



Citizens *for* Regional Transit

CRT News

**A Quarterly Publication of Citizens for Regional
Transit**

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Citizens for Regional Transit Public Meeting

19 October 2022

5:30 – 7:00pm

Frank Meriweather, Jr. Library

1324 Jefferson Avenue

Buffalo, NY 14208

Topic

**Critical Transit Issues Confronting Us:
CRT Takes a Stand!**

Speakers:

James Gordon, Treasurer, Citizens for Regional Transit

Douglas Funke, President, Citizens for Regional Transit

Summary:

We are at a critical juncture on several issues that bear heavily on key transportation decisions. These include: (1) The role of transit for meeting the environmental requirements of the NYS Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA) law; and (2) how to meet the Kensington / Humboldt Parkway restoration goals in a way that leverages transit. CRT has taken strong positions on these issues that will be summarized during this meeting.

We will also provide a sneak peek at the remodeling underway at Buffalo Metro's first extension into the old downtown DL&W train station. The DL&W station is being remade into a large indoor Buffalo Metro station that will serve Canalside and KeyBank Center.

President's Column Expanding transit

By Doug Funke

We are pleased that the NFTA has re-established transit service to Bills games, initiated new service to area parks, and restored service on many routes that were cut or reduced due to COVID. Here, here! The new service to Bills games and area parks make these venues reachable for many for the first time, especially for the 30% of Buffalo households who do not have a car.

Service to Bills Games. After over 10 years hiatus, NFTA bus service to Bills games has been re-established this year! This is very, very good news. It makes access to stadium jobs and events available to everyone, not just those able to drive or arrange for rides. And it provides convenient transportation to games for anyone who wants to avoid all the game day traffic and parking hassles. You can even join your tailgating friends, if desired. The bus drops you near the gate (see Figure below). These buses are jointly funded by the NFTA and the Buffalo Bills.

The Bills game express buses connect from 4 locations, the Black Rock Riverside Transit Hub, the University Station bus loop, the Metropolitan Transportation Center in downtown Buffalo, and the McKinley Mall Transportation Center. Buses are scheduled for those who want to arrive early and those who just want to be on time for kickoff. Return buses are scheduled for 30 and 60 minutes after the game. The cost is \$5 per person, per trip (\$10 round trip), same as other NFTA express buses. Fares for those working at games are paid by the Buffalo Bills. If demand exceeds bus capacity, the NFTA will provide a second bus.



**Take the bus and get dropped at the Highmark Stadium door
and avoid the driving and parking hassles!**

According to Rob Jones, NFTA's Service Planning Manager, the NFTA plans to make improvements to the service as experience is gained. The NFTA worked with the Erie County Sheriff's Office to plan routes and expedite buses where possible and will continue to coordinate and optimize moving forward. We discussed the idea of express lanes or que-jumping to expedite buses past traffic. The NFTA would be open to this if feasible within the constraints of roadway geometries and traffic loads. CRT strongly supports this idea. When drivers in traffic see buses speeding past, more will want to use the service. Here's a link to the NFTA website where more information on the new service is available: <https://metro.nfta.com/schedules/game-day-express>.

Service to Area Parks. Earlier this year, the NFTA established service to area parks for the first time. This service is called the Parks Adventure Bus. During 2022 the service was provided from downtown to Knox Farm (June 18th), Chestnut Ridge (June 25th), Fort Niagara (July 9th), Como Lake (July 16th), Beaver Island (July 23.), Akron Falls (July 30th), and Evangola (August 6th.) This Adventure buses were provided free as a public service and according to Rob Jones was very successful, serving between 60 and 125 riders per week. One trip was so successful that the NFTA had to dispatch a second bus to carry the load. The NFTA is planning to add an 8th park next year and offer some special events in the fall and winter. Here's a link: <https://metro.nfta.com/programs/parks-adventure-bus>.

Fully restored and Improved Service recommended. We are pleased that service on several routes cut due the pandemic have been restored. We hope that as ridership returns to pre-pandemic levels, and with increased State Transit Operating Assistance (STOA) thanks to the NYS legislature and Governor Hochul, the NFTA will be able to increase service frequencies, extend service hours, and improve weekend service. According to Rob Jones, the biggest problem right now is a shortage of bus operators and maintenance staff and that as the staffing shortfalls continue to be reduced, the NFTA priority will be restoring and increasing bus frequency. CRT agrees.

Honoring Betsy By Doug Funke

We gathered on Saturday morning to give tribute and to remember our good friend and deceased CRT board member, Betsy Giles. CRT President, Doug Funke and Board Member Carl Skompinski shared remembrances and expressed CRT's sadness. Betsy's daughter's, Julia and Maria Ziaja also shared memories of their Mom. The ceremony was held at Buffalo Metro's Amherst Station, Betsy's station, where a plaque and bench dedicated in her honor were placed. The ceremony was live streamed via Zoom and was recorded. Here's a link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TnL5rjEDiuI>

We are grateful to the NFTA for providing the bench and installing the plaque. Thank you!





Dedication of Plaque and Bench Honoring Elizabeth “Betsy” Giles Held on 9 September 2022

The New DL&W Extension and Transit Station Is Nearing Completion

We excited that the first Buffalo Metro rail extension since the current line opened in the 1980s will happen this year! This extension will be into the old DL&W station, which will become a new indoor station serving Canalside and KeyBank Arena. The new indoor platform will be able to stage multiple trains for handling customer surges after Sabres' games and other events at the arena or Canalside.

We posted a picture of the track work being completed at the station on our Facebook page and received over 12,000 views. This is a new record for CRT. Obviously, there is a lot of interest in this extension. The most exciting aspect of this extension, in addition to the station itself, is that it moves us closer to extending Buffalo Metro to the East Side and airport. We also look forward to the Amherst extension, which is in planning.

Buffalo Metro Rail First Extension since 1986 Is now under construction

**DL&W train station, built in 1917, is being restored & will be
a new station for Buffalo Metro Rail**



CRT Work Highlights:

July - September 2022

Tabled at the Elmwood Festival – CRT staffed a table at the 2022 Elmwood Festival of the arts that was held on August 27th and 28th. We distributed CRT literature, engaged people about the importance of improving transit services and extending Buffalo Metro, solicited signatures on our 2022 petition (<http://citizenstransit.org/node/194>).

Cornell Cooperative Extension / PPG High-Road Fellow – Our 2022 High Road Fellow completed her work in July and provided a comprehensive final report on the results of her deep outreach to East Side communities and updating the 2021 report with the latest 2020 census data. The report is in final editing and will be posted on our website.

Tabled at the Living Green Festival – CRT staffed a table at the first annual Living Green Festival held on September 9th at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Amherst. Doug was also a presenter at the festival about the importance of transit for meeting the challenges of climate change.

Interview of daily transit rider. Doug interviewed Cheryl Collier, a Buffalo resident who uses NFTA transit for 100% of her transportation needs. Her experience highlights areas where transit needs to improve to satisfy transportation needs for citizens who do not have access to cars. Note that 30% of Buffalo households do not own cars, a higher rate in some neighborhoods.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pjDZWiFu3rI>

Attended Workshops and Public Meetings. These included the LaSalle ETOD Community meeting on September 22nd, the Sierra Club Niagara Group Webinar Contrasting Fossil Fuel to Electric Buses on September 14th, Electrify 2.0/ Drive Your EV Week Celebration on September 24th sponsored by the Sierra Club, National Grid, the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus., and others. Doug was a speaker at the Electrify 2.0 event.

Ongoing Activities and Meetings. Continued to attend meetings of local public organizations, including the NFTA, the GBNRTC, and the Buffalo Place Board. Also served on the Erie County Climate Change Committee representing transit issues and NFTA's Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC). Many of these meetings were held been via Zoom.

Served on the e-TOD Corridor Collective workshop series. This workshop series is evaluating equitable transit-oriented development (e-TOD) opportunities at Buffalo Metro stations. Jim Gordon was our representative.

Submitted Comments on the Kensington/Humboldt Project. Our comments on the draft plans for capping the Kensington highlighted our strong disagreement with this \$1B plan. We recommended the far less expensive and superior approach of filling-in the Kensington and restoring the Olmstead designed slow speed multi-modal parkway. We noted that Buffalo's many radials could carry the traffic now funneled to the Kensington with improved transit service while the high-speed, high-capacity light rail is extended through the East Side to the airport. See our website for the full report.
<http://citizenstransit.org/sites/default/files/0722%20CRT%20198%20and%2033%20Comments.pdf>.

Keep CRT On Track

To join as a new member, renew your membership, or make a donation please [click here](#). Thanks. Are you a member of an organization or company? Consider an organizational or corporate membership. Your organization's name or logo will be displayed on our website, if desired.



Calendar

CRT Fall Public Meeting: Wednesday, October 19th. 5:30 – 7:00. The meeting will be held at the Frank Meriweather, Jr. Library, 1324 Jefferson Avenue, Buffalo, NY 14208

Erie County Climate Change Action Plan Unveiling Meeting, Saturday, October 22nd, 10:30am to 12pm at the Central Library Ring of Knowledge.

Volunteer Opportunities

CRT needs volunteers to help us with our outreach activities, especially our tabling events, which have been tremendously successful. Some tasks include:

Booth Materials Refresh. We need help preparing for shows. For example, helping evaluate and update our posters and material as needed and refreshing supplies of handouts and petitions.

Data Entry and Management. We need help managing our materials and data. For example, at our recent tabling events we obtained hundreds of email addresses that need to be added to our mailing lists.

Event Volunteers. We think adding more tabling events will increase CRT visibility. We therefore need more volunteers to staff our tables, to sit and talk with visitors to our booth. This is a very rewarding experience. We also need someone with a van or SUV who can bring our tent, table, and materials to event locations.

If you can help with any of these activities, please contact Doug Funke at 716-691-8528.