



CITIZENS for REGIONAL TRANSIT NEWS

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contact: crtc@juno.com (716) 634-2412 <http://go.to/crtc>

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Impacts of Transit Policy

What would our lives look like if we had a complete, comprehensive system of public transit?

...students crowding on buses and light rail cars to go to campuses, freed from financial worries over maintaining and operating cars

...transit-dependent workers spending more time at home to re-connect with their own families and neighborhoods

...employers enjoying a greater diversity of employees because workers can reach the job site

...all of us enjoying more contact with our own neighbors, as we discover more reasons to walk through our own neighborhood to the bus stop or train station

...greater personal fitness for everyone because of the incidental exercise involved in using public transit

...and--just maybe--fewer ozone days, since we use our cars less, and are putting less pollution into the air

What can we do, to ensure such a future?

The Congress is currently involved in the process to reauthorize the comprehensive transportation act, referred to as TEA3. Our representatives must ensure that transit gets a fair share of the new legislation.

Write, call, shake up our Congressional delegation. Insist on a clear transit role in all of the May meetings on development in the waterfront.

Transit will benefit us all.

At the NFTA Fare Hearing May 5--- the Rest of the Story

by Gladys Gifford

The NFTA conducted a hearing on its proposed fare increase on Monday evening May 5th, beginning at 7:00 PM.

Executive Director Larry Meckler presided. This reporter attended and spoke, representing the CRTCC.

Held in the auditorium at ECC City Campus, the event should have been convenient for many of the NFTA's customers. Few showed up.

I expect that the many people who would be impacted by the fare increase were precisely those people who could not make the transit connections in order to attend, after a full day of work.

There were fifteen members of the general public in attendance, and fourteen of them spoke. Sharon Hill, a student at ECC, softly opposed the increase. Donald Solberg complained about poor connections. Vanessa Mitchell reported that she had submitted a petition with 402 signatures to oppose the fare increase, gathered from transit riders. Regina asked for more services to better serve riders. Mr. Abrams asked that the bus announcements be toned down. Joseph Richardson asked for resumed light rail service on Sunday evenings.

Joann Wood reported late buses. Lynette Trudeau, in a wheelchair, complained that many lifts on buses do not work. Savannah Willard proclaimed that the system is broken and service no longer serves those who need it most. Juanita Croft reported that she cannot work the second shift because there is no bus available for the return home; she said, "You force people to buy a car!"

I was the fifth speaker. I reported that the NFTA 2004 budget indicates a 6.4% increase in government assistance. The NFTA published a leaflet, "Proposed Metro Fare Adjustment," to explain

to their riders the reasons for the fare increase. This folder claims that there is "no increase in government funding forthcoming this year." I asked for an explanation. I heard none.

The NFTA 2004 budget shows a net income of \$126 million and net operating expenditures of \$116 million. The difference, of \$10 million, is split between capital maintenance and airport debt service. The fare increase would generate \$1.3 million per year. I asked whether the fare increase would assist with the airport debt. Mr. Meckler emphatically asserted that no transit fares would be applied to the airport debt.

Two other speakers commented on the structure of the fare increase. David Burn insisted that the proposed increase in the all-zone pass is too large. Mike Cermak asked the NFTA to reconsider the whole proposal to increase fares, especially since a fare-box recovery rate of 25% compares favorably with other cities. He noted that to increase the all-zone pass to \$66 as proposed would be a 25% increase for that pass. He said that his employer participates in a reimbursement plan, but that the increase would not be covered.

Returning to the microphone after all others had spoken, Vanessa Mitchell questioned Mr. Meckler closely about the purpose of the fare increase. He responded by saying, "The fare increase will go to operating costs....the increase in fare is necessary to balance the budget."

The speakers at the Buffalo hearing raised significant issues that need to be addressed by the NFTA's Board of Commissioners, before they vote on May 27th. The rationale for the fare increase should be revisited. The structure of the fare increase should be rethought. Their customers, the riders, deserve no less.

NO FREE RIDE: Possible Transit Initiatives in WNY Public and Private Higher Education Institutions (Part Two)

by John P. Weiksnar, CRTC Executive Board

Weiksnar asked 14 area colleges to answer the following two questions. Responses to the first question were featured in Part One, published in April.

1. Some area educational institutions have sought transit passes for their population and have worked to bring bus routes closer to campus, etc. Can you name any particular public transit opportunities that exist for your college/university but go unused by your students, staff, or faculty?
2. Our light rail line is one of the most successful anywhere for its length, but has never been extended past its 6.2 mile core route. How do you foresee your daily commuters or campus residents benefiting from an expanded Metro Rail system?

(Part Two)

Answers to the second question are somewhat more telling. They reflect the public's varying familiarity with the benefits of Metro Rail expansion generally, and its proposed corridors/feeder routes specifically. There are hints that some still equate Metro Rail expansion with the proposed Amherst Corridor only, in other words, connecting the two UB campuses. Hope persists in a few respondents who envision creative routes that benefit their specific campus and beyond.

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

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This idea is voiced by D. John Bray of D' Youville College: "An expanded metro system would have to have a station close to D' Youville in order for our students and staff to use it. For example, if there were a metro station in the vicinity of the Peace Bridge (wherever that is going to be) or in the area of Niagara and Porter, it would be fairly close to the campus and I could see students and staff using it, especially those living in the suburbs."

Other colleges off the proposed corridor routes share provisional interest in Metro Rail expansion. Buffalo State College's Nanette Tramont remarks, "If the 6.2 mile system were expanded, we anticipate more people who commute to the college would use it." According to James Sturm of Hilbert College, "The light rail system does not really come into play at Hilbert due to our distance, other than those students who may use the rail system while in Buffalo. It would have to be expanded considerably to be of use to our students."

Similarly, Sister Mary Louis Rustowicz of Villa Maria College states, "I believe the only way we would benefit from an expanded Metro Rail system would be to have it come down either Genesee Street or Walden Avenue. Shuttle service from CRTC's proposed Airport/Transit Road Metro Rail corridor stops could bridge the short distance to the Villa Maria campus."

Establishing connecting routes to link present or future Metro Rail stops with colleges is a necessity, no doubt, but there would be nothing as convenient and impressive as direct light rail service. In the words of Anne Bertholf of SUNY Empire State College, "I imagine that the greatest boon to our students that would occur if the transit system were extended: there might be easier access to the University at Buffalo: for use of library facilities, cross registration in UB classes."

Regarding the rail extension, UB's Chris Austin says, "we'd love for . . . Metro Rail to come up here. In the long run, it could replace the (Coach USA) buses but it would also connect students to the city, to all types of entertainment venues, libraries, the list of benefits is endless. If one considers that those buses still move 300,000 individual passengers per month, not to mention the associated numbers of automobile commuters that commute between campuses, the feasibility of an Amherst Metro Rail corridor may just show more promise than ever."

This informal and unscientific survey of area higher education institutions is far from complete. There were no replies from Erie Community College, Niagara County Community College, Bryant and Stratton Business Institute, Medaille College, and Trocaire College.

A continuing dialogue with all schools is imperative to monitor the demand for transportation alternatives.

A first step has been taken: UB recently completed a major parking transportation study, done by a consultant, Chance Management Advisors. Their action indicates that UB seeks to improve transportation on and off campus.

It's time for everyone to have the right idea here. Each of our colleges must take action to ensure a choice of mobility among all members of its academic community.

New Report shows Transportation Policy Impacts Biodiversity

Transfer, 4-25-03 www.transact.org

In Second Nature: Improving Transportation Without Putting Nature Second, STPP and Defenders of Wildlife examine the connection between transportation planning and biological diversity. Road and highway development is one of the chief culprits responsible for the loss of biodiversity, through roadkill, pollution, habitat degradation and fragmentation, and the encouragement of invasive species.

However, the report argues, mobility does not have to come at the expense of biodiversity. Second Nature profiles innovative programs that seek to improve transportation infrastructure while protecting the rich variety of natural species that forms our natural life support system.

"We can have a world class transportation system and protect our biological diversity at the same time," said Anne Canby, President of STPP. "Some have suggested weakening our environmental laws to advance transportation projects. The examples in this report prove that [such an approach] is not necessary."

Clang, Clang, Clang Goes the Trolley

by E. Edward Deutschman

After a 50-year absence trolleys returned to **Tampa, Florida**, Saturday, October 19, 2002. More than 21,000 people lined up to ride on the eight newly constructed Gomaco streetcars operating on the 2.3 mile route from Centennial Park Station in Ybor City to Morgan Street Station in downtown Tampa.

The bright yellow and red Birney style trolleys look like the streetcars that once traveled over the streets of Tampa. They are built to modern-day standards on steel frames featuring beautiful wood interiors, brass fittings, air conditioning and handicapped accessibility.

The system is managed by Tampa Historic Trolley Streetcar, a nonprofit corporation, and is operated and maintained by the Hillsboro Area Transit Authority (HART). It is expected that economic development and cultural tourism will be affected positively by this new attraction.

On Track, Here and There

...Railfan & Railroad

Portland, OR, is a major place to go see light rail transit in use. The Portland Streetcar has Czech-built streetcars that are very reliable...The streetcar shelters have information boards that inform patrons when the next two streetcars will arrive, as well as a radio alert. For more information, see portlandstreetcar.org

Also, the Interstate MAX line, running on Interstate Avenue, is nearly finished. Tri-Met reports that the new line is on budget and ahead of schedule: expected to open in September, 2004.

Seattle suffers from traffic jams, but is not able to move on transit developments. The average Portland resident spends 34 hours a year in traffic jams, but a Seattle resident spends 54 hours a year idling in traffic.

Montclair State University has joined with **New Jersey Transit** to provide direct rail service via a new train station from the university to midtown Manhattan, the "Montclair Direct."

Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART)

opened its Blue Line light rail extension from LBJ/Skillman to downtown Garland on 11-18-02. DART's Red Line was extended from Galatyn Park in Richardson to new stations at State Hwy 190/Bush Turnpike on 12-9-02.

Houston's 7.5-mile light rail system, Metrorail, is expected to open for revenue service in 2004. The light rail cars will be low floor and supplied by Siemens.

2004 Federal Transportation Funding, (in billions) compared with previous years

...www.narprail.org 3-03

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004 (request)
Federal Highway (FHWA)	\$28.8	\$31.7	\$32.9	\$31.8	\$30.2
Federal Aviation (FAA)	10.0	12.0	18.5	13.6	14.0
Federal Transit (FTA)	5.8	6.2	6.8	7.2	7.2

at the CRTC Monthly Meeting, May 20....

**“Confronting Climate Change
in New York State”**

a report by Dr. Sigmund Zakrzewski

Dr. Zakrzewski is the chair of CRTC’s environment committee. He will share his analysis of likely impacts of climate change on New York State, based on the recent study issued by the the Ecological Society of America and the Union of Concerned Scientists “Confronting Climate Change in the Great Lakes Region.”

...come share in a discussion to connect public transit policy with air quality and public health issues

Citizens *for* Regional Transit meets monthly in the education wing of University Presbyterian Church, corner of Main Street and Niagara Falls Blvd., Buffalo.

Enter via the parking lot door, and take the elevator to “ML.”

Meetings are free and open to the public. Brown bag lunches are welcome.

CALENDAR

May 12 6:00 PM

“International Night”--China, Argentina at PLWNY monthly mtg, United Way Bldg, Bflo.

May 13 6:00 PM

Public Scoping Meeting, Erie Canal Harbor Project, Buffalo Historical Society, 25 Nottingham, Buffalo

May 14 9:30 AM

GBNRTC-PCC meeting, NYS Thruway, 455 Cayuga Rd., Cheektowaga

May 15 7:00 PM

Public Information Meeting, Southtowns Connector/Buffalo Outer Harbor Project, Tifft Nature Preserve, 1200 Fuhrmann Blvd, Buffalo

May 17 9 AM-3 PM

Waterfront Conference
The Pier Restaurant, Buffalo

May 18 3:00 PM

VOICE-Buffalo Public Meeting
Buffalo Convention Center

May 20 12 noon-1:30 PM

CRTC monthly meeting
3330 Main St., Buffalo

May 30 10:00 AM

GBNRTC Policy meeting and public forum,
Comfort Inn, Niagara Falls

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Buffalo, NY 14231-1186

return service requested