



CITIZENS for REGIONAL TRANSIT NEWS

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Volume #8 Issue #9

November, 2007

It seems to me...

Governor Spitzer and the New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) should remember that there is more to New York State than the Albany to New York City corridor.

In our September newsletter it was reported "New York State to Fund \$22M for Higher Speed Rail program". Sounds like good news, right? Wrong... if you're a western New Yorker or live anywhere upstate. The funding will be used entirely in the Albany-New York City area, for rock slope stabilization near the George Washington Bridge, for station platforms and canopies, and a fourth track and related signal work at the Albany-Rensselaer station

Spitzer said "A higher speed, more efficient rail system is a critical component to connecting our communities for tourism and economic development purposes". Yet, he overlooks the **fact** that we have one of the world's most popular tourist attractions here in *western* New York. Of course I'm talking about Niagara Falls.

We need state-wide high speed rail plus an expanded Metro Rail system in Buffalo/Niagara..

(For a supporting view, see also Doug Turner's column in the 11-12-07 News.)

Let's write Spitzer and NYSDOT, to tell them the **facts**.

If a large percentage of us would make our views known it would be difficult for Albany to ignore us and ignore the **facts**.

Joe Radder

Past Chair

CRTC

CRTC Monthly Meeting

**Tuesday, November 20
12:00 Noon**

"Access to Downtown Buffalo: the Parking Dilemma"

Desman Associates recently released the "Parking Needs Assessment," a study commissioned jointly by the City of Buffalo Board of Parking and Buffalo Civic Auto Ramps.

A brief look at the study reveals that downtown Buffalo has abundant parking, but that some locations have a "deficit" rating while others have a "surplus" rating.

In a wide-ranging discussion at the CRTC meeting, participants will examine the study and interpret its implications for access to downtown and for transit-oriented development in downtown Buffalo.

Download your copy of the study at: <http://www.bcarparking.com/>

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.

Step It Up rally Draws Crowd

by David Kowalski

Supporters gathered at the Teddy Roosevelt Inaugural Site and took the Green Finger pledge to vote for the environment in 2008. We marched to the McKinley Monument carrying banners and signs while shouting spirited chants about the cause. Climate activists and politicians met and presented informative talks. NY State Senator Antoine Thompson read a proclamation from the Governor: November 3, 2007 is Climate Action Day in New York State!

In addition to the U.S. Congressional leaders Brian Higgins and Louise Slaughter, NY State and local leaders provided strong support for our cause through their attendance and speeches.

Leaders present included NY Senator Antoine Thompson, ranking member of the State Environmental Committee, State Assemblyman Sam Hoyt, and Buffalo Mayor Byron Brown. Alice Kryzan, an environmental lawyer active in stopping new coal power, announced her candidacy for the U.S. Congress!

Local leaders from the Western NY Climate Action Coalition, Wind Action Group, Sierra Club, Citizens Regional Transit Corporation presented informative and inspiring talks.

It was a star-studded, action-packed and highly informative event held in historic areas of the city of Buffalo!

See the full Step It Up report at: <http://events.stepitup2007.org/november/reports/2221>

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

Remarks by CRTC President Gifford at Step It Up Rally

Go green! Go Metro!

Why are we suffering from global warming today?

Because the United States has abandoned rail transportation for its citizens!

We are in this pickle because just about everybody at this rally had to use their own automobile in order to get here.

How many of you walked from your home to get here? A few.

How many of you walked from your car to get here? Everybody else.

That's the point, isn't it.

We have all been suckered into using gas-guzzling machines to do our daily mobility.

We need a national government that will enthusiastically rebuild the network of streetcars and passenger trains that criss-crossed this country a hundred years ago.

If Theodore Roosevelt were here, he'd be appalled to see what his descendents have done to our planet because we abandoned rail in favor of the automobile.

But in Western New York, we can revive rail and go back to the future.

Here, we have an asset to build on, begun through the vision of state and Federal leaders in the 1980's. That asset is Metro Rail.

Let's expand Metro Rail, as our contribution to a green future.

Metro Rail is the ultimate in green transportation.

Metro Rail carries over one million riders per year; the combined Metro system carries over 24 million riders per year. Compare those figures to the Buffalo International Airport's 4 million boardings per year-- which one is green transportation? Metro Rail!

Let's boast about our green transportation, Metro Rail, and let's complete Metro Rail to the north campus of UB, to support the new vision of UB!

Let's expand Metro Rail to the airport-- instead of expanding parking at the airport!

How shall we reduce our dependence on scarce oil? Expand Metro Rail!

How shall we reduce carbon emissions by 2050? Expand Metro Rail!

Let's tell Congress and the candidates for President-- Expand Metro Rail!

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 \$3,500 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.

South and West Dominate Transit Ballot Measures

by Michelle Ernst, <http://blog.tstc.org/2007/11/07/>

...on Track, in Western New York

According to the Center for Transit Excellence, voters across the country yesterday considered 18 ballot measures to support transit. Results of these votes are still pending, but historically, voters have overwhelmingly approved funding to increase transit service, particularly when the funding is linked to a specific project. Regardless of whether voters approve the measures, their inclusion on the ballots has important consequences for the tri-state region [NY, NJ, Conn].

Of the 18 measures, a dozen are in southern or western states (some are the same ballot measure considered by several counties). Several of the measures ask voters to approve tax increases or bonding to support transit expansion projects. These projects will likely seek funding from the Federal Transit Administration's New Starts program to match the state and local spending approved by voters.

The New Starts program provides federal funds for the creation or expansion of "guideway" transit systems (such as metro, bus rapid transit, light rail, and commuter rail). To be eligible for New Starts funding, projects must demonstrate the ability to raise enough state and local funds to cover at least 20% of the project cost—but the competitiveness of the program means that most projects approved for New Starts funding are funded with at least a 50-50 split.

The success of transit funding ballot initiatives will only expand the already large pool of applicants for the exceedingly popular program.

In the tri-state region, only one transit-related measure made it to the ballot; voters in Milford and Stratford soundly rejected Metro-North's proposal to eliminate 2 stops on an afternoon train.

But the region is lagging far behind its peers in asking the voters to support transit financing.

Through the New Starts program, the FTA has already committed to partially fund the LIRR East Side Access project and the first phase of the Second Avenue Subway. However, agencies in the region will be starting at a disadvantage when they seek New Starts funding for the other major regional transit projects in the pipeline.

...**Cheektowaga** signed contract with Wendel Duchscherer to help town officials update the town's master plan, possibly to include light rail from downtown Buffalo to the airport. *Buffalo News 11-12-07*

...VOICE Buffalo is leading an effort to organize an Advisory Group to have effective input to the **Greater Buffalo Niagara Regional Transportation Council**. The CRTC is a member.

...CRTC joined with the **Transportation Equity Network** in submitting comments on a rule-change at the Federal Transportation Administration (FTA), 11-1-07. See <http://transportationequity.org>

...**Partnership for the Public Good** (PPG) is a collaborative formed in metropolitan Buffalo to promote civic engagement and to do research and advocate for the public good. The PPG issued a report, "Achieving a Greater Buffalo," in April. The report advocates for expanding light rail to UB and for transit-friendly commercial development in neighborhoods. The CRTC actively participates in the meetings of the PPG.

...At the **Buffalo Place** Board of Directors meeting, 10-31-07, staff reported that the Cars Sharing Main Street project would be the subject of a meeting in NYC soon with the FTA.

...The Transportation Council of the **Buffalo Niagara Partnership**, at its meeting 11-12-07, pledged to be more actively involved in the work of the GBNRTC.

from the study: "Public Transportation's Contribution to U.S. Greenhouse Gas Reduction"

A commuter switching to existing public transportation can reduce their CO2 emissions by 20 pounds per day of use or more than 4,800 pounds in a year, an amount equal to ten percent of an average family's carbon footprint....The study makes plain that expanding transit options in the nation's communities is a cornerstone to any effective plan for combating climate change.

...as reported by Center for Transportation Excellence, at www.cfte.org/

Scoping Meeting on SCAJAQUADA EXPRESSWAY Project

**Wednesday, November 28, 6-8 p.m.
Medaille College Lecture Hall**

The New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT)'s Regional Director Alan E. Taylor, in cooperation with the Federal Highway Administration, announced [10-23-07] that an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) will be prepared in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act on the NY Route 198 (Scajaquada Expressway) Corridor project in the City of Buffalo, Erie County.

NY Route 198 is an Urban Principal Arterial Expressway on the National Highway System connecting Interstate 190 and NY Route 33 (Kensington Expressway), with traffic volumes between 34,000 and 54,000 vehicles per day, a design speed of 55 mph, and grade separated interchanges. The Scajaquada Expressway is subject to congestion and higher than expected accident rates. There are also areas of poor pavement conditions and failing drainage systems.

The expressway facility is at odds with the context of the surrounding culturally rich community resources, including a nationally renowned art gallery, an historic Olmsted-designed park, an historic cemetery, historic buildings, higher education institutions and residential neighborhoods. The Scajaquada Expressway acts as a barrier, dividing the park and hindering the use of these resources by the community, including pedestrians and bicyclists. Transportation infrastructure in that area should balance the need to be in harmony with the surrounding community character with the need to provide safe and efficient transportation service for all modes of transportation through the affected area.

A series of public information meetings will be held in the City of Buffalo between November 2007 and February 2010, including a public hearing. Public notice will be given of the time and place of the meetings and hearing. The Draft EIS, when prepared, will be available for public and agency review and comment.

Medaille College Lecture Hall is located at 18 Agassiz Circle in the City of Buffalo. The meeting will be an informal open house with a brief formal presentation at 6:30 p.m. Department of Transportation representatives will be present to receive comments and answer individual questions.

For further information, or to request a sign language interpreter or assistive listening device system, please contact Craig Mozrall, Assistant Regional Design Engineer, at (716) 847-3033.

Citizens Regional Transit Corporation

P.O. Box 1186
Buffalo, NY 14231-1186

return service requested

CALENDAR

**Nov. 20 12:00 noon
CRTC Monthly Meeting
3330 Main Street, Buffalo**

Nov. 28 6-8:00 PM
Scajaquada Scoping Meeting
Medaille College, 18 Agassiz
Circle, Buffalo

Dec. 5 9:30 AM
PCC meeting of GBNRTC
NYSDOT, 100 Seneca St., Buffalo

**Dec. 18 12:00 noon
CRTC Monthly Meeting
3330 Main Street, Buffalo**

February 7-9, 2008
New Partners for Smart Growth
Conference, Washington D.C.
For details, contact George Grasser,
ggrasser@irdprojectmanagers.com