



Transit Development Plan



Department of Service Planning

January 2022



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Emerging Projects/Initiatives

2022



Shelter Expansion Plan

Emerging Projects/Initiatives, 2022

Description

NFTA-Metro seeks to add up to 30 additional shelters annually over the next five years to provide better customer facilities and align closer 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. Metro currently has over 4,100 bus stops, but only 250 shelters across the system; 5% of system boarding locations possess 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

Establish a Comprehensive Marketing Program for Transit Initiatives

Emerging Projects/Initiatives, 2022

Description

NFTA-Metro has a variety of exciting projects and initiatives going on at any given time. A comprehensive marketing program would provide a strategic, systematic, ongoing plan for publicizing and making transit initiatives to the public. This has the potential to increase ridership by attracting new riders and improving communications with existing riders.

Purpose & Need

A comprehensive marketing program for transit initiatives will help existing and potential customers learn about initiatives that are intended to improve their transit experience and quality of life. For example, many customers do not know about NFTA's full suite of trip planning and mobile ticketing options. NFTA-Metro needs a comprehensive marketing program that will publicize initiatives as well as track the effectiveness of campaigns to allow for continuous improvement.

Prerequisites

- None

Steps/Timeline

- Phasing for future initiatives developed
- Specific products and approaches roll out in conjunction with initiative timelines

New Timetable & Map Process and Printing

Emerging Projects/Initiatives, 2022

Description

Information accessibility is important for customers of NFTA-Metro services. Many riders still utilize paper timetables (schedules), and 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. An internal process shift is necessary due to change in staffing, inefficiencies, and capabilities of internally operated printing presses.

Purpose & Need

New timetable and maps are needed to update NFTA-Metro 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

Steps/Timeline

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

Metro Transit Expansion Environmental Impact Statement

Emerging Projects/Initiatives, 2022

Description

NFTA-Metro 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. The EIS is a critical step in the process that will allow NFTA to advance the project into future design phases.

Purpose & Need

NFTA-Metro must complete the EIS process to enter into FTA's Project Development to be eligible for Capital Investment Grant funding. The NEPA EIS process is underway and is expected to be completed by 2023. Funding is in place to complete the EIS and some preliminary engineering, but further funding is needed to advance the design phase of the expansion project, which takes 24 – 36 months to complete.

Prerequisites

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

Steps/Timeline

- Notice of intent to prepare EIS in August 2021
- Release DEIS in summer 2022
- Release FEIS and Record of Decision in winter 2023
- Secure local matching funds
- Enter into FTA Project Development

Bus Stop Balancing

Emerging Projects/Initiatives, 2022

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 manor 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

- None

Steps/Timeline

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

Electric Bus Implementation

Emerging Projects/Initiatives, 2022

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 has the space and electricity needs 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. Further analysis will need to be conducted to determine the most appropriate vehicle types and the associated routes for service, as some prove better candidates than others based on distance, topography, stopping frequency, and environmental factors.

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
- First electric bus service is implemented
- Ongoing planning and implementation of further charging infrastructure and electric buses

New Express Bus Services

Emerging Projects/Initiatives, 2022

Description

Pursuant to our service enhancement study, NFTA will begin a new configuration of express services. While there will be fewer express routes, there will be enhanced park-and-ride locations with more frequent service. New express services will be accompanied by an enhanced marketing campaign to promote the benefits of our new express services and our park-and-rides.

Purpose & Need

The goal of this configuration is to capture more riders at the periphery. The most common complaint we have from express riders is that they are not “true” express services, as they often travel largely on local roads. Additionally, it will allow for greater reliability, as a greater number of trips per route will allow for more options for our riders.

Prerequisites

- Completion of the park-and-ride analysis

Steps/Timeline

- Park-and-ride agreements secured
- Approval to implement service plan
- Service begins
- Data collection & service delivery refinement

Local Bus Service Changes

Emerging Projects/Initiatives, 2022

Description

Changes to the local bus service will likely focus on the reworking of low demand bus routes with a re-investment in core service. To aid in the implementation of these changes, separate reports will be developed looking at downtown Buffalo routing, Erie County routes and Niagara County routes separately. Changes to the local bus network will allow the authority to better allocate their funding resources into highly productive routes, while making changes to streamline service delivery.

Purpose & Need

These changes will allow us to better serve our core target market effectively. Our current primary and secondary routes have a disparate amount of demand, leading to underperformance on some routes, with an inability to meet total demand on others. Re-focusing our funding into productive routes experiencing high demand will allow us to build ridership within our core service area.

Prerequisites

- Approval of the local bus service plan by the board

Steps/Timeline

- Local service changes implemented
- Data collection
- Evaluation after a 1-year period

Fare Collection Upgrade Full Implementation

Emerging Projects/Initiatives, 2022

Description

The fare collection upgrade (MetGo) will be implemented in 2022. MetGo will be 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 the use of family accounts. Additionally, it will allow for 3rd party clients like the Buffalo Board of Education, local universities and colleges, and health and human services, and Corporate Pass Members to do more direct management of their accounts with the NFTA-Metro.

Purpose & Need

Current farebox and fare system technologies need 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 will provide 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 and fare gates installed
- Back-end systems established
- Ticket vending machines upgraded
- Testing completed

Steps/Timeline

- Approval of testing as final
- Pilot ticketing (PAL users)
- Pilot ticketing (CRAM and students)
- Full-roll out

New Park-and-Ride Analysis

Emerging Projects/Initiatives, 2022

Description

A new park-and-ride analysis will be completed by the end of 2022 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

This will allow the NFTA to streamline their express services and create "true" express routes. Current express routes are highly tied to our ability to provide access to park-and-ride locations, which are often far removed from highways and have limited amounts of signage. 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

DL&W Riverwalk Study

Emerging Projects/Initiatives, 2022

Description

DL&W Riverwalk will reimagine bicycle and pedestrian connections to the new DL&W Metro Rail Station.

Purpose & Need

The DL&W Riverwalk is located at the significant intersection of the Shoreline Trail, Niagara River Greenway, and Empire State Trail, along with the DL&W Metro Rail Station/Trainshed. Improving pedestrian, bicycle, stroller, wheelchair, and other people-centered access to the historic landmark and linking the various trails listed above will improve the experience for residents and tourists of the region. The multi-modal Riverwalk will continue to encourage healthy living, use of transit, and car-free trips that benefit the local air quality and environment.

Prerequisites

- Funding approved by Ralph C. Wilson Jr. Legacy Funds
- Receive funding

Steps/Timeline

- Design trail and access
- Begin construction
- Riverwalk opens
- DL&W station opens in Short-Range Projects/Initiatives

Bench Expansion Program

Emerging Projects/Initiatives, 2022

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

University Loop Operational and Amenity Enhancements

Emerging Projects/Initiatives, 2022

Description

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

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

- None

Steps/Timeline

- Test loop operations
- Striping of the Loop; improvement of curbs
- Resigned loop with increased signage and diagrams
- Customer outreach
- Changes finalized

Erie Canal Harbor Station Rehabilitation

Emerging Projects/Initiatives, 2022

Description

With the planned addition of DL&W Station, Special Events Station will be demolished, and Erie Canal Harbor 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

Erie Canal Harbor Station will absorb the demand from the defunct Special Events station, will be contextualized within the new Heritage Point development, and will be renamed to reflect its destination – “Canalside.” With the rehabilitation, improvements will increase customer comfort including heat elements and improved lighting for safety.

Prerequisites

- None

Steps/Timeline

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

Rail Communications Improvements

Emerging Projects/Initiatives, 2022

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

PAL Service Evaluation

Emerging Projects/Initiatives, 2022

Description

Evaluating PAL service to ensure that scheduling and dispatching trips are more efficient.

Purpose & Need

Currently, PAL trips are close to capped out based on operational procedures. NFTA-Metro is experiencing consistent growth in requested trips, which is straining existing capacities. Improvements in scheduling and dispatching software infrastructure and other ways to increase efficiencies will be explored. To improve the capacity of PAL service, the root cause(s) must be identified. Improving capacity will improve the customer experience and allow more PAL trips to operate, which improves how many a single rider can use the service.

Prerequisites

- RFP released for consultant evaluation

Steps/Timeline

- Consultant chosen
- Consultant report released internally
- Changes made to PAL Service based on consultant recommendations

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Short-Range Projects/Initiatives

2023-2024



Metro Transit Expansion Engineering

Short-Range Projects/Initiatives, 2023-2024

Description

While some level of engineering will be completed concurrently with the environmental review process, more detailed design and engineering will begin after environmental approvals are in place to allow the project to enter into Project Development with the FTA. NFTA-Metro has been allocated \$6 million from NY State to continue engineering work for the Metro Transit Expansion, which will help fund preliminary engineering for many of the key elements of the project. Project development has a two-year window for completion.

Purpose & Need

Detailed design and engineering are crucial in the development of the Metro Transit Expansion because it allows us to continue to identify issues and work with the community to solve problems before the project moves into Project Development.

Prerequisites

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

Steps/Timeline

- Complete 30% design
- Enter into FTA Project Development
- Identify local funding streams
- Move into full engineering and design

Realtime Information & Signage Enhancements

Short-Range Projects/Initiatives, 2023-2024

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. NFTA-Metro will begin to publish this data from compatible buses to improve access to realtime information by customers.

Realtime signage is digital signage that tells customers when the next bus or train is coming. Metro has taken steps to obtain realtime signage, but we currently only provide realtime signage at three transit centers and one rail station. Metro would like to provide realtime information using GTFS-R and existing signage throughout the system in a coordinated and unified manner, such that the equipment and information flow is uniform throughout the system.

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

Steps/Timeline

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

Church Street Crossover

Short-Range Projects/Initiatives, 2023-2024

Description

Design and construction of a light rail crossover north of Church Street 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.

Prerequisites

- Funding sources identified

Steps/Timeline

- Funding secured
- Design completed
- Construction begins

Development of Community Based Service Strategies

Short-Range Projects/Initiatives, 2023-2024

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 serve 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

Steps/Timeline

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

Rail Storage, Maintenance, and Operations Study

Short-Range Projects/Initiatives, 2023-2024

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, 2023-2024

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)

Steps/Timeline

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

DL&W Station Opens to the Public

Short-Range Projects/Initiatives, 2023-2024

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

Open Fare Payment Begins

Short-Range Projects/Initiatives, 2023-2024

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
- Scop to be developed with vendor

North Division Street Bus Canopy Full Design

Short-Range Projects/Initiatives, 2023-2024

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)

Rapid Transit Network Evaluation Study

Short-Range Projects/Initiatives, 2023-2024

Description

The Rapid Transit 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 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.

Prerequisites

- \$3 million funding secured

Steps/Timeline

- RFP for consultant
- Choose consultant
- Prepare study
- NFTA Board approval
- Release study to stakeholders and community

Mid-Range Projects/Initiatives

2025-2029



Bus Network Infrastructure Plan and Implementation

Mid-Range Projects/Initiatives, 2025-2029

Description

The NFTA will develop a plan to invest in bus related infrastructure and right-of-way improvements along Niagara Street, Kenmore Avenue, Bailey Avenue and Elmwood Avenue, and other high frequency corridors. Paired with a high level of frequency, these passenger amenities 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 location for these facilities and the appropriate accompanying service levels.

Purpose & Need

Appropriate passenger amenities and infrastructure improvements will assist in gaining additional riders along our high use corridors. Shelters and other passenger amenities will provide additional safety and comfort measures. Additionally, the inclusion of transit signal priority and/or queue jump lanes will allow for greater efficiency and speed of our vehicles along the corridor.

Prerequisites

- Identify appropriate corridors internally
- Identification of capital funding opportunities

Steps/Timeline

- Inventory of existing passenger amenities

Rail Station Joint Development Construction

Mid-Range Projects/Initiatives, 2025-2029

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

- RFP conducted to gauge development interest along rail line

Steps/Timeline

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

Service Delivery Evaluation

Mid-Range Projects/Initiatives, 2025-2029

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

North Division Street Bus Canopy Completed and Operational

Mid-Range Projects/Initiatives, 2025-2029

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

Bailey BRT Implementation & Construction

Mid-Range Projects/Initiatives, 2025-2029

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

Cold Spring Garage Fully Electrified

Mid-Range Projects/Initiatives, 2025-2029

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

Long-Range Projects/Initiatives

2030 and beyond



Metro Transit Expansion Opens

Long-Range Projects/Initiatives, 2030 and beyond

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 the 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

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
- Provide analysis 6 months after implementation

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

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 50 transit markets.

Prerequisites

- Contracting process is complete

Steps/Timeline

- Launch Token Transit
- Track data and utilization
- Make determination on advancing past the pilot program

Community Bus

Appendix – Completed Projects

Completed in 2019

Description

NFTA-Metro renovated one 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 read for use starting spring 2019

DL&W 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

DL&W 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

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

North Division Street Bus Canopy DRR

Appendix – Completed Projects

Completed in 2019

Description

NFTA-Metro expressed interest in created a linear transit hub along North Division Street between the Metropolitan Transportation Center (MTC) and Church Street Metro Rail Station where many buses pass through. This linear transit hub is 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

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

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

On Board Survey

Appendix – Completed Projects

Completed in 2021

Description

In cooperation with GBNRTC, NFTA 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. These data aids in the development of the Title VI pro-gram 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

