



# CITIZENS for REGIONAL TRANSIT NEWS

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617 Main Street, Buffalo, NY 14203  
contact: crtc@citizenstransit.org http://citizenstransit.org/

Volume #11 Issue #1

January, 2009

## Stimulus=Support Transit!!

Dear supporters and members of CRTC,

With the formation of TRAC (see p. 2), the CRTC has entered a new phase in our organizational life. We have moved from simply being an interesting citizen group to be tolerated. Along with our dozen or so partners in the coalition, we have earned the respect of transportation planners, who are willing to hear our ideas as having merit.

With such growth in our role comes new responsibilities to fulfill that role.

At its January meeting, the CRTC Board decided that the next step for the CRTC is to expand our membership. With a strong membership base we will be able to diversify the offerings of our organization and strengthen our role as advocate for expanded Metro Rail.

The CRTC is a volunteer, 501c3 organization, supported entirely by member dues and contributions from supporters.

Will you help stimulate the work of the CRTC with your membership?

Please send checks to the treasurer (p. 2). Send PayPal to crtc@citizenstransit.org

As a reader of this newsletter, you are enjoying a major portion of the CRTC's work. But there is much more we could do, when we have your financial support.

Will you speak up for an expanded Metro Rail, by supporting the CRTC?

An expanded public transit system will go a long way to stimulate our economy back to health. Please help the CRTC to have a strong voice in this effort.

Thank you!!

Gladys Gifford, President

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## CRTC Monthly Meeting

**Wednesday, January 21  
12:00-1:00 PM**

## CRTC Annual Meeting

Citizens Regional Transit will hold its Annual Meeting, January 21, 2009, at 617 Main Street, Buffalo, NY. The agenda includes election of officers for 2009 and the 2008 Annual Report.

Come help the CRTC Board set goals and brainstorm strategies for accomplishing our goals in 2009.

### Join us!

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## 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.**

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# Transportation Regional Advisory Coalition 2009 Agenda

Led by VOICE-Buffalo and the CRTC, eleven non-profit civic organizations in Niagara and Erie Counties have formed the Transportation Regional Advisory Coalition (TRAC).

TRAC provides a voice for the non-profit sector to the regional transportation planning body, the Greater Buffalo Niagara Regional Transportation Council (GBNRTC).

The TRAC coalition includes the following groups: Citizens Regional Transit Corp., Voice Buffalo, League of Women Voters of Buffalo-Niagara, New Millennium Group, Partners for a Livable Western New York, Citizen Action New York-Western New York, Wellness Institute of Greater Buffalo and Western New York, Coalition for Economic Justice, Sustainable Institute of Daemen College, Homeless Alliance, Self-Advocacy Association of New York State, Green Options Buffalo.

TRAC meets monthly, at the Preservation Buffalo Niagara meeting room in the Market Arcade, 617 Main Street, Buffalo. The group has developed the following agenda for 2009 and will take actions in support of these objectives:

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**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

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## **Federal Transportation Funding and Oversight**

- \* Urge the WNY Congressional delegation to give priority to promoting long-term solutions for planning and funding public transportation, through financial measures to offset the impact of projected decreases in gas tax revenues.
- \* Urge implementation of Health Impact Assessment (HIA) as a criterion to be considered in the implementation of all public works expenditures.

## **Federal Priorities: Projects**

- \* Support a "record of decision" by the Federal Highway Administration for the Peace Bridge which implements input from those people in neighborhoods and region who are most directly impacted by the design of the Peace Bridge and plaza.
- \* Support coordination of traffic plans for all four bridges spanning the Niagara River.
- \* Support Complete Streets legislation in Congress, to implement local provision for multi-modal transportation (walk, bicycle, public transit, as well as car).

## **State Priorities: Projects**

- \* Support revision of the project to return cars to Main Street in Buffalo, to ensure no reduction or interruption in Metro Rail service. The number of stations and their accessibility must be preserved.
- \* Support planning for passenger rail upgrades to reliably connect Toronto and New York City through Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse and Albany.

## **Regional Priorities: Projects**

- \* Urge implementation of student transit passes at the University of Buffalo.
- \* Support moving the light rail Airport Corridor project from illustrative to actual status in the GBNRTC Long Range Plan and Transportation Improvement Program.
- \* Support creation of frequent cross-town NFTA bus routes, such as Transit Road and Union Road (north-south) and Sheridan Drive and Amherst Street (east-west).
- \* Support planning for an intermodal transportation center for downtown Buffalo, to include Amtrak, Metro Rail and Metro Bus
- \* Support fast-track action on the Scajaquada study (Route 198).
- \* Support removal of part of the Robert Moses Parkway.

## **Local Priorities: Projects**

- \* Ensure that the new City of Buffalo Complete Streets Ordinance Amendment is implemented, including transit-oriented development, with clear enforcement mechanisms and compatible language in the new zoning code of City of Buffalo.
- \* Support completion of the North Buffalo and Tonawanda Rails-to-Trails projects, which are already funded.
- \* Support implementation of a international transportation train station at the Whirlpool-Rapids Bridge in Niagara Falls, which is already funded.
- \* Support a proposal by Assemblyman Sam Hoyt to establish by 2010 a 25-mile express passenger rail service linking downtown Buffalo and Niagara Falls.

...no mention of Metro Rail in the Erie Canal Harbor Development Corporation's roll-out of its master plan for Inner Harbor development. Kudos to David Duchscherer, Director of Public Transportation Chairman, Wendel Companies, for excellent Letter to the Editor, 1-10-09 supporting public transportation in and through the project, including Metro Rail.

...hats off to Gregory Stamm, Chairman of the NFTA, for visionary article 12-17-08, showing how to spend Federal stimulus money in Erie County on transportation. He included in that list of priorities support for building "a network of surface light rail or streetcars that could connect downtown Buffalo to the airport, the airport to UB and UB and downtown to Niagara Falls." Way to go, Mr. Stamm!!

...the railroad bed paralleling Route #219 between Orchard Park and Riceville is scheduled to be torn up soon. But the Western New York Railway Historical Society has a viable plan to rehabilitate and operate the line--this should be the responsibility of NYSDOT...

Governor Paterson issued his proposed budget on 12-16-08, (available at www.budget.state.ny.us/). Overall, the governor seeks to close the budget gap by Feb. 1 and enact the new budget by March 1, 2009. These are laudable goals. However, the CRTC offers several concerns regarding the transportation section of this proposed budget, found in the "briefing book."

First, the NYS 2009-2010 Budget should support expanding, not reducing, public transit service. The proposed cuts to transit aid (\$18.8 million) will cripple transit systems at the very time when demand for public transit is rising.

\* expanded and improved public transit conserves energy and reduces air pollution through reducing the need for commuting by automobile.

Second, both freight and passenger rail infrastructure must be improved and expanded, not reduced.

\* investment in rail infrastructure encourages density in economic development along existing transportation corridors, i.e., contains urban sprawl.

Third, new highway construction must be put on hold, but critical maintenance for existing bridges and highways must be funded.

Overall, the proposed budget does not adequately address the imbalance between spending for highway construction vs. spending for public transit infrastructure.

Highlights from the proposed budget:

- **Reduce Highway Construction.** The annual construction contract level for state-owned roads and bridges is reduced by \$274 million, from the planned level of \$1.891 billion to \$1.617 billion. Savings include reduced debt service, which will grow substantially over time. (2009-10 Savings: \$16 million; 2010-11 Savings: \$45 million)
• **Reduce Rail and Aviation Programs.** Rail appropriations are reduced by \$10 million from planned levels of \$42 million to \$32 million, and a rail operating subsidy is reduced by \$2.5 million from planned levels of \$5 million to \$2.5 million. Aviation funding is reduced by \$4 million from planned levels of \$24 million to \$20 million. (2009-10 Savings: \$8 million; 2010-11 Savings: \$9 million)

Transit

- **Reduce Transit Aid.** The General Fund components of transit aid are reduced from planned levels to help close the state's budget deficit (\$16 million for MTA, \$2.8 million for other transit systems, reducing/eliminating a planned transfer to the upstate transit account by \$4.8 million). In addition, revenue losses in transit dedicated funds and other factors result in an overall \$285 million reduction in aid to transit systems. (2009-10 Savings: \$23.6 million; 2010-11 Savings: \$18.8 million)

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"As Americans deal with yet another gasoline-price spike, the costs of overdependence on highways and the personal convenience of cars keep rising. Mass transportation, which spreads the expense over more people per vehicle, has become more appealing. On a per-passenger basis, trains use 20 percent less energy than planes and 27 percent less than cars. . . . At least two retired chief executive officers of airlines, Robert Crandall of AMR Corp., parent of American Airlines and Gordon Bethune, of Continental Airlines, say improved train service is the way to relieve congestion in crowded airways. - editorial in The Columbus Dispatch calling for Congress and the president to design long-term solutions to ensure Americans efficient means of travel in the future. (quote courtesy Partners for a Livable WNY)

## **Transit Advocacy in NYS**

**Join CRTC in Albany on March 2, 2009  
for Transit Awareness Day!  
Show your support  
for public transit in New York State!**

Uncertain economic times and new state and federal administrations  
have made transit advocacy more important than ever!

Help us tell our decision-makers in Albany  
about the vital role public transit plays in our communities, providing:  
access to jobs, improved environmental quality, context for regional  
planning and development, and basic mobility for millions of New  
Yorkers to live independently.

Please register with the CRTC for Transit Awareness Day before January 30, at  
**[crtc@citizenstransit.org](mailto:crtc@citizenstransit.org)**  
with **“register for March 2” in subject line.**  
Please indicate whether you will be traveling on your own, or would  
prefer to share a ride with others.  
The day begins at 10 AM at the Legislative Office Building followed by  
Legislative appointments all afternoon and a reception at 4:30 PM.  
Lunch is on your own.

Organized by: New York Public Transit Association, Inc., 119 Washington Ave.,  
Albany, NY 12210

Local cooperating organizations: NFTA, VOICE-Buffalo, League of Women Voters

**THANK YOU! See you in Albany on March 2nd!**

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### **Citizens Regional Transit Corporation**

617 Main Street  
Buffalo, NY 14203

*return service requested*

### **CALENDAR**

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

Feb. 4 9:30 AM PCC meeting,  
GBNRTC at City Hall, Buffalo

**Feb. 18 12:00 noon  
CRTC Monthly Meeting  
617 Main Street, Buffalo**

**March 2 10 AM-4:30 PM  
Transit Advocacy Day,  
Albany**

**March 10-11  
Transportation Equity  
Network conference,  
Washington, DC**

**May 12-16 National Solar  
Conference, Buffalo**

May 13 7 PM “Transit-Oriented  
Development” part of  
Reshaping Rochester series  
*Details at [www.rrcdc.org](http://www.rrcdc.org)*