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# CRT News

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**Citizens for Regional Transit Next Public Meeting:**

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**Tuesday, October 17, 2017, 5:30-7:00 pm  
(Doors open at 5:00)**

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**Details TBA**

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**Free and open to the public**

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Speakers at April 2017 Meeting

**President's Column: Electric Buses for Buffalo-Niagara?****Doug Funke, CRT President**

CRT is supporting the Niagara Chapter of the Sierra Club's petition asking the NFTA to purchase electric buses for evaluation. Specifically, the petition encourages the NFTA to purchase 10 electric buses by 2018 for pilot testing. The move could take advantage of grants currently available for purchase of clean transportation solutions.

The recent NFTA purchase of compressed natural gas (CNG) buses makes environmental and financial sense in the short term. However, electric buses have the potential of providing far greater benefits over the long haul. CNG buses deliver proven technology today with lower fuel cost and reductions in pollution, especially in greenhouse gases. However, electric buses offer much stronger environmental benefits with operational cost savings that offset higher initial purchase cost.

These are the conclusions of a recent study by Judah Aber of Columbia University commissioned by NYC transit. The Aber study considered pollution created in generating electricity for the NYC area as well as for other higher-polluting electric production regions. With much of the NFTA's electricity coming from the New York Power Authority's (NYPA) hydro power plant in Lewiston, there is a potential for an even cleaner experience in Buffalo-Niagara. When the more difficult to quantify costs of health care and carbon (e.g., from CNG leakage in the delivery system) are considered, the benefits of electrics can far outpace CNG buses.

Cities across the US are trying out electric buses. The Aber study has led NYC to commit to the purchase 10 electric buses for evaluation. Rochester, NY, has also ordered several electric buses for pilot testing. Los Angeles, a warm climate city, has gone further and committed to going to 100% electric buses by 2030. There are still operational and transition details that need to be evaluated so pilot testing of electrics in Buffalo, like Rochester and NYC, makes sense. Some of the issues to be evaluated include battery performance and heating of the bus during winter. To deal with these concerns, bus manufacturers are offering bus lifetime battery warranties and battery lease programs.

The table below lists a few available grant programs that can be applied to the cost of purchasing electric buses. These programs are available today, but are less certain going into the future. This is especially true for the VW settlement fund, which will be a one-time offer.

<b>Agency/ Program</b>	<b>Summary</b>	<b>Comments</b>
NYSERDA Truck Voucher Program	\$9M available for purchase of clean trucks and buses	Available on first come, first serve basis
FTA Low or No Emission Vehicle Program	Under FAST Act, \$55M per year until FY2020	Can be applied to purchase or lease of low or no emission buses
VW diesel cheating settlement	VW is required to establish a \$2.7B trust fund for eligible projects that reduce NO <sub>x</sub> pollution.	\$127M expected to be designated for NYS.

I hope the NFTA is able to take advantage of these grant opportunities to bring electric buses to Buffalo-Niagara.



## CRT at Work for Western New York

Our **quarterly public meeting** in April featured speakers from Amherst, Tonawanda, and the NFTA addressing the proposed Amherst extension of Metro Rail. The presentation by Rachel Maloney of the NFTA can be found on our web site at <http://citizenstransit.org/>.

CRT President Doug Funke concluded his service on Mayor Byron Brown's **train station site selection committee**. After the committee voted for a downtown site, CRT continued to support the option of a second smaller station at the Central Terminal (CT). To that end, meetings were held with the City of Buffalo Office of Strategic Planning and with the Urban Land Institute's CT study group.

We worked with the Sierra Club Niagara Group on their **campaign for electric buses**, circulating petitions and helping with an information table, bus demonstration, and meetings with NFTA staff. See President's column, this issue and <http://citizenstransit.org/node/111>.



We **submitted comments** on projects proposed by the Greater Buffalo Niagara Regional Transportation Council (GBNRTC), including Amherst light rail extension, improved lighting on Niagara Falls Boulevard, the GBNRTC public participation plan, sidewalk improvements near various bus stops, and NFTA performance targets.

We participated in **Dump the Pump Day** (June 15) with the NFTA, Go Buffalo Niagara, the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus, and GObike. Activities were held at rail stations, bus stops, the Downtown Country Market, and Hostel Buffalo Niagara.



We **attended meetings** of transportation agencies and community organizations including Buffalo Place, GBNRTC, NFTA, Niagara River Greenway Commission, Town of Amherst, and WNY Environmental Alliance.

We **provided brochures or staffed information tables** at community events including YIMBY Festival, Buffalo Living Tour, Buffalo Zoo, CT film festival, and beltline bike tour.



## Updates: Transit in the Buffalo Niagara Region and Beyond

### **Citizen Advocacy:**

Buffalo Transit Central (BTC) has announced that it is closing its web site and Facebook page. BTC has been a valuable contributor to transit advocacy by disseminating information, attending CRT meetings, and forming other alliances. We thank them for their efforts, wish them well, and hope to see them at our future events.

### **NFTA:**

The NFTA has initiated a corporate pass program for commuters. The program offers a discount on a monthly pass, partly subsidized by the NFTA and the employer. The program began on June 1 and will run for six months on a trial basis. Details can be found at [http://metro.nfta.com/temp\\_pdfs/CorpPassInfo.pdf](http://metro.nfta.com/temp_pdfs/CorpPassInfo.pdf) and <http://buffalonews.com/2017/04/04/nfta-launch-corporate-metro-pass-pilot-program/>

In Niagara Falls, two summer shuttles are up and running. The Discover Niagara shuttle is enjoying its second year of success (<http://www.discoverniagarashuttle.com/>). The ride is free and many of the stops along the route offer free parking. The long-standing NFTA trolley is operating as usual (<http://metro.nfta.com/programs/Trolley.aspx>). The route includes Niagara Falls Boulevard, Pine Avenue, the Airport, and downtown Niagara Falls. The trolley is free for guests staying at many local hotels, \$2 for an all-day pass for other riders.

An on-board NFTA rider survey was recently completed by Moore and Associates for the GBNRTC (<http://www.gbnrtc.org/surveys/>). Among the highlights:

- \* A large majority of respondents were somewhat satisfied (38.3%) or very satisfied (51.5%)
- \* More than half were completely dependent on transit: they do not have a car or a driver's license.
- \* Most riders walk to/from transit. Of these, very few (5%) are required to walk more than five blocks to/from their transit stop.

The proposed Amherst-Buffalo Light Rail Extension is moving forward. A request for proposals is in preparation for the required Environmental Impact Statement and for design aspects. The proposed extension to the DL & W Station has begun its environmental review and is seeking a consultant for design services. The lower portion of Cars Sharing Main Street, from Perry to Exchange, is expected to begin soon, with an estimated completion date of December 2018.

### **The Region:**

Go Buffalo Niagara is a program to encourage commuters to try transit and other alternatives (<http://gobuffaloniagara.org/>).

The NFTA Annual Performance Report with many interesting statistics can be found at <http://www.nfta.com/pdfs/AnnualPerformanceReport-17.pdf>.

### **NY State:**

A new report on Uber and Lyft and transit has been issued by the NY Public Transit Association ([https://nytransit.org/images/NYPTA\\_TNC\\_issues\\_White\\_Paper.pdf](https://nytransit.org/images/NYPTA_TNC_issues_White_Paper.pdf)).



*Calendar*

October 17 - CRT Quarterly Public Meeting – Details TBA.

Citizens for Regional Transit (CRT) seeks to educate the region about the benefits of a comprehensive transportation system including an expanded Metro Rail.

[www.citizenstransit.org](http://www.citizenstransit.org)  
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Please support our efforts with your dues and donations. Send your payment by [PayPal](#), or mail to Citizens for Regional Transit, 617 Main St., Suite #201, Buffalo, NY 14203.

Suggested donation levels:

Corporate: \$250.+ (name/logo will be on our website)

Group/organization: \$50.

Household: \$35.

Individual: \$25.

Student, senior, unemployed, etc.: \$5.

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CRT is a registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization and all contributions are tax deductible.