



CITIZENS for REGIONAL TRANSIT NEWS

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July/August, 2007

It seems to me...

A bit of history

People often ask me how I know that people prefer rail to buses.

Until recently, I had no concrete proof. However, thanks to Robert Gower, planner for Metro Bus and Rail at the NFTA, who provided the proper figures, the history of public transit in Buffalo supports my contention.

The history of public transit in Buffalo shows that:

prior to the opening of Metro Rail in 1984, Metro Bus carried 42,810 riders in the Main Street corridor on an average weekday;

soon after Metro Rail replaced many of those buses, the figure jumped to 56,620 riders in the Main Street corridor.

This was an increase of almost 14,000 new public transit riders, or 32%. Clearly, these new riders were attracted by rail, since they were not using the buses.

It seems to me that expansion of Metro Rail is a no-brainer in the light of these facts.

Isn't Buffalo interested in increasing the use of public transit?

Joe Radder

Past-Chair

CRTC Monthly Meeting

**Tuesday, July 17
12:00 Noon**

"Summer Strategies"

Hear updates on various transit-related efforts, along with the proposal to extend Metro Rail into the Cobblestone District, along S. Park Ave.

Help CRTC prepare to brief candidates for local offices on the impacts of transportation policy on our region.

Join us!

**CRTC does not meet in August--
see you September 18!**

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.

On Track, Here and There...

Federal Transit Administrator James Simpson signed a contract [in early July] guaranteeing \$345.5 million in federal funds for the Tri-County Metropolitan Transportation District of **Oregon's** I-205/**Portland** Mall light-rail extension. The federal grant will cover 60 % of the project's \$575.7 million cost.

Scheduled to open in September 2009, the 8.3-mile line will run between Gateway Transit Center and Clackamas Town Center, and Union Station and Portland State University.
www.progressiverailroading.com

After more than a half-century of debating, studying, proposing and discarding ideas for [**Rochester, NY's**] old canal and subway bed, officials are taking action to turn visions into reality.

City Hall plans to have a consultant on board by September to develop a corridor master plan. By January, officials expect to take bids on a controversial aspect that would fill in the subway bed north of Main Street.

All construction would be completed in June 2011.

democratandchronicle.com

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

UB Study Shows: Metro Rail Boosts Real Estate Value

...reviewed by Gladys Gifford

Metro Rail does benefit homeowners living near the stations.

According to a recently released University at Buffalo study, homes in Buffalo located "within a quarter-mile radius of Metro rail stations can earn a premium of \$1,300-\$3,000, or 2-5% of the city's median home value."

The study, "Impact of Proximity to Light Rail Rapid Transit on Station-area Property Values in Buffalo, New York," was written by Daniel Baldwin Hess and Tangerine Maria Almeida. Prof. Hess teaches in the Department of Urban and Regional Planning, UB. Ms. Almeida works with LSC Transportation Consultants, Inc., Colorado Springs, CO.

Supported by both literature and examination of census and real estate records, the study evaluated the impact of the light rail stations on the value of nearby residential properties during the twenty years of Metro Rail operation. The authors acknowledged the fact that other variables are more important when predicting property values, but that proximity to certain Metro Rail stations sweetened the deal when the whole package is evaluated.

Analysis was done using two models: straight-line distance (as the crow flies) and network distance (actual walking distance along streets). Both models suggested that proximity to Metro Rail stations was a positive effect for properties that valued transit access. The greatest positive effect was seen at the University station.

Hess and Almeida concluded that Buffalo's light rail system has a positive influence on property values near several stations. However, "where access to rail transit is not highly valued, property values do not rise." Reasons cited for this uneven impact included the "fragmented planning process" in the initial planning period (1960s and 70s) plus the inability of the region "to agree on how to proceed with a plan to extend Metro Rail."

The study recommended that all Metro Rail stations be viewed as locations for economic opportunity. "In a region where no prospect to increase access, attract jobs, workers and residents, and encourage economic growth can be ignored, urban planners and municipal officials should exploit the existence of reasonably priced properties within many stable neighborhoods adjacent to light rail stations and Metro Rail's relatively speedy service (7-minute headway during the peak), low fares and uncongested travel."

Published in Urban Studies, Vol. 44, Nos. 5/6, May 2007

Progress on the Cobblestone Loop Proposal

CRTC continues to raise funds for the feasibility study, to be prepared by Stone Consulting. Our goal is \$9,750. We have raised nearly \$3,000 since mid-April. As soon as the money is in hand, the work will begin and is expected to be completed in about three months.

Help us reach our goal!
Send your donation to the CRTC treasurer, ASAP!
For more information, see the CRTC web page, *citizenstransit.org*.

CRTC Testimony to GBNRTC Policy Committee

...presented 6-22-07 by Gladys Gifford, CRTC President

The 2030 Long Range Plan (LRP) is an improvement over previous versions. However, the 2030 LRP does not plan out far enough--the view should be to 2050, at least.

At the New York Public Transit Association conference in Rochester this month [June, 2007], we learned that the environmental crisis has finally connected with the transit industry--transit is green, not highways! Therefore, the vision for 2030 and beyond must shift more resources from highways to expanding transit infrastructure and providing more transit service.

We learned [at the conference] that the Second Avenue subway project in New York City is going forward in stages, funded largely from the recent transportation bond act, after nearly eighty years of planning. Here in WNY, we have been urging the completion of the whole Metro Rail network for twenty-five years. Could we move a little faster than New York City?

All we would need is [about] \$200 million for the Airport corridor, \$500 million for the UB-Amherst corridor, \$300 million for the Southtowns corridor--and maybe \$10 million for a mile in the Cobblestone District here in the city of Buffalo.

How long must we wait?

There is one thing that the GBNRTC can do for all us us. Let's find out how much money is spent for operations and maintenance of each lane-mile of road that is maintained by every municipality in the two counties. Then we will have a figure that will help to evaluate the demand that local governments shoulder the burden of operations and maintenance for completing the light rail system.

Keep in mind that the operations side of each lane-mile, i.e., trucks and cars that use the roads, is entirely borne by the private sector. Balance that understanding with the fact that both operations and maintenance for light rail is folded into public funding.

...commentary on the latest proposal for revitalizing downtown Rochester, NY

Light rail transit can be affordably and successfully implemented in **Rochester**. More importantly, rail transit would create the framework for private investment by removing the greatest barrier: access and parking.

As numerous experts have commented on over the years, downtown Rochester is suffering from a near total reliance on parking. Surface parking lots are "costly" in that they are antithetical to creating vibrant streets. Parking garages cost \$14,000 to \$18,000 *per parking space* to build and the operating costs are often subsidized by the public and businesses. Countless experts have told us that if we really want to revitalize downtown, we need to have transit that is attractive, fast and reliable.

The present structure is not a canal. It is a trolley subway that was built on the site of the former canal bed. We cannot "rewater" the tunnel. Any canal proposal would require the construction of an entirely new canal-- at great cost. While water features are indeed nice amenities, we need to focus on fundamentals first, and an attractive transit system is one fundamental that is largely ignored by the city. For the cost of a short canal re-creation, we could have an extensive light rail transit line that would support private development over a greater swath of downtown and it would help to stabilize transitional neighborhoods that are served by it.

Let's examine the growing number of examples for low-cost rail transit lines in medium-small cities (Portland, Norfolk, Salt Lake City, Tacoma, tiny Kenosha, WI...). We can build all of the amenities and massive public works projects (Ren Square) that our leaders can dream up, but downtown will not truly be revitalized until we address the parking/transit issues that will facilitate private development.

DeWain Feller, Chairman, Rochester Rail Transit Committee
comments submitted in response to Democrat & Chronicle article, 7-8-07

excerpts from CRTC comments on the LRP, submitted in June to the GBNRTC:

The GBNRTC should examine fully the deficient reasoning that allows the funding for operations and maintenance of highways to be borne by all local taxpayers as a normal part of county and municipal budgets while extraordinary effort is required to find such funding for public transit.

Perhaps the fair way to challenge the system would be to hold up all highway construction funding until each local municipality agreed in advance to pay the escalating costs of maintenance for such new lane miles of roadway!

Transportation safety goals should include strategies to reduce VMT, i.e., increase use of public transit through investment in public transit infrastructure and improved service....

As in previous Plans, each "high quality transit corridor" should consist of an extension or completion of the light rail system.

Niagara Frontier Chapter, National Railway Historical Society

--Invites You--

Ride the TTC in Toronto

Sunday, August 5, 2007

Join the NRHS for a day trip to Toronto to ride the newly rebuilt St. Clair line of the TTC. Travel to Toronto via Motor Coach, lunch on your own.

Meet at Transit Road Park & Ride

9:00 AM departure

(lunch on your own)

1:00 PM chartered light rail trip on St. Clair line

6:30 PM (approx.) return to Transit Rd.

Full fare: Adults \$60.; Seniors (60+) \$55.; Children under 18 \$55.

TTC only: \$35.

Motor Coach only: \$35.

Reservations deadline: August 1, 2007

Name _____ Phone _____

adults _____ # seniors _____ # children _____

TTC only _____ # motor coach only _____

Total remitted _____

Checks payable to: NRHS Niagara Frontier Chapter, Inc.

Send full remittance to: Richard A. Olday

171 Parwood Trail

Depew, NY 14043-1071

Citizens Regional Transit Corporation

P.O. Box 1186

Buffalo, NY 14231-1186

return service requested

CALENDAR

July 16-20 Chautauqua Institution –

“21st Century Cities”

10:45 a.m. lectures:

Monday – Marilyn Taylor, chair of the Urban Land Institute,

Tuesday – Lev Gonick, Case Western, Cleveland;

Wednesday – Chicago Mayor Richard Daly invited to speak;

Thursday – Geoffrey Canada, president and CEO, Harlem Children’s Zone;

Friday – U.S. Rep. Earl Blumenauer, Oregon.

Friday at 2 p.m.-- a panel of mayors including Byron Brown of Buffalo.

July 17 12:00 noon

CRTC Monthly Meeting

3330 Main Street, Buffalo

Aug. 1 9:30 AM

PCC meeting of GBNRTC

NFTA, 181 Ellicott St., Buffalo

Aug. 5 Toronto trip (p. 4)

bus tour sponsored by NRHS

Sept. 18 12:00 noon

CRTC Monthly Meeting

3330 Main Street, Buffalo