

Appendix J1

Public Outreach and Coordination

Report

Contents

Appendix J. Public Outreach and Coordination Report.....	J-1
J.1 NEPA SCOPING PROCESS.....	J-1
J.2 PUBLIC MEETINGS.....	J-2
J.3 POP-UP EVENTS.....	J-3
J.4 COMMUNITY MEETINGS/EVENTS.....	J-3
J.5 PROJECT WEBSITE.....	J-4
J.6 MEDIA CIRCULATION.....	J-4
J.7 SURVEYS.....	J-4
J.8 STEERING COMMITTEE.....	J-5
J.9 TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE.....	J-5
J.10 ADVISORY COMMITTEES.....	J-5
J.11 UNIVERSITY AT BUFFALO WORKING GROUP.....	J-6
J.12 TRANSIT-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT OUTREACH.....	J-6
J.13 COMMENT DATABASE AND MAILING LIST.....	J-6
J.14 CONTACT INFORMATION.....	J-6

Tables

Table E-1. Pop-Up Events.....	J-3
Table E-2. Community Hosted Events.....	J-4

Acronyms and Abbreviations

EIS.....	Environmental Impact Statement
FTA.....	Federal Transit Administration
GBNRTC.....	Greater Buffalo Niagara Regional Transportation Council
Metro.....	Niagara Frontier Transit Metro Systems, Inc.
NEPA.....	National Environmental Policy Act
NOI.....	Notice of Intent
Project.....	Buffalo-Amherst-Tonawanda Corridor Transit Expansion
SEQR.....	State Environmental Quality Review Act
TAC.....	Technical Advisory Committee
TOD.....	transit-oriented development
UB.....	University at Buffalo

Appendix J. Public Outreach and Coordination Report

This appendix describes the public outreach and coordination that has been conducted for the Buffalo-Amherst-Tonawanda Corridor Transit Expansion (Project). Public involvement is an integral part of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process. The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and Niagara Frontier Transit Metro Systems, Inc. (Metro) have committed to an open, participatory environmental review process and have solicited early and continued feedback from the public and from agencies. Public outreach sessions have encouraged open discussion of Project details and issues and have provided opportunities for comments and questions. These efforts will continue throughout the environmental review of the Project.

J.1 NEPA SCOPING PROCESS

Scoping occurs early in the environmental review process and affords an opportunity for agencies and the public to provide input on a project's purpose and need, its objectives, the potential alternatives under consideration, and the environmental analysis methodology. On August 30, 2021, the FTA, in coordination with Metro, issued a Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) in accordance with NEPA, the Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act, the New York State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQR), and Article 8 of the New York State Environmental Conservation Law and its implementing regulations. The NOI initiates public scoping for the NEPA EIS and provides information on the Project, including its purpose and need and the alternatives being considered for evaluation. The NOI also invites public comment on the environmental impacts that may be associated with the Project and the alternatives being considered for evaluation. The 45-day public comment period ended on October 14, 2021.

Two public scoping meetings for the Project were held using Zoom Webinar video conferencing on Wednesday, September 15, 2021, including a daytime meeting from 1:00 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. and an evening meeting from 6:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. The scoping meetings were promoted through an "e-blast" invite to the Project contact list, distribution to media outlets, via NFTA social media channels, and posting to the Project website. Copies of promotional materials and links to the presentation, facilitator script, and meeting recordings are provided on the Project website.¹

Ninety-one individuals registered in advance of the daytime scoping meeting; the meeting was attended by 67 members of the public. Seventy-three individuals registered in advance of the evening scoping meeting; the meeting was attended by 43 members of the public. The

¹ www.NFTAMetroTransitExpansion.com

comments received during the scoping period were considered and incorporated into the written record of the meeting and addressed in the Final Scoping Document. The Project website provides a summary of the scoping comments and responses.

J.2 PUBLIC MEETINGS

In addition to the formal NEPA scoping meetings, Metro held public meetings for the Project throughout the conceptual design and SEQR environmental review process. The following describes these meetings:

- A public open house was held on December 6, 2018, at Sweet Home Middle School in the Town of Amherst to provide the results of the re-evaluation of the Locally Preferred Alternative. A total of 80 people attended the open house, and 12 written comments were received at this meeting.
- A public scoping meeting for the SEQR EIS was held on February 12, 2019, at Sweet Home Middle School in the Town of Amherst to provide input on the Project's purpose and need, its objectives, the potential alternatives under consideration, and the environmental analysis methodology. A Draft Scope for the SEQR environmental analysis was issued on January 24, 2019, followed by a 45-day public comment period. Metro received 132 comments via hard copy, email, or verbal testimony during the 45-day public comment period. A final scoping document was released in May 2019.
- A public workshop was held on June 11, 2019, in Hayes Hall at the University at Buffalo (UB) South Campus to present various station design concepts, ridership projections, and traffic analysis results. A total of 30 people attended the workshop.
- A public workshop was held on September 24, 2019, at Sweet Home Middle School in the Town of Amherst to present the concept design plans, updated station design concepts, traffic analysis results, and preliminary environmental analysis and impacts. A total of 100 people attended.
- Two public hearings were held in February 2020 to provide an opportunity for the public and local agencies to comment and provide their input following the release of the SEQR Draft EIS (Draft EIS) in January 2020. The written and oral comments received during the SEQR public hearings, the comments received during the SEQR Draft EIS 60-day public comment period, and the findings of the SEQR Draft EIS were considered during the NEPA process.
- In January and February 2024, NFTA conducted public "listening sessions" and a public survey to solicit public input on current transportation challenges, weekly travel destinations, how to improve transit service in the Towns of Amherst and Tonawanda, and concerns related to the Project. Over 200 community members participated in the listening sessions and more than 1,800 survey responses were collected.

J.3 POP-UP EVENTS

A pop-up event is a form of public engagement in which a project's team members set up a table with a project's information at a local event, center of activity, or other location where the intended audience for a project may congregate. This format allows for informal one-on-one or small group conversations and offers participation opportunities for people who otherwise might not be aware of the Project or may not be available to attend a public meeting. The events were held during a two-hour block of time in the late afternoon to evening between 2:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m. This ensured that members of the public would have an opportunity to participate after the average school day or the 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. workday. The event locations were chosen to cover and collect input from a wide range of stakeholders. Table J-1 presents the pop-up events held following the publication of the SEQR Draft EIS.

Table J-1. Pop-Up Events

Event	Location	Municipality	Date	Time	Estimated Attendance
University Station Pop-Up	University Station	Amherst	February 6, 2019	2:30 - 4:30 p.m.	80
Allen Medical Campus Station Pop-Up	Allen Medical Campus Station	Buffalo	June 21, 2019	4:00 - 6:00 p.m.	30
LaSalle Station Pop-Up	LaSalle Station	Buffalo	June 27, 2019	4:00 - 6:00 p.m.	30
University Station Pop-Up	University Station	Buffalo	July 9, 2019	3:30 - 5:30 p.m.	20
34 Bus	Niagara Falls Boulevard	Amherst	July 24, 2019	3:30 - 5:30 p.m.	80
UB on the Green Pop-Up	Rotary Field, UB South Campus	Buffalo	August 9, 2019	5:00 - 8:00 p.m.	60
Annual Book Sale Pop-Up	Erie County Central Library	Buffalo	August 15, 2019	2:00 - 4:00 p.m.	10
Kenilworth Branch Library Pop-Up	Kenilworth Branch Library	Tonawanda	August 20, 2019	2:00 - 4:00 p.m.	10

J.4 COMMUNITY MEETINGS/EVENTS

The Project team attended and provided Project information and opportunities for input at meetings and events hosted by neighborhood, business, and civic organizations within the Project corridor. Public comments gathered at these events were logged in the Project's comment database and contact information from sign-up sheets was added to the Project contact list.

Table J-2. Community Hosted Events

Event	Location	Municipality	Date	Estimated Attendance
Ken-Ton Networking Event	Tonawanda Castle	Tonawanda	February 28, 2019	40
Kenmore Rotary Meeting	Jovi's	Kenmore	February 25, 2019	15
Ken-Ton Networking	Hyatt Place Buffalo/Amherst	Amherst	March 28, 2019	10
Audubon HOA Meeting	Audubon Community Center	Amherst	June 27, 2019	70
Hartford Estates Meeting	Sweet Home Middle School	Amherst	July 2, 2019	70
Willow Ridge Civic Association	Ellicott Creek Fire Hall	Amherst	July 30, 2019	20
Westminster Presbyterian Church	Westminster Presbyterian Church	Buffalo	September 15, 2019	5

J.5 PROJECT WEBSITE

The Project website www.nftametrotransitexpansion.com provides current Project information, including an interactive map, an overall schedule and upcoming events, a document library that includes documents related to the current effort and previous studies, and public meeting materials, including meeting summaries.

J.6 MEDIA CIRCULATION

Metro has used local newspapers to inform the public of upcoming events, Project milestones, and opportunities to provide input. News releases and advertisements for public meetings are sent to newspapers in the Greater Buffalo-Niagara Region, including *The Buffalo News* and the *Amherst Bee*.

J.7 SURVEYS

Metro has used surveys to collect public input on the Project. A Station Design & Connections Questionnaire was administered between June 11 and August 30, 2019 (80 days). The questionnaire received 457 responses. The purpose of this survey was to gather public input on elements of the proposed station designs, including canopies and shelters, platform configuration, and road separators, as well as potential connections to proposed stations, including bike, bikeshare, and pedestrian facilities.

A Corridor Employer and Employee Survey was administered between September 16 and November 27, 2019. The survey received 217 responses. The purpose of this survey was to:

- Learn about parking and transportation issues employers and employees currently face that could be mitigated by the Project.

- Ensure that businesses and their employees in the Project corridor, who may disproportionately benefit or be impacted from the expansion of high-quality transit within the Project corridor, are aware of the Project.
- Gather input on what kinds of environmental impacts employers and employees are concerned about and their preferred methods for mitigating said impacts.

In 2024, Metro conducted a survey to solicit public input on current transportation challenges, weekly travel destinations, how to improve transit service in the Towns of Amherst and Tonawanda, and concerns related to the Project.

J.8 STEERING COMMITTEE

Internal staff from Metro and the Greater Buffalo Niagara Regional Transportation Council (GBNRTC) comprise the Project's Steering Committee, which provides oversight and guidance for the Project. The Steering Committee has held meetings regularly throughout the Project.

J.9 TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Metro staff, key stakeholders, and municipal entities comprise the Project's Technical Advisory Committee (TAC). The TAC reviews Project materials and provides feedback and guidance. TAC members include the following:

- Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority
- UB – Campus Planning and Administration
- New York State Department of Transportation – Region 5
- Empire State Development
- GBNRTC
- Erie County – Environment and Planning Division and Public Works Division
- Town of Tonawanda – Department of Planning and Department of Engineering
- Town of Amherst – Department of Planning
- City of Buffalo – Office of Strategic Planning

J.10 ADVISORY COMMITTEES

The Project's Stakeholder Advisory Committee consists of representatives from community and stakeholder groups, including developers and real estate professionals, businesses, property owners, not-for-profits, housing and transportation agencies, community and economic development agencies, and academic institutions. The Stakeholder Advisory Committee reviews Project materials and provides feedback and guidance to the Steering Committee and Project team. The Stakeholder Advisory Committee held Project meetings regularly throughout the Project. In addition, Metro provides regular Project updates to NFTA's Citizens Advisory Committee and Accessibility Advisory Committee.

J.11 UNIVERSITY AT BUFFALO WORKING GROUP

The UB Working Group, established for the Project, includes faculty, student representatives, planning staff, and Metro staff. The UB Working Group reviews Project materials and provides feedback related to the Project. Meetings were held with the UB Working Group at regular intervals.

J.12 TRANSIT-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT OUTREACH

In addition to the outreach efforts conducted for the conceptual design of the Project, GBNRTC and Metro have conducted outreach activities related to transit-oriented development (TOD) along the Project corridor. In 2018, GBNRTC and Metro hosted three charrette-style workshops along the Project corridor to identify opportunities and challenges for TOD. The comments received from the workshops informed the conceptual design plans for proposed stations. The strategies communities should follow to achieve equitable TOD were developed through context-appropriate analyses of these varying neighborhood and market typologies. GBNRTC and Metro community engagement efforts continued through the “Developing Our Transit Future” series conducted during the spring and summer of 2022 to communicate the advantages of TOD and build support for equitable TOD development throughout the region.

J.13 COMMENT DATABASE AND MAILING LIST

Comments received on the Project, including those collected during public meetings or those received via the Project website or by email, are recorded in a comment database. Comments are categorized by theme and are incorporated into the environmental review process, as applicable.

Metro developed a Project contact list, including elected officials, public agency contacts, stakeholder and community groups, members of the media, and members of the public. The Project contact list is expanded, based on sign-in sheets from Project meetings and is used to issue meeting notices and other communications with the public.

J.14 CONTACT INFORMATION

For further information on the Project, please consult the Project website² or the following point of contact:

Jeffery Amplement, Project Manager
Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority
181 Ellicott Street
Buffalo, NY 14203
(716) 855-7382

² www.NFTAMetroTransitExpansion.com

Written comments regarding this Draft EIS should be submitted to the following:

Metro Transit Expansion Project, c/o Service Planning
Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority
181 Ellicott Street
Buffalo, NY 14203
transitexpansion@nfta.com