

change that works

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December 15, 2011

Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority
Mr. Henry M. Sloma, Chairman
181 Ellicott Street
Buffalo, New York 14203

Dear Chairman Sloma,

The recent vote by Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority Board of Commissioners to maintain the current fee structure and to eliminate service is very troubling and simply short sighted. Reducing 22% of the transportation services and 26% of the operational hours will severely affect the residents who desperately need services that are located throughout the county. This action will limit accessibility to our residents and it could potentially limit prospective economic growth that this region desperately needs.

As the Director for the Center for Employment Opportunities, an agency that specializes in employment services for low-income, hard to serve residents, this decision will further limit our ability to assist individuals from finding employment throughout Erie County. The current transportation situation is already a tremendous barrier and reducing routes further will only compound our already difficult employment situation locally. The City of Buffalo is no longer the employment hub it once was and today many companies that are looking to hire are now located throughout the region. The struggle to place residents in employment is real and limited transportation will have a direct affect on local unemployment rates, social service costs and even local crime rates.

The Buffalo News recently highlighted the even disparity of below poverty residents throughout Erie County, with 48% of those residents residing in the City of Buffalo and 52% living in the suburbs. These figures are coupled with the fact that our current unemployment rate is 7.3% and unemployment rates for those who are hard to serve are much higher. Accessibility is essential for growth and as we develop as a regional economy we must think about how our decisions can have an adverse affect on community. The NFTA can play a central role in our region's recovery, however limiting our residents from employment opportunities, essential community services, or even tourism is counterproductive to our region's redevelopment.

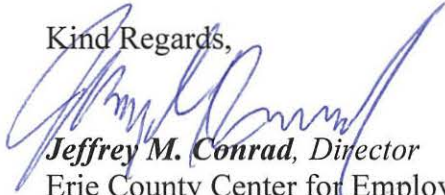
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I encourage the Board of Commissioners to establish a committee of local service providers immediately to work with the NFTA before any potentially harmful impact will be made on the system. Additionally, this committee could strategize on new ways to provide service in the future to our diverse population. This will ensure that the residents of this community, who need advocacy the most and utilize the service most frequently, are protected from decisions based solely on dollars. I respect the Board of Commissioner's ability to manage, however local organizations work directly with our residents and we understand the true impact of your decisions and the affects that your decisions have on their livelihood.

I appreciate your consideration and I look forward to speaking to you regarding this very important issue. Please feel free to contact me directly if you have any questions or require any additional information at (716) 842-6320 Ext. 501.

Kind Regards,



Jeffrey M. Conrad, Director

Erie County Center for Employment Opportunities

Cc: Honorable Brian M. Higgins, Member, United States House of Representatives
Honorable Mark C. Poloncarz, County Executive-Elect
Honorable Byron W. Brown, Mayor, City of Buffalo
Honorable Timothy M. Kennedy, Member, New York State Senate
Honorable Mark J. Grisanti, Member, New York State Senate
Honorable Sean Ryan, Member, New York State Assembly
Honorable Crystal D. People-Stokes, Member, New York State Assembly
Honorable Robin Shimminger, Member, New York State Assembly
Buffalo Common Council
Erie County Legislature
Ms. Kimberly A. Minkel, Executive Director, Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority