



CITIZENS for REGIONAL TRANSIT NEWS

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Welcome to the New Year!

A fresh air of opportunity for light rail transit in Buffalo is circulating in 2006.

Witness recent features in the Buffalo News: a full-length article about Metro Rail in Sunday, January 8; two columns published in December about riding on Metro Rail by Mary Kunz Goldman; and the Why Not Buffalo? series which put transportation on the list of regional issues in need of improvement.

Witness changes at the NFTA Board of Commissioners, when Governor Pataki appoints the new Chairman as well as a new Commissioner.

Witness the start-up of "Cars Sharing Main Street" with public input on Feb. 1 to comment on the design of the project.

Witness more economic development coming to the Cobblestone District as well as continuing transit-oriented development at Allen Street Station.

And, witness continuing regional planning at the Greater Buffalo Niagara Regional Transportation Council (GBNRTC). The GBNRTC is in the process of revising its Long-Range Plan. This plan is expected to govern the transportation planning done in WNY up to the year 2030. Will it include Metro Rail expansion?

Will we witness changes, in 2006?

Our newly elected leaders will be seeking to make their mark early in their careers.

Let's show them which way the wind is blowing, by insisting that Metro Rail expansion is the best way for long-term, lasting improvement in WNY.

Let's all participate in public meetings.

Let's tell the planners what transit improvements we want in our communities.

Let's be the change we desire.

CRTC Annual Meeting

**Tuesday, January 17
7:30 PM**

"Opportunities in 2006"

The CRTC Annual Meeting will include election of officers and one amendment to the CRTC by-laws. Discussion will center on CRTC goals for 2006.

Join us!

Citizens Regional Transit meets at:

3330 Main Street, corner NF Blvd., Buffalo

University Presbyterian Church education wing
Enter through the parking lot door, take elevator to "ML."

CRTC meetings are free and open to the public.

Hudson-Bergen: a Joyride in Jersey

by Seth Triggs

Of all states that have embraced light rail, few—if any—have expanded light rail as aggressively as has New Jersey. In the past five years, New Jersey Transit has created two brand new, long lines. One of these lines is the first light rail transit system in the New York City metropolitan area, the Hudson-Bergen Light Rail.

The Hudson-Bergen Light Rail first opened on the weekend of April 22-23, 2000. Originally, the line was entirely within Jersey City, NJ, running from West Side Avenue to Harborside Financial Center. Further expansions brought a mainline south to Bayonne and later Hoboken, resulting in an excellent intermodal connection with the Port Authority Trans-Hudson (PATH), NJ Transit commuter rail and ferry service.

The line was again extended to the north in what is going to be the great push northwest along an abandoned Conrail right of way. The HBLR's northern extension begins at Hoboken and will eventually end in the town of North Bergen. Right now the extension is just over halfway completed—a new station will be dug at Bergenline Avenue in an abandoned railway tunnel before the line's eventual terminus at Tonelle Avenue. At this time, the line terminates at Port Imperial Station. This station also features intermodal connections to ferry service, making the HBLR one of the most accessible light rail systems in the country.

I had the opportunity to ride the Hudson-Bergen Light Rail in its entirety in November 2005. Immediately upon reaching the Hoboken terminus, I was struck by the attention to lighting and aesthetics by New Jersey Transit.

The stations are extremely attractive and are well-equipped with state-of-the-art technology, such as fully electronic ticket machines, destination boards and automated on-board announcements for the trains.

The trains themselves are sleek and fast Siemens articulated units, which may run as a single vehicle or a coupled pair. These trains have a bright lighting scheme on the interior, as well as very comfortable seating. Space for seating and standing is indeed very generous on the HBLR. I found the ride to be exceptionally smooth and comfortable.

In the operator's cab, the driver has a great deal of the latest technology available. Along with the usual vehicle controls that you would expect to find in nearly any light rail vehicle are television monitors that allow the driver to view the right-of-way—even at night. The numerous technological and safety features—and the choice of these particular vehicles—clearly show that NJ Transit wants to remain at the forefront of not only transit expansion, but transit safety.

This is clearly a line that Buffalo could emulate. The HBLR easily blends street running and grade separation into a very efficient mix, with some sections allowing 60 mile-per-hour speeds. The street-running sections are easily blended into the surrounding traffic context; and furthermore are prevented from undue delay by slight grade separation. Indeed, this is one of the strongest aspects of light-rail in general; its flexibility and compatibility with both automotive and pedestrian uses. This line quickly covers a distance that would take over an hour to traverse through heavy vehicular traffic.

As I completed my joyride of the system, my thoughts assessed the HBLR. I was very impressed by the speed and comfort of the system, as well as its apparent reliability. Its aesthetics are top-notch, which definitely gathers more praise. And indeed, I was left with enthusiasm for eventually returning to ride the HBLR through its newest extension through the former River Line tunnel.

And as I walked to the PATH station, reflecting upon my ride, another thought came to me. "Why not Buffalo?"

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

News from **Partners for a Livable Western New York (PLWNY)**:

The "Smart Growth is Smart Business" series concluded with William Fulton's presentation in December. The eight programs were well-attended and many constructive suggestions were received.

A summary of all eight programs in the "Smart Growth is Smart Business" series, is available at www.BeActivenys.org. You are encouraged to print out copies and give them to your local elected officials.

Current PLWNY plans include (i) an "Introduction to Smart Growth" for elected officials (public will be welcome) and (ii) meetings in suburban communities.

Send your ideas on how PLWNY can be more effective to:
ggrasser@irdprojectmanagers.com or by mail to:
Partners for a Livable Western New York, 11 Summer Street, Buffalo, NY 14209.

Heading Into 2006...It's a Rail Transit World!

...www.lightrailnow.org 1-3-06

What a difference a half-century makes. Fifty years ago, ... especially in North America, wholesale abandonments of electric rail transit and trolleybus systems [occurred] in city after city. As the power wires were torn down and the rails ripped up, passengers left public transit in droves, eschewing the motor buses that were substituted and opting for private vehicles, encouraged to do so in accordance with officially promulgated policies at every level of government. In the USA, regional rail and intercity railservices likewise suffered officially sanctioned devastation....[and] similar policies and devastation were experienced on a worldwide scale.

Fast-forward to the 21st century, and the turnaround is breathtaking. In city after city across the globe, on every continent, rail transit systems, widely regarded today as indispensable services, are now being upgraded and expanded vigorously. Nearly every large, major world metropolis is either operating or installing some form of rail transit, and more and more medium-sized and smaller cities are doing so as well – and much of this development involves electric light rail transit (LRT), undoubtedly because of advantages such as its significantly lower cost and greater versatility.

Why rail transit?

It's actually somewhat amazing that a technology well over a century old would still exhibit such enduring utility, versatility, and applicability to contemporary needs. But then, you could probably say the same thing about other enduring technological innovations – say, for example, the automobile, telephone, wireless communication (radio), and electric power production.No technology has emerged to beat the simplicity and efficiency of steel flanged wheels supported and guided by steel rails, which can be easily routed over viaducts, on urban streets, and through subway tunnels.

Global "rail revolution"

...The following summary ...includes a few of the more exciting developments in what's looking more and more like a global "rail revolution".

United States

Light rail transit: The development of electric LRT constitutes the biggest success story of all, with nearly two dozen systems (including both interurban-type LRT and streetcar systems) being installed since 1981. These include systems in San Diego (1981), Buffalo (1985), Portland (interurban-type LRT, 1986), Sacramento (1987), San Jose (1987), Los Angeles (1990), Baltimore (1992), St. Louis (1993), Memphis (streetcar, 1993), Denver (1994), Dallas (1996), Salt Lake City (1999), Kenosha (Wisconsin, 2000), Hudson-Bergen (New Jersey, 2000), Portland (streetcar, 2001), Tampa (streetcar, 2002), Tacoma (streetcar, 2003), and, most recently (2004), Houston, Little Rock (streetcar), and Minneapolis. In addition, three more new systems – in Seattle, Phoenix, and Charlotte– are currently under construction....Legacy

(historically rooted) LRT systems have continued to undergo upgrading and expansion in New Orleans, San Francisco, Boston, Philadelphia, Cleveland, Pittsburgh, and Newark.

Canada

Toronto's legacy LRT streetcar system is the largest in North America and, with fairly extensive, intersecting lines, a small taste of what urban streetcar networks once looked like. In 1979, Edmonton led the North American LRT revival with its predominantly subway-routed, grade-separated system. Calgary followed in 1981, pioneering the use of highfloor cars operating on major streets with high-platform stations.

Today, a new LRT project has been launched to connect the communities of Coquitlam and Burnaby in the Vancouver region, and a heritage-type streetcar line is also under study for central Vancouver. Ottawa also has launched a project to install an electric LRT system.

Mexico

Light rail transit services – mostly configured as light metros or semi-metros - operate in Mexico City (upgrade from a legacy system), Guadalajara (opened in 1989, converted a trolleybus tunnel to rail), and Monterrey (opened 1991).

Germany

[In a 2003 report,]Glen Bottoms noted that...Germany "generally avoided the massive abandonments that prevailed" elsewhere through the world, and in both the West and the East, chose to retain and, especially in the West, modernize street-based urban rail systems after World War II."

Western Germany, he recounts, "systematically converted and expanded basic streetcar [tramway] networks into model light rail systems (Stadtbahnen)." Thus, " With the exception of Hamburg, all large and most medium-sized German cities maintain robust light rail networks."

Ireland

By far one of the most successful new LRT tramway systems in Europe has been the Luas system in Dublin, opened in 2004. Expansion is under way.

Turkey

As an Asian city, Turkey is seeing particularly vigorous rail transit development – and almost all of it some form of LRT. Ankara has both a rail rapid transit metro and an LRT system, while Istanbul, Izmir, Konya, Bursa, and, most recently, Eskisehir have all installed LRT systems within the last two decades. The city of Adana has a light metro project under way.

An Essential Public Meeting! Participate in Critical Planning for WNY!

Wednesday, Feb. 1, 2006
4:00-8:00 PM
Market Arcade Film & Art Center,
639 Main Street, Buffalo

“Cars Sharing Main Street” Open House

Public to view introductory power point,
submit comments,
view traffic modeling,
see initial Metro Rail station concepts

Be there!

Let your voice be heard!

Citizens Regional Transit Corporation
P.O. Box 1186
Buffalo, NY 14231-1186

return service requested

CALENDAR

Jan. 17 7:30 PM
CRTC Annual Meeting
3330 Main St., Buffalo

Jan. 21 9:30-11:30 AM
Polish Cadets Hall, 927 Grant St.,
Buffalo, Breakfast with NYS
Assemblyman Sam Hoyt,
RSVP 852-2795
Meet **Hon. Maria Whyte, Majority**
Leader, Erie County Legislature

Feb. 1 4:00-8:00 PM
Cars Sharing Main Street
Open House
Market Arcade, 639 Main St., Bflo

Feb. 8 9:30 AM
PCC meeting of GBNRTC
City Hall, Buffalo

Feb. 21 12:00 noon
CRTC Monthly Meeting
3330 Main St., Buffalo
Pat Krawczyk, Erie County
Office of Aging: “Transit
Issues for Older Adults”

Feb. 24
Policy Committee meeting of
GBNRTC, Buffalo