

change that works

October 31, 2012

Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority
 Ms. Kimberly A. Minkel
 181 Ellicott Street
 Buffalo, New York 14203

Dear Executive Director Minkel,

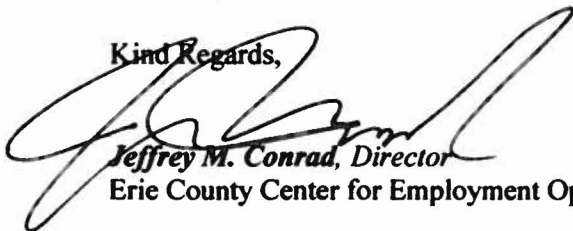
As a not-for-profit agency that specializes in employment services for people returning home from prison, transportation is a critical element in their ability to obtain and maintain steady employment. Approximately 90% of CEO participants, who enter our program, require transportation provided by the NFTA to get them to and from work. Additionally, the current unemployment rate for those on parole is 66%, which is extraordinarily high, and socially unacceptable.

The barriers that restrict individuals returning home from prison are many; transportation to the suburban communities in Erie County continues to be a challenge. CEO Job Developers have found numerous employers outside the City of Buffalo willing to work with this population; however the major hurdle is current busing hours. In fact, Galleria Mall employers who are open to hiring ex-offenders, often have shifts beyond busing hours, which prohibits our participants from accepting the employment offer.

I respectfully request that the NFTA complete an immediate review of the current operations of the Galleria Mall and suburban communities with a high concentration of businesses, which could potentially hire low income residents and hard to serve populations. This review is essential to a region that boasts a high poverty and unemployment rate. Additionally, I encourage you to also review the current Metro fare pass options that the NFTA offers to riders. A weekly or monthly pass is simply restrictive, and in many cases it is not cost conscience for human service agencies or riders. Allowing riders to carry a balance on a card instead of providing a weekly or monthly pass would improve the options for riders and it would bring the system in line with providers in other cities.

I appreciate your time and consideration and I look forward to working with the NFTA in creating a system that is conducive to all residents of the Buffalo/Niagara Region. 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: Howard Zemsky, NFTA Chairman
 Erie County Legislature
 Buffalo Common Council