



CITIZENS for REGIONAL TRANSIT NEWS

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December, 2008

Holiday Fare is Fair?

When the NFTA planned its public hearings on the proposed "fare adjustment," they expected a large outcry. What they received was a whimper. The Niagara Falls hearing on December 2 drew a handful of citizens; the Buffalo hearing held December 3 attracted only 100, according to the News. Of those, several were out-of-towners, touting their own agenda.

So now the transit riders will receive a special message on New Year's Day: an extra quarter per fare, please.

However, the latest word from the NFTA is that the second part of this fare increase may be trashed--if the state and/or Federal governments come through with sufficient assistance.

Wishful thinking? Perhaps not. The Obama administration is committed to a stimulus package to be signed into law ASAP, which includes help for public transit. Gov. Paterson will be rolling out his budget soon--will he increase public transit funding?

Meanwhile, the NFTA is printing new leaflets for bus and rail routes, showing the new fares.

Will these new fares be fair?

The NFTA provides over 100,000 rides every weekday. Figuring in round trips, possibly as many as 50,000 people ride the NFTA's buses and rail cars each day.

But only 100 showed up for the fare hearings. Surely WNY can do better!

Both President-elect Obama and Gov. Paterson are accountable to the voters who elected them. Call and write them! They will decide whether to seek more State and Federal transit funding.

Let fares be fair!

CRTC Monthly Meeting

**Wednesday, December 17
12:00 Noon**

"Advocates for Public Transit? A new role for transit agencies"

Gladys Gifford, President of CRTC, will report on the fall conference of the New York Public Transit Association (NYPTA), held November 12-14 in Albany, NY. The theme, "Transit Vision 2050" included a strong emphasis on public transit advocacy. How can the CRTC and its allies hold these transit leaders accountable to the laudable commitments expressed at this conference?

Join us!

Citizens Regional Transit meets at:

617 Main Street, Market Arcade Building, Buffalo

Meeting space is available, courtesy Preservation Buffalo-Niagara.

CRTC meetings are free and open to the public.

CRTC Comments on the proposed Metro Fare Increase

Why has Rochester, NY, been able to lower its transit fare to \$1.00?

See following comment from DeWain Feller, Chairman, Rochester Rail Transit Committee

- Rochester has been able to lower fares only because it is operating extremely low levels of service and they are getting substantial income from the Rochester City School District bus contract and disproportional (relative to other upstate cities) high increases in state aid.

It would be impossible for Rochester-Genesee Regional Transportation Authority (R-GTA) to increase service frequencies and maintain the same fare level, since the Rochester City School District contract income and state aid would not increase.

R-GRTA wasn't able to lower fares because they are financial geniuses; they were able to do it because they have cut service to unacceptably low levels.

Another detail: R-GTA has eliminated all transfers. Each boarding costs \$1.

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 \$150.00
- household 35.00
- individual 25.00
- student 5.00

send check to:
CITIZENS REGIONAL TRANSIT CORP.
c/o John K. Howell, treasurer
289 Ashford Avenue
Tonawanda, NY 14150-8563

December 3, 2008

Commissioner Gregory Stamm
NFTA
181 Ellicott Street
Buffalo, NY 14203

Dear Commissioner Stamm:

The Citizens Regional Transit Corporation (CRTC) understands the budget crisis faced by the NFTA, which has prompted this proposal to increase fares.

Since State Senator Antoine M. Thompson has taken a position against the fare increase; the CRTC expects him to work with the NYS Legislature and Gov. Paterson to devise funding which will prevent such an increase.

Since the Erie County Legislature has passed a resolution opposing the fare increase; the CRTC expects that the Erie County Legislature will work with the NYS Legislature to find solutions.

In the meantime, the CRTC must protest that any fare increase at this time will cause severe hardship for those least able to cope and discourage automobile owners from using the NFTA's transit systems in Western New York. Therefore, the Citizens Regional Transit Corporation urges the NFTA to work with both Erie and Niagara counties as well as Governor Paterson to develop solutions to the current crisis that will stabilize fares and encourage expanded use and demand for public transit. However, should a fare increase be required, the CRTC Board would support increases to single-ticket fares while keeping the rate for monthly passes at their current levels.

Sincerely,

Gladys Gifford, President

...for a comprehensive discussion of the big-picture factors that forced the NFTA to seek a fare increase, see

Outrages & Insights
September 29, 2008
A pittance for public transit
by Buffalo News investigative reporter James Heaney

www.buffalonews.typepad.com/outrages_insights/

WASHINGTON – The National Railroad Passenger Corporation Board of Directors announced today [11-25-08] that it has chosen Joseph Boardman, a nationally recognized transportation industry professional, to become president and chief executive officer of the company, effective November 26.

Boardman offers nearly 34 years of experience in the surface transportation industry at city, county, state, and federal government levels; most recently as the administrator at the Federal Railroad Administration. "In an attempt to maintain the momentum at Amtrak, while finding a permanent CEO candidate, the board has appointed Mr. Boardman for one year, but will conduct a search in the coming months for a permanent CEO," said Board Chairman Donna McLean....

Having served as administrator of the Federal Railroad Administration since April 2005, Boardman was the Department of Transportation designee on the Amtrak board of directors.

Prior to his tenure at FRA, he served as commissioner of the New York State Department of Transportation beginning in July of 1997. There, Boardman led a transformation effort that better enabled the agency to respond to the challenges associated with an expanding global marketplace. In this capacity, Boardman was deeply involved in the operation of the large complement of Amtrak service in the state....

Joe Boardman fills the position following the departure of Alex Kummant earlier this month.

By all accounts, the November 2008 elections were a success for transportation. More than 70% of measures decided last Tuesday were in favor of transportation. As a result of this election, approximately \$75 billion will be invested in the infrastructure, operations and maintenance of transportation systems across the country. For voters in many regions, the challenges of the current national economy were pitted directly against the future success of their regional economy. In other communities, voters would not have to look too far down the road to see the effect of their vote, as the fate of several transit systems hung directly on the approval of new investment. Overwhelmingly, voters saw the need for local investment and cast their vote in support.

Majority of Honolulu Voters Approve Commuter Rail AFTER SETBACKS FOR BOTH PROJECT AND MEASURE, VOTERS SAY 'YES'

Honolulu can now begin construction on a 20-mile, \$4.3 billion commuter rail project after voters passed a city Charter amendment to authorize the construction. In the weeks leading up to the election a major pro-rail ad campaign was waged and with the strong support of Honolulu Mayor Mufi Hannemann, voters were able to see beyond the anti-rail campaigns that forced the issue to the ballot in the first place. For the past three decades, the city has been proposing an elevated rail system to relieve congestion and provide more transportation choices for residents and visitors of Honolulu. With the approval of voters, the project is now expected to begin construction by 2010 and be completed by 2018.

Election Results Unfavorable for Transit in Kalamazoo County, Michigan OFFICIALS ALREADY PLANNING TO PUT MEASURE ON BALLOT IN EARLY 2009

Kalamazoo County's measure to replace expiring property taxes with a transportation millage was defeated at the ballot. Voters were asked to continue funding public transportation with a levy of 0.63 mills in 2008, which would increase to 0.86 mills by 2011. In its first year, the tax was expected to generate \$5 million for Metro Transit's countywide bus system. Officials are now trying to figure out what went wrong this November compared to the 2006 election in which 52% of voters supported a transportation millage. Some potential problems include the ballot language itself, which proposed four separate tax rates between 2008 and 2011, or the current economic climate or even the local gossip about millage increases for other services in the near future. If officials are unable to get voters to approve a transportation millage early next year, the \$7 million fund balance remaining for the Kalamazoo County Transportation Authority will run out by July 2009.

... we need to stop seeing our cities as the problem and start seeing them as the solution. Because strong cities are the building blocks of strong regions, and strong regions are essential for a strong America."
- presidential candidate Barack Obama to the U.S. Conference of Mayors, June , 2008

Holiday Greeting for Rail Fans

by Joseph Radder

We have a lot of rail fans around here. What's a rail fan?

Somebody who loves everything that runs on rails. We not only love rail transportation, but believe it's the answer to getting cars off the road, thereby reducing America's dependence on foreign oil, and improving air quality. Many rail fans belong to CRTC, the one group we know of that's dedicated to Metro Rail expansion in Buffalo/Niagara.

Many rail fans remember the huge steam locomotives that pulled the New York Central's crack trains like the 20th Century Limited. And we remember the IRC trolleys that served every major street in the cities of Erie and Niagara Counties. As a kid I would ride these streetcars all over the city on one 3-cent fare, using double transfers.

If you remember the IRC, the old Brill cars that ran on Broadway and Fillmore-Hertel, the NearSide cars that ran on Sycamore, South Park, East and West Utica and other streets, and the newer (1920s) Peter Witt cars that ran on Main Street, Parkside-Zoo, and many of the other lines, you too are a rail fan.

If you're old enough you remember when the IRC cars were painted dark green and then painted apple green in the 1930s. And if you're a rail fanatic, you remember that the first car to be painted apple green was NearSide car #6232. As a true rail fan, I would let other cars pass by, waiting for #6232, so I could ride it and enjoy its new paint job inside and out.

Could anybody be that nutty about buses? I doubt it. Indeed, someone once wrote a book called "Some of My Best Friends are Streetcars."

Can you imagine anyone writing a book called "Some of My Best Friends are Buses?" I can't.

Happy Holidays, all you rail fans!

Citizens Regional Transit Corporation

617 Main Street
Buffalo, NY 14203

return service requested

CALENDAR

Dec. 17 12:00 noon
CRTC Monthly Meeting
617 Main Street, Buffalo

Jan. 4 9:30 AM PCC meeting,
GBNRTC at NFTA,
181 Ellicott St., Buffalo

Jan. 21 12:00 noon
CRTC Annual Meeting
617 Main Street, Buffalo

March 2 Transit
Advocacy Day, Albany

May 12-16 National
Solar Conference,
Buffalo