

**Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority (NFTA)**  
**Michelle Liberty**  
**University at Buffalo Law Student**



**What is the NFTA's website and contact information?**

NFTA can be found on the web at <http://www.nfta.com/>. It can be contacted via phone at (716) 855-7300 or by email to [info@nfta.com](mailto:info@nfta.com). Questions and comments can also be directed to Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority · 181 Ellicott Street · Buffalo, New York 14203.<sup>1</sup>

**What services does NFTA provide?**

NFTA provides transportation services in the Buffalo-Niagara region. It oversees the Metro Bus and Rail System, the NFTA Boat Harbor, the Buffalo Niagara International Airport, and the Niagara Falls International Airport.<sup>2</sup>

**What are the key legal provisions governing NFTA?**

NFTA is governed by a state law, the Niagara Frontier Transportation Act which created the Authority to further and improve transportation services within the Niagara Frontier.<sup>3</sup>

**What geographic area does it serve?**

NFTA's Metro System serves four zones which encompass most of Erie and Niagara counties. The service area covers a number of cities including Buffalo, Cheektowaga, Tonawanda, Lackawanna, Williamsville, Orchard Park, Lockport, Grand Island, and Niagara Falls.<sup>4</sup>

### **Who runs the NFTA?**

NFTA is run by an eleven member Board of Commissioners which oversees the Authority's executive director and other management personnel. The Board reviews and monitors the operational and financial management of the Authority. The Board consists of a Chair, Vice Chair, Treasurer, Secretary, Executive Director, General Counsel, Chief Financial Officer, and others appointed to serve at the will of the will of the Board.<sup>5</sup>

### **How are members of the Board appointed?**

The eleven members of the Board are nominated by the Governor of New York with the advice and consent of the Senate, and all members must be residents of the district.<sup>6</sup> The Erie County Executive and the Erie County Legislature each recommend one member.<sup>7</sup> The officers, with exception to the Chairman, are elected at the first meeting of the Board each fiscal year.<sup>8</sup>

### **What is the Authority's mission?**

NFTA's mission is to offer professional and efficient transportation services to the Buffalo Niagara region. NFTA seeks to improve the quality of life within the region by providing cost-effective land and air transportation that is safe, efficient, convenient, and customer service oriented.<sup>9</sup>

### **What modes of transport does the NFTA offer?**

NFTA's 1,119 full time employees operate several modes of transportation, including buses, trains, trolleys, and vans. Approximately 94,000 people a day use NFTA's 27 rail cars, 35 vans, four trolleys, and 332 buses.<sup>11</sup> Currently, there are 216 metro routes in operation.<sup>12</sup>



### **What are the fare options for the Metro and Rail system?**

Cash fares are based on Zone Rides covering specific areas and range from \$1.75 to \$2.65 for adults and \$0.75 to \$1.20 for children from 5 to 11 years old, senior citizens 65 and older, disabled passengers, and Medicare recipients.<sup>13</sup>

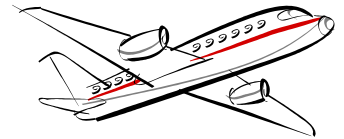
Other types of NFTA-Metro passes available include daily, monthly, and weekend All Zone Passes good for unlimited bus rides. NFTA-Metro also offers One Zone and All Zone Monthly Metro Passes good for unlimited rail/bus rides during the month of issue. There are also Single Zone and All Zone passes available in 10 trip and 20 trip denominations.<sup>14</sup>

### **What services does the Buffalo Niagara International Airport provide?**

Buffalo Niagara provides nonstop service to 18 cities and has an average of 110 flights per day.<sup>15</sup> Ten passenger air carriers travel through Buffalo Niagara including AirTran, American Airlines, Continental, Comair, Delta, Jet Blue, Northwest, Prior Aviation, Southwest, United, and US Airways.<sup>16</sup>

### **What services does the Niagara Falls International Airport provide?**

Niagara Falls International Airport offers non-stop service to Myrtle Beach twice a week through Direct Air.<sup>17</sup> This airport operates 24 hours a day, and provides free on-site parking.<sup>18</sup> NFTA has initiated a \$29.7 million project to build a new terminal at this airport; it is scheduled to open in late summer 2009.<sup>19</sup>



### **What other services does the Authority provide?**

In addition to its transportation services, NFTA also has a property management department that controls over 2,000 acres of real estate. This property includes the airport, rail rights of way, and waterfront property such as the NFTA Boat harbor, which is the largest marina in New York State.<sup>20</sup> NFTA is also a part of the effort to redevelop Buffalo's Inner Harbor, and has opened up public access to a new area of the Buffalo River by extending the Riverwalk.<sup>21</sup>

### **Who oversees the safety of the NFTA transportation services?**

NFTA has its own Transit Police Department whose mission is to ensure public safety within the transportation systems, including NFTA-Metro, the two NFTA airports, and NFTA Boat Harbor. There are currently 86 New York State certified and sworn officers and three civilian personnel working for the NFTA Police Department.<sup>10</sup>

### **What is the annual budget?**

For the fiscal year ending March 31, 2010, NFTA has projected an operating income of approximately \$201 million, operating expenditures of \$177 million, non-operating expenditures of \$16.5 million, and capital spending of \$7.5 million.<sup>22</sup>

### **How is the budget funded?**

NFTA operating revenues are generated from transportation centers, property management, and the Buffalo Niagara International and Niagara Falls International airports.<sup>23</sup> Operating revenues for NFTA-Metro are generated from fares and advertisements placed on buses, bus shelters, and at bus stations.<sup>24</sup>

The major sources of non-operating revenues include interest revenues and state, federal, and municipal grants. For the fiscal year ending March 31, 2010, grants and subsidies total approximately \$46.6 million from the state, \$12.5 million from federal sources, and \$34.5 million from municipalities.<sup>25</sup> These budget figures include an Erie County subsidy of \$3.6 million, and approximately \$17.3 million in sales tax.<sup>26</sup>

### **How is the budget spent?**

Some of NFTA's major operating expenses include metro maintenance and repair, baggage handling, employee health insurance costs, union contractual increases, utilities, workers compensation costs, and fuel. Much of the non-operating expenses are debt service related to the Buffalo Niagara Improvement Project, Property Management, and an energy efficiency study with the Northeast Energy Services Company, Inc.<sup>27</sup>

### **What are some examples of the NFTA's projects?**

NFTA worked closely with the Department of Environmental Conservation to open the Greenway Nature Trail to the public. The Greenway Nature Trail occupies over 6,000 feet along the Lake Erie shoreline that was transformed from wasteland into green recreational park space to revive the waterfront.<sup>28</sup>

NFTA-Metro also works with local colleges and universities on its Unlimited Access Pass Program. The Program is available to students of participating schools, and allows them unlimited access to the Metro system during the school year.<sup>29</sup> Additionally, NFTA-Metro offers the Metro Advantage program for employers – allowing them to offer employees the ability to purchase Metro Passes with pre-tax dollars.<sup>30</sup>

### **Does the NFTA have any hybrid vehicles?**

Recently, NFTA-Metro received \$24.4 of the federal stimulus package to increase the number of hybrid buses in its fleet.<sup>32</sup> Using the stimulus funds, the Authority has entered into a contract with Gillig Corp. of Hayward, California for the purchase of 24 new hybrids and 56 new diesel fueled buses.<sup>33</sup> There are already 43 hybrids in NFTA's fleet.<sup>34</sup> The hybrids have combination diesel and electric motors which are estimated to reduce fuel requirements by up to 30% and emit 90% less particulates, hydrocarbons, and carbon monoxide.<sup>35</sup>

### **How can I contribute input to the Authority's decisions?**

NFTA encourages open communication with the public through use of email<sup>36</sup> and their Communication Department which can be contacted at (716) 855-7218.<sup>37</sup>

### **Can I attend NFTA's meetings?**

NFTA holds public meetings for each of their committees.<sup>38</sup> These meetings are a good place to go for more information about the agency, and recordings of the meetings are also accessible on the NFTA website<sup>39</sup> at <http://www.nfta.com/meetings.asp>.<sup>40</sup>

### **Are there any local organizations that deal with area transportation and NFTA?**

Yes. The Citizens' Regional Transit Corporation (CRTC) is an organization that supports the expansion and improvement of bus and rail transit for Niagara Frontier citizens.<sup>41</sup> The CRTC operates as a grassroots advocacy network that educates and works with citizens to improve area access to mass transit.<sup>42</sup> More information about this organization can be found at <http://citizenstransit.org/>.

The Greater Buffalo-Niagara Regional Transportation Council (GBNRTC), is an organization that works to establish a comprehensive transportation planning process in the Erie and Niagara Counties to allow for the allocation of federal funding of all types of public transit.<sup>43</sup> For more information regarding this organization, visit their website at <http://www.gbnrtc.org/>.

### **NOTES**

1. <http://www.nfta.com/>.
2. <http://www.nfta.com/>; <http://www.nfta.com/metro/>;  
<http://www.nfta.com/boatharbor.asp>; <http://www.buffaloairport.com/>;  
<http://www.niagarafallsairport.com/>.
3. NY CLS Pub A § 1299-d (2009)
4. <http://www.nfta.com/metro/systemmaps.asp>
5. <http://www.nfta.com/Public%20Information/Bylaws.PDF> , adopted July 26, 2004.
6. NY CLS Pub A § 1299-c (2009).
7. <http://www.ny.gov/governor/press/0809074.html>.
8. <http://www.nfta.com/Public%20Information/Bylaws.PDF>.
9. <http://www.nfta.com/Public%20Information/Mission%20Statement.PDF>.
10. <http://www.nfta.com/Police2/Home.htm>.
11. <http://www.nfta.com/metro/about.asp>.
12. <http://www.nfta.com/metro/routes/>.
13. <http://www.nfta.com/metro/Fares.asp>.
14. <http://www.nfta.com/metro/Fares.asp>.
15. <http://www.buffaloairport.com/>.
16. <http://www.buffaloairport.com/Carriers.asp?sec=3#NonStops>.
17. <http://www.niagarafallsairport.com/tourism.asp>.
18. <http://www.niagarafallsairport.com/AboutNFTA.asp>.

19. [http://www.nfta.com/executive\\_message.asp](http://www.nfta.com/executive_message.asp).
20. [http://www.nfta.com/property\\_management.asp](http://www.nfta.com/property_management.asp).
21. [http://www.nfta.com/property\\_management.asp](http://www.nfta.com/property_management.asp).
22. <http://www.abo.state.ny.us/annualreports/PARISBudgetReports/FYE2010/NiagaraFrontierTransportationAuthority2009-10.pdf>
23. [http://www.nfta.com/graphics/Budget\\_10.pdf](http://www.nfta.com/graphics/Budget_10.pdf).
24. [http://www.nfta.com/graphics/Budget\\_10.pdf](http://www.nfta.com/graphics/Budget_10.pdf).
25. <http://www.abo.state.ny.us/annualreports/PARISBudgetReports/FYE2010/NiagaraFrontierTransportationAuthority2009-10.pdf>.
26. [http://www.erie.gov/exec/pdfs/budget2009\\_msg\\_summary\\_proposed.pdf](http://www.erie.gov/exec/pdfs/budget2009_msg_summary_proposed.pdf).
27. [http://www.nfta.com/graphics/Budget\\_10.pdf](http://www.nfta.com/graphics/Budget_10.pdf).
28. [http://www.nfta.com/outer\\_harbor\\_development.asp](http://www.nfta.com/outer_harbor_development.asp).
29. [http://www.nfta.com/metro/unlimited\\_pass.asp](http://www.nfta.com/metro/unlimited_pass.asp).
30. <http://www.nfta.com/metro/advantage.asp>.
31. [http://www.nfta.com/Public%20Information/Environmental\\_Policy.pdf](http://www.nfta.com/Public%20Information/Environmental_Policy.pdf).
32. Linstedt, Sharon, *Stimulus Package to Bring NFTA More Hybrid Buses* (Feb. 20, 2009), <http://www.buffalonews.com/145/story/584855.html>.
33. Fink, James, *NFTA Holds Line on Fares* (March 23, 2009), <http://buffalo.bizjournals.com/buffalo/stories/2009/03/23/daily8.html>.
34. <http://www.visitbuffaloniagara.com/meetingplanners/green/NFTA.asp>.
35. <http://www.nfta.com/metro/news.asp>.
36. [http://www.nfta.com/executive\\_message.asp](http://www.nfta.com/executive_message.asp).
37. <http://www.nfta.com/news/index.phtml>.
38. <http://www.nfta.com/meetings.asp>.
39. Brodfuehrer, Sean, *NFTA Committee Meetings*, <http://www.buffalorising.com/2009/03/nfta-committee-meetings.html>, (March 20, 2009).
40. <http://www.nfta.com/meetings.asp>.
41. <http://citizenstransit.org/>.
42. <http://citizenstransit.org/>.
43. <http://www.gbnrtc.org/>.
44. <http://www.nfta.com/news/index.phtml>.

---

Partnership for the Public Good  
237 Main St., Suite 1200, Buffalo NY 14203  
[www.ppgbuffalo.org](http://www.ppgbuffalo.org)

---