



# CITIZENS REGIONAL TRANSIT NEWS

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## The Search for Fair Fares

by Richard Olday, vice-chair

Due to NY State budgetary constraints this year, it appears that a fare increase will be necessary for the NFTA. My suggestion is that the NFTA adjust fares for the daily riders with only a minimal increase. Daily riders are the backbone of the ridership and are usually those who can least afford a fare increase. However, the casual rider (those who ride once a week or less) should bear the bulk of the increase. A fare of \$1.75 per ride is still a bargain for them.

Consider the expenses for a casual rider traveling from near the UB South Campus to attend a downtown event. To travel by car, given that gasoline prices are currently around \$1.60 per gallon and that parking ranges up to \$10 per event, two people attending a downtown event would spend at least \$11.60, not considering additional wear and tear on their automobile. In contrast, their travel by Metro Rail would cost them \$7 (at \$1.75 per ride), with no hassle over parking.

The casual rider would spend over 50% more to drive than use Metro Rail. They still enjoy a clear advantage to ride rather than drive.

Also, the single ride fare of \$1.75 would be comparable or less than the New York City fare for riding the subway when the new fare increase goes into effect this year.

If a fare hike is inevitable, let it be a fair one. I suggest that the NFTA keep their monthly passes at a bargain, to reward and encourage daily ridership. Let the casual rider absorb the increase. And let the public hear the difference, loud and clear. Let the fares be fair.

## Transit Oriented Development to come to Buffalo

by Gladys Gifford, CRTC Chair

February 3rd was a great news day for transit in Buffalo. Rep. Jack Quinn, the NFTA, Hauptman-Woodward Medical Research Institute and the Buffalo-Niagara Medical Campus teamed together to secure \$100,000 in Federal funds to plan transit oriented development at the two subway stations that serve medical campuses: Allen-Hospital and Summer-Best (see [Buffalo News](#), 2-4-03).

This public-private partnership may serve as a model for better coordination of development around all the subway stations. The goal of this project, according to Thomas R. Beecher, Jr., chairman of Buffalo-Niagara Medical Campus, is to stimulate mixed-use development around the stations while "facilitating pedestrian and commercial traffic between the medical campus and the neighborhood," i.e., transit oriented development.

Transit oriented development (TOD) was expected to occur around the Metro Rail stations from its inception. CRTC has demonstrated that development near the stations has occurred frequently since the subway opened in 1984 (see [CRTNews](#), 2-02). However, the pace has been gradual and the advantages of transit proximity have not been exploited. Individual projects have been successfully built, but with little reference to the transit station nearby.

The firm contracted to do the study, Chan Kreiger and Associates, is experienced with TOD projects. Expectations are rising, to see this project accomplish a complete transformation of the environs at Allen-Hospital and Summer-Best.

CRTC applauds this effort.

## What is TOD?

Transit researchers have begun to study TOD, to see what works and why. The following material is excerpted from STPP's publication, [Progress](#), 10-02.

[There is a need for] a better, more outcome-oriented definition of TOD. We have developed a definition with four components: location efficiency (walkability, appropriate density, transit accessibility and convenience), a rich mix of uses, value capture and recapture for individuals and community and resolving the tension between the station's role as a key transport node, and the need to make it a livable place. This definition in turn needs to be turned into replicable products that respond to the differing contexts of the station in the region, but are sufficiently standardized to be easily financed and built.

[TOD has had a historical development.] In the late 19th and early 20th century, the link between transit and development was taken for granted. In many cases transit was built--sometimes by developers--to make new development on the urban fringe viable.

Many of the early transit systems were dismantled, but as traffic congestion worsened a new generation of systems was planned and built in the '60's and '70's [not in Buffalo!]. These systems were designed with the assumption that most people would drive to the stations.

The last decade or two has seen an increase in projects that try to re-establish a functional link between development and transit.

## USDOT Budget Themes: Safety, Flexibility, Efficiency

...excerpts from [www.dot.gov](http://www.dot.gov)

### ...on Track, Here and There

...**CRTC** elected Gladys Gifford as the new chair, at the January meeting. Ms. Gifford had served the organization previously as its secretary, 1996-2001.

...**New Jersey Transit** opened its latest rail expansion projects last fall – the Hudson-Bergen Light Rail extension to Hoboken and the Montclair Connection. The latter provides more direct access to Penn Station for commuters in Montclair and along the Boonton Line, which previously terminated in Hoboken. Although it is unclear how many cars the projects will take off New Jersey roads, they both provide strong new transit options to important destinations. ...*tstc.org*

... Transportation policy did not figure in New York **Gov. Pataki's** state of the state speech [Jan. 8]. The governor announced that he would push for the state's adoption of California's carbon dioxide vehicle emission standards, but the only other mention [to transportation] was a vague reference to lower Manhattan reconstruction. ...*tstc.org 1-13-03*

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The U.S. Department of Transportation today [2-3-03] unveiled its proposed fiscal year 2004 budget, requesting \$54.3 billion – a 6 percent increase over President Bush's 2003 request. A total of \$14.4 billion is targeted towards supporting transportation safety, U.S. Secretary of Transportation Norman Y. Mineta's top priority....

“During the past year, we at DOT have been hard at work creating a safer, simpler and smarter national transportation system for all Americans: safer, because we are placing a greater emphasis on saving lives and reducing accidents; simpler, because we want to consolidate and streamline programs and improve project delivery; and smarter, because we are improving system performance and enhancing program accountability,” Secretary Mineta said. “This budget request and these guiding principles provide the foundation for a new reauthorization cycle in both surface and aviation programs that will guide the course for these important programs for the next several years.” ...

Current laws authorizing both surface and air transportation financial assistance programs will expire at the end of 2003. In anticipation of this, the 2004 budget includes the foundation for proposed new legislation that will authorize these programs for the next several years, including increased funding flexibility, innovative financing tools, efficient environmental review processes, and expansion of the capacity and efficiency of freight transportation. In addition, the proposal includes an emphasis on consolidating and expanding federal transportation safety programs....

The budget also includes \$7.2 billion for the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) to strengthen and maintain U.S. mass transit systems. The request reflects a streamlined and consolidated program giving states and localities additional flexibility to meet mobility needs in their communities. The 2004 budget funds 26 “new start” projects....

Further details, see DOT's fiscal year 2004 “Budget in Brief” at <http://www.dot.gov/bib2004/bibindex.html>.

*The USDOT offers an “Over view” of its proposed 2004 budget, highlighted below.*

The American people deserve the safest, most secure, and most efficient transportation system possible....The Department's five key performance goals - improve safety, increase mobility in support of the Nation's economy, protect the human and natural environment, achieve organizational excellence, and support homeland and national security - form the basis for the FY 2004 budget request....

In 2001, 42,116 lives were lost in fatal traffic accidents. The economic cost of motor vehicle crashes is estimated to be more than \$230 billion annually....The FHWA budget includes efforts to improve infrastructure safety through improvements in roadway design and features.... In addition, FHWA proposes increased flexibility in safety grants to allow states to target resources to address their unique problems....FTA shares the Administration's emphasis on safety and security as the top priority of the Nation's transportation system....According to the National Safety Council, riding a bus is 47 times safer than car travel....

Transit systems safely and efficiently move millions of people every day, reducing congestion, facilitating economic development and connecting people to their jobs and communities. Total capital investment in public transportation, including state, local and Federal funds, has increased by nearly 80 percent between 1991 and 2000, and now totals \$9.1 billion annually. Transit ridership has increased every year since 1995, with 9.5 billion passenger trips in 2001.

In FY 2004, FTA's Formula Grants and Major Capital Investment Grants programs will provide \$7.0 billion in capital resources for [transit] infrastructure investment. This \$7.0 billion request for infrastructure investment is expected to leverage another \$7.8 billion in state and local support for transit. The FY 2004 budget request also leverages recent technological developments in transit, such as Bus Rapid Transit (BRT).

## McGreevey Takes on New Jersey's Gridlock and Sprawl

...exerpts from *Mobilizing the Region* #398 1-13-03 tsc.org

At the January 7 New Jersey transportation "summit," attended by 1,000 people from business, finance, labor, construction and related fields, Gov. James McGreevey issued an executive order designed to tackle under-investment in transportation. The governor repeatedly blamed inadequate infrastructure for rising traffic congestion, disabling bottlenecks and economic and vehicular gridlock.

The executive order establishes a blue ribbon commission made up of seven to-be-named representatives of business, labor and environmental interests.... The commission's job is to make transportation policy recommendations for the next 10 years, and on renewal of the gas-tax-funded Trust Fund, which will run dry in 2004.

Unlike Connecticut's Strategy Board, held at arms-length by Gov. Rowland this past year, the commission looks likely to make an impact. That's because McGreevey has taken full ownership of transportation policy as a public issue, even if his policies will take some time to develop.

The commission's report is due in a year. If it can shave a month, its likely advice that the state should hike its low gas tax could be enacted by a lame duck, post-election legislature in Dec. 2003.

....McGreevey and chief-of-staff Jamie Fox know that getting a gas tax hike needs backing from environmentalists. The greens have threatened to kill any bill if more progress isn't made on the Fix It First mandate enacted in 2000.

Bright lights at the conference included George Warrington, who persuasively argued for investment in NJ's transit-served communities, like Hoboken, where 57% of residents take transit to work; Assemblywoman Linda Stender, leader of the Fix It First brigade; Senator Andy Ciesla, who nobly said investing in transit capacity is critical even though his county (Ocean) has little of it; and Steve Adubato, the TV journalist-moderator who asked panelists tough questions about how to sell a gas tax hike.

The executive order requires DOT, NJTransit, and the toll road authorities to expedite projects, build park-n-rides, tackle highway safety, "implement a statewide rail freight plan [to] reduce the number of trucks on our highways," and improve the highway access permit process to reduce sprawl and "direct development in growth areas...and prevent it in environmentally sensitive and overdeveloped areas."

The transportation reform groups have requested this policy for a decade; the McGreevey team seemed to reject it last fall, but may have re-considered. After a big pre-summit build-up, the *Star-Ledger* of Newark didn't report this climax, but the Philadelphia *Inquirer* did, citing McGreevey saying "highway expansion leads to more congestion," and noting that he "emphasized that spending would be focused on improving existing infrastructure - roads, bridges, rail lines — instead of expansion."

The audience reacted positively to the pronouncement. Despite the rhetoric, however, only the DOT capital program—due to the Legislature March 1—will demonstrate whether the governor and DOT are serious about their commitment to Fix It First projects. Funding for bridge and road repair projects slid to its lowest level ever last year, despite the reduction in new capacity projects. The executive order directs transport agencies to expedite and prioritize fix-it and smart growth projects, which are defined as preserving and rehabilitating bridges and roads, increasing transit capacity eliminating bottlenecks, improving rail freight and ferry service and making communities more livable.

The Alliance for Action orchestrated the huge event well. In a sign of the times, a Parkway crash made most northern NJ attendees very late. Incident management wasn't mentioned in the executive order.

## Governors do impact Transportation Policy

To appreciate fully the impact of the anti-sprawl initiative launched by New Jersey's Gov. McGreevey, it is instructive to review the membership of Federally-mandated planning boards that control public spending on transportation.

The law which governs Federal funding of transportation, TEA-21, requires that such funds granted to any urbanized area of more than 50,000 population be organized by a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO).

Such MPOs must include representatives from both state and local municipalities on their policy boards. The proportions of appointed or elected representatives is not specified.

New Jersey has two MPOs. Each of their policy boards includes three members directly appointed by their governor. The North Jersey board has fifteen elected members; the South Jersey board has eight elected members.

New York has twelve MPOs. The governor appoints three out of seven in Buffalo-Niagara, four out of twenty-four in the Rochester area, five out of thirteen in Syracuse, and two out of nine in NYC.

It follows that the influence of the governor is crucial for the success of an effective transportation policy.

*Researched at USDOT and GBNRTC websites.*

**Featured at CRTC Monthly Meeting, Feb. 18, at noon:**

**“Using smart Growth and New Urbanism to build more Livable Communities”**

a presentation by George Grasser and Bill Harrington, of

**Partners for a Livable WNY.**

This power-point presentation features images from WNY to illustrate the discussion of land use and the built environment.

Partners for a Livable WNY (PLWNY) is a volunteer organization of interested professionals and citizens working together to bring about more livable communities in WNY. Their work includes advocacy for better land use policies including support for public transit oriented development. PLWNY offers educational programs, professional assistance and resources to stimulate and encourage actions and initiatives in support of livable communities.

The CRTC meets monthly in the education wing of University Presbyterian Church, corner of Main Street and Niagara Falls Blvd., Buffalo. Enter via parking lot door, and take the elevator to “ML.” Meetings are free and open to the public. Brown bag lunches are welcome.

**CALENDAR**

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

**Feb. 11** 4:00 PM  
Regional Coalition Educ. on Sprawl  
LWVBN, 1272 Delaware, Buffalo

**Feb. 12** 9:30 AM  
GBNRTC-PCC meeting  
City Hall, Rm 901, Buffalo

**Feb. 18** Noon  
CRTC monthly meeting  
PLWNY presentation

**Feb. 24** 5:30-7:00 PM  
LWVBN general meeting  
Buffalo-Niagara Partnership  
665 Main St., Buffalo  
speaker: Andrew Rudnick, on  
Partnership’s strategic plan

**Mar. 10** 6:00 PM  
Partners for a Livable WNY

**Mar. 18** Noon  
CRTC monthly meeting

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**Quotable Quotes:**

"There is no single greater threat to our way of life in New Jersey than the unrestrained, uncontrolled development that has jeopardized our water supplies, made our schools more crowded, our roads congested and our open space disappear."

--New Jersey’s Gov. James McGreevey, in his State of the State message, Jan. 14, 2003, as quoted in the New York Times.

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*return service requested*