



# **Citizens *for* Regional Transit**

## **CRT News**

**A Quarterly Publication of Citizens for Regional Transit  
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**5 January 2023**

**Citizens for Regional Transit Next Public Meeting  
Our Annual Meeting**

**18 January 2022  
5:30 – 7:00pm**

**Join on your computer, mobile app or room device**

[Click here to join the meeting](#)

Meeting ID: 244 467 004 219

Passcode: ehMP6b

### **Topic:**

**CRT Annual / Public Meeting  
The Past Year in Public Transit and the Exciting Year to Come**

### **Speakers:**

**Doug Funke, President, Citizens for Regional Transit  
Jim Gordon, Treasurer, Citizens for Regional Transit**

### **Summary:**

This is our Annual Meeting. We will kick-off the membership vote on the CRT 2023 Board. (See the President's column for the list of the nominees.) We will summarize CRT's 2022 accomplishments and lead a discussion of 2023 priorities and projects. A lot of exciting things are happening so come and learn more. Will also summarize the results of CRT's work with the Partnership for the Public Good (PPG) expanding on the prior work exploring the economic and social benefits of extending Buffalo Metro through the East Side to the airport.

## **President's Column**

### **Looking forward to a Successful 2023**

By CRT President Douglas Funke

Please join me in welcoming our 2023 CRT Board nominees. Once approved by the members, our CRT 2023 officers and board members will be: Doug Funke (continuing as president), Seth Triggs (continuing as Vice President), Jim Gordon (continuing as Treasurer), Rebecca Reilly (continuing as Secretary), Gladys Gifford, Carl Skompinski, and Pat Whalen (all continuing as board members). Also, Tom DeSantis will join the board as a new member. Our website has short bios for our continuing board members. A biographical summary for Tom DeSantis is provided below.  
(<http://citizenstransit.org/leadership>).

We will kick off the voting at our annual meeting to be held on 18 January 2022. Voting will be done on-line again this year. Members will have one week to cast their votes. We encourage those at the meeting to vote in real time during the meeting.

We were saddened at the loss of Elizabeth (Betsy) Giles who died in 2022 after a long struggle with cancer. We all miss her greatly. There is a plaque and bench at the Amherst Station – Betsy's station – dedicated in her memory.

Tom DeSantis is nominated as our new board member for 2023:



Tom DeSantis, AICP, is an award-winning retired Director of Planning, Environmental Services and & Economic Development for the City of Niagara Falls. He oversaw all municipal land use planning with service on the City's Planning Board and Historic Preservation Commission, its GIS and environmental review functions, economic and business development activities, site planning, zoning and environmental review. He was City's representative on the Greater Buffalo Niagara Regional Transportation Council (GBNRTC) for many years and previously worked for the NFTA. He led the development of the Niagara Falls Intermodal Transportation Center.

Tom has an MA in Urban Planning from UB where he now serves as an adjunct professor and lecturer. He is a member of the American Institute of Certified Planners and a Certified Planner (AICP). We are pleased and honored that Tom has agreed to join the CRT Board.

We are waiting to hear from one other potential nominee. The final slate of nominees will be announced at the annual meeting. CRT members will vote for the nominees online.

In addition to introducing the 2023 CRT Board nominees we will summarize the CRT 2022 accomplishments and lead a discussion of 2023 priorities at our annual meeting. We will also summarize the results of our 2023 Cornell / PPG Fellowship work.

Some the exciting 2023 projects include: continue advocating for extensions to Metro Rail (some near-term, some long-term), support NFTA bus rapid transit (BRT) projects, oppose spending over \$1B to cap the Kensington Expressway (and instead extend Metro Rail), work with rail stakeholders to advocate for expansion of Amtrak service and regional rail, work with Erie County in implementing their Climate Action Plan

(<https://www3.erie.gov/environment/climate-action-and-sustainability>) that has a significant focus on transit, and advocate for the City of Buffalo taking responsibility for clearing snow from sidewalks and bus stops. We will continue our work monitoring public agencies, meeting with legislators, public education and outreach efforts (e.g., our newsletter, social media) and partner with other non-profit organizations, etc. Please join us at our 2023 Annual Meeting (<http://citizenstransit.org/>) to learn more and see how you can get involved.

Finally, again this year, our deepest thank you to our members and supporters for your support over the past year. Please see below to find out how you can help.

## **Widespread Looting in Parts of the City, but not in Stores!**

By CRT Treasurer Jim Gordon



The dog whistle concern about looting predictably came during the blizzard. We know which “parts of the city” and who the looters are, right?

But the real looting happened 60 years ago, and the looters made off with more than just a couple color TV sets. They looted entire houses and leveled some of them. They stole one of the crown jewels of the City of Buffalo; Humboldt Parkway, and part of another: Delaware Park.

When the NYS Department of Transportation constructed NY Route 33, the Kensington Expressway, and NY Route 198, the Scajaquada Expressway, they thought it was progress. Parks were a thing of the past. Cars zipping fast through the city saving motorists a few minutes was a fad 60 years ago when the looting began in earnest.

Community leaders at the time expected the expressways to add value to the city. Older homes considered obsolete on quaint park-like land were disparaged. Bankers offered low interest rate mortgages on new homes and nothing for rehabilitating old ones. It was thought the expressways would prove their worth by raising property values throughout the transportation corridor.

They made a mistake. A hugely expensive mistake. A deadly mistake.

It turns out Buffalonians treasure Olmsted’s trees and city in a park far more than NYS DOT’s expressways. Comparing nearly identical real estate on Bidwell Parkway with Humboldt Parkway the value difference is a staggering 75 to 100% less on Humboldt Parkway than on Bidwell Parkway. The loss to the city’s property owners and overall tax base caused by these expressways is billions of dollars. The loss of life has been atrocious. Six motorists dead on the Kensington Expressway in the last three months of 2022 alone.

The voices of the people who protested expressway construction were suppressed, but never silenced. Today, the expressways are falling apart. NYS DOT needs to rebuild the Kensington Expressway. NYS DOT is trying to put a Band-Aid over the mistake while making it permanent. NYS DOT wants to spend more than \$1 billion tax dollars to cover a stretch of the Kensington Expressway between Dodge Street and Sidney Street. They're promising a "Victorian garden." And a new ventilation system consisting of 5 new fake houses that will force polluted air from under the cover, perhaps through filters, into the neighborhood. Just to save some motorists minutes getting around town.

It's time to chase the looters out of the city and make them clean up their mess. CRT is advocating for the complete restoration of the original Olmsted Humboldt Parkway alignment, but with a modern complete street design having just one travel lane each direction, protected bike paths, and sidewalks with full-size trees in the median to match those of Chapin, Bidwell and Lincoln Parkways.

CRT worries that NYS DOT has filtered out citizen feedback supporting restoration and may be misleading our Governor. We think it is urgent that CRT members who agree express their concerns and call for restoring Humboldt Parkway directly to Governor Hochul using this web page: [tinyurl.com/GovHochul](https://tinyurl.com/GovHochul) or use the QR code shown here.



If you can help spread the word, all the better. We have free posters and flyers that you can place wherever posters and flyers are permitted. Just write to [crtc@citizenstransit.org](mailto:crtc@citizenstransit.org)

### **CRT Work Highlights:** October - December 2022

Below is a summary of the CRT activities during the October – December 2022 period:

**CRT's PPG 2023 Plank.** Proposed and presented a CRT plank for the Partnership for the Public Good (PPG) 2023 agenda. If successful, we will work with the PPG to advocate for the City of Buffalo to provide snow clearing on city sidewalks and bus stops. Our proposal was jointly submitted with the Buffalo Transit Rider's Union (BTRU) and GoBike. Winners will be announced on 12 January 2023.

**Cornell Cooperative Extension / PPG High-Road Fellow (HRF).** Proposed on the High Road Fellowship program again for 2023. If successful, the 2023 HRF will help enhance CRT outreach capabilities and tools. Winners will be announced in early 2023. Last year's CRT High Road Fellowship final report on economic potential for extending Buffalo Metro through the East Side is in final editing and will be posted on our website soon.

**Climate Change Action Plan Public Meeting.** (22 October 2022.) Attended the Erie County public meeting on the county's plan for fighting climate change. This meeting summarized the work of the Climate Change Task Force, which included significant focus on transportation. Doug and Jim contributed to the transportation portion of the plan.

**CRT Public Meeting** – (19 October 2022.) Held CRT's fall public meeting. Doug presented the role of transit for fighting climate change. Jim presented CRT's opposition to spending over \$1B on capping the Kensington and argued for the alternative of restoring Olmsted's Humboldt Parkway

and extending Buffalo Metro. Jim's talk is available on our YouTube channel ([https://www.youtube.com/results?search\\_query=Citizens+for+Regional+Transit](https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=Citizens+for+Regional+Transit)). We are reaching out to other community organizations to build a broader, stronger coalition.

**Launched Campaign Opposing Capping the Kensington.** Launched campaign opposing NYS Department of Transportation's (DOT) plan for putting a cap over the Kensington in favor of a similarly priced extension of Buffalo Metro to the East Side and airport. See the above article for more information.

**NFTA Budget Public Hearing** – Reviewed the NFTA's draft FYE 2023-2024 budget and attended the Public Hearing. Read CRT written comments that were also delivered via email. Our comments are posted on our website ([http://citizenstransit.org/sites/default/files/Comments%20on%20NFTA%20Draft%202023\\_2024%20Budget%20Comments%20-%20FINAL.pdf](http://citizenstransit.org/sites/default/files/Comments%20on%20NFTA%20Draft%202023_2024%20Budget%20Comments%20-%20FINAL.pdf)).

**Attended Workshops and Public Meetings.** These included: (1) a community engagement meeting on Equitable Transit Oriented Development (eTOD) with a focus on the LaSalle Station led by the City of Buffalo; and (2) a Buffalo Common Council meeting that discussed proposals for City-provided snow removal on sidewalks and bus stops. Funding remains an issue.

**Agreed to support the Buffalo Snow Brigade.** This Buffalo Snow Brigade is a community partnership with Buffalo Transit Riders Union (BTRU), the Buffalo Urban League Young Professionals and others. The brigade organizes volunteers to clear snow from neglected sidewalks and advocates for the City of Buffalo to take responsibility for clearing sidewalks and bus stops. Attended the initial Snow Brigade kick-off meeting on 9 December 2022.

**Ongoing Activities and Meetings.** Continued to attend meetings of local public organizations, including the NFTA and GBNRTC. Also served on the Erie County Climate Change Committee representing transit issues and NFTA's Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC).

### **Keep CRT On Track**

To join as a new member, renew your membership, or make a donation please click here. Thanks.

### **Can You Help Us?**

We are looking for volunteers to help us be more effective. Can you help us plan and staff tabling events? Can you help us update and prepare outreach material? Can you help us with data entry tasks (e.g., maintaining our email lists)? Can you help us write grant applications? Please contact us at [CRTC@citizenstrnsit.org](mailto:CRTC@citizenstrnsit.org) if you want to help.

### **Calendar**

Wednesday, January 18<sup>th</sup> 5:30 – 7:00. CRT Annual / Public Meeting (via Zoom)