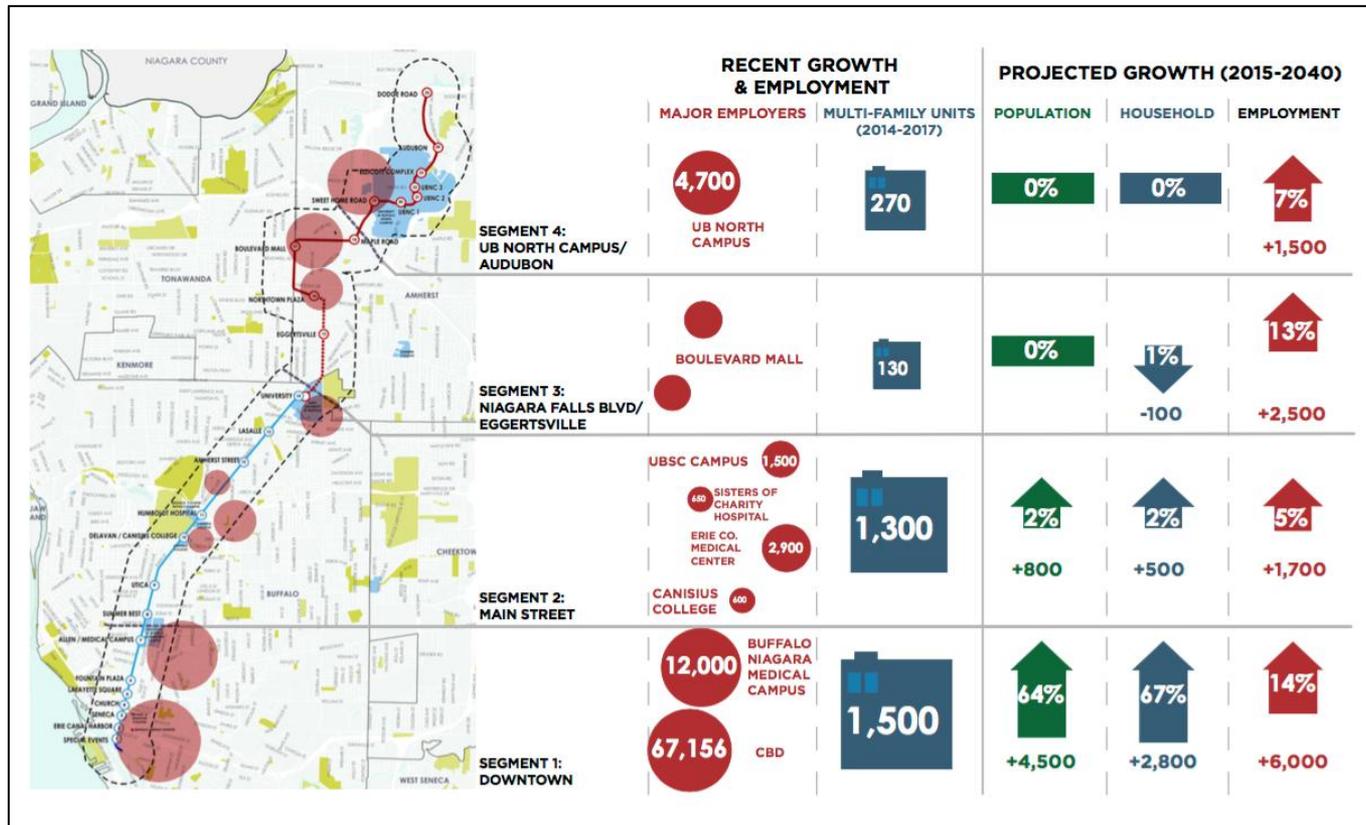
# Amherst Extension Alignment Beginning Engineering Design



Source: NFTA Rail Expansion Draft EIS. December 2019

[https://www.nftametrorailexpansion.com/pdfs/LPA\\_refinement\\_technical\\_report\\_012019.pdf](https://www.nftametrorailexpansion.com/pdfs/LPA_refinement_technical_report_012019.pdf)

# GBNRTC /NFTA Transit Oriented Development (TOD) Projections



Comprehensive Transit-Oriented Development Plan. Final Report. August 2018

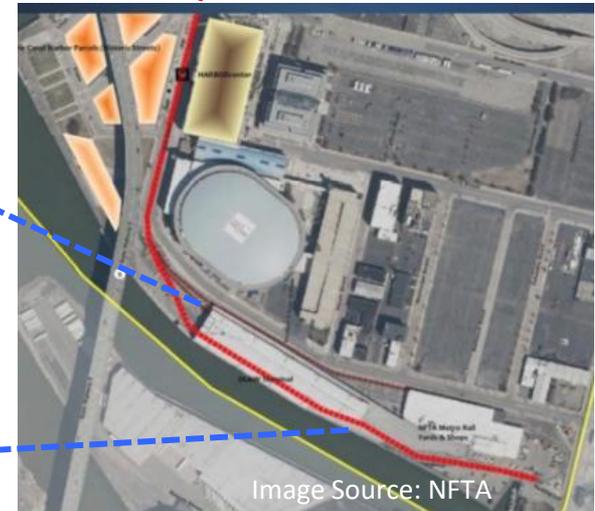
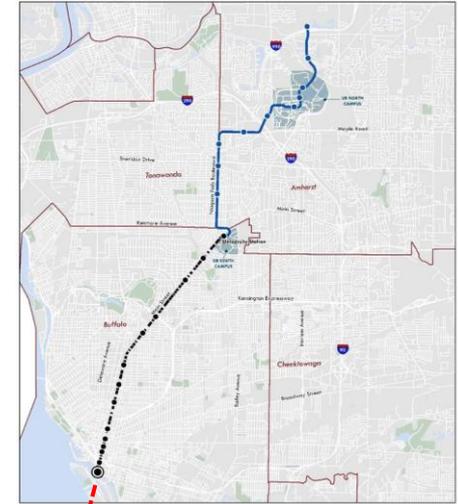
<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/56ccbbfd3c44d8670dbd1d84/t/5ba50772e2c4837b698a9a1b/1537542056538/Comprehensive+Transit-Oriented+Development+Plan+Executive+Summary+August+2018.pdf>



# Planned DL&W Extension



Source: NYS Buffalo Billion Website. <https://buffalobillion.ny.gov/dlw-station>



# CRT Proposed Airport Route

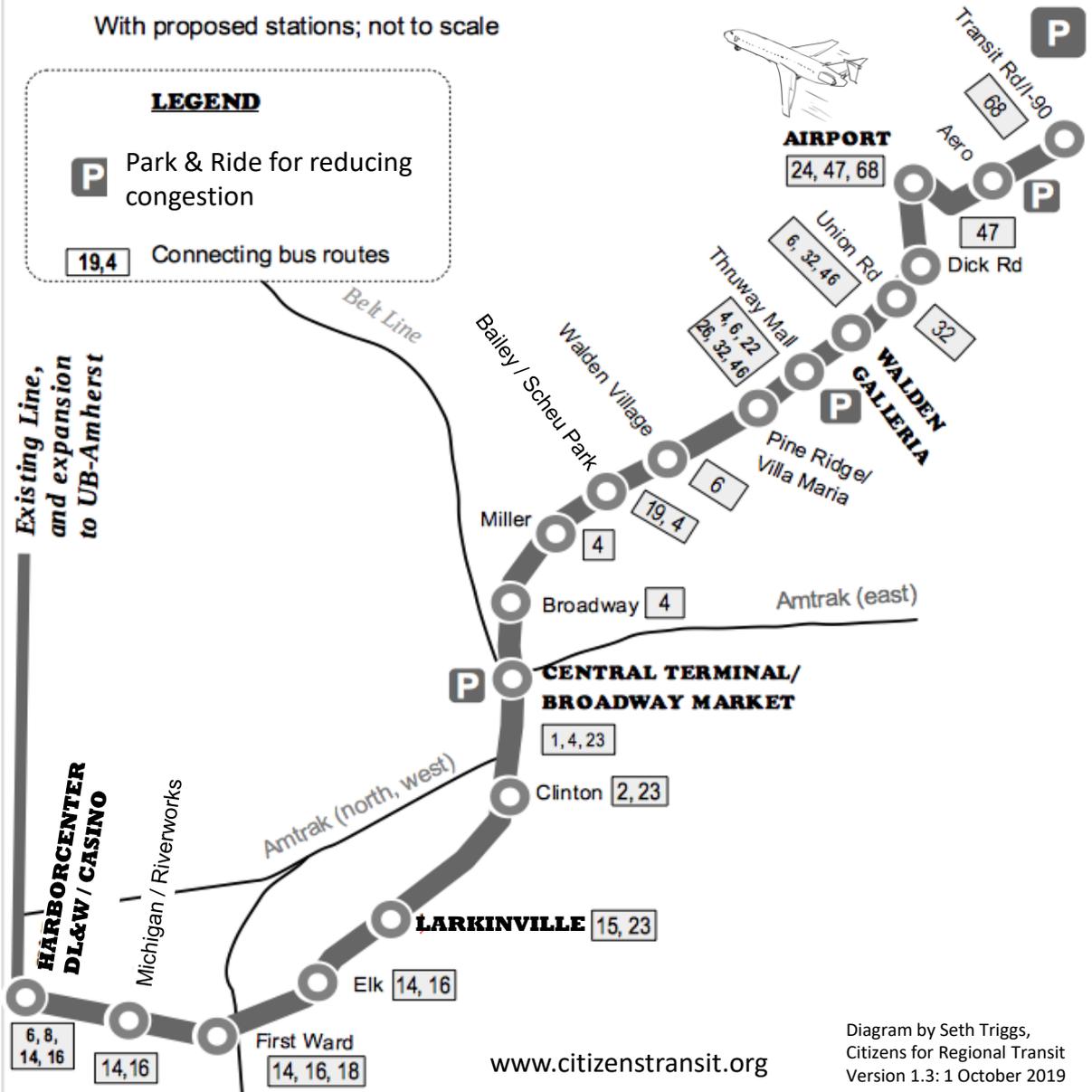
## EASTSIDE – AIRPORT METRO RAIL EXTENSION

With proposed stations; not to scale

**LEGEND**

 Park & Ride for reducing congestion

 Connecting bus routes

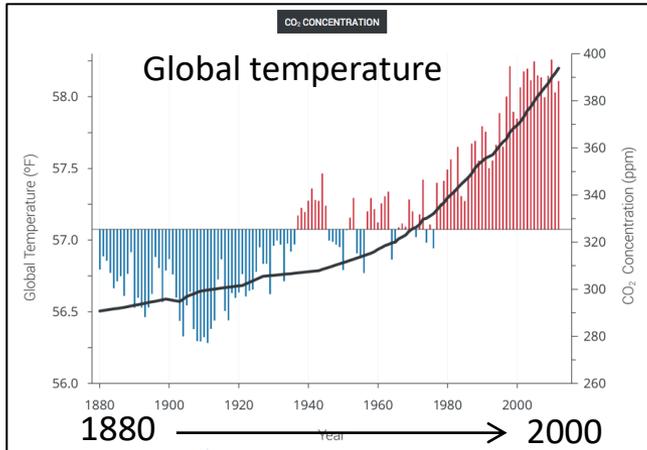


# Topics

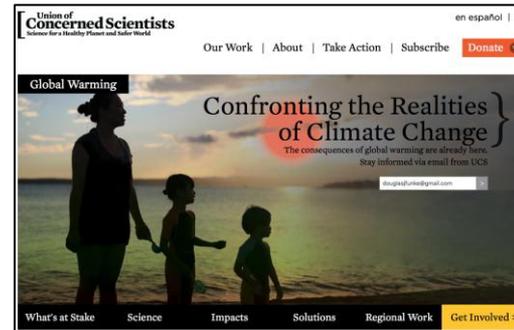
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# Greenhouse Gas Emissions Are the Problem

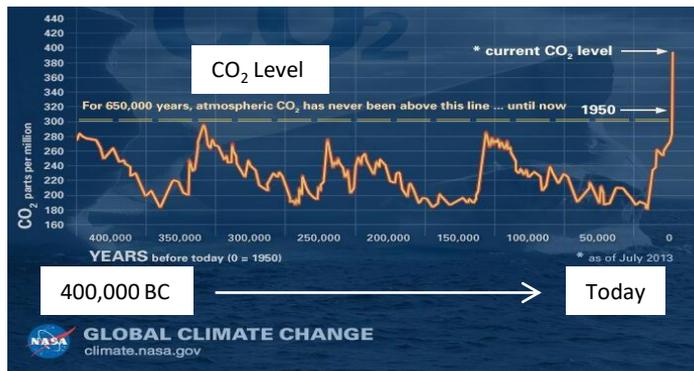


Source: **National Climate Change Assessment Report. 2014.**  
<http://nca2014.globalchange.gov/report/our-changing-climate/observed-change>.



Union of Concerned Scientists,  
 Numerous publications, 2018

<https://www.ucsusa.org/global-warming#.W8dzPS2ZMUE>

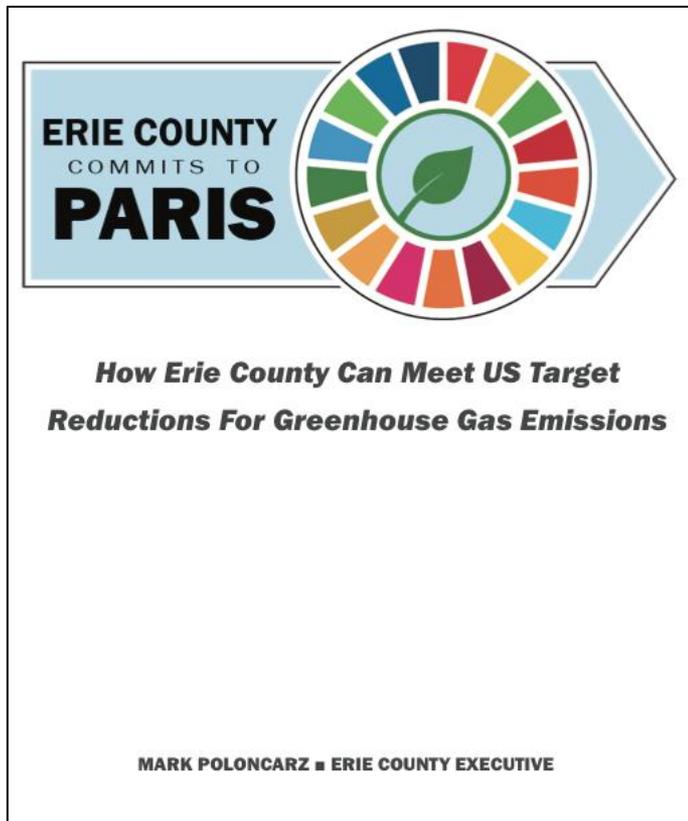


Source. [Climate.NASA.gov/evidence](http://Climate.NASA.gov/evidence)



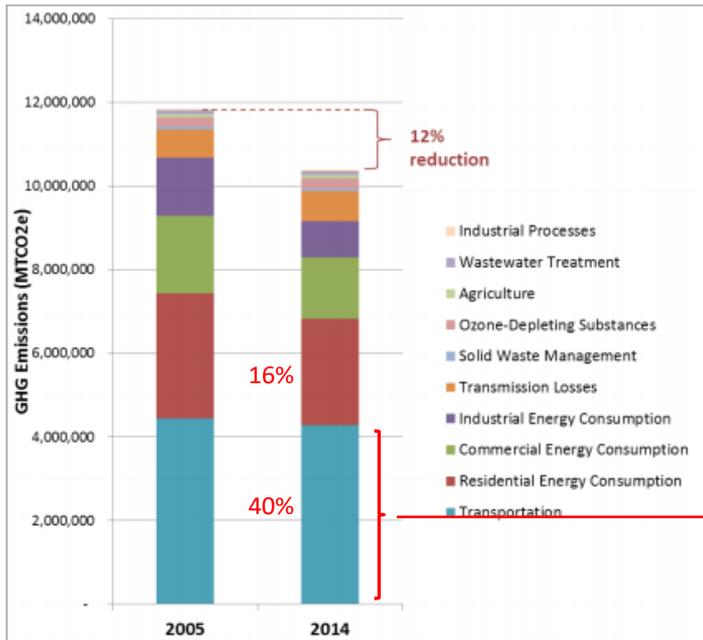
Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), United Nations, October 2018  
<http://www.ipcc.ch/report/sr15/>

# Erie County Commits to US Paris Climate Agreement Targets



- **Reduce GHG emissions county-wide by 26-28% below 2005 levels by 2025**
- 100% renewable energy for County operations by 2030
- Actions:
  - Establish County Green House Gas (GHG) Inventory, update yearly
  - Establish County “Green Team” and “Energy Committee”
  - Establish green energy purchase programs
  - **Incentivize use of public transportation**

# Opportunities for Reducing Residential Energy Consumption



Source: Erie County Commits to Paris

<http://www.fta.dot.gov/documents/PublicTransportationRoleInRespondingToClimateChange2010.pdf>



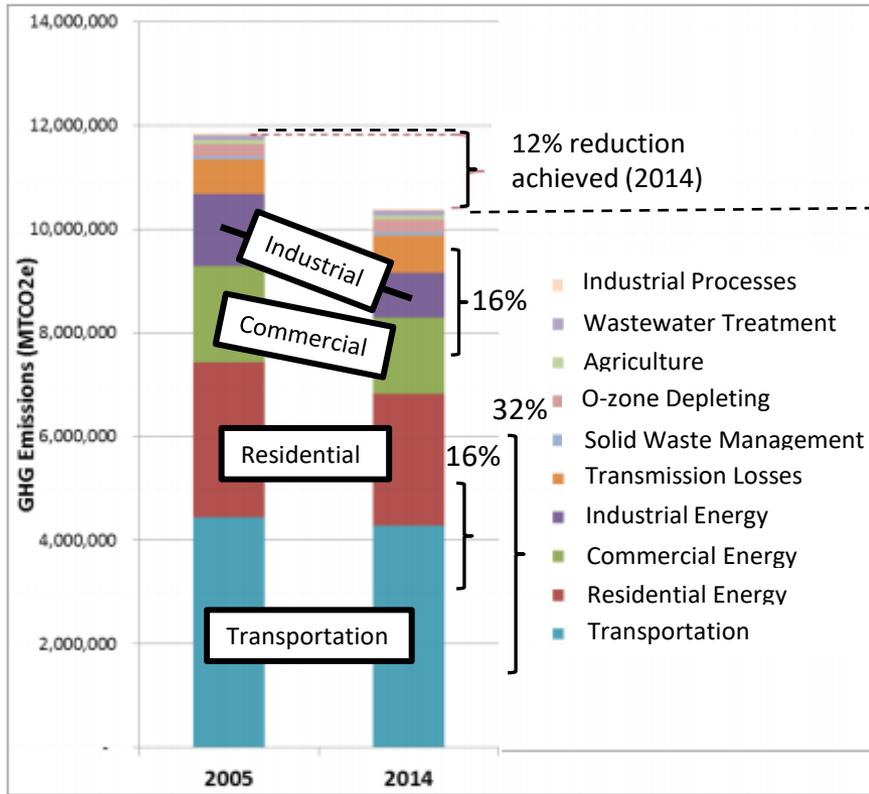
# NYS Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CPCPA)

- Overview
  - 35-40% of benefits to historically disadvantaged communities
  - Accelerates development of wind and solar energy
  - Facilitates growth of energy storage technology
- NYS Electricity from renewables
  - 70% by 2030
  - 100% by 2040
  - Specific targets for offshore wind, solar and energy storage specified.
- **Puts NYS on path to net zero emissions overall**
  - **40% GHG emissions by 2030**
  - **85% GHG emissions by 2050**
  - **This means reductions in the transportation sector!**
- Offsets
  - only where technologically impossible to reduce emissions by other means
  - must be verifiable and permanent

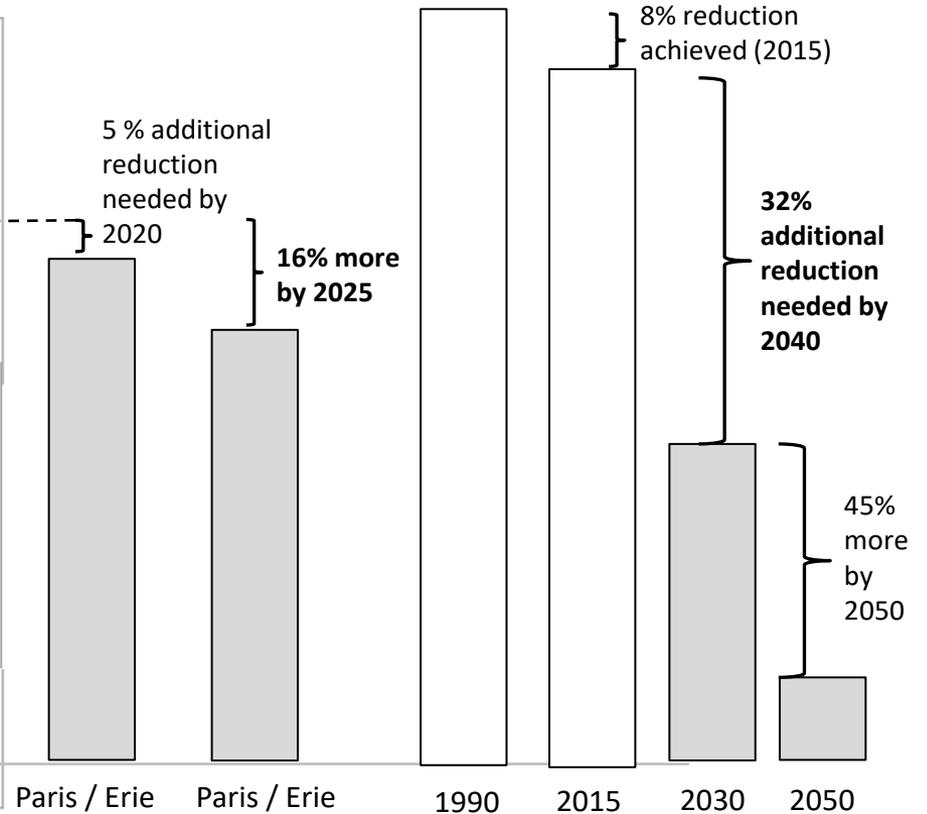


## Erie County Commits to Paris

## NYS CLCPA Commitments

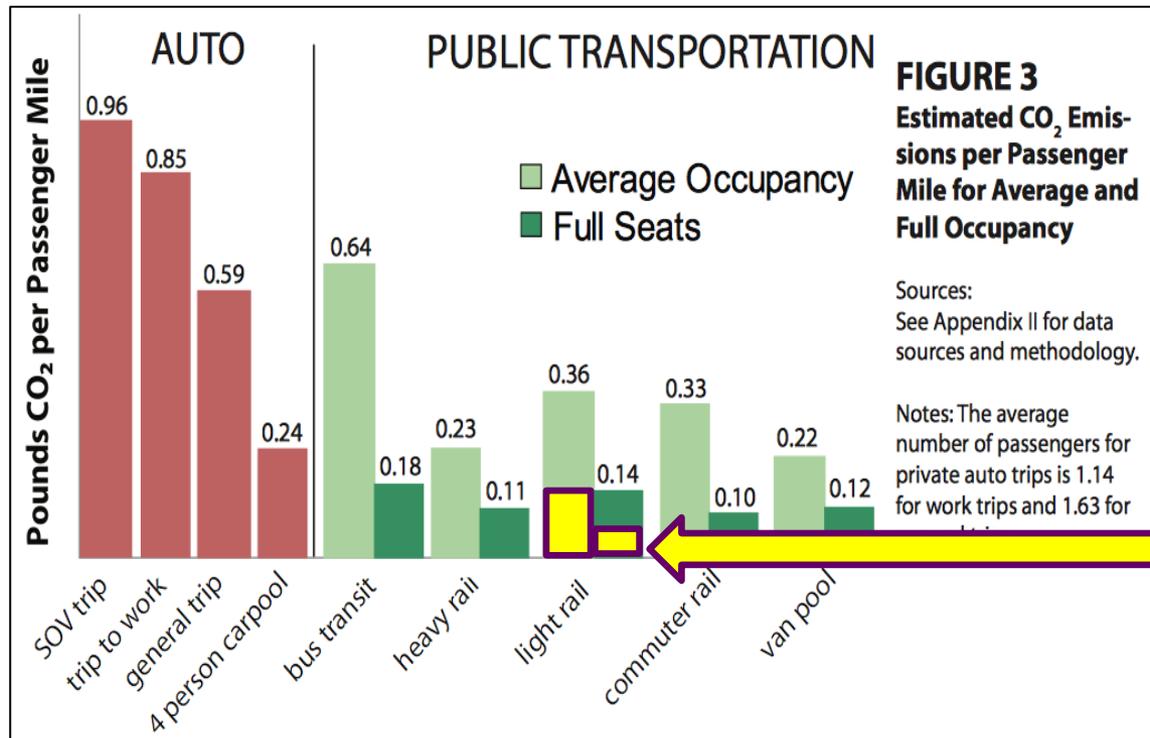


Erie County GHG emissions by sector (Reference 1)



Paris / Erie County 2020 goals (17% reduction)  
 Paris / Erie County 2025 goals (26-28% reduction)  
 1990 NYS GHG emissions (Reference 3)  
 NYS CLCPA (40% reduction from 1990 levels by 2030 and 85% by 2050)

# Transit Can Reduce CO2 Emissions, and We Can Do Even Better in Buffalo!



**Buffalo's Metro Rail Uses 60% hydro power from Niagara Falls**

So with average occupancy  
CO<sub>2</sub> / passenger mile =  
**0.144 pounds**

And with full seats  
CO<sub>2</sub> / passenger mile =  
**0.056 pounds**

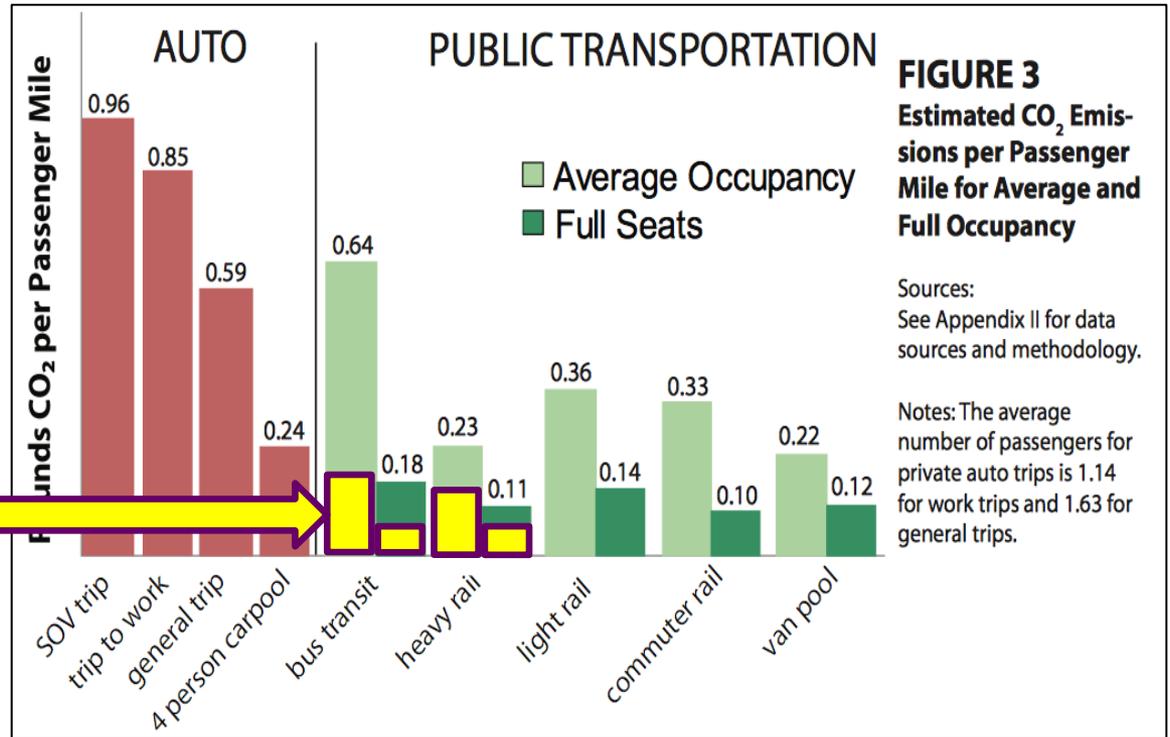
<http://www.fta.dot.gov/documents/PublicTransportationsRoleInRespondingToClimateChange2010.pdf>

# NFTA Is Moving to Electric Buses!

Buffalo's electric buses will reduce CO<sub>2</sub> by 84%

So with average occupancy CO<sub>2</sub> / passenger mile = 0.102 pounds

And with full seats CO<sub>2</sub> / passenger mile = 0.083 pounds



Source: Aber, Judah, Columbia University. Electric Bus Analysis for New York City Transit. May 2016.



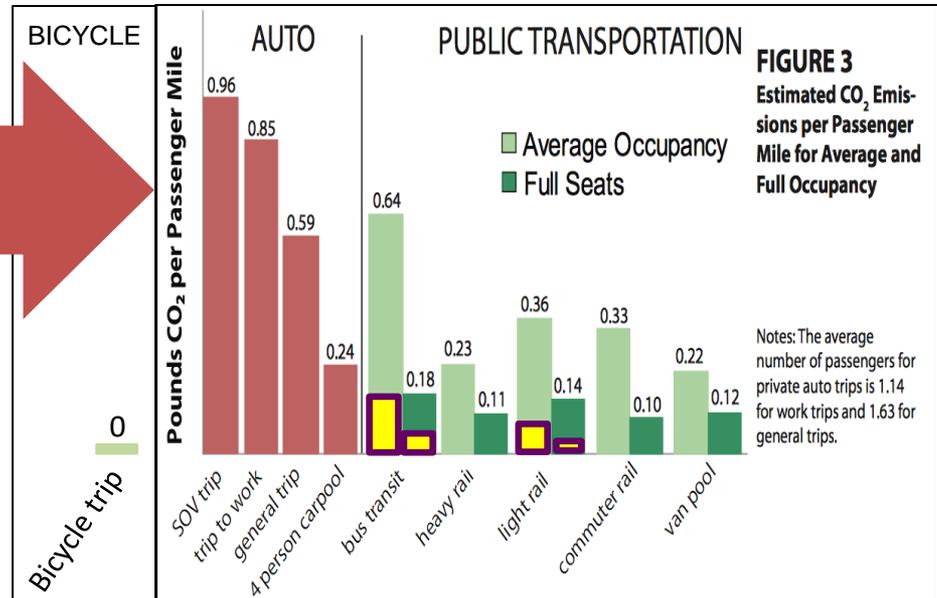
# The Effect of Choosing Between Driving or Taking Transit

Choose  
Transit

Adds negligible CO<sub>2</sub>

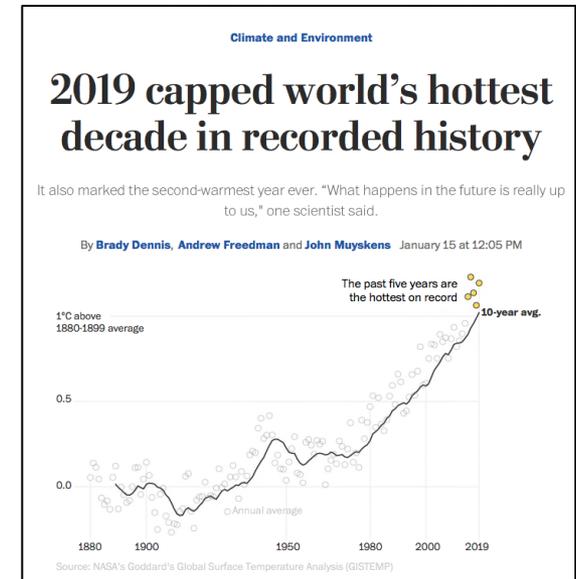
0  
Bus or train

But avoids  
CO<sub>2</sub> from auto



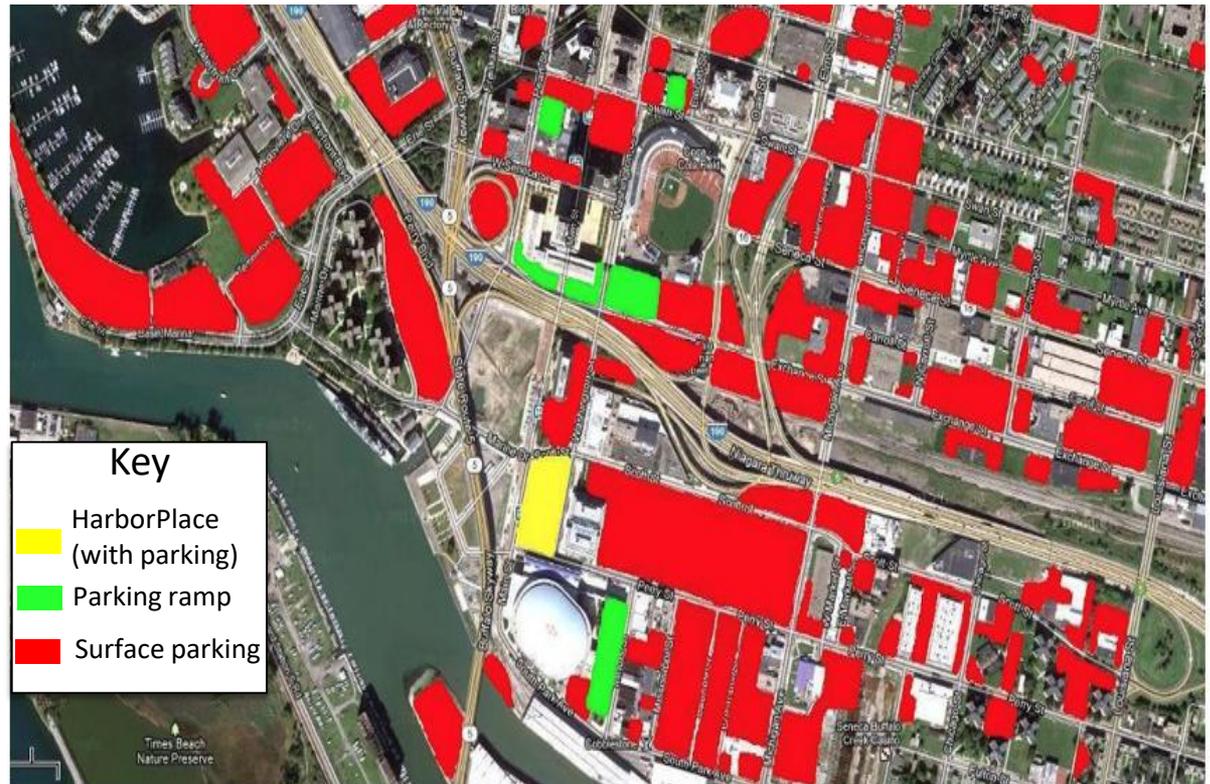
# Transportation and Climate Initiative (TCI)

- Overview
  - 12 states (ME, VT, NH, MA, CT, NY, NJ, PA, NJ, DE, MD, VA)
  - Commitment to reduce GHG emissions from transportation
- Draft MOU Highlights
  - **Establish regional cap & invest program:**
    - “... to transition to more sustainable, resilient, lower-carbon transportation sector”
    - “... that provides ... More transportation options, improved air quality and public health...”
    - “...invest in programs to help... residents transition to affordable, low-carbon transportation options...”
    - “... **Ensure benefits flow equitably to communities that are underserved by clean transportation alternatives, disproportionately bear the costs of the current transportation system** or suffer disproportionate impacts of vehicular pollution and climate change...”
    - “... develop process for auctioning emission allowances...”
  - Establish a regional CO<sub>2</sub> emissions cap that will decline over time to reduce emissions from on-road diesel and finished motor gasoline...”



**The Washington Post**  
*Democracy Dies in Darkness*

# Buffalo's Waterfront (Zoomed-Out): without transit, a congestion and parking magnet



Courtesy of Mark Paradowski from the Preservation-Ready Sites

# Electric Cars to the Rescue?

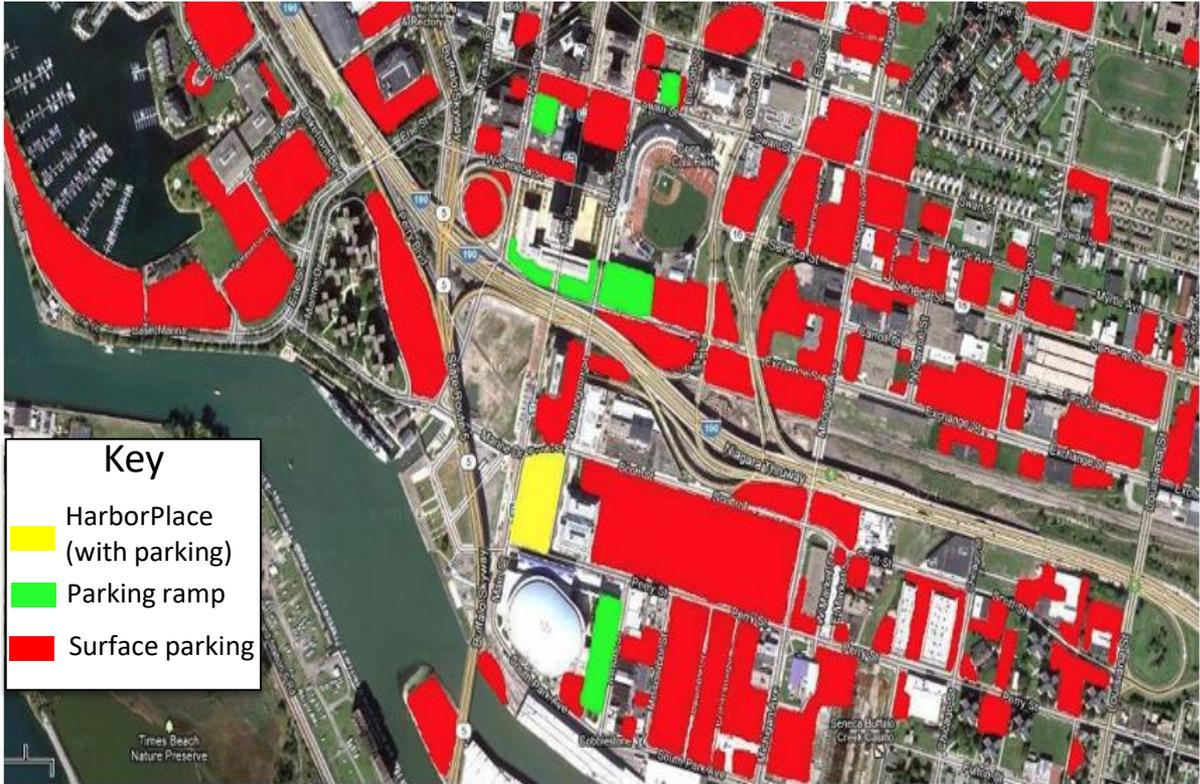
What if we all drove electric cars? Won't that solve the problem?



Image source: NYSERTA. Charge NY. <https://www.nyserda.ny.gov/All-Programs/Programs/ChargeNY>



# Not Exactly...



Courtesy of Mark Paradowski from the Preservation-Ready Sites

# The Math Is Simple

What does it take to move 560 people?

1 train (Four cars)



8 buses



Anywhere from 140 to 560 cars\* (270 shown here)



Adapted from: Transport Sydney Trains (<http://www.sydneytrains.info/about/environment/>)

\* From "RAILFAN GUIDES of the U.S." > Todd's Railfan Guide to the Buffalo, NY NFTA Light Rail System (<http://www.railfanguides.us/ny/buffalo/lightrail/index.htm>)



# The Math Is Simple

What does it take to move 560 people?

1 train (Four cars)



8 buses



Anywhere from 140 to 560 cars\* (270 shown here)



**Every 10 minutes!  
In each direction of  
service!**

Adapted from: Transport Sydney Trains (<http://www.sydneytrains.info/about/environment/>)

\* From "RAILFAN GUIDES of the U.S"> Todd's Railfan Guide to the Buffalo, NY NFTA Light Rail System (<http://www.railfanguides.us/ny/buffalo/lightrail/index.htm>)



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# Community Leaders Who Have Joined with Us to Demand a Transit Revolution!

1. Extend Metro Rail along highest demand corridors
2. Provide inter-modal connectivity
3. Establish long-term sustainable transit funding

**City of Niagara Falls**  
(Aug 2016)  
- Mayor Paul Dyster  
- NF City Council



**City of Tonawanda**  
- Mayor Rick Davis  
(Mar 2015)



**Erie County**  
- Executive Mark Poloncarz  
(July 2018)



**City of Buffalo**  
- The Buffalo Common Council  
(Dec 2015)



**City of Lackawanna**  
- Lackawanna City Council  
(Sep 2018)



**Village of Hamburg**  
- Mayor Tom Moses  
(Feb 2018)  
-- Village Council  
(Nov 2015)



**City of North Tonawanda**  
- Mayor Arthur Pappas  
(Dec 2015)



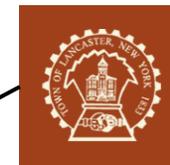
**Town of Tonawanda**  
- Supervisor Joseph Emminger  
(Feb 2019)  
- Town Board  
(Feb 2019)



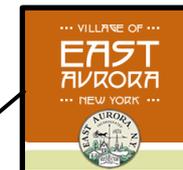
**Town of Cheektowaga**  
- Town Council  
(Oct 2015)



**Town of Lancaster**  
- Town Council  
(Dec 2016)



**Village of East Aurora** -  
- Mayor Alan Kasprzak  
(Oct 2015)



**Village of Orchard Park** -  
- Mayor Jo Ann Litwin  
Clinton  
(Oct 2015)



**Village of Orchard Park**



# Organizations That Have Signed

1. Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) 1342
2. Alpha Kappa Chi
3. Buffalo-Niagara Gardening.com
4. **BBN Homes LLC**
5. **Bijou Grill**
6. **Buffalo Computer Graphics**
7. **Buffalo Development Corporation**
8. **Buffalo First, Inc.**
9. **Buffalo Transportation Pierce Arrow Museum**
10. Buffalo Urban League
11. Buffalo and Erie County Botanical Gardens
12. Buffalo Transit Central
13. Campaign for Greater Buffalo
14. Catholic Charities
15. **Carmina Wood Morris**
16. Cazenovia Community Resource Center
17. Central Terminal Restoration Corporation
18. Challenger Community News
19. **Ciminelli Real Estate Corporation**
20. Citizens 4 the Beautification of Lovejoy
21. Coalition for Economic Justice (CEJ)
22. Communications Workers of America (CWA 1133)
23. Concerned Ecumenical Ministry
24. Courtland Avenue Block Club
25. Daemon College Center for Sustainable Communications and Civic Engagement
26. **Douglas Development Corporation**
27. **Eco\_Logix Studio, Architecture & Engineering, PLLC**
28. Earth Spirit Educational Services Inc.
29. **Environmental Services Group**
30. Fillmore Corridor Neighborhood Coalition
31. Fillmore Forward
32. Friends of Times Beach
33. The Fruitbelt Coalition
34. Go Buffalo Niagara
35. Geo Operative
36. Global Villages Coalition
37. GoBike Buffalo
38. Greater Eastside – Field of Dreams Block Club
39. **Hostel Buffalo-Niagara**
40. Housing Opportunities Made Equal
41. **Human First Ergonomics**
42. Interfaith Peace Network of WNY
43. iT Garden
44. Journey's End Refuge Service
45. **Kaleida Health**
46. Ken-Ton Chamber of Commerce
47. **The Knoer Group, PLLC**
48. Latin American Cultural Association
49. League of Women Voters (Buffalo Niagara)
50. Lincoln Memorial Church (UMC)
51. Masten Block Club Coalition
52. The Merry-Wood Block Club Association
53. NAACP Buffalo Branch
54. Network of Religious Communities
55. Partners for a Livable Western NY
56. Partnership for the Public Good (PPG)
57. Prisoners Are People Too
58. PUSH Buffalo (People United for Sustainable Housing)
59. Re-Energize Buffalo
60. Restore Our Community Coalition (ROCC)
61. Riverside Salem UCC / DOC
62. Roebling Avenue Block Club
63. **Sail Buffalo**
64. Sierra Club (Niagara Group)
65. South Fillmore Block Club
66. University District Community Development Association
67. University Park Historic Block Club
68. VOICE Buffalo
69. Wellness Institute of Greater Buffalo
70. Westside Stories
71. **WNY Law Center**
72. WNY Peace Center
73. **Young and Wright Architectural**
74. 21<sup>st</sup> Century Park on the Outer Harbor

## Signers by Category

**18 Business leaders**

**56 Community organizations**

# Community Support for Transit Reflected in One Region Forward Outreach

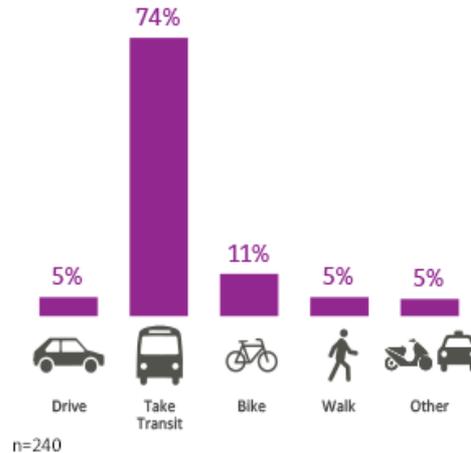


Question #3: To improve our transportation system, our top priority should be making it easier to...

- A. Drive
- B. Take Transit
- C. Bike
- D. Walk
- E. Other

A large majority of citizens (74%) responded that **making it easier to take transit** was key to improving our region's transportation system.

To improve our transportation system, we should make it easier to...



## How should we move forward?

- “106 out of 115 (92%) maps said increase ways to get around without a car is a guiding principle”
- “On average participants added 59 miles of metro rail

## How do our choices play out?

- “A larger percentage of jobs and homes would be served by transit”
- “We would depend less on cars for our daily trips, conserve more energy, and emit less carbon”

## What could we do differently?

- “Connect land use to transportation, especially public transit”
- “The region should make transit funding and system improvement a top priority for advocacy and action”

# Topics

- Citizens for Regional Transit
- What we had and lost
- What other cities are doing to get it back
- The world's greatest waterfront
- Why extend Buffalo's Light Rail – the financial case
- Transit and the Environment
- Is there public support?
- **Conclusion**



# Let's Connect our Region with Transit



Contiguous Urbanized Area

Image courtesy for Dan Leonard, Economic Development Director at the Buffalo Niagara Partnership

Toronto-Hamilton-Buffalo-Rochester

Population = 9 million

GDP = \$450 billion