



# CITIZENS REGIONAL TRANSIT NEWS

published by Citizens Regional Transit Corporation  
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Volume #4 Issue #1

January, 2003

## Roll Metro Rail past Arena

by E. Edward Deutschman,  
chairman

Ten years ago, in 1992, the NFTA put a moratorium on expanding Metro Rail.

Missed opportunities during these ten years include:

- \* new light rail lines from the suburbs brought more people downtown without any need for additional parking;
- \* developers built new housing, stores, offices and entertainment complexes adjacent to light rail lines, thus increasing the tax base;
- \* use of the light rail system reduced the need for expensive new road building and widening, and helped to reduce wear and tear on existing roads and bridges.

Our politicians say that it is too expensive to build any new Metro Rail extension. Recently, Buffalo Place and other business interests are suggesting otherwise. These business interests want to build a short extension of Metro Rail to run past the HSBC Arena (Buffalo News, 11-4-02). They find that such an extension would be less expensive to operate and maintain than the current shuttle bus service offered by Buffalo Place.

The CRTC Executive Board toured the area recently. Here is what we found:

An extension of Metro Rail down South Park Avenue, then left on Chicago Street, then left on Perry Street would add access for more than 1100 apartments, including the new Elk Market Terminal complex. Continuing on Perry Street, the extension would serve the parking lots and ramp between Columbia St. and the HSBC Arena, then return to Main St.

Voila! the Cobblestone area's alive.

## CRTC Comments Submitted Regarding TEA-03

*The following comments were submitted to the USDOT on behalf of the Citizens Regional Transit Corp (CRTC), a grassroots, volunteer, dues-paying organization which educates Western New York about public transportation:*

The Citizens Regional Transit Corp offers two suggestions for the transportation reauthorization bill, currently undergoing discussion in Congress, as follows:

- Operating Assistance: restore the option for urbanized areas with populations over 200,000 to use formula funds for capital needs or operating needs.

It is clear that the requirement for local funding for operations and maintenance cannot be readily met by local dollars, such as in Western New York. The local transit authority in Buffalo, the Niagara Frontier Transit Authority, will not plan for any capital improvements because it does not have adequate provision for operations and maintenance to cover normal operations of such capital improvements. Federal incentives to build a better transit system have failed in Western New York because these incentives do not include funds for transit operations.

- Transit Enhancements Program (TEP): include the following language in descriptions of projects that qualify-- "transit connections to parks, *historic districts and cultural attractions*."

The TEP is the only part of TEA21 which is generated by the public and encourages the public to take an active role in designing any aspect of their transportation infrastructure. Such new language would encourage more variety in the projects to be submitted for Federal funding, such as our proposed Vintage Trolley, in Buffalo, NY, which would connect cultural attractions with historic districts to facilitate tourism.

## New Year's at CRTC

by Gladys Gifford,

January is as good time to take stock of who we are, where we've been, and where we're going.

CRTC's work is to promote an integrated multimodal public transit system which serves all citizens of WNY. In support of our mission, we act as a watch-dog over the current transportation system. We persistently raise questions, hoping for positive answers. Here are a few good questions that we plan to raise in 2003:

What has the NFTA done to ensure that the capital maintenance for the subway stations be done?

When will the Inter-modal Transportation Center Record of Decision be issued and the first phase of construction begin?

Who will plan the 1.5 mile extension of Metro Rail past the HSBC Arena, and when will it be constructed?

What fresh ideas will our WNY Congressional delegation bring for consideration in the new transportation bill (reauthorize TEA21)?

Will the discussions of the future of the Skyway include realistic studies of current traffic patterns, as well as plans for extension of Metro Rail to the Southtowns?

Will the Niagara Falls casino result in better passenger rail connections between Buffalo and Niagara Falls?

Now that the GBNRTC has done a Safety Study of the Kensington Expressway, what action will our leaders take to alleviate those problems?

These are some of the questions that CRTC will be following in 2003.

Stay tuned.

## CRTC says, "Thank You!" to Annual Fund Drive Donors

A hearty, "Thank you!" to all who responded to our annual year-end fund raiser:

- Christopher Beale
- John Beutel
- Paul Bond
- Joan Bozer
- E. Edward Deutschman
- George Grasser
- John Howell
- Jack Komorowski
- Robert Lenz
- Michael Lewyn
- Richard Olday
- Joseph Radder
- Katherine Tarbell
- David Tocke
- Seth Triggs
- Elizabeth Weberg
- John Weiksner
- Sigmund Zakrzewski

CRTC thanks all members and friends who have supported our work with generous donations of time and money throughout the year.

Here's to a productive and energetic New Year!

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### Citizens Regional Transit Corp.

aims to improve and expand bus and rail transit for all of WNY through citizen involvement and education.

Join us! Membership dues are fully tax-deductible:

corporate	\$100.00
household	35.00
individual	25.00
student	5.00

send check to:

**CITIZENS REGIONAL TRANSIT CORP.**  
c/o Alvin J. Schuster, treasurer  
174 Capen Blvd., Amherst, NY 14226

## On Track, Here and There

...Kudos to the **NFTA** for a new advertising campaign. They displayed a banner on the side of the NFTA building this fall: an ad saying, "You relax, I'll drive." Bravo!

...On 12-31-02, **NFTA's** Metro Bus offered free shuttle service between First Night venues from 5 p.m. to 10:15 p.m. Metro shuttles operated approximately every 10 minutes in both directions along the designated route.

...**Charlotte, NC**, will build its starter line soon, along South Boulevard, a downtown commercial strip. Real estate purchases are under way, and developers are already buying land in the vicinity of the proposed light rail stations to create new apartment buildings. Construction is scheduled to start this summer. This project is a model of track-sharing with an operating railroad, Norfolk Southern. The historic **Charlotte Trolley** will continue to operate on the northernmost two miles of track, along with regular light rail service. ...*Railfan & Railroad*

...A new and attractive intermodal terminal now graces **Frederick, Maryland**, served by MARC trains (on weekdays), local buses and Greyhound.

**Tampa, FL**, opened its TECO Line historic streetcar daily service on 10-19-02, from downtown to Channelside and Ybor City (2.3 mi.). It is managed by non-profit Tampa Historic Streetcar Inc., and run by the local transit agency, Hillsborough Area Regional Transit Authority.

**Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART)** extended its Blue line from LBJ/Skillman in Dallas to downtown Garland on 11-18-02 (4.6 mi.). DART expansion of its Red line from Richardson to Plano was planned for 12-9-02.

Metrolink commuter trains on the **Ventura County, CA**, line began serving Montalvo, 5 mi. west of Oxnard, CA, on 11-11-02. ...*narprail.org*

*sketch by Seth Triggs*

## Richard Sampson and Seth Triggs Receive CRTC Grants

Two students who are currently pursuing a career in urban planning/geography have been awarded grants from the Gordon Thompson Memorial Scholarship Fund. Each continues to be actively interested in the work of the CRTC.

Richard Sampson plans to complete his undergraduate degree at The Catholic University of America in May, 2003. He is employed by the Community Transportation of America ([www.ctaa.org](http://www.ctaa.org)), where he writes for its quarterly publication, RAIL Magazine. Rich says, "I hope to combine the ethos of Gordon's work and the advocacy demonstrated by the CRTC in my future career."

Seth Triggs is a student in the Geography Department at the University at Buffalo. Public transportation is one of his of research interests. His eventual goal is a degree in geography, with special emphasis on public transportation. He hopes to pursue a career in research and teaching at the college level.

# Rumblings in Washington

*Mobilizing the Region, 12-23-02* tstc@tstc.org

As part of its TEA-21 reauthorization work, the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, chaired by Rep. Don Young of Alaska, is working on a plan to pay for estimated U.S. transportation system investment and maintenance needs over the next seven years. The plan proposes increasing gas taxes by 2 cents per gallon per year, totaling 30.4 cents per gallon by 2009, indexing the gas tax to the Consumer Price Index, which would generate about \$18 billion from now until 2009, raising ethanol taxes, and reorganizing Highway Trust Fund interest and fuel taxes to help pay for projects (much of this revenue currently goes into the general fund).

The plan comes after the FTA estimated that \$75 billion worth of maintenance work will be needed by 2009 to get the nation's transportation systems into a state of good repair. An estimated \$60 billion is needed to pay for maintenance on highways, up from \$32 billion, while \$12 billion is needed for transit, up from 7 billion. Note that this a 71% increase in transit maintenance spending and an 88% boost for roads.

Young hopes to have a bill finalized by March. However, the tax increase emphasis seems to reflect the internal preoccupations of the transportation world at the expense of the broader political climate. To put it mildly, it seems very un-Bush-like. The administration says it will release its proposed "TEA-3" legislation early next year, along with its 2004 budget.

Separately, Sen. John McCain, set to chair the Senate Commerce Committee, said he would convene hearings on Amtrak reform next year.

[Despite] McCain's past calls for rail privatization, many Republican senators retain a basic ambivalence about killing Amtrak off. "We've got to have a commitment by Amtrak that it's going to be a national system," Texas' Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison told Gannett [newspapers]. She said the company devotes too much money and attention on the Northeast. "There's got to be an evening-out of the resources."

# Republican Senate's Impact on Transportation

*Transfer, 1-6-03* www.transact.org

Senator James Inhofe (R-OK) will ascend to chairman of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, replacing Senator James Jeffords (I-VT) who is slated to become the panel's Ranking Minority Member. While the new Committee Chair has not yet publicly announced his agenda for the panel, Inhofe has pledged to make renewal of TEA-21 a top priority.

While regarded as an outspoken critic of the Clean Air Act or other environmental statutes, generally urging more attention to better science and costs and benefits, Inhofe has already indicated that any legislative proposals to amend the Clean Air Act will be taken up by the Committee after completing action on TEA-21.

Foremost on his TEA-21 agenda will be correcting what he perceives are funding imbalances among the states, often called the donor/donee issue (i.e. Oklahoma contributes more highway-related tax dollars than it gets back in program spending). This concern is one that he shares with Senator Kit Bond (R-MO), the new incoming chair of the panel's Subcommittee on Transportation, Infrastructure and Nuclear Safety.

Inhofe is also expected to pursue TEA-21 proposals that would emphasize highway capacity improvements, including provisions to streamline applicable environmental and other rules to move such projects forward more expeditiously. Public and environmental review processes, transportation and air quality conformity provisions, and the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality program are among several issues that are expected to receive particular attention by the new chairman during Committee action on legislation renewing TEA-21.

Senator Richard Shelby (R-AL) is slated to take the reins of the Senate Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs Committee, the panel with jurisdiction over the transit title of TEA 21. Shelby, in his capacity as a leading appropriator on transportation funding issues has been extensively involved in transit and other transportation funding issues.

In the past, Shelby has been a strong proponent of "minimum allocation" proposals governing the distribution of federal transit funds, measures aimed at ensuring a minimum level of transit funding among states and transit providers, independent of transit capacity and service levels.

Senator Wayne Allard (R-CO), who is expected to take over from Senator Jack Reed (D-RI) as chair of the Banking Subcommittee on Housing and Transportation, has also previously championed minimum allocation provisions.

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**TEA-3 Timeline:**

January 108th Congress convenes; Bush administration to submit TEA-21 renewal bill to Congress.

February House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee to introduce TEA-21 renewal package.  
Senate schedule uncertain, but goal is to have final bill by September 30.

February 17-21 Congress in recess, members available in districts

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## CRTC Annual Meeting to Feature:

### \* Election of Officers

### \* Buffalo-Airport-Transit Road Presentation

The CRTC Annual Meeting will be held on January 21, 7:30 PM, at 3330 Main Street, Buffalo, in the education wing of University Presbyterian Church. The meeting is open to the public.

The main business of the CRTC will be to elect officers for 2003.

E. Deutschman, G. Gifford and G. Stein will present the "Buffalo-Airport-Transit Road Light Rail Corridor," as shown recently to the Buffalo-Niagara Partnership.

The February 18th CRTC meeting will be held at noon, and will feature special guest George Grasser, from Partners for a Livable WNY.

## CRTC Welcomes You--Your Energy and Ideas-- Come to a Meeting! Contact us with your Suggestions!

## CALENDAR

**Jan. 13** 6:00 PM  
Partners for a Livable WNY  
United Way Office Bldg., Buffalo

**Jan. 16** 4:00 PM Regional  
Coalition for Education on Sprawl  
1272 Delaware Avenue

**Jan. 17** 10:00 AM  
GBNRTC Policy Meeting  
Central Library, Buffalo

**Jan. 21** 7:30 PM  
CRTC Annual Meeting  
3330 Main St., Buffalo

**Feb. 10** 6:00 PM  
Partners for a Livable WNY  
United Way Office Bldg., Buffalo

**Feb. 12** 9:30 AM  
GBNRTC PCC meeting  
City Hall, Buffalo

**Feb. 18** noon  
CRTC monthly meeting  
3330 Main St., Buffalo

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### Quotable Quotes:

...A letter to President Bush from 43 U.S. Senators urges investment in public transit as the Administration develops its reauthorization proposal for TEA-21.

"Our nation's transit systems are especially critical to the overall economy," wrote the Senators. "Transit systems in urban, suburban, and rural areas throughout the country link people to jobs, medical care, shopping, and other essential services."

Senators from both parties from 28 states signed the letter. *Transfer*, 1-6-03 [www.transact.org](http://www.transact.org)

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