



# CITIZENS for REGIONAL TRANSIT NEWS

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April, 2010

## Singing our Song

The new Transit Restructuring Study has been completed by the NFTA's consultants, Transportation Management & Design (TMD). Final public hearings on the plan are expected in May.

Citizens for Regional Transit enthusiastically supports the NFTA's proposed restructuring of bus service. It is a very aggressive and well-needed initiative that will, in our opinion, greatly build ridership.

Features of the Study indicate that somebody is listening to the public:

- \* single-fare structure
- \* 15 bus routes in the urban core operating at 15-minute intervals
- \* expand Metro Rail service on Sundays
- \* streamline express bus routes and place park-n-ride lots at freeway connections
- \* begin planning for "high-quality transit corridors."

The recommendations of the study will be implemented in phases, beginning in September.

Guided by TMD, the NFTA has included the public in every step of this study. The outcome shows that the input from the public has been taken seriously.

They have heard us!

Will the NFTA continue to hear us, after the consultants have gone?

One issue unresolved in the study: what transit mode will be used in the "high-quality transit corridors"?

Will the NFTA expand Metro Rail?

Stay tuned.

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## CRTC Monthly Meeting

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

## Updates from Congress:

## What is Transit Operations Assistance? When will we see a new Transportation Act?

with

**Andrew Graham, VOICE-Buffalo**

Mr. Graham represented VOICE-Buffalo at the December conference of the Transportation Equity Network (TEN), in Washington, DC. Attendees were urged to support a transit operating assistance bill now moving through Congress.

What is this bill, and how will it impact transit systems in NYS?

What is the status of the new transportation act?

## Join us!

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## Citizens for 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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**Transit Wins Votes!**

*...cftc.org*

On April 6, 63% of voters in **St. Louis County [Missouri]** approved a half-cent sales tax increase to support the Metro regional transit system.

The countywide sales tax, known as Proposition A, is expected to generate about \$75 million a year, which will be used to expand service and restore cuts to bus routes that were made after voters rejected a tax increase in November 2008. It also automatically triggers a matching quarter-cent sales tax that was approved by voters in the city of St. Louis in 1997. This second tax will generate an additional \$8 million a year for Metro.

This was the second transit election of 2010 and the second win! A sales tax increase in **Walla Walla, WA** was approved by 76% of the voters in February.

Upcoming elections include a sales tax measure in **Bellingham, WA** on the April 27 ballot and property tax measures on the ballot in Glen Dale and Huntington, **West Virginia** on May 11.

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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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# New Interest in Federal support for Transit Operating Subsidies

*by Gladys Gifford, CRT President*

Throughout the country, cities are being forced to lay off bus drivers and train operators, and cut routes that many workers depend on to get to their jobs. The Jobs bill that was signed into law recently does not include any provision to use transit funding for operating costs.

In response, Sen. Sherrod Brown (OH) has introduced his version of Rep. Russ Carnahan (D-MO)'s flexible operating subsidy in the Senate – S. 3189. So far, there is one co-sponsor, Sen. Ron Wyden (OR). This bill will allow up to 30-50% of transit funding to be allocated for operating expenses, according to population densities. The bill was referred to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs on March 26, 2010.

The Carnahan bill, H. R. 2746, has languished in the House Subcommittee on Highways and Transit since June 9, 2009. The bill has 105 co-sponsors, including Reps. Higgins and Slaughter from WNY.

Action on this bill is heavily dependent on citizen advocacy. One group that is focused on Federal support for transit operating subsidies is Transportation Equity Network (TEN). See their website, [transportationequity.org](http://transportationequity.org), to participate in their action on April 20, "Resurrect Mass Transit."

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## HIRE Act Signed Into Law

*...apta.com*

On March 18, President Barack Obama signed the Hiring Incentives to Restore Employment Act (HIRE) (H.R. 2847, also referred to as a "jobs bill," which includes an extension of authorizing law for federal transit and highway programs through December 31, 2010. The U.S. Senate passed the bill on Wednesday with a bipartisan vote of 68 – 29 with 11 Republicans voting for the measure.

Another key provision in the HIRE Act is the transfer of \$19.5 billion of general funds from the Treasury into the Highway Trust Fund (HTF), including \$4.8 billion into the Mass Transit Account. These funds are based on the restoration of interest payments on balances to the HTF and ensure the solvency of the Mass Transit Account through the end of Fiscal Year (FY) 2011.

The HIRE Act also expands the Building America Bonds program, originally created by the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act (ARRA), which subsidizes municipalities issuing taxable debt by reimbursing the issuer directly for a percentage of the interest payments. This program has helped states and local governments borrow at lower costs to finance infrastructure projects and create jobs.

# USDOT Secretary Ray LaHood confirms support for NYS High Speed Rail

...reported by Gladys Gifford

The temporary Amtrak station in Rochester, NY, was the setting for the press conference called by Rep. Louise Slaughter on the morning of April 9, 2010, to greet USDOT Secretary Ray LaHood.

Citizens for Regional Transit attended, represented by CRT President Gladys Gifford and two members.

Speakers included Rep. Slaughter, Secretary LaHood, New York State Senator Malcolm Smith, Amtrak Chairman Joseph Boardman, Amtrak Board member Nancy Naples, and NYSDOT acting commissioner Stanley Gee.

The purpose of LaHood’s visit was to announce the award of \$151 million to begin the improvements needed for the Empire Corridor to support high speed rail. Rep. Slaughter presided over the event, which was followed by questions from the press.

Secretary LaHood credited Rep. Slaughter as the instigator for high speed rail in New York State, particularly by organizing the Congressional Upstate Caucus, bringing bi-partisan support for the effort.

LaHood not only announced the Federal funding, but also promised that the international companies seeking to build new trainsets for American high speed rail projects will be required to set up the plants to manufacture that equipment in the USA.

New York Senator Smith detailed how the national High-Speed Rail Working Group continues to press for additional Federal help.

Boardman, Naples and Gee shared additional information on how Amtrak and the NYSDOT will work together in support of high speed rail in New York State.

The excitement of the occasion was best captured by Rep. Slaughter, who offered her vision of what high speed rail will do for New York State:

“This is a down payment on a network that starts by connecting Buffalo to Albany and on to New York City and expands to connect our state through Niagara Falls to Toronto, Montreal and back to Albany.

“Like Europe, Upstate New York’s geography is uniquely suited to benefit from high speed rail. Upstate boasts major urban areas each about 70-80 miles apart. The cities are too close for air travel and yet too far for daily commuters, which is why rail is a perfect fit. Improved rail service will unify Upstate and create a Buffalo-Niagara-Rochester metro area that will rank as the 26th largest in the nation, helping to attract new businesses in search of an innovative mobile workforce. Along the way it will provide work for the 3,500 Upstate employees that work at the more than 30 New York firms that manufacture railroad equipment.

“Just as the interstate highway system we take for granted today was built over the past fifty years, completing a high speed rail network will take time. But high-speed rail will be a transformational investment to boost economic development in New York State.

“Just as New York innovated and brought prosperity to Upstate by constructing the Erie Canal in the 19th Century, today New York State, and Upstate in particular, is leading the nation again by creating a 21st century high speed rail network.”

...for more of Rep. Slaughter’s remarks, see [www.louise.house.gov](http://www.louise.house.gov)

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## ...a model for the Kensington Expressway??

The [St. Louis Post-Dispatch](#) has endorsed the removal of an elevated part of US I-70 in the city of St. Louis saying: “The 1.5 mile stretch of steel and concrete is one of the most heedless examples of highway planning in the age of urban renewal. It forms a forbidding and confusing barrier along the park’s [Jefferson National Expansion Memorial grounds] western boundary – a dismal counterpoint to Eero Saarinen’s transcendent symbol of westward migration. ...from PFLWNY newsletter, 3-10

Rochester Regional Community Design Center  
5th Annual Reshaping Rochester lecture series

presents:

# "Getting on the Right Track"

**John Robert Smith**  
**President and CEO, Reconnecting America**

John Robert Smith is the former Mayor of Meridian, Mississippi, and a long-time activist on behalf of passenger rail.

He is co-chairman of the National Forum on the Future of Passenger Rail, is a member of Amtrak's board, and a member of the transportation committees of the National League of Cities and the U.S. Conference of Mayors.

He is a veteran of the station-centered community development movement, and led the drive to renovate the City of Meridian's Union Station, a \$7 million historic restoration project that created a new multimodal transportation center, dramatically increased use of the station, raised property values and city tax receipts, and lowered crime in the station's neighborhood.

Memorial Art Gallery, 500 University Avenue  
Rochester, NY

**Monday, May 10, 2010 • 7-9 pm**

\$15/advance • \$20/door

*for more info, see [www.rrcdc.org/reshapingrochester.html](http://www.rrcdc.org/reshapingrochester.html)*

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**Citizens Regional Transit Corporation**

617 Main Street  
Buffalo, NY 14203

*return service requested*

## CALENDAR

April 17 10 AM-6 PM  
Buffalo-Niagara Green Expo  
Walden Galleria, Cheektowaga

**April 21 12:00 noon**  
**CRTC Monthly Meeting**  
**617 Main Street, Buffalo**

May 5 9:30 AM  
GBNRTC PCC meeting  
Carnegie Building  
1022 Main Street  
Niagara Falls, NY

May 10 7-9 PM  
Reshaping Rochester lecture by  
John Robert Smith (*p. 4*)

**May 19 12:00 noon**  
**CRTC Monthly Meeting**  
**617 Main Street, Buffalo**