



NFTA Public Hearing Transcript

Aug 25, 2021, 5:30 pm

Metropolitan Transportation Center, 181 Ellicott St

00:00:00

[00:00:00] Helen Tederous: structure modification. In addition **[unintelligible 00:00:04]** we'll have a group presentation. Joining me tonight, NFTA Commissioner, Reverend Mark Blue, NFTA Executive Director Kim Minkel, General Counsel David State, Chief Financial Officer John Cox, Director of Public Transit Thomas George, and Deputy Director of Public Transit, James Morrell. We do have a Spanish interpreter here **[unintelligible 00:00:27]** if you would like that. We also have **[unintelligible 00:00:31]** signing for us this evening. This hearing will be taped and transcribed. The transcription will be available on our website.

This public hearing is part of our ongoing community outreach **[unintelligible 00:00:46]** and listening and adapting to our riders and our community. Over the past year, we conducted surveys, held in-person outreach events, several virtual meetings, all to better understand rider needs and priorities. We work with 20 plus communities and municipal partners in that process.

For the public comment portion of this hearing, speakers will be called out to the podium for comments. You will get three minutes to share your thoughts. I will ask you to say and spell your first and last name and if you're affiliated with an organization. We'll let you know when you hit that three-minute mark. All comments will go on public record. We will not answer any questions during this hearing. Members of the Metro leadership team are available in the hallway to answer any specific questions and they are happy to do so. We ask that you are respectful **[unintelligible 00:01:45]** during the presentation and throughout the hearing. Before we get to your comments and we have a presentation, **[unintelligible 00:01:52]** Rob Jones, Manager of the Service Planning.

[00:02:02] Robert Jones: Thank you all for joining us for **[unintelligible 00:02:03]** 2021 Bus Network Improvement Plan. I'm Rob Jones, the Manager of Service Planning **[unintelligible 00:02:09]** rider. I'll be walking you through **[unintelligible 00:02:11]** bus network. The goal of this plan is to adjust our bus network to the

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changing ridership and demand patterns, aligning with community priorities addressed by the [unintelligible 00:02:22].

To get to this point, we have conducted a robust community engagement effort. The first phase of the community engagement was targeted at soliciting feedback from our residents on priorities for transit service. This effort, which took place in May and early June, resulted in almost 600 respondents. Individual [unintelligible 00:02:43] desire for increased access to suburban jobs and shopping, recreational destinations, and all [unintelligible 00:02:48].

The second round of community engagement was conducted in late June and July. Staff were able to take the feedback from phase one and begin developing a service plan. We developed a dedicated website to solicit public comments and also created [unintelligible 00:03:05] maps for individuals to comment on for numerous alternatives [unintelligible 00:03:08]. Additionally, Metro Staff conducted in-reach to bus operators and other internal employees to gather ideas and information.

The majority of comments were related to frequency, coverage, access to suburban shopping centers, and [unintelligible 00:03:23] that are not currently being served. Feedback from both grounds of community engagement [unintelligible 00:03:30] over on the website and I'll be walking through during this presentation.

In short, we [unintelligible 00:03:37] to create a more streamlined routing, provided access to new locations, create modifications to the express network so it's more reliable, introduce new limited-stop services to create [unintelligible 00:03:48] travel times, modify different [unintelligible 00:03:51] to create more logical endpoints and create common layover locations for smoother transfer activities.

Additionally, they examined broader frequency changes [unintelligible 00:04:02] current traveling management and planned to introduce new scheduling techniques by the time we transfer those [unintelligible 00:04:07] to limit overall wait times. Lastly, [unintelligible 00:04:11] locations in our paratransit network which we also considered [unintelligible 00:04:16]

To start, the Niagara Falls Bus Network has been considerably modified. The primary goal of the Niagara Falls [unintelligible 00:04:25] is to provide better transfers, more legible routes, faster service between Niagara Falls and Buffalo, and also access to new job opportunities. Two new routes helped us achieve these goals. 77 will provide faster service between downtown Niagara Falls and all points in Buffalo. 59 will continue to provide access to Niagara Falls International Airport [unintelligible 00:04:47] by adding service to [unintelligible 00:04:49].

Additionally, the 52 has been redesigned as a [unintelligible 00:04:57] serving [unintelligible 00:04:57] Niagara Falls. Service with [unintelligible 00:05:01] allowing for maintained coverage and short travel times. 54 Military has been eliminated as part of this proposal. The express network has also been substantially altered. Our goal with the express planning was to create more permanency of routing and greater reliability with the schedule to meet various start and end times [inaudible 00:05:23] For services that had multiple different variants, these are being consolidated into one variant for all the trips.

Additionally, all routes will have at least three morning and three evening trips, which allows for greater passenger flexibility. Numerous services that were not effective are isolated for-elimination, including the 67 Cleveland Hill, 68 George Urban, 75 West Seneca, and 79 Tonawanda routes. Downtown Buffalo **[unintelligible 00:05:51]** have been modified to use common routings and stops. The current network for the downtown **[unintelligible 00:05:56]** can be somewhat confusing and difficult to understand for passengers. Creating common routings allows for greater visibility of transit and also more legible systems for our passengers.

It also allows Metro to target specific stops for greater **[unintelligible 00:06:08]**. The addition of two new limited-stop services will create faster trips for riders and allow for easier transfers to connecting routes. Limited-stop services will not replace local trips but will be provided as an option, creating greater choices for our riders. The addition of limited-stop services is planned for the 19 Bailey and 25 Delaware routes.

Another local bus network improvement plan is to modify the **[inaudible 00:06:34]** specific routes that are aligned with destinations and provide greater access. The example shown on the slide is a modification to the endpoint of the 11A route which currently ends within a residential **[unintelligible 00:06:46]**. We were proposing a modification that would access the Boulevard Mall. This allows for the activity center to be served while also providing new **[unintelligible 00:06:53]** currently not served by transit.

Numerous riders and community members have provided feedback **[unintelligible 00:07:02]** new job locations. The example shown **[unintelligible 00:07:05]** the new 59 route as well as the current 55F variant. We were able to create a new route out of the 55 route which is **[unintelligible 00:07:13]**. The resulting route allows us to serve new business centers while also maintaining access **[unintelligible 00:07:21]** that already exist in that area.

Transit service **[unintelligible 00:07:26]**. In the example on the slide, virtual modification **[unintelligible 00:07:31]** currently deviates down to Buffalo State College. Bus deviation **[unintelligible 00:07:36]** some ridership, it also forces the majority of the passengers who are trying to travel **[unintelligible 00:07:40]** bus to have a longer trip.

Eliminating this **[unintelligible 00:07:44]** creates better travel time and reliability for the majority of our passengers. Individuals from Local State will still have the opportunity **[unintelligible 00:07:51]** services of the 3 Grant, 20 Elmwood **[unintelligible 00:07:55]**. Frequency changes, which are more operational in nature, are examined on an ongoing basis. However, **[unintelligible 00:08:04]** returned to a 15-minute frequency in the near future, our busiest routes, **[unintelligible 00:08:08]** 3 Grant, 20 Elmwood, and 23 Filmore-Hertel.

Creating common layover locations is important for better transfers and greater efficiency. In the example shown on the slide, 47 Youngs Road modification accomplishes this goal by modifying the endpoint of the route **[unintelligible 00:08:25]** 48 and 49 routes. Additionally, the modifications to the 47 routes overlap the Main Street serving job locations in the center- community center and create greater access to transfer locations **[unintelligible 00:08:38]** employment.

In order to accomplish some of the [unintelligible 00:08:43] improvement plan, some local foreign routes [unintelligible 00:08:46]. The local routes [unintelligible 00:08:48] for elimination include 7 Baynes-Richmond, 29 Wohlers, and 54 Military Route. These routes have the lowest ridership in our system. [unintelligible 00:08:58] alternate-alternative services available to riders in these areas.

In addition to the improvements in the bus network [unintelligible 00:09:05], we're also proposing modifications to our fare structure. We're undergoing a major change [unintelligible 00:09:10] collect and process fares, and over time, have decided a couple of modifications to our fare policy [unintelligible 00:09:15]. NFTA Metro [unintelligible 00:09:20] public hearing in September of 2016 regarding the proposed fare policy. The fare policy allows us to establish guidelines for setting [unintelligible 00:09:27] fares.

The fare policy includes local fare payment and fare [unintelligible 00:09:32] as well as the fare structure [unintelligible 00:09:34]. The previous fare policy effort covered numerous elements of our proposed fare structure, including daily [unintelligible 00:09:40] passes and a change in how we handle these fares. As part of that effort, after equity analysis was completed, [unintelligible 00:09:49]

Over time, the priority of the authority and the community at large have changed. We think that it's pertinent to look at three additional fare structure changes. The first is the institution of 31-day capital. This will ensure that all riders [unintelligible 00:10:03] will receive the best value over the course of any [unintelligible 00:10:06] regardless of being able to forward a \$75 [unintelligible 00:10:09] policy. This will effectively bring the overall cost down for passengers.

The second modification to the fare structure is to eliminate the enhanced express surcharge. \$0.50 surcharge currently only applies to two routes and does not align with our [unintelligible 00:10:24] guidelines. Elimination of this surcharge will create greater equity of standardizing on lower fares.

And lastly, we're introducing a premium fare of \$5 one-way for premium services. While we do not currently have any premium services, we're examining the potential to provide these in the future. This may include a sporting event or a special activity outside your normal service parameters. The introduction of these three items is a win for our community in providing equitable services to our region.

The third and final phase of community engagement commenced on July 22nd with our presentation for a Board of Commissioners. We have conducted numerous in-person [unintelligible 00:11:01] events for the public and our bus operators since then. We have received comments via mail, email, and through our dynamic mapping software. The public hearings are just one way to comment, and the official public comment hearing will stay open until September 8th.

After all comments are received, the staff will modify the plan if necessary and present it to our Board [unintelligible 00:11:18] in September. We were planning to phase implementation beginning with the Niagara Falls changes in the winter of 2021, moving to your kind of local changes, and finally the implementation of the express plan changes in the summer of 2022. That concludes my presentation

providing an overview of the bus network in improvement and fare cost modifications. At this time, I'll turn it back over to Helen Tederous to kindly open our public hearing.

[00:11:50] Helen Tederous: Thank you, Rob. A reminder, this hearing is for the public to provide input. We will not respond to specific questions. All comments will become part of the public records. Please direct your comments to the subject at hand. And now our first speaker, Bill Russo.

[00:12:14] Bill Russo: All right. Thank you very much, um--

[00:12:16] Helen Tederous: You-you must say and spell your first and last name.

[00:12:18] Bill Russo: B-I-L-L, R-U-S-S-O.

[00:12:21] Helen Tederous: Thank you so much.

[00:12:24] Bill Russo: Um, well, I already see how I'm gonna be affected by some of these changes. Eliminating the 11 North on Colvin, I won't be able to get to my friend's house anymore who lives on Colvin and she's kind of around and near, um, um, Oliver Creek Road, but on the other hand, I'll be able to go to the Boulevard Mall easier, so there was a tradeoff there. **[unintelligible 00:12:42]** but, in regards to, um, bus fares, um, when I visited Montreal, this was years ago, they had a weekend pass because there was less surplus, they've justified by having a cheaper fare.

You know, **[unintelligible 00:13:00]** something for a price cheaper than any other day of the week, and it's time that we do that here. Um, I want to note that I've been riding the system for 19 years and I've ridden every single bus route in this entire system, so I know what needs to be done and a lot of the times we need more service. I mean, yes, it goes down **[unintelligible 00:13:22]**, but you know, we need to add more and, um--

[00:13:24] Audience Member: Yeah.

[00:13:25] Bill Russo: Another thing I was just thinking would be nice is if we had-- Oh, another note is, I've been to every single state except Hawaii, so I've gone on all their bus systems, and a lot of times in all these other places, the bus systems connect with other bus systems, and I can give you an example of how that can happen here. If we introduce bus service to Batavia, and then from there connect with the RTS system, we could-- Once you're down to that system, you can go pretty much anywhere on that system. Imagine being able to get to Rochester.

Right now it's a-- It's like a \$50 with only a Greyhound **[unintelligible 00:13:57]**. Imagine that for, like, \$5 **[unintelligible 00:13:59]**. That's huge savings. Um, we need more service on roads such as Harlem **[unintelligible 00:14:08]** a lot of service going this way, but not a lot of service going this way. You know? To go all the way back and all the way out again makes no sense. Um, how about, you know, since we already have the airport, how about make that a hub for-for bus groups to out? And maybe that could be the hub for the new route to Batavia if that ever becomes a reality.

How about train service to the airport and to the Falls? I mean I'm glad that you're trying to make the trip to the Falls faster because that's-- It's an awfully long trip, or how about service between the Falls and [unintelligible 00:14:42]? See, there's a lot of-- There's ways where all this could be connected, but right now, it's-it's going all the way one way through all the way back out again.

Um, so another idea, or another big thing that's, um-- We need more service in the evenings and-and-and even overnight. [unintelligible 00:15:02] Say you work in, uh, three to eleven shifts and by that time, you-you know, the buses are very far and few between that and either it takes a lot longer to get home, or you're stuck and you have to walk for the rest of the way. Um, and, um, how about-- Here's another out-of-the-box idea. You know, being able to [unintelligible 00:15:22] Oh, I'm running out of time. Um, never mind.

[00:15:24] Helen Tederous: [inaudible 00:15:24]

[00:15:27] Bill Russo: What was that?

[00:15:27] Helen Tederous: Wrap up.

[00:15:29] Bill Russo: How about we partner physical fitness and help the huge issue in this region? We have a lot of heart diseases and all that. Partner with, um, gyms and health facilities and maybe offer a discount and you can have a medical pass or discount to the gym?

[00:15:47] Helen Tederous: Thank you, Bill. [inaudible 00:15:49]

[applause]

[00:15:55] Helen Tederous: Wendy Davenport.

[pause 00:15:57]

[00:16:09] Davenport: [inaudible 00:16:09] My concern is about the [unintelligible 00:16:15] bus schedule. Um, [unintelligible 00:16:18].

[00:16:19] Helen Tederous: Wendy, I'm sorry to interrupt you. Can you say and spell your first and last name for the record?

[00:16:23] Davenport: Wendy, W-E-N-D-Y, Davenport, D-A-V-E-N-P-O-R-T. Um, they're setting up the new building at 428 Amherst Street. It's a senior building for 55 [unintelligible 00:16:39] and I did [unintelligible 00:16:44] protect the bus stop for us seniors. If you were a senior, you know you can't walk that far, some have wheelchairs, I do have a wheelchair, a walker, and a cane, but I try to use the walker more than my wheelchair, and y'all are gonna take the stop, [unintelligible 00:17:06] three blocks over. Not three blocks back, three blocks over.

For [unintelligible 00:17:13] Madison to Jefferson. We seniors can't do that. Me, I have a lot of medical problems, and my main concern is about the other seniors, and then one of the other residents is here with me. He did a petition, me and him are the one trying to push it to keep the bus stop there and also we can have a bench for the

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senior to sit down and a shelter to go over our head on both sides of Broadway and Amherst for the seniors. That's all I have to say today. Please keep the bus stop for our seniors.

[applause]

[00:17:55] Helen Tederous: Carl [unintelligible 00:17:55] De Leon.

[pause 00:17:58]

[00:18:09] Carl de Lon: Good afternoon. My name is Carl De Leon, C-A-R-L, um, my last name is D-E space L-E-O-N. Now, this is, uh, with regards to the- to the bus stop on item three, uh, route 4. Um, we do understand residents, family members, and the staff of the newly, um-- of-of the- of the new apartment complex

[unintelligible 00:18:34] are begging your office not to discontinue or eliminate the two bus stops because, um, we are now open and-- I'm sorry.

And we-- And, uh-- Just-- The apartment is-is-is-is really open and, um, there is, uh-- There are 84 residents, living in that apartment now, you know? And people-people, um, are moving in daily. They just started accepting, uh, residents last July. Now, if you can consider the good benefits if you're aware of the bus stop, um, at-at our age, you know, or, you know, we-we-we are seniors. Half of- half of us even have mental disabilities. It would be difficult, it would be tiresome, um, for us to be walking from uh, from, uh, Amherst Street to Jefferson or to **[unintelligible 00:19:33]** carrying-carrying loads of shopping bags under the heat of the sun or worse under heavy snow. And, uh, **[unintelligible 00:19:42]** seniors, you know, who are physically challenged so please, do not discontinue, um, the bus stops on-on Amherst Street. Thank you very much.

[applause]

[00:20:02] Helen Tederous: Andrew Pieczynski

[00:20:07] Signer: [unintelligible 00:20:10] right.

[00:20:10] Andrew Pieczynski: Thank you.

[00:20:14] Signer: The podium's right in front of you. Just walk around it.

[00:20:15] Andrew Pieczynski: All right.

[00:20:15] Signer: You got it?

[00:20:16] Andrew Pieczynski: Yep.

[00:20:16] Signer: Okay.

[00:20:18] Andrew Pieczynski: Hello, everyone. My name is Andrew Pieczynski, A-N-D-R-E-W P-I-E-C-Z-Y-N-S-K-I. I'm here to speak about the plans that the NFTA has as a paratransit rider. It's been brought up a lot of things that's-- that-that paratransit was looked into. I feel the information that was put out towards the

paratransit community was null. They have all the names and phone numbers, all the people that could be losing service and it seems like none of them have been notified about these meetings that's gonna affect a lot of people.

It seems like there's more service losing area than gaining. And just the information that was given, **[unintelligible 00:21:05]** it wasn't done. It was done very late in the process. For people without technology and phone systems, finally, the message was put on there under a week before the- these meetings were here to get the input. That information needs to be put out for a lot of people that are technology-starved and don't have **[unintelligible 00:21:27]** the landline phone is the major source of use.

A lot of people have technology, but you can't forget about the technology-starved people in this area. You know, either challenged community in the paratransit and even for the fixed-route community. There's a lot of people that called that phone number to get information. An-an-another thing was- talked about was some of the changes on sub-- I-I live in Hamburg, out on 74 **[unintelligible 00:21:56]** cut a whole bunch of service out from, uh, McKinley Parkway all the way out to Boston.

One example, I live in Hamburg and live three miles from a Walmart. I can't get to it via paratransit. I have to go 15 miles **[unintelligible 00:22:10]** to get to a Walmart. How efficient is that in a system to bring out a s- where they're changing the system on at 74 but at the end, **[unintelligible 00:22:22]** a deviation over down southwest **[unintelligible 00:22:26]** Road to go into Walmart where you have fixed-route service and then a paratransit service **[unintelligible 00:22:32]**

So, a lot of these issues are out there for the paratransit community also because if a- the fixed-route-- We are like the-the little brother of the fixed route system. As in we are always forgotten about because whatever fixed-route does, it affects us. **[unintelligible 00:22:50]** And it seems like we get the information as late- later than other- like the fixed route. **[unintelligible 00:22:56]** so, that's why I keep bringing this issue up, as it has to be addressed and publicly noticed for a lot of people. Thank you, everybody and c-continue pushing for more information.

[applause]

[00:23:16] Signer: Just pass down on your left.

[00:23:18] Andrew Pieczynski: Okay. Thank you.

[00:23:19] Signer: You're welcome. **[unintelligible 00:23:22]**

[00:23:21] Andrew Pieczynski: Okay. Thank you.

[00:23:25] Helen Tederous: Diane Jordan.

[00:23:35] Signer: There's a chair right in front of you, Ms. Diane.

[00:23:37] Diane Jordan: Yes.

[00:23:38] Signer: Okay. **[unintelligible 00:23:39]** Keep coming towards my voice **[unintelligible 00:23:43]** a little bit to your right. Why don't you grab my hand?

[00:23:48] Diane Jordan: Shoulder.

[00:23:49] Signer: All right, shoulder, and I'd take you right over here.

[00:23:51] Diane Jordan: Okay.

[00:23:51] Signer: Okay. On your left-hand side is the podium.

[00:23:58] Helen Tederous: Thank you.

[00:23:58] Signer: There you go. Yep.

[00:24:00] Diane Jordan: Okay, My name is Diane Jordan. D-I-A-- D-I-A-N-E J-O-R-D-A-N. Um, my comments are mostly mainly for the experiences I- that I have riding the paratransit, and how it-it affects the big buses, the change will affect us. The changes that are made for the big bus that affect us affect us in a different way and I think measurements have to be measured in a different- in a different, uh, way of measurement because people who ride the big bus, they have vision.

Of course, when you shut down, uh, uh, a route, they could walk through blocks. But when you shut down that route and it affects the paratransit and the people who are still on that route, they don't have a choice. So therefore, um, I-- You're mixing eggs with potatoes. You-you can't use the same basis to determining the- that it doesn't affect the people who ride the paratransit as much as it does. It affects us much more because we have no choice. Because we need the paratransit to take us from one place to another and I think that should be taken into consideration.

Um, also, the bus stop that you are going to shut down near the Broadway market, my understanding that there's a bus stop that's only 50 feet away, but when you need to ride the bus and you're going to the Broadway Market, which is a business in our community that we are trying to keep alive, walking another 50 with a couple of bags is a lot.

Second of all, everything you say says it's on the website and that's a fact. And it's a fact that people can use the website but you are leaving out so many people who don't have access to a website which I heard some- one of your, uh, people say that they're not respond- you're not responsible for people not having a cell phone. No, you're not, but you're responsible for people getting the information and if you have to present the information in another way, that's what you're responsible for and that's what you're not doing.

Because the website, for people who can access it, it's fine. But for people who do not have- even have a phone, then don't have the skills, they can't do it. I don't believe you have anyone staff who is a programmer that programs to- that has the necessary skills so that the people who use screen readers can use it. We have talked about that in the advisory board a number of times and **[unintelligible 00:27:08]** it seemed to fall on deaf ears. Thank you.

[applause]

[00:27:24] **Signer:** All right, on your left is your chair.

[00:27:26] **Diane Jordan:** Okay.

[00:27:26] **Signer:** All right.

[00:27:27] **Diane Jordan:** Thank you. Thank you very much.

[00:27:33] **Helen Tederous:** Douglas Funke.

[00:27:45] **Douglas Funke:** Thank you. Uh, my name is Douglas Funke. I'm one of the Presidents of Citizens for Regional Transit [unintelligible 00:27:50]

[00:27:51] **Helen Tederous:** Douglas. Can you-

[00:27:52] **Douglas Funke:** Oh, I'm sorry.

[00:27:52] **Helen Tederous:** -say and spell your name?

[00:27:53] **Douglas Funke:** D-O-U-G-L-A-S, last name is F-U-N-K-E. [unintelligible 00:27:59] Citizens for Regional Transit. Uh, [unintelligible 00:28:02] provide us some written comments and they were currently [unintelligible 00:28:05] go in detail but I just want to make a couple of comments in general. Um, the bus balance [unintelligible 00:28:11] we support it. I understand [unintelligible 00:28:15] and we're pleased that you are doing it at [unintelligible 00:28:22] on the actual transit of the bus but the real problem is we don't have enough buses that are [unintelligible 00:28:31]

So via commute, uh, it takes too much time because buses [unintelligible 00:28:38] So we really wanna get more frequent buses and more importantly even [unintelligible 00:28:46] which is high capacity and very fast. And what we should have is, you know, a high-frequency network of buses connecting to high speed [unintelligible 00:28:57] If you live at Buffalo, we've got well over a hundred piles of buses, bus service and six miles of [unintelligible 00:29:05] rail. That [unintelligible 00:29:07] rail carries 23% of the entire NFTA ridership.

And so it's a workhorse, it's fast, carries a lot of people. It needs to be extended for the original plan which is 47 plus or minus. Uh, the new fare collection system, uh, we support that very strongly. [unintelligible 00:29:29] 21st Century and that's an important step. [unintelligible 00:29:32] also provide, uh, some real important data for managing and approving the service, the system.

Uh, we support the bus route [unintelligible 00:29:42] changes that are proposed. Again, uh, we look back at the uh, 2016, uh, plan put out there. It was called for more frequent buses in the court areas with, um, reduced service in the other areas. As we did [unintelligible 00:30:01] trying to forget the difference and we support [unintelligible 00:30:04] but again, the real solution is more buses coming in more frequently connecting to high-speed [unintelligible 00:30:13]

Um, the other thing I just wanna mention real quickly, uh, there's a number of, uh, proposed service plans that were put out there. Uh, [unintelligible 00:30:24] delivery standards, the most recent one. However, we felt there was not adequate public [unintelligible 00:30:33] that was put out without [unintelligible 00:30:37] announcement in enough time before that was put before the, uh, before the commissioners and approved. And we had some important comments on that document [unintelligible 00:30:50] Unfortunately, we didn't have a chance to do that. Uh, we were very pleased with the [unintelligible 00:30:59] plan that [unintelligible 00:31:01] put up [unintelligible 00:31:02]. Thank you.

[applause]

[00:31:13] **Helen Tederous:** Denise Varr.

[00:31:15] **Audience Member:** Dennice.

[00:31:23] **Dennice Varr:** Good afternoon, everybody. My name is Dennice Varr, D-E-N-N-I-C-E V-A-R-R. [unintelligible 00:31:32] point that, uh, important to point out quickly that as much as you're talking about service for, uh, cell-phones and Wi-Fi, I noticed I have no Wi-Fi in this room. That's not appropriate. Um, I wanna be very specific in saying I brought these with me today. I have bus passes that go back from 2013 and I can tell you that I'm really upset about the fact that I feel like you're doing exactly like they do to me in the grocery store. I'm consistently getting less products for my money. They're charging me the exactly the same amount of money and I'm getting less quality and less product for my money.

Very often on [unintelligible 00:32:17] You've taken the 7, you've taken the 29, now you're wanting to cut backstops on the 22. I live in the Belt so when I wanna travel downtown on weekends, where I have to go to [unintelligible 00:32:34] station, wait maybe 25 minutes for a train to go one stop to maybe wait 25 minutes for a train. And I get out there and I see that people are, uh, they-- They're strollers. You've got people waiting out there.

I often walk downtown. I walked 5 miles today. I walked 5.5 yesterday. I walked 3.5 the day before. It's not right. You need to give me the service that I'm paying for. You're not charging me less money because I'm walking. You're charging me exactly the same. I want the service that I'm paying for. In addition to that, you need to be aware of the fact I have got nothing against people who love animals, but we have all these people coming on the buses now with animals in strollers and if you've got a woman who comes on the bus, she gotta carry the baby in the carrier and she gotta carry the stroller. That's not right.

So you've got a bottleneck at the front of the bus 'cause you've got disabled people in wheelchairs, you've got people with walkers, you've got animals in strollers, you've got women with babies. It's not right. You need to figure out a better way to be able to manage things. In addition to that, I wanted to point out I'm very upset about the fact that when I come down here, here to buy a bus pass for myself and my 91-year-old mother, you will not sell me a bus pass for my mother unless I carry identification that says that she's able to get a bus pass that has added discounted fare. That's not right.

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I don't understand why it's anybody's business who I give a-a-a bus card to. I shouldn't have to carry my mother's ID down here to show that she's qualified, even for her to get on the bus. For her to have to stop and show that she qualifies. Clearly, she's a senior and this is a harassment for the seniors that are getting on and off of our buses. You almost had an incident on the 18 recently because a driver tried to stop a senior and people were very upset. So you need to be aware of that. It's not right. I want my service for what I'm paying for.

[applause]

[00:34:53] Announcer: John Morrison. Morrissey. Morrissey?

[00:34:58] John Morrissey: Morrissey, correct. Uh, my name is John Morrissey. I'm a retired, uh--

[00:35:07] Announce: John, I'm sorry, please say and spell your first and last name.

[00:35:10] John Morrissey: Oh, okay. John, J-O-H-N M-O-R-R-I-S-S-E-Y.

[00:35:15] Helen Tederous: Thank you.

[00:35:16] John Morrissey: You're welcome. I'm a retired NFTA Metro driver. And as far as the bus stops, bus stops have been where they are for years for reasons. Okay, right now, it's 90 degrees. It's not going to stay that way. By eliminating bus stops, in the wintertime when sidewalks aren't shoveled, people don't care if **[unintelligible 00:35:38]** blocks. You're gonna have more people walking in the streets for longer lengths of time, endangering their safety. Okay?

And any time they would be **[unintelligible 00:35:51]** by less bus stops is lost with the new fare boxes that won't accept dollar bills and so people have maybe maybe tried 10-15 times to give the money in. Okay. I'm sure everybody has seen that.

[crosstalk]

[00:36:08] John Morrissey: And with the, uh, the printed bus schedules, they're very important to people. On the 14 Abbott Road road and the 16 South Park, both lines have about 15 trips that leave from the medical campus in the Fruit Belt and travel through downtown court. What if you do not show on the schedule what time they go through downtown? **[unintelligible 00:36:35]** the time is left blank, a lot of people **[unintelligible 00:36:37]** Okay and uh, it-it shows a real indifference towards the-the riders. Thank you.

[applause]

[00:36:52] Helen Tederous: Colun Cross.

[00:36:59] Colun Cross: Uh, I'm Colun Cross, C-O-L-U-N C-R-O-S-S. Uh, so I'm going to talk specifically about the proposal because **[unintelligible 00:37:09]** I've got the proposal. Um, one of the things, uh, big things is I don't understand it. I don't understand the point of it. What is the vision of the NFTA? What are you driving for? What is the point of the NFTA? So far, people I've talked to, it seems like over the

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last few decades you just keep removing service and removing service. Is that the point of the NFTA is to take the buses and get rid of them?

I think the point is is to help Buffalonians get around the two counties conveniently, reliably, and affordably. A part of that, a big thing I noticed was missing from the proposal is you talked-- Basically, all you said was, um, all you presented was cutting some lines, which is not good. Realigning some lines and adding new lines. But what you didn't describe is how any of that physically interacts with the environment. When I get on a bus, I-I gotta go from walking to on the bus. When I get off the bus, I don't magically disappear and appear back into my destination.

[laughter]

[00:38:16] Colun Cross: I gotta walk to my destination.

[00:38:18] Audience Member: That's right.

[00:38:19] Colun Cross: How is the new bus stops that you're adding on these new lines and the realigned lines, how do they interact with the places you're going? You talk about all this economic growth that the new lines in Niagara Falls are next to jobs. How are they next to jobs? Are they- are they next to jobs like the South Park line is next to the Tesla factory or it's just on South Park Avenue, you gotta walk across half a mile to the parking lot to get to your job?

Are they- are they next to- are they next to jobs like up in Commerce Drive in Amherst? Or I literally have to stand on the grass and watch people fly by way faster than it should be, but that's a different story, waiting for a bus because the only s- infrastructure is a sign that sometimes bus drivers miss. And I've had that happen. Sometimes I'll stand next to a sign and then they drive by. Like Delaware in North, the 25 at Delaware North. There's no structure there. I'm standing out there like- kind of like a schmuck, you know, 'cause there's no shelter, there's no bench on the sidewalk **[unintelligible 00:39:17]** the side.

How are you **[unintelligible 00:39:21]** dealing with that? You know, where are the CNU suggestions? We heard that the, uh, the Congress for New Urbanism came here before the pandemic and they had this whole thing about how downtown should be restructured for mixed modality. I'm all for mixed modality. I like that, but how is that impact with your proposal here? You want to balance all of these lines in downtown. How is that gonna look physically when I'm walking around downtown?

A couple other, uh, notes that are not anything to do with that. Uh, you have the phased approach. Houston, a few years ago in 2016, when they redid their entire network, they did it all overnight, in one night it was very successful. Uh, another thing, uh, I don't like is the idea of a weekend schedule. Everything should be frequently serviced every day, 365 days of the year.

[applause]

[00:40:21] Helen Tederous: Marie **[inaudible 00:40:22]**

[00:40:34] Marie Malinowai: My name is Marie, M-A-R-I-E, Malinowai, M-A-L-I-N-O-W-A-I. Malinowski as it's spelled.

[laughter]

In case you c-- In case you didn't think I'm called that. See this bus? See this here? This is what I feel, right? You know, I have a disability. Mine is not visible. But as I've had to have my bus route, bus stop taken away from my corner of my-my street, I have-- and I'm a very, I'm a very memorable person.

I know the time it comes from my bus corner for me to get to Ross or the street the-sides across the way. I would have to walk more time and hopefully don't catch a-anxiety trying to get there. Literally, I would have anxiety trying to do that. Now, we have a thing, we-we don't have a-- we got 1020 Broadway, but if you take some of the bus stops out, people can't, with bits of disabilities, can't get-- and people that have got to help, to that building because if you take the four bus stops out, some of the **[unintelligible 00:41:54]** four bus stops out, if you take the 23 **[unintelligible 00:41:56]** bus stops out--

I don't know if you plan to or not, but my point is, if you take these bus stops away, some of those folks have wheelchairs. Are you kidding me? You want somebody in the middle of the wintertime to take-- t-t-to roll their b-- to roll their wheelchair or **[unintelligible 00:42:17]** in the middle of wintertime? If they can't catch their transit, if they can't catch their **[unintelligible 00:42:23]** and stuff, they're-- and that's stopping, they have to take the big bus. And it's very hard for them to do that. You want us to stay in our house? That'd be bad business and **[unintelligible 00:42:34]** with COVID, you rerouting again?

You did it because of the bridge that was coming down. I get it, th-that aerial, was coming down. But it's called the COVID bus about the bus for a reason. Take it out of COVID, what do we-- Boulevard, I mean like really? And Boulevard in a couple of years is gonna be closed.

And another thing is, you-y-you-just like [chuckles] seriously? I've been riding the bus since I was little. I learned how to ride a bus by myself when I was 16 and you know what? If you change these things all the way round, I have to learn them all over again and to me, I-- that don't sound fair. That don't sound right. And you've got people, if you're rerouting the ones that are Niagara Falls, then can- we can't get together and do stuff.

We can't get ourselves **[unintelligible 00:43:31]** to a meeting, we can't go grocery stores, we can't do these things. We're supposed to be doing things independently. Then we have to-- Yes, I have a worker, but h-however, she don't work 24 hours a day. What am I gonna do if I can't get to these places? What if I can't see my friends at Niagara Falls? What if I can't see my friends in North Tonawanda? This is not fair and really honestly, it scares me. And the money backs, too, that scares me too. So, you're changing things that you think you're doing right. Do better.

[applause]

[00:44:18] Helen Tederous: Nancy Rizzo?

[00:44:29] Nancy Rizzo: N-A-N-C-Y R-I-Z-Z-O. I'm going to talk about the 15 Seneca bus which I have been taking for a little over nine years now. On March 4, while waiting for the bus to go home, around 3:40 or 3:30, 3:40, which is my leave time, 3:30, a lady that I became acquainted with that works in the Liberty Building, she heard from a man that works on the floor of the walled part that there was going to be a drastic change to the Seneca bus, that they were going to um, eliminate the Southgate **[unintelligible 00:45:12]** at three-- that's the 3:40 bus that leaves, um, it goes back in to Freedom Park, the-the bus stop. That they were going to cut it to the City Line and that will go all the way to Southgate.

This is a problem because I get off at Southgate and I have to squander and I have a half hour to get the 410 bus, which does go to Southgate. Now, the problem is, we get into the wintertime and we go back to day-- to Standard Time and it's going to get dark between 4:40-five o'clock. That's not going to be-- that's going to be a hazard because I walk seven blocks from Southgate Plaza to my apartment complex that I live in. I live in the Q-Queen's Court, Queen, uh, Queen's Court Apartments diagonally across from uh, **[unintelligible 00:46:01]** in July. I'm worried about my safety walking along Seneca Street in rush hour traffic in the dark and when we get the snow and ice, I'm afraid that I'm gonna get hit by a plow or-or-or something w-when it gets really bad in the snow and ice in the dark. I'm walking in the-in the dark in the morning for eight and a half block, for eight and a half blocks to get to the bus. And now I'm gonna be walking home-- at home in the dark during rush hour traffic? And that's-- it's not safe.

It's be-- it's a hardship to me, to have that bus uh, to not have the bus lines go running to Southgate Plaza like they used to. And I found out by third-hand information. I didn't find out from the sign on the bus behind where the driver sits. No, somebody found this out from third-hand information. I finally found out the r-- the-the official way about a week later, about a week after March 7th, when this **[unintelligible 00:47:07]** first went into effect.

So, that's how the communi-- how it was communicated to me. From another dr- uh, rider that gets off at the City Line, the Seneca City Line. I really need to-- I really think that the service should be restored and if you have to have any cutbacks, which I deplore, I'd rather have them not be during the week. When I'm trying to get home from work, and I want to get home at a reasonable time, when my time is from 7:30 to 3:30 **[unintelligible 00:47:40]** and I love my work hours. I just did want to get home the way I used to get home with the bus going to-going to Southgate Plaza.

[applause]

[00:47:57] Helen Tederous: Bridge Rabch?

[00:48:07] Bridge Rabch: It's uh, Bridge as in bridge uh, uh, B-R-I-D-G-E. Last name is R-A-B-C-H. I'm gonna start my clock here. Oh, okay, um, so, uh, I wanna acknowledge first, uh, I want to thank you for uh, the implementation coming of the 30-day, uh, 31-day monthly capping, uh, that will save, uh, like our most militant riders, you know, hundreds of dollars every year. That's food on the table, that's uh,

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you know that-that's you-- just meant so much and I want to thank you for implementing that.

Um, I, you know, want to acknowledge that this is not ideal, like, you know, we're all talking through masks like, you haven't been doing stuff online things. Um, so, uh, you know, but I also want to acknowledge like, this needs to be just the start of this, the environment process. I would like **[unintelligible 00:48:57]** to commit to the public meetings six times a year, you know, with-with the public throughout this entire, but like, not just this process but like going forward. We're, uh, **[unintelligible 00:49:07]** seen unprecedented amounts of money coming in from the feds uh, for public transit and, you know like.

So, this is just the start of this, like, if we're looking at little cutbacks right not but, you know, we could be looking at expansion, you know. We should be talking about this and that we should be working with riders to build ridership. That's what we'll-- like you'll save that **[unintelligible 00:49:28]** stop like this **[unintelligible 00:49:29]** spiral, you know. If we want to build this ridership up and you you'll **[unintelligible 00:49:33]** be true like all of-- all the members, that's- that's what we're here for. We want help with that.

Um, I'm very sorry. The 60-minute frequencies that are proposed like in here **[unintelligible 00:49:44]**. That's unacceptable. You know, like-like uh, I can't tell you how many times I have had to walk miles you know, to get where I needed to go because there is no bus and again with this-this we-we need to do better. We need to be more together. Uh, be true. Like we can work with MTA to help like push cities, to implement bus lines, to imp-- you know, to like, have like the cities, like install bus shelters. We can work with you on that. And we like-like, we just want a better, better service, you know. It's like, that's-that's what drivers want. That's what MTA wants. Like let's come together. Let's like meet regularly and start to like work on this.

Um, and just on a personal level, please bring back the 7, uh, you know? Like I am a West Side resident. Uh, it makes, you know, it's-it's-it's just like, it's a pleasure to ride, you know?

And, uh, it-it also just makes like, you know, your getting to work in the morning so much easier, uh, but especially now that kids are going back to school, like there's three is gonna be packed like shoulder to shoulder again, and that's so unsafe, like right now like you know, the COVID variants and things. Um, so like, if we can add more service, add more frequencies, like frequency, frequency, frequencies, like that's like the number one way to build ridership.

Like all the studies like transit center, you know **[unintelligible 00:51:03]** transit center services, that's where the-the, uh, you know, the bus balancing thing comes from. Please read all these things from the transit center say, just add frequency. That's all like you need to like make the system strong. Thank you.

[applause]

[00:51:24] Helen Tederous: Diane [unintelligible 00:51:24]

[00:51:38] Diane Britain: Thank you, Diane, D-I-A-N-E, um, and then Britain, like the country, B-R-I-T-A-I-N. Um, so, uh, I want you to kind piggyback a bit off of, um, Bridge and, um, the frequencies is-is the, um, is the way the **[unintelligible 00:51:55]** service, right? I mean, the NFJ is not into the business of making money, it's in the business of creating public transportation.

And it is, um, you-you have it in your vision and your mission statements that you work with residents and-and with the, um, businesses, and then the idea is to provide service to both the businesses, as well as to the residents. Um, and-and we **[unintelligible 00:52:16]** to, uh, to build another Buffalo Transit Riders United. Like we-we work together, right? And it-it's all about riders coming together, and we really do want to have that relationship with the NFTA. I mean, it's-it's, we're the riders, you're the ones who provide the service and then working together is we can only get better at that.

Um, the communication i,-is probably the biggest lacking thing, um, out of all the-the- the issues or problems or anything else. Um, and I don't want it to come off just as all negative. I think it-it the other way. Your putting a cap on the-on the fares is an amazing gift. Um, something we've all been needing for a long time. Um, from Houston in Chicago, um, so I've been here about seven years now, but knowing and being in these larger cities, it-it is definitely frequency and it is the-the interlocking between the riders and the services, um, that really builds a strong system.

Um, and we-we do, we have a-a ton of federal dollars that are coming in, and that communication has to be key, and it's like in a relationship, right? I-I-It builds or it falls with communication. And w-we put out signs, we spent weeks putting signs up on the routes that were canceling and closed because nobody will **[unintelligible 00:53:33]** them.

Um, it's just, it's not an okay thing to do for the disabilities, for the elderly communities, for residents in general. I mean, the amount of times people were standing out there at what used to be a bus stop and the it was just gone. Frankly, there's just no communication. That's not okay. I mean, it's literally your job. Um, and-and our job is to get to our jobs and do our best at our jobs. And-and if we can't do that, if we can get to our jobs on time and nobody wants to get on a bus and get to work an hour early, nobody wants to, you know, get off at a bus stop and then not be able to get home because it's it literally no longer runs at that time anymore.

Um, it's, uh, it's not-it's not fair. And-and when there's so many ways in which it is that we can be working together to deny that relationship, um, just doesn't seem like it's working in favor of either party. So we would really, as a, as an organization and as a group, we'd really like to form that relationship in a way that's beneficial for both sides and, um, really kind of keying in on the fact that it's just the community engagement. There's-there's a, I-I looked at it really fast. On the US census, there's a, uh, there's over-- about 30% of the population was **[unintelligible 00:54:46]** what they called poverty, and 25% of Buffalo residents don't have internet access. So having a communication status meeting where it's just based on communication through internet, um, is not a viable way to do it to **[unintelligible 00:54:59]** residents on public transport issues. Thank you. Good night.

[applause]

[00:55:10] Helen Tederous: Who's next? **[unintelligible 00:55:12]**

[00:55:25] Simon Huxted: Simon Huxted. It's spelled S-I-M-O-N, Huxted's H-U-X-T-E-D. Um, I first wanted to say, thank you, Commissioner Blue for being here at the public hearing. I had been asking for more of the commissioners to be participating in all these matters, really the bus riders to be coming to our Citizen Advisory Committee meeting, to be coming to every matter that involves bus riders.

Also, I know, uh, assembly member Rivera as one of the staff members here, and I appreciate that.

Yesterday we had Mayor Rest-Restaino, um, from Niagara Falls present. Unfortunately, we do not have the mayor of Buffalo here because-- um, unfortunate. Um, we all should be listened to. We should be talking to NFTA. We should be talking to all of our decision-makers. Um, my name is Simon and I'm a member of Buffalo Transit Riders United.

I'm here not to speak for the group. I'm really here 'cause I live in South Buffalo and I also often just don't feel like I'm, uh, often heard as a South Buffalo resident. I own a car and like so many people in Buffalo, I suck at driving and I suck at car cleaning.

[laughter]

I have so much stress about parking and storing the car. And I have so much stress about getting near misses that I used to hate living in any city. And I thought the suburbs was where I needed to go. My opinion has suddenly evolved since then. And I complete most of my errands actually on my bike with a milk crate attached to the rear. I haul my own prescription cat food and groceries from the local farmer's market. I visit my parents in West Side **[unintelligible 00:57:03]** and I commute to and from every single Slow Roll with my friends.

Multiple people have said I must be very brave to bike as much as I do year round in a place like South Buffalo. In many ways, I wish I didn't need to be so brave. I live near a bus stop and I wish the number 15 Seneca ran more frequently and took me closer to destinations in West Seneca, for biking is more hazardous. I'm aware bus service adjustments are often evaluated using ridership data, but perhaps public safety should be included in this analysis too.

There's plenty-there's plenty of industrial portions alongside Seneca Street or in **[unintelligible 00:57:46]** where motorists feel induced to drive at high **[unintelligible 00:57:50]** lightspeeds, motorists, um, along some portions of Seneca Street have yelled at me from their car windows ordering that I bike on the sidewalk. Um, in which times there isn't even a sidewalk on that part of Seneca Street.

Um, this past March, you slashed three miles off of the 15 Seneca. So they had stopped at the City Line, every other bus. This is on top of limiting the 75 West Seneca Express route, which supplemented the weekday bus service in my neighborhood going to and from downtown.

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Last month, my younger brother, Adam was summoned to participate in grand jury, a commute downtown he must make every Wednesday over the next 12 months. He lives in West Seneca and asked me about taking a bus downtown from Southeast Plaza. Unfortunately, the options currently available with the 42 and the 15 are unworkable for his need to arrive at the federal courthouse in a reasonable time. My mom ends up driving him when his car breaks down, which it often does.

Um, and just bear with. Right now, the cost of transportation is skyrocketing. Buying a used car is not affordable. Renting one is near impossible. Uber and Lyft doesn't even near like have as many drivers as they used to, which makes marks up of price. Biking is becoming a popular option, but we have seen too many unfortunate collisions and too many excuses for why we should live with **[unintelligible 00:59:19]**. Let's build a robust and high-quality bus network so that transportation is affordable, save and conducive to people who live closer together so that we can save more of our planet from needless roads and parking lots.

[applause]

[00:59:39] Helen Tederous: Melissa Leonard?

[00:59:44] Melissa Leonard: So that's Melissa, M-E-L-I-S-S-A, Leonard, L-E-O-N-A-R-D. Um, and I'm speaking on behalf of the Manchester **[unintelligible 00:59:53]** Club, um, as an officer, um, I wanna make two points and then I'll indicate, um, other concerns that residents have and **[unintelligible 01:00:02]**. Um, first, I wanna reiterate what everyone's been saying about communication because one of the resi- one of my neighbors had emailed David Rivera's office, um, towards the end of July, and all of a sudden, the indication of public hearings occurred that week.

Um, I received an email said, "There will be a public hearing. Go to the website," even though there was no indication in that when it was taking place, where and then, uh, most of my neighbors on the block had no idea that **[unintelligible 01:00:34]** was permanently eliminated. It was temporarily suspended during the pandemic, and there's no indication that says cancelled, that it was gone, and then all of the **[unintelligible 01:00:44]** bus signs were removed permanently, indicating that it's already gone. Even though these public hearings had not taken place yet. So this is input that should be included in that decision, and the-the- yet those signs are gone. Um, none of the residents knew of these public hearings, and it was very hard to find. So that's-that's one of our first concerns.

Secondly, what I'm hearing is that these changes are going to make service more direct, more efficient and faster, but reflecting in that are all these stories that we're listening to of how it's going to make a lot of people's lives a lot more difficult. Um, in particularly the **[unintelligible 01:01:31]** I stood here almost 10 years ago arguing when this bus was going to be cut at ECC in a room three times this size with a lot more people. So clearly, people don't know about these meetings. I was out on Monday night. It was dead air the whole meeting. There was maybe two or three other people who spoke. So I don't think people know that this input is happening.

Um, so the-the apathy is lacking as far as I'm hearing that the **[unintelligible 01:02:02]** has low ridership therefore you can use these other routes. Um, one thing

that we have talked about in our black **[unintelligible 01:02:10]** meeting, the EPS is telling schools they don't have enough bus drivers.

[01:02:15] Participant: Yeah.

[01:02:16] Melissa: So that means that their- my children's school is asking parents to drive their kids to school. If you try to get on the ramp of the unload during school hours, you can't, and so asking people to use old routes is not feasible.

Um, and also walking in the snow which I've heard getting around the bu-- I have four small children. Getting on a bus with a stroller up on those routes during those busy times is impossible. So that-that just doesn't work. Um, and I-I think we're just very frustrated with the cuts that are being made and the lack of, um, service during- during those hours.

[applause]

[01:03:02] Helen Tederous: **[unintelligible 01:03:02]** Leonard?

[01:03:05] ?Leonard: Uh, **[unintelligible 01:03:06]** L-E-O-N-A-R-D. Uh, thank you, uh, for hosting this public comment period **[unintelligible 01:03:12]**. Um, I just wanted to make, uh-uh, a couple of comments. First of all, I've long been a staunch advocate for transit and better mobility in the city, and I really believe in cities. I believe in urbanism. I think it's not only, uh, the right thing to do economically, environmentally, I think it's also the right thing when we look at people to make sure they have access to jobs.

I think one of the things that I've always, uh, certainly recognized and advocated for is, uh, the need for funding, uh, for the NFTA. The NFTA-- and this is not a problem we can solve tonight and with this plan, the NFTA is woefully underfunded. Um, and- and that's not uncommon for transit across the country. Um, you know, there's-- When we build roads and service roads, we don't look for and ROI and make sure it's making enough money.

The same thing should be said for public transit, and- and certainly the N- the NFTA does not do this to make money. Um, but one thing I would encourage, the comments here tonight in these stories are absolutely real, and there are challenges.

Some can be, uh, solved through planning. A lot of it, uh, can't be solved through planning because we need funding. I would encourage the comments from, uh, this session and the other session, make sure that our state legislators see it and hear it. Uh, our locals, common council, and even the federal government. I mean because that's where you really can make sweeping changes. We should be looking to building a better system all the time, which I certainly do think happens. Uh, so I'm glad to see changes to their collection system, the capping. Uh, I think there's a number of- of challenges that, uh, are being addressed.

I do wanna make sure on the record, um, to make a comment specifically about the 7, uh, losing that is a- is a hardship for- for my family and my neighbors. Uh, one comment that Melissa did make is we're one-car **[unintelligible 01:05:12]** license family. My wife does not have a license. I often drive her to work. Uh, so getting the

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kids to and from school and where they need to go often falls on Melissa and we're right pretty much on the **[inaudible 01:05:25]** bus there.

It's really a challenge especially in the winter. We have four kids between two and nine to- we-- This is not a city that enforces clearing sidewalks, making sure that it's walkable. Making sure there aren't tripping hazards. It's really a challenge, and again the- part of the problem is that we sort of segment a lot of these conversations, and there's other players that really impact mobility.

So I wanted-- do want to make sure it's on the record, uh, and we'd love to see the 7 come back. Um, and I'm sure there's other similar kind of issues that **[unintelligible 01:05:59]** like that but that is one in particular that between our family, our kids and we have elderly neighbors, we have disabled neighbors that I know that would be important. Thank you.

[applause]

[01:06:17] Helen Tederous: Dane Forrell Jr.?

[01:06:24] Dean Forrell: Uh, the name's **[unintelligible 01:06:26]**. My last name is F-O-R-R-RE-L. So, uh, I work for Amazon and I do staffing from Erie, Pennsylvania to Syracuse. Um, so I've seen a lot of different, uh, transportation situations in a lot of different cities.

Uh, one of the biggest hurdles that any employer has is getting people to work. Buffalo is expanding. I think everyone in this room sees what's happening in the city, and we all wanna take part of it. Um, I think that there has been a huge sort of disconnect between the city and the suburbs being interconnected back together.

Um, when I was growing up, I remember taking a bus ride down here all the way to **[unintelligible 01:07:13]** Lake. That does not exist anymore, you know, so, uh, you know that's just a personal thing, um, but there are businesses between Central and Ransom Road, uh, out there on **[unintelligible 01:07:28]** that are having a 25 an hour \$3,000 signing notice, um, no experience required and no one in the city of Buffalo can get access to those jobs.

So as-as Buffalo, you can tell it's digging itself out of poverty and getting itself to a point where Buffalo is about to take off. If-if anyone has seen it, the housing market is insane. Um, now is the time for expansion. Now is the time to make sure that everyone's included in the expansion. Um, so I just wanna- I just wanna say that I think we need to expand as we- as out as far as we can within reason. Um, you know, the more ridership that we can get, um, the better.

Also, a lot of positions right now with these companies that are outside of the city that are hiring, um, the entire facility, there's people driving to work. Um, that would change drastically if there was able to get bussing out there. Um, I know that the **[unintelligible 01:08:33]** charities, Buffalo is a- is a sanctuary city. There are thousands, and thousands, and thousands of people who do not have cars that are here. They're trying to grab their bootstraps and start their life and they can't get to work.

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So, um, I know that my side in particular out there on Lancas- uh, Lancaster, a long bit of pavement, we have always had the attrition issues directly related to transportation. I'll come here to the Central Library. I'll set up a table. I'll talk to **[unintelligible 01:09:05]** students, **[unintelligible 01:09:07]** students, Dougal students. They'll all say, "Hey, I would love to work there. I have no way to get there."

Um, the opportunities that some of these companies are distilling. A gasket company out there that has gaskets that went in the Mars Rover that just went to Mars. There's big things happening in Western New York, and it's not all in the city. It's very important that we're able to get out and, uh, get into the suburbs freely. Um, that's- that's really all I have. Thank you very much.

[applause]

[01:09:44] Helen Tederous: Peter? The last name, Peter?

[01:09:49] ?Speaker: Peter? I think he's stepped away? We'll come back to Peter later.

[01:09:55] Helen Tederous: Okay. Um, **[unintelligible 01:09:58]** any other speakers who signed up?

[01:10:01] Elaine: I signed up. Elaine Barthel.

[01:10:02] ?Speaker: Yeah, Elaine.

[background conversation]

[01:10:10] Helen Tederous: Okay. You're probably ready. Fire away.

[01:10:19] Elaine: Okay, thank you. **[unintelligible 01:10:20]**. Um.

[01:10:21] Helen Tederous: Please say and spell your first and last name and then you sign on here.

[01:10:24] Elaine Barthel: All right. Yeah. I've got the wrong sign-in lady My name is Elaine Barthel, E-L-A-I-N-E B-A-R-T-H-E-L, uh, from, uh, Buffalo Transit Riders United.

So, um, there are three points because all of the others-- I wanna make sure **[unintelligible 01:10:44]** time. Uh, we're working together. And so you in the back, you've seen this before. We're not giving up and we are halfway there. We'll be having up two voters. Not people who just speak, people who vote.

Those of us who are riders, those of us who know what we're going through every single day to be on the board to vote, at least two of us. We're halfway there. We'll get there. So be ready. All right. That's part of working together. So that's pretty obvious, and, uh, don't wanna be facetious but that is true. We do need to work together, and that's the only way I've se-seen it happen, because we're gonna be able to vote, two of us. We're gonna be able to vote. So just-- We know your needs. We ride the buses every day.

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Um, finances. All right. Now, during COVID, I've been hearing more often than not, we're the second largest city in New York. So if we are the second largest city in New York, we're not proud that we're not New York City, but we are the second largest city. We do need a viable transportation system. And so all those things people mentioned should be coming into play without any excuses about finances. That's part of the deal, and we've researched this.

And our **[unintelligible 01:12:11]** is ten years, so excuse us. We've been on this about getting the voters and getting the finances. And the finances have been researched, and we know. We'll come back to this if you wanna talk to discuss that at any time. So they're there.

All right. So with the time's left, um, big other, uh, points are being made, uh, about the buses being cut and less availability, uh, like for example, the 49 is way out in the suburbs. So a lot of these things in suburbs, these buses in suburbs, the 11, the 49, even the 16. There's nothing in **[unintelligible 01:12:51]** Park. Once they drop you off, you're on your own. After the stadium, you walk or you take a taxi. And a lot of people cannot afford that. And a taxi will not pick you up, by the way, in certain areas. But they-- A lot of them go a certain distance, they won't pick you up, I don't care if it's Uber or whatever, if they're not gonna make the money. So I'm just telling you right now.

All right. So, uh, we need a lot more buses. So, uh, I do think, yeah, of course, we need to have met- a metro system. But in order to have a good, uh, system, we need more good buses. Not to waste time and saying, "In the future, we're gonna have this," or "In the future, we're gonna have this." Right now we need buses.

And that's, uh, also about the students. Probably not the bus. They need their own bus. I'm talking about for public school students. They need their own bus to get them to our jobs and not be **[unintelligible 01:13:47]** during COVID. Thank you.

[applause]

[01:13:57] Helen Tederous: Did Peter come back?

[01:13:58] ?Speaker: No, he left.

[01:13:59] ?Speaker: No.

[01:13:59] Helen Tederous: Oh, okay. **[unintelligible 01:14:01]** if there's anyone else who wishes to speak? So that concludes our hearing. **[unintelligible 01:14:06]** if you'd like to provide further comments, you can go to our website or send an email, call us, or send the comment to us via mail. We'll be collecting all comments until September 8, and I'll keep that **[unintelligible 01:14:20]** equally. Once again, thank you for taking your time to be with us tonight. **[unintelligible 01:14:25]**

[applause]

[background conversation]

[01:14:38] [END OF AUDIO]

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