



Transit Development Plan

April 2024



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Completed

Ongoing Projects/Initiatives 2024

Shelter Expansion Plan

Ongoing Projects/Initiatives, 2024

Description

NFTA-Metro seeks to add up to 30 additional shelters annually over the next five years to provide better rider facilities and align with peer agencies. Shelter locations will be chosen based on need (based on our current scoring system and transit need index) and to add geographic diversity throughout the system.

Purpose & Need

Bus shelters are important for customer comfort and safety, providing protection from wind, snow, rain, and sun to passengers waiting for transit. When implementation began for this initiative in 2022, Metro had over 4,100 bus stops, but only 250 shelters across the system; 5% of system boarding locations possessed a shelter.

Elected officials and transit users frequently request additional shelters. Providing more shelters will immediately benefit our current ridership, while potentially attracting new ridership. New shelters also provide additional marketing and branding opportunities.

Prerequisites

- None

Steps/Timeline

- Identify locations for shelters
- Secure additional funding
- Produce CAD drawings for the sites
- Obtain municipal permissions and/or permitting
- Install shelters

Progress Update

In 2022, Metro installed 30 shelters at new locations around the system.

In 2023 Metro identified new locations for 43 shelters. Due to supply chain and procurement struggles, no additional shelters were installed. In 2024, Metro plans to move forward with installing 30 new shelters.

New Timetable & Map Process and Printing

Ongoing Projects/Initiatives, 2024

Description

Information accessibility is important for customers of NFTA-Metro services. Many riders still utilize paper timetables (schedules), but current NFTA-Metro products do not align with industry standards. New, highly readable, and clearly branded timetables including geographically correct maps have the potential for the greatest impact to customers, particularly those without regular access to the internet.

Purpose & Need

New timetable and maps are needed to bring NFTA-Metro up to industry standards of information presentation. Timetables and maps today are not easily readable or understandable according to customers. Both products are about 40 years old. Current maps are abstract, overly stylized, black-and-white, and do not provide enough information for the general public with an absence of consistency of shape, area, or distance.

Internal staffing for relevant departments has changed significantly, allowing for a change in the process of timetable production. A streamlined approach for the assembly of the public timetable will improve staff efficiencies in production.

Limitations on internal printing capabilities must be addressed to produce timetables and maps according to industry best practices.

Prerequisites

- Licenses for required mapping program ArcGIS Pro with interoperability with Adobe Creative Suite (complete)

Steps/Timeline

- Determine style and content of timetables
- Staff process
- Printing options

Progress Update

In 2022, NFTA Metro designed and finalized a new cover for the timetables. Staff have also begun drafting sample maps for further discussion.

In 2023, redesigned timetables were produced for 11 routes. Public feedback and comments on the new designs were solicited via a web survey. Full rollout of the redesigned timetables is scheduled for June of 2024.

Metro Transit Expansion Environmental Impact Statement

Ongoing Projects/Initiatives, 2024

Description

NFTA-Metro, in cooperation with the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), is in the process of conducting an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) for expanding high-capacity transit service throughout the Buffalo-Amherst-Tonawanda corridor. As part of the EIS process, NFTA-Metro will assess the potential environmental effects of the project and provide meaningful opportunities for public participation.

Purpose & Need

NFTA-Metro must complete the EIS process to advance the project to future design phases and compete for federal discretionary funding provided through the FTA's Capital Investment Grant (CIG) Program. The EIS process is underway and is expected to be completed in 2025. Funding is in place to complete the EIS and preliminary engineering, but further funding is needed to advance the design phase of the project, which takes 24 – 36 months to complete.

Prerequisites

- Funding in place for the EIS and preliminary engineering
- NEPA EIS process began in August 2021

Steps/Timeline

- Notice of Intent to prepare EIS in August 2021
- Release DEIS in 2024
- Release FEIS and Record of Decision in 2025
- Secure local matching funds
- Enter into the Project Development phase of the FTA's CIG Program

Project Update

- Completed the EIS public scoping process in fall 2021
- Held a NEPA EIS kick-off meeting for Cooperating/Participating Agencies in winter 2022
- Began preparing DEIS chapters in accordance with federal requirements
- Conducted outreach to environmental justice communities throughout the project corridor in winter 2023/2024

Bus Stop Balancing

Ongoing Projects/Initiatives, 2024

Description

NFTA-Metro has some of the smallest average distances between bus stops in the country. This means that there are more bus stops per mile than most peer agencies, leading to inefficiencies in run time. By balancing the bus stop distances based on industry standards, NFTA-Metro can make travel times quicker and easier to understand, while requiring less maintenance for the Authority.

Purpose & Need

Bus stop balancing campaigns are needed to increase efficiency in travel time, which can then be reinvested into the existing bus network in the form of greater service frequency. By balancing the distances of stops, NFTA-Metro can improve service in a cost-efficient manner whilst also improving the conditions of bus stops in the network, identifying areas that may receive a bus shelter or bench due to increased demand for amenities.

Prerequisites

- Bus Stop Balancing analysis is complete

Steps/Timeline

- Bus routes ranked in order of need to balance (complete)
- Phasing for employment of bus stop balancing (complete)
- Signage and public awareness on physical bus stop and on website (complete for group 1)

Progress Update

In 2022, NFTA implemented bus stop balancing for routes 2, 4, and 22, as well as for all routes in downtown Buffalo and parts of Niagara Falls. In addition, the bus stop balancing analysis was completed, along with a draft of proposed bus stops to move or remove, for high priority routes. In 2023, NFTA implemented bus stop balancing for routes 20, 5, and 18. In 2024, NFTA plans to implement bus stop balancing for routes 12, 13, and 26.

Battery Electric Bus Implementation

Ongoing Projects/Initiatives, 2024

Description

NFTA-Metro completed a study in 2020 to better understand possible approaches to adding electric buses to our system. The study looked at which garage had the space and grid capacity to be upgraded to charge electric buses. As a result of this study, NFTA decided to move forward with electrification of Cold Spring Garage, and broke ground on this project in December 2021.

Purpose & Need

NFTA-Metro wants to provide the most environmentally friendly transportation possible and is carefully planning for the operationalization of electric buses to best serve the public, beginning with the installation of charging infrastructure at Cold Spring garage.

Prerequisite

- Facility electrification study (complete)
- Continued engineering and construction to electrify garage(s)

Steps/Timeline

- Cold Spring Garage partially electrified (2022)
- First set of electric buses purchased (2021-2022)
- Service plan for electric vehicles conducted (2022-2023)
- First electric bus service is implemented (2023)
- Second electric bus delivery received (2023)
- Ongoing planning and implementation of further charging infrastructure and electric buses
 - Facility now able to charge up to 36 electric vehicles

Progress Update

NFTA continued construction to electrify Cold Spring Garage throughout 2022. While the delivery of the electric buses was delayed due to supply chain issues, by the end of the year NFTA-Metro had received 6 electric buses. In 2023, the buses were put in service, starting with routes 8, 12, 13, and 26 before expanding to all routes out of Cold Spring Garage. Currently, NFTA has 24 electric vehicles and are able to utilize those vehicles on all routes out of the facility.

DL&W Stair Tower and Pedestrian Bridges – Engineering and Construction

Ongoing Projects/Initiatives, 2024

Description

In addition to constructing the new DL&W Station, NFTA-Metro has undertaken several projects to connect the future station potential mixed use development and to Keybank Center using stair tower(s) and overhead pedestrian bridges.

Purpose & Need

A stair tower to connect the future DL&W Station to potential mixed use development in the DL&W complex is essential to the success of this project. In addition, community stakeholders and partners have long requested a “coatless” connection between the DL&W Station, Keybank Center, and the parking ramp at the corner of Illinois Street and South Park Ave.

Prerequisites

- LRRT DL&W Station Pedestrian Bridge Study (completed)

Steps/Timeline

- Preliminary engineering (completed)
- Final engineering (completed)
- Construction (in progress)

Progress Update

Construction started on the stair tower in late 2022. The DRR for the pedestrian bridge(s) was also completed in 2022. Construction dates for the remainder of the project are still to be determined.

Rail Realtime Communications Improvements

Ongoing Projects/Initiatives, 2024

Description

NFTA has received a grant for \$3 million to improve communications for Metro Rail. This includes improving passenger information display systems (PIDs), the public address (PA) system, and PACE panels (for emergency contact). Improvements are also available for installing Wi-Fi at stations, and in-tunnel communications.

Purpose & Need

Improvements to communications for Metro Rail will directly benefit customers and operations by providing more information for wayfinding, safety, and emergency broadcast. Connectivity to Wi-Fi will benefit customers who do not have cell service in stations and allow them to purchase tickets using their phones without fear of losing connection going underground.

Prerequisites

- NFTA received \$3 million grant

Steps/Timeline

- Grant money received
- Project design completed
- Improvements made to communications

Progress Update

NFTA-Metro is continuing to scope and plan this project. Metro is working with the IT department on identifying eligible purchases to upgrade the relevant technology. As the infrastructure in the rail is largely outdated, there are many interdependencies relating to these upgrades that need to be accounted for.

PAL Service Evaluation

Ongoing Projects/Initiatives, 2024

Description

NFTA was fortunate to receive funding from New York State to conduct a study to reevaluate the Paratransit Access Line (PAL) service and other paratransit-related services that are needed over the coming years. This project will review and evaluate topics including: expanding the PAL service area beyond $\frac{3}{4}$ mile, the feasibility of on-demand / microtransit service, and partnerships with transportation network companies and/or local taxi and Medicaid transportation providers.

Purpose & Need

NFTA-Metro currently operates paratransit service to meet ADA requirements but would like to evaluate additional services to ensure we are following best practices to meet community needs and desires going forward.

Prerequisites

- Write RFP (done)
- Release RFP (done)
- Select consultant (done)

Steps/Timeline

- Consultant selection expected to go to the NFTA Board of Commissioners in March 2023.
- This project is expected to last 18-24 months, with the study currently scheduled to conclude at the end of 2024.

Progress Update

The RFP was released in late 2022. A Project Manager was hired for this project who started work January 2023. A consultant team (Nelson\Nygaard) was hired, with NTP given in May 2023. By end of 2023/beginning of 2024, the consultant team has conducted a set of public meetings to solicit input and participation as part of Phase 1 (Existing Conditions Analysis) of the Study and has begun work on Phase 2 (Estimation of Future Demand and Costs for Paratransit Service Enhancement and Expansion).

Metro Transit Expansion Preliminary Engineering

Ongoing Projects/Initiatives, 2024

Description

NFTA-Metro has received funding from New York State to advance preliminary engineering and design efforts for the project, which will be conducted concurrently with the project's environmental review process. This work will build off the conceptual design efforts completed in previous project phases to position the project to compete for federal capital funding provided through the FTA's CIG Program.

Purpose & Need

Detailed design and engineering are crucial in the advancement of the Metro Transit Expansion because it allows NFTA-Metro to develop a refined capital cost estimate for the project. An accurate and reliable capital cost estimate is required before the project can advance through the Project Development phase of the FTA's CIG Program and into full engineering..

Prerequisites

- EIS submitted/Record of Decision (ROD) issued
- Funding contract in-place

Steps/Timeline

- Complete 30% design
- Enter into the Project Development phase of the FTA's CIG Program
- Identify local funding streams
- Move into full engineering and design

Project Update

- Held design kick-off meeting in May 2022
- Executed Supplemental Agreements with the project consultant to complete preliminary design and Project Development efforts in January 2022 and February 2024

Bailey BRT Design and Environmental

Ongoing Projects/Initiatives, 2024

Description

NFTA-Metro, along with our partners at GBNRTC and the City of Buffalo, is pursuing bus rapid transit (BRT) on Bailey Avenue. Design work will include infrastructure design and recommendations, bus station treatment, and identification of vehicle needs.

Purpose & Need

The Bailey corridor is one of the most highly utilized transit corridors in Buffalo-Niagara. The 19-Bailey route consistently has high ridership along the whole of the route and connects to Metro Rail and 13 other bus routes. Improvement of transit on Bailey also coincides with city initiatives and other multimodal improvements to the corridor, which is a state-priority project.

Prerequisites

- Bailey Avenue Transportation Study (NFTA, City of Buffalo, GBNRTC) (completed)

Steps/Timeline

- Secured funding (done)
- Consultant chosen (done)
- Design engineering begins (in progress)
- Design engineering finishes

Progress Update

- The City of Buffalo began design work to reconstruct this corridor from Winspear to Kensington. NFTA-Metro was an active participant in this process in an effort to leave the door open to BRT without further construction.
- In 2021, NFTA was awarded \$650,000 from the FTA's Areas of Persistent Poverty Program to complete an Equity and Inclusion Community Participation Plan. Work on this has not yet started.
- In 2022, NFTA was allocated \$3 million by NYSDOT to advance the project into environmental review and project design. Additional funds are needed for this work, which is estimated to occur in 2025-26.
- In 2023 NFTA submitted a request for proposals (RFP) for the design and engineering components of the Bailey BRT Corridor project. NFTA received three (3) responses, and conducted follow-up interviews with the prospective consultants. In early 2024, Creighton-Manning was selected as the consultant for the study.
- In March 2024, NFTA received a \$102 million grant from the United States Department of Transportation to design and construct a low or no-emission Bus Rapid Transit line.
- NFTA plans to hire an additional project manager in 2024 to oversee this project on the NFTA side within the Service Planning department.

ITS4US

Ongoing Projects/Initiatives, 2024

Description

ITS4US is a program that specializes in complete trip deployment to identify and deploy solutions that meet a population's multi-modal mobility needs. NFTA is participating in an ITS4US deployment through its Buffalo All Access pilot program, based in the area in and around the Buffalo-Niagara Medical Campus in the City of Buffalo, intended to integrate accessible trip planning with current NFTA transit services. Buffalo All Access is to be based around four components: a Complete Trips Platform intended to support travelers with disabilities or special needs with trip planning, wayfinding, and information availability; an on-demand community shuttle offering service within a predefined zone of operations; smart infrastructure at intersections and along sidewalks to aid in wayfinding and safety; and a publicly-available performance dashboard that measures and displays the system performance.

Purpose & Need

The deployment area includes the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus and three adjacent neighborhoods: Masten Park, the Fruit Belt, and Allentown. The 120-acre medical campus is just north of Buffalo's Downtown Central Business District and borders Main Street. The campus itself is 9 million square feet and consists of 8 member institutions and is also home to more than 150 private companies. Today, more than 16,000 people work or study on the campus and more than 1.5 million visit each year for health care and other services, generating significant transportation demand for the area from residents, employees, and visitors.

The deployment in Buffalo will integrate accessible trip planning with current NFTA transit services, incorporate an on-demand shuttle which will be the first of its kind in the region, have indoor and outdoor wayfinding and install intersection safety technologies for travelers and the platform will also factor in traveler preferences and accessibility needs.

Prerequisites

- Grant funding received
- Phase 1 (Planning) completed

Steps/Timeline

- Currently in Phase 2 (Design and Testing), scheduled to end September 2024
- Phase 3 (Implementation) scheduled to begin September 2024

Progress Update

NFTA-Metro has worked with our project partners on the design and testing for the past 18 months. These elements are being integrated into the Complete Trip Platform. NFTA is currently seeking to test the Human Driven Shuttle, with implementation slated for Fall of 2024.

DL&W Station Opens to the Public

Ongoing Projects/Initiatives, 2024

Description

The new station will be open and operational for revenue service. It will provide additional access to the Canalside, KeyBank Arena, and Cobblestone Districts. The new station will provide second level access to DL&W which will encourage redevelopment of the facility. NFTA-Metro will continue working with private sector developers and businesses on the operations and maintenance of the second-floor space. The new station will have a great impact on the level of access to the First Ward and Cobblestone districts.

Purpose & Need

To operate a passenger station in DL&W Station to improve the customer experience with access to a new station adjacent to Canalside and Cobblestone Districts. The station will facilitate the reuse/ reactivation of the DL&W Terminal and provide capability to extend Metro Rail service beyond Special Events Station.

Prerequisites

- Environmental clearances
- Complete design
- Fully funded grant agreement
- Construction completes

Steps/Timeline

- Station open
- Operational impacts considered and revised
- Continued build-out of the second floor

Project Update

- Construction is estimated to be completed in December 2024.
- The station is anticipated to be open to the public in early 2025.

Emerging Projects/Initiatives 2024

Bench Expansion Program

Emerging Projects/Initiatives, 2024

Description

NFTA-Metro seeks to add up to 30 benches annually over the next five years to provide better customer facilities, supplement the Shelter Expansion Program and align closer with peer agencies. Bench locations will be chosen based on need (based on our current scoring system and transit need index) and to add geographic diversity throughout the system.

Purpose & Need

Benches are important for customer comfort and safety, providing a seat to passengers waiting for transit. Metro currently has over 4,100 bus stops.

Elected officials and transit users frequently request benches. Providing more benches will immediately benefit our current ridership, while potentially attracting new ridership.

Prerequisites

- None

Steps/Timeline

- Identify locations for benches
- Secure additional funding
- Obtain municipal permissions and/or permitting
- Install benches

Progress Update

NFTA-Metro installed close to 20 benches at transit centers in 2022 including University Station Bus Loop, Black Rock Riverside Transit Hub, and Amherst Station. In 2023, 14 additional benches were installed at locations along Amherst Street. Staff are moving forward on creating a process for permitting additional benches with our municipal and state partners across our service area.

Church Street Crossover and Station Rehabilitation

Emerging Projects/Initiatives, 2024

Description

Design and construction of a light rail crossover north of Church Street station. Design and construction of a substantially rehabilitated Church Station.

Purpose & Need

Building a new rail crossover gives the opportunity to reduce the distance single-tracking is needed for future improvements or issues. This inherently leads to more operational flexibility, safety for riders and other road users like cars or pedestrians, and the customer benefit of not needing to switch trains for a longer distance during single-tracking events downtown.

The rehabilitation of Church Station was needed to keep the system in a state of good repair and response to rider safety and comfort requests for a facility with more protection from weather.

Prerequisites

- Funding sources identified

Steps/Timeline

- Funding secured
- Design completed
- Construction begins

Progress Update

Construction is scheduled to begin in the summer of 2024. The rail crossover will be completed by the end of 2024, while the station rehabilitation will last a year and is expected to be completed by the summer of 2025.

North Division Street Linear Transit Hub Full Design

Emerging Projects/Initiatives, 2024

Description

As part of a larger NYSDOT project in 2017, NFTA relocated a Metro bus stop and pull-off from the entrance of the Metropolitan Transportation Center to the north side of North Division Street between Ellicott Street and Washington Street. This change has provided an opportunity to create an enhanced waiting area for the many buses that pick up on North Division, as well as a link between the Church Street light rail station and Metropolitan Transportation Center (MTC). In March 2019, NFTA completed the Design Review and Rationale for this project, which recommends a fabric covered super structure (canopy) that covers the entire sidewalk from Ellicott St to Washington St. This canopy will protect both people waiting for the bus and pedestrians from rain, snow, and sun.

Purpose & Need

The main goal of this project is to provide enhanced amenities to our passengers, increase the visibility and visual appeal of the North Division Street linear transit hub, provide a visual connection between the Metro Rail and the Metropolitan Transportation Center. About 2,000 people board buses here every weekday. Although there are a series of shelters available, they cannot accommodate all waiting customers, which is why we seek to improve protection from wind, snow, rain, and sun as part of this project.

Prerequisites

- Design Rationale and Review (DRR) completed in March 2019
- Draft concepts presented to NFTA management in March 2019

Steps/Timeline

- Refinement of draft concepts
- Selection of preferred design
- Engineering & design work begins
- NFTA Board approves staff to pursue funding opportunities
- Construction begins (estimated to take 1 construction season)

Progress Update

NFTA Engineering, in cooperation with Metro, bid and started final design and engineering for this project in 2022. In 2023, a preliminary DDR was released, where a preferred alternative (Scheme A) was selected to continue into schematic design as it best satisfies the NFTA's goals for the project. 70 Percent Design schematics are to be completed by end of year 2024, with the intent of advancing a construction bid package for 2025.

Transit Signal Priority

Emerging Projects/Initiatives, 2024

Description

NFTA Metro seeks to create a Transit Signal Priority plan to further the goals of making transit on-time and reliable, reducing delays, and reducing signal inefficiency.

Purpose & Need

Transit Signal Priority and related improvements are essential to NFTA Metro's goals of improving service delivery and efficiency, particularly in high-traffic corridors. A Transit Signal Priority Plan will also ensure that systems used by relevant transportation/ROW stakeholders (City of Buffalo, New York State, etc.) will remain compatible with existing tech and on-vehicle equipment used by NFTA Metro.

Prerequisites

- Coordination with NITTEC, City of Buffalo, NYS Department of Transportation
- Funding sources to be identified

Steps/Timeline

- Update and install necessary equipment on NFTA-Metro buses
- Configure and launch Miovision pilot.

Project Update

- NFTA Metro has worked with NITTEC and the City of Buffalo to implement transit signal improvements at 27 intersections along Niagara Street, to be completed by end-of-year 2024.
- As the Bailey BRT project advances, NFTA Metro plans to perform similar signal improvements along the Bailey Avenue corridor.

Park-and-Ride Analysis

Emerging Projects/Initiatives, 2024

Description

NFTA-Metro is planning a new park-and-ride analysis that examines new locations and enhancements to current locations. The analysis will recommend specific improvements to our current park-and-ride locations that include signage, lighting, and other passenger amenities. New locations will be pursued based on their ability to assist the NFTA in creating and modifying current express services to more true express services, with reduced running times and more frequent service.

Purpose & Need

Providing better park-and-ride lots that are located close to highways will allow the NFTA to offer faster service along these corridors, which will in turn be more enticing to our customers.

Prerequisites

- None

Steps/Timeline

- Catalog our existing park-and-ride inventory
- Suggest improvements to our inventory
- Suggest new park-and-ride locations
- Work with partners to negotiate access to new locations

Progress Update

- NFTA-Metro made substantial route updates to the existing express network in September 2023. This will facilitate the proposed park and ride analysis.

Babcock Garage Zero Emission Vehicle Study

Emerging Projects/Initiatives, 2024

Description

Now that NFTA-Metro is on a path to electrifying Cold Spring garage, the agency is interested in scoping out zero emission vehicle options for Babcock Garage. This study will include all zero emission options, from battery electric to hydrogen. This study will be led by NFTA engineering and will evaluate the utilities, infrastructure, capital, and operations costs.

Purpose & Need

The first step to upgrading the rest of the fleet to zero emission vehicles is to study the universe of options for Babcock garage. As Frontier is currently fully compressed natural gas (CNG) on the big bus side, and Cold Spring is almost half electric, there is limited flexibility in the movement of vehicles for operations purposes. As an agency looking towards a sustainable future, upgrading the fuel type at Babcock garage provides the greatest opportunity to balance environmental stewardship and operational capacity.

Prerequisites

- Funding identified
- Discussion with community partners (utilities, municipality)

Steps/Timeline

- Draft scope
- RFP and select a consultant
- Project begins

Project Update

This project has not kicked off yet. It is anticipated that the project will be scoped out by Metro and engineering in the near future and bid.

Customer Communication Enhancements

Emerging Projects/Initiatives, 2024

Description

Staff are pursuing a pilot project with a company called Simplify Transit which would allow NFTA-Metro to provide much needed service alerts to riders via the website, text, email, and phone, vastly increasing the amount and quality of service information available.

Purpose & Need

Every year on the ABBG/GOAL Customer Satisfaction Survey, NFTA-Metro scores low compared to our peers on providing information (realtime or other) about the services we provide, and on providing alternatives information in the event of a cancellation or detour. There is currently no simple, reliable way for riders to sign up for email, text, and phone call service alert updates. Furthering the Simplify Transit pilot program would help to alleviate both issues.

Prerequisites

- Secure funding sources
- Create implementation plan
- Work with IT to ensure compatibility with existing systems

Steps/Timeline

- Pilot program to begin in 2024

Project Update

- In early 2024, staff held meetings with Public Affairs, IT, and Metro operations/control for advanced coordination on this topic. Staff sent scope, fee estimate, and sole source justification to procurement in April 2024.

Community Pass Programs

Emerging Projects/Initiatives, 2024

Description

NFTA Metro seeks to update/replace and expand our current CRAM Pass program based around the potential of our new MetGo fare system, and to strengthen existing relationships and create new relationships with interested third parties (schools, developers, housing complexes, affordable housing providers, etc.)

Purpose & Need

While the CRAM, Corporate Pass, and related bulk pass programs have been highly successful, the full implementation of the MetGo fare payment system opens up new possibilities for the types of programs that can be offered, especially given new post-pandemic travel patterns. For example, some organizations have indicated that as their staff no longer commute five days a week, they are looking for more flexibility in the type of pass available. NFTA Metro will develop and pilot new types of programs, such as pay as you go, in order to continue to serve our partners and to encourage them to distribute transit passes widely.

Prerequisites

- Full rollout of MetGo fare collection system – complete
- Interest from existing corporate pass partners and outreach to potential corporate pass partners

Steps/Timeline

- Develop an action plan for reaching out to interested parties, providing training and technical assistance on our new system
- Create a “pay per ride” option, to offer potential partners greater flexibility

Project Update

- Staff have begun to estimate the costs and technical requirements of a pay as you go pilot program.

Apprenticeship Program

Emerging Projects/Initiatives, 2024

Description

Metro is working with our labor unions to develop apprenticeship programs. The goal of these programs is to train staff to move into higher positions with better pay. This will strengthen our workforce and create a sustainable staffing level for the agency.

Purpose & Need

- Skill Development and Workforce Readiness: Apprenticeship programs provide hands-on training and practical experience, equipping individuals with the specific skills and knowledge required for various trades and professions, thus ensuring a highly skilled and job-ready workforce.
- Bridging the Skills Gap: As industries evolve, there is often a gap between the skills taught in traditional education and those required in the workplace. Apprenticeships help bridge this gap by aligning training with industry needs, ensuring that workers are proficient in current technologies and practices.
- Economic Growth and Competitiveness: By fostering a skilled labor force, apprenticeship programs contribute to economic growth and enhance the competitiveness of businesses. Employers benefit from a steady pipeline of qualified workers, which can lead to increased productivity and innovation.
- Career Advancement and Job Security: Apprenticeships provide a structured pathway for career advancement, offering opportunities for individuals to earn while they learn. This can lead to higher job satisfaction, greater job security, and long-term career prospects in their chosen fields.

Prerequisites

- MOU with labor union(s)

Steps/Timeline

- Discussion with labor union(s)
- Initiation of MOU
- Kick-off meeting with management and labor union(s)

Next Generation Railcar Design

Emerging Projects/Initiatives, 2024

Description

The current NFTA Metro Rail fleet was designed in 1978.

Purpose & Need

NFTA-Metro needs to design and acquire new railcars to maintain and improve existing quality of service on NFTA's Metro Rail service. Additionally, the acquisition of new railcars will advance both the ongoing Rail Renewal projects and the Metro Rail Expansion project into Amherst. All new cars need to be high floor to maintain compatibility with existing station infrastructure, and need to be compatible with the proposed design of the Amherst Metro Rail Expansion project.

Steps/Timeline

- Develop specs for new railcar design by end of year 2024
- Develop RFP for 2025

Short Range Projects/Initiatives 2025-2026

Construction of North Division Street Linear Transit Hub

Short-Range Projects/Initiatives, 2025-2026

Description

These three projects will move from design into construction in 2023-2024.

Purpose & Need

These three projects will dramatically improve the rider experience in the Church Station / North Division Street intersection area. North Division St bus stops will be covered by a grand canopy, providing both wayfinding and shelter for riders.

Prerequisites

- Funding sources identified

Steps/Timeline

- Funding secured
- Design completed
- Construction begins

Project Update

70 Percent Design schematics are to be completed by end of year 2024, with the intent of advancing a construction bid package for 2025.

DL&W Riverwalk Enhancements

Short-Range Projects/Initiatives, 2025-2026

Description

The DL&W terminal is located along South Park Avenue and the Buffalo River in the heart of Buffalo's downtown waterfront district near several major attractions, including Canalside, the KeyBank Center, and the Outer Harbor. The DL&W Terminal and its surrounding public spaces also serve as a major source of access for bicyclists and pedestrians seeking to travel between the Canalside and Cobblestone Districts and other areas to the north and south. This area has the potential to be a gateway to downtown Buffalo for people arriving from the south and southeast.

Purpose & Need

Several challenges currently exist in the use of this space. The public right-of-way surrounding the DL&W Terminal is narrow and uninviting for pedestrians and bicyclists due to confusing intersections, sharp turns, a driveway, chain link fencing around the NFTA-Metro rail yard and parking lot, and several staircases. These accessibility issues create a gap in the nearby multi-use trail network and limit public interaction with Buffalo's waterfront and other downtown attractions.

As NFTA moves toward completion of the DL&W Metro Rail Station and redevelopment of the adjacent space, the agency seeks to plan and implement access and trail improvements to establish a safe and pedestrian and cyclist-friendly multimodal network adjacent to the DL&W Terminal that facilitates activity to and from the station, connects people to the Buffalo River Waterfront, supports adaptive reuse of a Buffalo landmark, and creates a unique commuter and recreational user experience.

The scope of work for this RFP is based on previous work done in the DL&W Multimodal Access Enhancement Study, performed by NFTA in 2022, and will focus on three subcomponents to the Shoreline Trail improvements as recommended by the Study: Michigan Avenue Riverwalk Station Entrance Improvements, Bridge View Plaza Riverwalk Station Access Improvements, and Riverwalk/Shoreline Trail Station Access Improvements.

Prerequisites

- DL&W Multimodal Access Enhancement Study – completed in 2022
- Funding sources identified
- RFP developed – complete

Steps/Timeline

- Develop RFP
- Release RFP
- Select consultant

Project Update

- NFTA engineering is in the process of developing and releasing an RFP in mid-2024. The project is scheduled for completion by January 2026.

Development of Community Based Service Strategies

Short-Range Projects/Initiatives, 2025-2026

Description

The service planning department will develop community targeted strategies for Buffalo, Niagara Falls, Amherst, Tonawanda, Cheektowaga, Lackawanna, and West Seneca. These plans, which may be broken out further, will focus on the key ridership generators within communities. These include educational institutions, retail centers, employment generators, medical facilities, and neighborhoods. This will allow Metro to identify key areas that we are committed to serving and those that we may be missing currently.

Purpose & Need

These community strategies will guide how service is provided to these municipalities in the future. Current evaluation techniques rely on examining ridership by specific routes, as opposed to viewing how Metro would like to serve a particular community. By establishing community plans, we will be able to have a long-term vision relating to the neighborhoods and activity centers that we are committed to serving, regardless of the associated route or service delivery method.

Prerequisites

- On-board survey data
- Ridership data

Steps/Timeline

- Data collection and assembly
- Public outreach to communities
- Mapping
- Plan document development

Rail Storage, Maintenance, and Operations Study

Short-Range Projects/Initiatives, 2025-2026

Description

Rail storage, maintenance, and operations headquarters have been at the same location for the entirety of the existence of Metro Rail. With the current operational environment, this facility has been adequate to handle the amount of rail cars and physical track. However, multiple rail expansion projects are underway that will impact Metro's ability to perform these tasks while simultaneously constricting the amount of space at DL&W for these activities.

Purpose & Need

With concurrent projects examining expanding revenue service to the DL&W terminal, and to the Northtowns, there will be inherent changes to the storage and operations needs for Metro rail. This study is needed to determine operational impacts and potential off-site storage needs of the organization.

Prerequisites

- Preliminary design work completed for DL&W space
- Preliminary design work completed for Amherst Metro Rail Expansion

Steps/Timeline

- RFP issued for study
- Consultant selected
- Evaluation of rail infrastructure

Bailey BRT Design Complete

Short-Range Projects/Initiatives, 2025-2026

Description

The Bailey Avenue corridor has been studied by NFTA and the City of Buffalo as an area for potential improvement and investment. The goal of the NFTA is to establish a bus rapid transit (BRT) line on this street, much like peer agencies in Cleveland and Indianapolis. Design work completed will include infrastructure changes, bus station treatment, and identification of vehicle needs.

Purpose & Need

The Bailey corridor is one of the most highly utilized transit corridors in Buffalo-Niagara. The 19-Bailey route consistently has high ridership along the whole of the route and connects to Metro Rail and 13 other bus routes. Improvement of transit on Bailey also coincides with city initiatives and other multimodal improvements to the corridor, which is a state-priority project.

Prerequisites

- Bailey Avenue Transportation Study (NFTA, City of Buffalo, GBNRTC) (complete)
- Bailey BRT Design and Environmental (in progress)

Steps/Timeline

- Alternative chosen
- Secured funding
- Consultant chosen
- Design engineering begins
- Design engineering finishes

Bailey BRT Construction Begins

Short-Range Projects/Initiatives, 2025-2026

Description

The goal of the NFTA is to establish a bus rapid transit (BRT) line in the Bailey Avenue corridor, much like similar BRT systems in peer agencies in Cleveland and Indianapolis. Bailey BRT construction will be based on design work completed in previous tasks, including infrastructure changes, bus station treatment, and identification of vehicle needs.

Purpose & Need

The Bailey corridor is one of the most highly utilized transit corridors in Buffalo-Niagara. The 19-Bailey route consistently has high ridership along the whole of the route and connects to Metro Rail and 13 other bus routes. Improvement of transit on Bailey also coincides with city initiatives and other multimodal improvements to the corridor, which is a state-priority project.

Prerequisites

- Bailey Avenue Transportation Study (NFTA, City of Buffalo, GBNRTC) (complete)
- Bailey BRT Design and Environmental (in progress)

Steps/Timeline

- Construction scheduled to begin in 2026; phasing TBD

Open Fare Payment Begins

Short-Range Projects/Initiatives, 2025-2026

Description

Open Fare Payment is the ability to pay a transit fare with a tappable credit or debit card or a smartphone with near field communication (NFC) from a digital wallet like Apple Pay or Google Pay.

Purpose & Need

The ability for customers to use several methods to pay without requiring them to purchase a distinct fare card makes payment simpler and easier with cards or devices that a person may already have. This is especially easier for tourists and people who do not use Metro often. This capability is standard in many peer agencies.

Prerequisites

- MetGo full fare system upgrade implementation
- Background engineering

Steps/Timeline

- Funding identified
- Scope to be developed with vendor

BRT Network Evaluation Study

Short-Range Projects/Initiatives, 2025-2026

Description

The BRT Network Evaluation Study will identify corridors and appropriate modes to invest in providing higher-capacity and speed transit to Buffalo-Niagara. These corridors would be a priority for investment with light rail or BRT and transit-oriented development (TOD). Additionally, the study would approach future transit vehicle storage and operational strategies.

Purpose & Need

Establishing a long-term vision for rapid transit in the region can allow for other stakeholders to prioritize investments in economic development, infrastructure improvement, housing, and TOD. It has been over 10 years since any similar study has been conducted, and development patterns have changed within the region since that time. This critical link between NFTA and the community is needed.

Steps/Timeline

- Identify appropriate consultants
- Choose consultant
- Prepare study
- Release study to stakeholders and community

PAL Service Changes

Short-Range Projects/Initiatives, 2025-2026

Description

The PAL Comprehensive Analysis Study is anticipated to be complete by winter 2024. We will begin to pilot some recommended improvements to PAL service, based on the short-term, mid-term, and long-term recommendations made in Phase 3 of the study (Implementation Strategy and Planning).

Purpose & Need

NFTA-Metro operates PAL service to meet ADA requirements but would like to evaluate additional services to ensure we are following best practices to meet community needs going forward.

Prerequisites

- PAL Comprehensive Analysis Study completed.
- Additional funding secured

Steps/Timeline

- The PAL Comprehensive Analysis kicked off in May 2024, and is expected to last approximately 18 to 24 months. Key components of the Study deal with demand analysis and service expansion (with cost estimates); and with implementation of short-term, mid-term, and long-term recommendations.
- Paratransit scheduling and dispatching software (PSDS) is being evaluated as part of Phase 2 of the PAL Comprehensive Analysis study.

Microtransit Study

Short-Range Projects/Initiatives, 2025-2026

Description

NFTA-Metro seeks to understand the opportunities and risks of engaging with microtransit operators in any number of ways, such as using in-house or third-party providers for on-demand transit service using smaller vehicles. This will build on the findings and conclusions of the NFTA-Metro Comprehensive PAL Analysis study as we first need to understand the opportunity or implications of commingling.

Purpose & Need

Microtransit is a growing solution to improve first mile/last mile transit access, however, it comes with a variety of costs, risks, and benefits that need to be considered.

Prerequisites

- Complete PAL study
- Identify funding

Steps/Timeline

- Develop RFP for Microtransit study.

Enhancing Facilities for Mobility Integration

Short-Range Projects/Initiatives, 2025-2026

Description

NFTA-Metro plans to continue working with regional partners to develop and improve mobility hubs. Existing transit facilities can serve as the basis for successful mobility hubs. For example, NFTA-Metro has worked with Reddy Bikeshare to locate bike share stations at all rail stations as well as the MTC in downtown Buffalo. Additional modes that could be included in a mobility hub could include: electric bikes, electric scooters, car share, and more. Successful mobility hubs can also aid NFTA in building relationships with other stakeholders, such as Reddy Bikeshare (as mentioned above) and carshare service providers.

Purpose & Need

Integrating numerous forms of traditional and innovative transportation at transit hubs can help improve transportation options and improve overall travel time for current and potential riders. For example, riders may be able to reduce their walk time by using an electric bike to get to the bus stop or rail station. Increased convenience and access to transit also has the potential to cause people to switch from single occupancy vehicles to a multimodal and/or transit trip.

Prerequisites

- None

Steps/Timeline

- NFTA-Metro staff continue to progress mobility hub initiatives as the opportunity arises.

Project Updates

- Mobility hubs are included in the Bailey BRT project scope, with exact locations and design to be determined.

Dedicated Rail Operating Assistance

Short-Range Projects/Initiatives, 2025-2026

Description

NFTA-Metro seeks to work with our partners in elected office to advocate for dedicated operating assistance for the Metro Rail at the state level.

Purpose & Need

Keeping the Metro Rail in a state of good repair takes consistent funding. As the only upstate agency with a rail system, NFTA-Metro has a unique asset to maintain, above and beyond our upstate peers.

Prerequisites

- None

Steps/Timeline

- Ongoing

Project Updates

- The New York State budget for FY 2025 included annual funding of \$26 million from a new \$130 million five-year capital plan for Metro Rail. This new investment will also fund track and tunnel repairs and rehabilitate stations.

North Division Street Bus Canopy Completed and Operational

Short-Range Projects/Initiatives, 2025-2026

Description

The linear transit hub along North Division Street between Ellicott and Main Streets will be completed. This linear hub will act as an example for the potential provision of transit amenities throughout the rest of the service area. A high level of passenger information and amenities will be present, and riders will be asked to provide input on future changes and locations to expand the program if successful.

Purpose & Need

This passenger area will allow for an improved passenger experience and a more visible connection between Church Street Station and the MTC. This model will be the “test case” for future expansion of passenger amenities, with a focus on those in the downtown core within Buffalo.

Prerequisites

- Approved design
- Hiring of a construction team/firm
- Secured funding

Steps/Timeline

- Linear transit hub opens
- Routing to the hub is re-evaluated
- Data collection
- Analysis of impacts

Cold Spring Garage Fully Electrified

Short-Range Projects/Initiatives, 2025-2026

Description

Cold Spring garage finishes its complete rehabilitation to an electric bus facility. All buses operating out of the garage will be electric buses, with batteries charged with catenary chargers.

Purpose & Need

Electric buses are cleaner and have less maintenance than diesel or compressed natural gas buses that currently operate in NFTA-Metro's fleet. By electrifying all of Cold Spring garage, NFTA-Metro can save emissions and increase efficiency while lowering maintenance costs and burden on our workforce.

Prerequisites

- Identify funding
- Construction of charging infrastructure
- Align with vehicle procurement
- Electrification pilot
- Bus supplier identified

Steps/Timeline

- Funding
- Procurement of additional vehicles

Mid Range Projects/Initiatives 2027-2030

Transit Supportive Corridor and Intersection Plan and Implementation

Mid-Range Projects/Initiatives, 2027-2030

Description

The NFTA will develop a plan to work with regional partners on investments in bus related infrastructure and right-of-way improvements along Delaware Ave, Elmwood Avenue, Fillmore Ave, and other high frequency corridors. Paired with a high level of frequency, these transit supportive investments will increase the level of passenger comfort and encourage further use of the system. Infrastructure improvements include shelter design, transit signal priority and right-of-way improvements. The plan will seek to examine the appropriate locations for these improvements and any necessary service changes.

Purpose & Need

Transit supportive investments on high density corridors will help increase ridership and improve regional mobility options, as well as preparing corridors for expansion of bus rapid transit service where feasible. Enhanced stops and shelters, place-making features like green infrastructure and public art, and other related improvements will provide additional safety and comfort measures. The inclusion of transit signal priority and/or queue jump lanes will allow for greater efficiency and speed of buses along the corridor. The enhancement of pedestrian and cyclist infrastructure will improve safety and promote multimodality in our high use corridors.

Prerequisites

- Identify appropriate corridors internally
- Identification of capital funding opportunities
- Conduct community engagement

Steps/Timeline

- Inventory of existing passenger amenities

Rail Station Joint Development Construction

Mid-Range Projects/Initiatives, 2027-2030

Description

TOD at or near several of our Metro Rail stations provides the opportunity to improve our existing station infrastructure and gain riders. As interest in property along Main Street has increased, the NFTA is in a position of flexibility with respect to several stations and NFTA-owned property along the line. In addition to being able to develop or reconfigure stations and properties such as the LaSalle Station Park and Ride for operations, NFTA-Metro may wish to explore entering into a private development agreement at some sites.

Purpose & Need

Several rail stations and adjacent sites have the potential for future development through a public private partnership. Supporting increased development and property improvements near Rail stations will support higher ridership on the rail and improve conditions for existing riders.

Prerequisites

- RFQ conducted to gauge development interest along rail line (completed)
- Community engagement (Equitable Transit Oriented Development engagement) (completed)

Steps/Timeline

- RFPs released for sites along LaSalle Station
- RFPs evaluated for appropriateness
- Course of action (internal or external) recommended to the board
- Construction begins on properties

Progress Update

On May 1, 2024, NFTA released a Request for Proposals (RFP) for LaSalle Station. The RFP window runs through September 2024.

Service Delivery Evaluation

Mid-Range Projects/Initiatives, 2027-2030

Description

Changes discussed previously in the document regarding express service, downtown routing and local service will be evaluated to determine their effects. Internal evaluation may lead to the need for the NFTA to seek outside consult to develop a robust plan of action moving forward. Considering the best practices in the industry and the changing regional context, NFTA-Metro will be able to better provide service to our passengers and create an operating environment that is efficient and highly productive.

Purpose & Need

While small alterations to service remain ongoing, large-scale changes to the system should be evaluated every 3-5 years. By doing so, we can determine if the way we provide service to the public is comprehensive and appropriate given the context in which we operate.

Prerequisites

- Evaluation of current metrics
- Mapping of new/underserved activity centers

Steps/Timeline

- Internal evaluation of service
- RFP issued
- Service plan developed
- Implementation plan completed

Bailey BRT Completed and Operational

Mid-Range Projects/Initiatives, 2027-2030

Description

After design work has been completed on the Bailey BRT project, and funding has been identified, the implementation and construction of BRT infrastructure will commence with congruent efforts from partners at the City of Buffalo and New York State DOT.

Purpose & Need

The Bailey corridor is one of the most highly utilized transit corridors in Buffalo-Niagara. The 19-Bailey route consistently has high ridership along the whole of the route and connects to Metro Rail and 13 other bus routes. Improvement of transit on Bailey also coincides with city initiatives and other multimodal improvements to the corridor.

Prerequisites

- Finished designs
- Approval from City & other partners
- Secured funding

Steps/Timeline

- Permitting complete
- Select contractors
- Procure additional vehicles
- Begin construction

Metro Transit Expansion Construction Begins

Mid-Range Projects/Initiatives, 2027-2030

Description

After design work has been completed on the Bailey BRT project, and funding has been identified, the implementation and construction of BRT infrastructure will commence with congruent efforts from partners at the City of Buffalo and New York State DOT.

Purpose & Need

The Bailey corridor is one of the most highly utilized transit corridors in Buffalo-Niagara. The 19-Bailey route consistently has high ridership along the whole of the route and connects to Metro Rail and 13 other bus routes. Improvement of transit on Bailey also coincides with city initiatives and other multimodal improvements to the corridor.

Prerequisites

- Finished designs
- Approval from City & other partners
- Secured funding

Steps/Timeline

- Permitting complete
- Select contractors
- Procure additional vehicles
- Begin construction

Long Range Projects/Initiatives Beyond 2030

Metro Transit Expansion Opens

Long-Range Projects/Initiatives, Beyond 2030

Description

The Metro Transit Expansion is realized, leading to increased investment along the Buffalo-Amherst-Tonawanda corridor, increased transportation options, and enhanced park-and-ride options for Northtowns residents. The extension of high-capacity transit throughout the corridor will be transformational to the region as a whole. The extension will allow for greater access to jobs, retail, and educational opportunities in this corridor.

Purpose & Need

To provide enhanced transportation options and increased access to major activity centers in the corridor. Building along the existing investment of Metro Rail to additional TOD opportunities in the corridor.

Prerequisites

- Completed design and construction
- Additional Metro transit vehicles ordered
- Completed environmental review
- Final design approved

Steps/Timeline

- Construction management plan adopted
- Metro Transit expansion opens
- Operations parameters finalized

Babcock Garage Zero Emissions Conversion

Long-Range Projects/Initiatives, Beyond 2030

Description

After identifying the appropriate fuel type, engineering will work on a path forward to convert the garage appropriately. Additionally, new vehicles will be procured through our standard procedures. Metro operations will work with service planning on identifying any necessary changes for service and operational procedures. Our bus maintenance team will work to ensure the facility is appropriately equipped to meet its needs.

Purpose & Need

By addressing these prerequisites, a diesel bus garage can be effectively converted to support and maintain a fleet of zero-emission buses, contributing to cleaner and more sustainable urban transportation.

Prerequisites

- Funding identified
- Discussion with community partners (utilities, municipality)
- Babcock Garage Zero Emissions Study complete
- Infrastructure upgrades

Steps/Timeline

- Identify appropriate fuel type
- Complete engineering design to move towards new fuel type
- Infrastructure upgraded to accommodate new capacities
- Facility modifications
- Operational changes

Appendix: Completed Projects

Metropolitan Transportation Center (MTC) Layovers

Appendix – Completed Projects

Completed in 2018

Description

NFTA took advantage of new capacity at the Metropolitan Transportation Center (MTC) to bring more bus routes to the core. Routes 1 William, 2 Clinton, and 4 Broadway now operate with the MTC as their endpoint. In the future, the 6 Sycamore and 24 Genesee may also be candidates to layover at the MTC. This will change the routing of several routes, with operational savings and better customer service.

Purpose & Need

Ending more routes at the MTC means that customers can wait and transfer in a comfortable, climate-controlled environment. Additionally, it will offer our operators more amenities and better bathroom facilities. These changes save the NFTA money by reducing the travel time and distance of the aforementioned routes, while also allowing for better interlining between routes operationally.

Prerequisites

- None

Steps/Timeline

- Finalize MTC lease negotiations
- Analyze optimal routing
- Change schedules
- Print new timetables

Update/Impact

- This arrangement continues to work well for riders, who benefit from waiting and transferring in a comfortable, climate controlled environment.

Transit Options Amherst Buffalo Locally Preferred Alternative

Appendix – Completed Projects

Completed in 2019

Description

The technical work for the Transportation Options Amherst Buffalo project has been completed. Reaching a locally preferred alternative has allowed the authority to pursue environmental analysis and preliminary design work to advance the project.

Purpose & Need

Adoption of an LPA has allowed the NFTA to move forward with pursuing funding for the environmental and preliminary design work to advance the project forward. The alternatives analysis process was the first step in the realization of the project and has allowed for further refinement in the environmental assessment stage.

Prerequisites

- NFTA Board support
- Political support
- Municipal staff level support
- Accompanying collateral materials

Steps/Timeline

- Meet with UB to determine level of support
- Gain support from key political officials
- Communication with the stakeholder committee
- NFTA Board adoption of the LPA

Update/Impact

The Metro Transit Expansion project continues.

Mobile Ticketing Pilot

Appendix – Completed Projects

Completed in 2019

Description

NFTA-Metro customers can pay for their bus and rail fare using their smart phones. Metro has contracted with Token Transit, a smart phone application developer, for a pilot test of this product with a max investment of \$10,000 from NFTA. Customers who download the app can use credit or debit cards to pay for bus and rail tickets, which they then show to the driver or ticket inspector as proof of payment.

Purpose & Need

Mobile ticketing is a new best practice for transit agencies. It is easy for customers to use, allows customers to use credit/debit cards, and customers can plan ahead by purchasing tickets ahead of time. Token Transit has experience in over 200 transit markets.

Prerequisites

- Contracting process is complete

Steps/Timeline

- Launch Token Transit
- Track data and utilization

Update/Impact

Token Transit has been very successful, with usage increasing each month. There was a 21% increase in passes sold over FY 2023-2024, and in December 2023 alone, NFTA-Metro sold over 96,000 passes in Token Transit, which amounts to gross sales of over \$385,000. Riders frequently compliment how user-friendly the app is and how it makes riding transit easier. Token Transit has also proven essential in running the Bills Game Day Express service.

Community Bus

Appendix – Completed Projects

Completed in 2019

Description

NFTA-Metro renovated a bus to use for education and promotion. The Community Bus was outfitted with schedules and fare payment systems on the inside and an awning on the outside. The Community Bus is driven to events and then set up with the awning so that staff can table outside the bus and people can board the bus to learn more about NFTA-Metro services.

Purpose & Need

The Community Bus assists in helping new and potential riders learn how to ride the bus. Riding the bus for the first time can be intimidating. With the Community Bus, people can practice boarding, paying, and even loading a bike on the bike rack. This will be especially useful when MetGo launches because we can use the Community Bus to teach people how to use the new fare payment system.

Prerequisites

- Obtain and execute grant

Steps/Timeline

- Construction on Community Bus
- Bus went to contractor to have awning installed
- Bus was ready for use starting spring 2019

Update/Impact

In addition to public events, the Community Bus has been used extensively as part of the effort to recruit more bus drivers.

DL&W Station Design Competition

Appendix – Completed Projects

Completed in 2019

Description

Designs for DL&W were submitted by firms for approval by NFTA Board and the developer chosen.

Purpose & Need

Complete designs are needed to begin construction on the new station at DL&W. This competition allowed for NFTA and the chosen developer to decide on aspects and options for DL&W Station.

Prerequisites

- Design RFP released

Steps/Timeline

- RFP released
- Design proposals received
- Final designs chosen
- Award winning design to submitting firm

Update/Impact

Construction of DL&W Station is ongoing.

DL&W Station Construction Begins

Appendix – Completed Projects

Completed in 2020

Description

Once the environmental and design phases are complete, construction work will begin on the DL&W terminal project. The construction phase of the project is expected to last for two to three years. During construction, the NFTA will still need to use the space for rail operations and maintenance. As such, a sound construction plan will need to be developed to minimize the impacts to our ridership.

Purpose & Need

To construct a passenger station inside the first floor of DL&W Station to provide enhanced access to the Canalside and Cobblestone Districts. Additionally, this will allow the NFTA to utilize the 2nd floor space for potential retail. Second floor retail or office space will provide revenue generation and help with ridership by creating an additional destination within the district.

Prerequisites

- Environmental review accepted
- Final design completed
- Funding/P3 secured
- Construction Manager hired

Steps/Timeline

- Issued bid for construction
- Contractors selected
- Construction began

Update/Impact

Construction of DL&W Station is ongoing.

Bailey Avenue Corridor Improvements Study

Appendix – Completed Projects

Completed in 2020

Description

NFTA-Metro, in conjunction with the Greater Buffalo Niagara Regional Transportation Council and the City of Buffalo, began a study to evaluate the potential for enhanced transit service along Bailey Avenue. The Study allowed Metro to work closely with agency and community partners on this corridor to determine improvements that are technically and financially feasible in the short and long term. This included an assessment of the feasibility of a range of BRT-style improvements for the route 19 bus, from dedicated lanes to improved stop/shelter amenities.

Purpose & Need

The Bailey Avenue Corridor sees some of the highest ridership in the NFTA-Metro system, and provides linkages to many other routes, acting as a primary north-south connection. During peak periods, vehicular on-time performance is lagging due to high levels of traffic, and roadway and streetscape improvements are needed to improve safety for all modes. Furthermore, transit improvements, in conjunction with streetscape updates and improvements, have the potential to positively impact economic development on this corridor.

Prerequisites

- Identification of funding
- Internal data collection and analysis

Steps/Timeline

- Consultant selection
- Public outreach
- Data analysis
- Preliminary design options developed
- Final report produced

Update/Impact

This feasibility study has enabled NFTA and partners to apply for funding to move the project forward. NFTA was awarded an Areas of Persistent Poverty grant from FTA to begin outreach and engagement in 2023. Significantly, NFTA was awarded \$102 million in early 2024 through the Reconnecting Communities grant and was able to enter into environmental and project development. The Bailey Avenue BRT project is ongoing.

North Division Street Bus Canopy DRR

Appendix – Completed Projects

Completed in 2019

Description

NFTA-Metro conducted a DRR (design rationale report) for a linear transit hub along North Division Street between the Metropolitan Transportation Center (MTC) and Church Street Metro Rail Station. This linear transit hub will be an enhanced place for passengers to wait for the bus and purchase transit passes. Bergmann was consulted as designer for this project and explored two options for design of the hub.

Purpose & Need

Given the large number of bus routes that pass through this corridor and the radial nature of Buffalo, North Division serves as an important transit connector between Metro Rail, Metro Bus routes, and intercity buses provided by a handful of operators at MTC. A linear transit hub would solidify this link under a weather protected block with transit supportive design. It would serve customers with a comfortable place to wait and increase NFTA-Metro's presence downtown.

Prerequisites

- None

Steps/Timeline

- Secure funding
- Release the RFD for the transit hub
- Select designer consultant
- Approve DRR

Update/Impact

70 Percent Design schematics are to be completed by end of year 2024, with the intent of advancing a construction bid package for 2025.

Electric Battery Bus Integration Plan

Appendix – Completed Projects

Completed in 2020

Description

To prepare for electric vehicles, NFTA first conducted a study to examine what the most effective charging technologies are, where NFTA-Metro would locate an electric bus fleet, and what associated changes are needed to the existing infrastructure to accommodate electric buses. Metro wants to be prepared for purchasing a substantial number of electric buses in the future, with the back-end maintenance systems able to handle not only charging but the servicing of these vehicles as well.

Purpose & Need

Prior to moving into the bus electrification market, a comprehensive study was needed to examine the most appropriate charging technologies and to examine our facility challenges. As we have three bus facilities, each poses their own challenge with regards to electrification, and significant upgrades are anticipated to handle a substantially sized electric bus fleet.

Prerequisites

- None

Steps/Timeline

- Evaluation of emerging electric bus charging technologies
- Catalog of existing facility constraints
- Costing of potential upgrades to bus facilities to handle an electric bus fleet

Update/Impact

Electrification of Cold Spring garage is ongoing, and NFTA-Metro is starting to plan for a zero-emission vehicle study on the Frontier and Babcock garages as well.

Rail Infrastructure Funding

Appendix – Completed Projects

Completed in 2020

Description

In 2020, NFTA-Metro Rail was granted \$100 million over the course of 5 years in dedicated state capital funding. NFTA has properly maintained rail assets since they were installed in the 1980s, but age, lack of capital funds, and harsh operating conditions have resulted in a deteriorating system.

Purpose & Need

\$100 million in dedicated state capital funding for Metro Rail will allow NFTA-Metro to make needed improvements to the health, safety, and quality of the Metro Rail system for our riders. It is also a necessary precursor for potential expansion of Metro Rail.

Prerequisites

- None

Steps/Timeline

- State legislature passes legislation to provide dedicated, ongoing capital source for NFTA-Metro Rail
- Capital plan developed for drawdown of specific funds
- Project execution

Update/Impact

This funding has funded, and continues to fund, critical Rail repairs including Pad and Fastener, Catenary replacement, and more.

On Board Survey

Appendix – Completed Projects

Completed in 2021

Description

In cooperation with GBNRTC, NFTA-Metro conducted an on-board survey of riders in conjunction with the federal Title VI process. The on-board survey asks individuals to complete questions relating to their trip purpose, trip characteristics and demographics. The survey was available during a two-week sampling period and in English and Spanish.

Purpose & Need

This effort collected information on trip characteristics, trip purpose and demographics. This data aids in the development of the Title VI program and other planning functions. Demographic data from the periodic survey are critical in the development of our Title VI reporting for the Federal Transit Administration.

Prerequisites

- Development of survey instrument
- Internal approval of the sampling plan
- Coordination with selected consultant on operations plan

Steps/Timeline

- Survey conducted
- Consultant completes data entry
- Analysis of results
- Presentation to the board

Update/Impact

NFTA-Metro continues to use the onboard survey to inform planning projects. An update Onboard Survey is planned for Fall 2023.

Implementation of Express Bus Changes

Appendix – Completed Projects

Completed in 2022

Description

NFTA-Metro updated and streamlined the routing of the express buses, with a particular focus on downtown. Routes were modified to be more logical and reduce wasted time. In addition, routes coming from similar regions were matched up with common routings in downtown Buffalo.

Purpose & Need

Express routes need to be as time competitive as possible with private vehicles. They need to be simple and direct, to help commuters get to and from downtown quickly and smoothly. Before this update, the express network had not been reviewed in a long time, and some routes had become convoluted and inefficient.

Prerequisites

- Development of Express Network Plan (2020)

Steps/Timeline

- Planning
- Community Engagement
- Implementation

Update/Impact

The express route updates are working well so far. Service Planning is working on a revised express plan that takes current travel patterns into consideration.

Local Bus Service Changes

Appendix – Completed Projects

Completed in 2021-22

Description

NFTA-Metro significantly adjusted the bus network in Erie and Niagara Counties, including changes to bus routes, stops, and schedules. The Board approved these changes in September 2021.

Purpose & Need

An update of the bus network was necessary to respond to changing ridership patterns, land use changes over the years, and challenges with staffing (bus driver availability).

Prerequisites

- None

Steps/Timeline

- Public engagement
- Plan development
- Implementation

Update/Impact

The updated bus network is running smoothly. A formal review of the bus route changes occurred one year post implementation, and additional reviews will be undertaken as necessary.

DL&W Riverwalk Study

Appendix – Completed Projects

Completed in 2022

Description

This plan brought regional stakeholders together to develop a shared vision for access and trail improvements to the Riverwalk. NFTA envisions improvements that will support the adaptive reuse of DL&W Terminal as well as improving walking and bicycling options along Buffalo's waterfront and improving multimodal transportation options.

Purpose & Need

Located at the intersection of the Shoreline Trail, Niagara River Greenway, and Empire State Trail, the DL&W Terminal and its surrounding public spaces serve as a primary source of access for bicyclists and pedestrians seeking to travel between the Canalside and Cobblestone Districts and areas to the north and south. This area also has the potential to be a gateway to downtown for people coming from the south and southeast. Under existing conditions, the public right-of-way surrounding the DL&W Terminal is narrow and uninviting for pedestrians and bicyclists due to confusing intersections, sharp turns, a driveway, chain link fencing around the NFTA-Metro rail yard and parking lot, and several staircases. These accessibility issues serve to create a gap in the nearby multi-use trail network and limit public interaction with Buffalo's waterfront and other downtown attractions.

Prerequisites

- None

Steps/Timeline

- Obtain grant funding
- Issue RFP
- Planning process begins
- Implementation

Update/Impact

NFTA-Metro has been using this plan to apply for additional funding to support this project. NFTA Engineering is developing an RFP to move this project forward.

Bus Network Improvements Implementation and Evaluation

Completed in 2023

Description

The Bus Network Improvements Plan was approved by the NFTA Board of Commissioners in September 2021. The plan was implemented in phases beginning in December 2021. The various phases are being evaluated one year after implementation, starting with a review of the changes made in Niagara Falls in December 2021.

Purpose & Need

The planned adjustments to the bus network in both Erie and Niagara Counties were needed in response to changing ridership patterns, community requests, and operational capacity. These changes are allowing NFTA-Metro to match service levels to operator availability while continuing to serve the community with logical service that serves current land uses.

Prerequisites

- Bus Network Improvements Plan approved by NFTA Board of Commissioners on September 23, 2021.

Steps/Timeline

- Local service changes implemented throughout late 2021 and 2022.
- Data collection and community engagement 1 year post implementation

Update/Impact

In 2022, NFTA-Metro developed an evaluation process to study the Bus Network Improvements changes one year post implementation, starting with Niagara Falls. A full Post-Implementation Analysis report was completed in April 2023.

Fare Collection Upgrade Full Implementation

Completed in 2023

Description

The fare collection upgrade (MetGo) continued implementation through 2022 and was in full operation in October 2023. MetGo is an account based smart card system. The new project will allow for a greater flexibility of payment from customers — including mobile ticketing, the use of credit/debit cards at TVMs, the ability to load value and passes online, automatic reload options, and availability at select local retailers. Additionally, it will allow for 3rd party clients like the Buffalo Board of Education, local universities and colleges, health and human services, and Corporate Pass Members to do more direct management of their accounts with the NFTA-Metro.

Purpose & Need

After over 20 years in service, the previous GFI fareboxes and fare system technologies needed upgrade and replacement. Customers have been seeking greater flexibility with regards to payment options, which this project will allow us to provide. The new system provides a new level of convenience for our riders, while continuing to advance our technology as a company. Lastly, the project will allow us to collect better data on usage, especially in the rail system.

Prerequisites

- Fareboxes, fare gates, and PAL card validators installed.
- Back-end systems established.
- Ticket vending machines upgraded.
- NFTA customer service points-of-sale established.
- Limited local retail presence established.
- Testing completed.

Steps/Timeline

- Approval of testing as final.
- Pilot ticketing (PAL users)
- Pilot ticketing (fixed route bus and rail).
- Pilot ticketing (CRAM and students).
- Pilot ticketing (corporate partners / social services).
- Outreach
- Full-roll out.

Progress Report

2022 saw the first full year of new fareboxes on fixed route bus, featuring legacy fare media. Full system testing began Q1 2023. Full rollout of the system occurred in October 2023, and the faregates at the rail stations were completely closed. Support from the vendor persists to address issues as they occur and ensure smooth operation.

Realtime Information for Bus Riders

Completed in 2023

Description

General Transit Feed Specification-Realtime (GTFS-R) is the transit standard data source for realtime information that is consumed by all major wayfinding applications. In December 2023, NFTA-Metro began to publish this data from compatible buses to improve access to realtime information by customers. Riders are able to access realtime bus arrival data using major smart phone applications such as Moovit, Transit, and Google.

Purpose & Need

Realtime information is digital and is updated based on current conditions, showing the true time when the bus or train will arrive, or whether the service has been cancelled. Transit customers today expect realtime information so that they can make educated choices about their transportation options. For example, if a bus is cancelled, they may choose to walk or bike rather than waiting. Realtime information will improve reliability from a transit rider's perspective, with them able to understand where a bus is and when it is coming for them at any moment.

Prerequisites

- Identify scope and vendor to provide GTFS-R (completed)
- Vendor develops GTFS-R feed (completed)

Steps/Timeline

- Select vendor to produce feed
- Develop system
- Implement system

Progress Update

In 2022, the vendor Conduent developed the GTFS-R feed as requested. In late 2022, NFTA-Metro underwent early testing of this feed. As of late 2023, the GTFS-R feed is compatible with major mobile transit apps (Transit, Moovit, Google Maps). The GTFS-R feed was finalized and launched in December 2023.

Community Cares Reduced Fares Program

Completed in 2023

Description

NFTA-Metro developed a program, in partnership with Erie County and Niagara County, that provides temporary (1-year) Reduced Fare cards to families receiving childcare assistance through the New York state Child Care Block Grant program (categories 2 and 3).

Purpose & Need

NFTA Metro seeks to help the community by reducing the cost of transit for individuals in need. While some individuals receive free or reduced transit passes through different social services organizations, or through NFTA's existing Reduced Fares program for individuals who are 65 and older or have a disability, there are segments of the population for whom transportation expenses are a burden but who are currently paying full price for transit. This pilot program seeks to help that population.

Prerequisites

- None

Progress Update

NFTA and our county partners began distributing passes in September 2022. Around 10 passes were distributed by the end of 2022. The Program was taken out of its pilot phase in 2023. The program continues to be explored.

University Loop and Façade Rebuild and Operational and Enhancements

Completed in 2023

Description

A series of projects in 2023 will rebuild the University Station Bus Loop, the sidewalks around the loop, and the station façade. This rebuild is an opportunity to make some operational enhancements to the loop, as well as increase the number of shelters and benches.

University Loop has had operational complications with the number of buses coming into the loop and the amount of space the loop provides. Enhancements will improve the flow, allow customers to transfer to Metro Rail easier, and improve the customer waiting experience.

Purpose & Need

These projects are needed to keep the stations and bus loop in good repair. In addition, University Loop currently experiences operational issues include bus bunching, unsafe passing within the loop, passengers being let off in front of running buses, and parking/layover issues. With changing the layout of the loop, with addition of lanes, marked bus bays, designated drop-off area and a reconfigured route assignment, the goal is to make navigating the loop easier and safer for operators and customers. Addition of shelters and benches will provide customers with comfort waiting for their buses.

Prerequisites

- Engineering has entered into final design for this project.
- Service Planning has a plan to reorient bus stops in the loop to improve efficiency and rider convenience.
- Metro continues to work with Engineering to plan for the operations of University Loop during the construction period.

Steps/Timeline

- Construction of University Loop is scheduled to begin in summer 2023.
- Upon completion of bus loop, signage will be replaced, along with substantial rider outreach to explain the new configuration. Benches and shelters will also be installed.

Progress Update

This project entered into final design in 2022, and construction completed in September 2023.

Safety and Security Study

Completed in 2023

Description

NFTA-Metro engaged a consultant to review existing conditions and make recommendations based on the principle of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design at underground Metro Rail stations as well as Portage Road Transportation Center in Niagara Falls.

Purpose & Need

NFTA-Metro would like to identify what physical changes can be made to our facilities to help riders feel safer and be safer on our system. After 35 years there may be opportunities to change or upgrade aspects of the stations to fit current best practices in safety and security.

Prerequisites

- None

Steps/Timeline

- Scope project
- RFP project
- Engage consultant

Progress Update

This project started in mid-2022 and was concluded in August 2023, with two deliverables: an Existing Conditions and Risk Assessment Report, and a Final Recommendation Report. Rail is working on an updated implementation plan/program to move these recommendations forward.

Canalside Station Rehabilitation

Completed in 2024

Description

After more than 30 years, Erie Canal Harbor Station is being reconstructed to better align with new land uses in the area, and is being renamed Canalside Station. Special Events Station will be demolished, and Canalside Station will serve as a main station for events at KeyBank Center, the Buffalo-Erie County Naval Park, and Canalside District. Improvements made for accessibility and customer comfort are included in the rehabilitation.

Purpose & Need

Station rehabilitation was needed to keep the facility in good repair and to adapt to the complete transformation of this area since the Metro Rail was construction. The rehabilitation will also substantially improve rider comfort and accessibility.

Prerequisites

- Project is at 100% design

Steps/Timeline

- NTP to contractor
- Submittals and material procurement
- Start construction
- Demolish Special Events station
- Complete construction

Progress Update

Construction progressed well in 2022 and 2023, with the rehabilitated Canalside Station opening in April 2024.