

State Environmental Quality Review Act

**NOTICE OF COMPLETION AND PUBLIC HEARING
DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT**

METRO RAIL EXPANSION PROJECT

Pursuant to the State Environmental Quality Review Act (Article 8 of the New York State Environmental Conservation Law) and the regulations adopted pursuant thereto (6 NYCRR Part 617), a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) has been prepared for the proposed Metro Rail Expansion (the “Proposed Action”) and accepted by the Niagara Frontier Transit Metro System, Inc. (Metro), a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority (NFTA).

Project Location: The Proposed Action is located in Erie County, in the City of Buffalo and Towns of Amherst and Tonawanda.

Proposed Action Description: The Proposed Action is an expansion of the existing light rail transit (LRT or Metro Rail). The existing LRT runs along Main Street in Buffalo for 6.4 miles between the Erie Canal Harbor Station in downtown Buffalo and the University Station located at University at Buffalo South Campus. The Proposed Action would expand the Metro Rail from the terminus at University Station, along Kenmore Avenue (underground), then surfacing and running at-grade along Niagara Falls Boulevard and Maple Road, grade separated through the intersection of Maple Road and Sweet Home Road, and at-grade again along Sweet Home Road and through the University at Buffalo North Campus to Audubon Parkway, terminating around Interstate 990. The light rail expansion would be approximately 7 miles – 0.8 miles underground and the remaining at grade (with the exception of grade separation at the intersection of Maple Road and Sweet Home Road). Ten stations are proposed, two with park & ride facilities, and an overnight storage and light maintenance facility located near the end of the line.

SEQRA Classification: Type 1

Lead Agency: Niagara Frontier Transit Metro System, Inc.

Lead Agency Contact: Rachel Maloney, Project Manager
Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority
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As Lead Agency, Metro is required to determine whether the Proposed Action may have a significant adverse impact on the environment. Metro has prepared a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the Metro Rail Expansion Project in accordance with the SEQRA requirements (Article 8 of the Environmental Conservation Law and its implementing regulations 6 NYCRR 617). The Proposed Action will be the subject of a future application by Metro for federal funds administered through the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) or other federal sources to cover a portion of the Proposed Action's capital costs. Therefore, this DEIS is intended to be compliant with the substantive environmental review requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) (42 U.S. Code § 4321 et seq.) and implementing regulations of the Council on Environmental Quality 40 CFR Parts 1500–1508), the Federal Highway Administration/Federal Transportation Authority (23 CFR Part 771), and other applicable federal rules, regulations, and executive orders.

Metro has prepared this DEIS to identify potential environmental effects that would result from the Proposed Action, to evaluate reasonable alternatives to avoid or minimize impacts, and – to the extent that adverse impacts are identified – avoid or otherwise mitigate those impacts to the maximum extent practicable, consistent with social, economic, environmental, and other considerations. State and local governments and agencies must review their discretionary actions in accordance with SEQRA, unless such actions fall within certain statutory or regulatory exemptions, before undertaking, funding, or approving the actions. This DEIS includes a discussion of existing conditions as well as conditions expected in the future with and without the Proposed Action.

Hard copies of the DEIS are available at the following locations:

- NFTA Headquarters, 181 Ellicott Street, Buffalo, New York 14203
- Buffalo and Erie County Central Library, 1 Lafayette Square, Buffalo, New York 14203
- Kenilworth Library, 318 Montrose Avenue, Tonawanda, New York 14223
- Amherst Library, 350 John James Audubon Parkway, Amherst, New York 14228
- Amherst Town Hall, 5583 Main Street, Williamsville, New York 14221
- Tonawanda Town Hall, 2919 Delaware Avenue, Kenmore, New York 14217

A digital version of the DEIS can be viewed at the following publicly accessible website:

<http://www.nftametrorailexpansion.com>

Publication of the DEIS and issuance of this Notice of Completion signal the beginning of the public review period. During this time, the public may review and comment on the DEIS, either in writing or at a Public Hearing convened for the purpose of receiving such comments. All substantive comments received on the DEIS, at the hearing or during the comment period, become part of the official record and will be summarized and responded to in the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS). The public comment period for the DEIS will be open from January 24, 2020 through March 24, 2020. During the 60-day comment period, Metro will hold two Public Hearings as follows:

- Tuesday, February 25 at 5:00 PM at Sweet Home Middle School, 4150 Maple Road, Amherst, New York 14226
- Wednesday, February 26 at 1:00 PM at The Screening Room at Boulevard Mall, 880 Alberta Drive, Amherst, New York 14226

Comments on the DEIS may be made orally or submitted in writing at the Public Hearing or submitted in writing to the Lead Agency. Comments must be received on or before 4:00 p.m. on March 24, 2020. Written comments may be submitted by email or mail to the Lead Agency contact. Written comments, whether received at or after the Public Hearing will be afforded the same weight as oral testimony, and those wishing to submit lengthy or complex testimony are urged to do so in writing.

This Notice of Completion of a DEIS and Notice of Public Hearing have been sent to:

- City of Buffalo Common Council;
- City of Buffalo Department of Public Works
- City of Buffalo Office of Strategic Planning
- Dormitory Authority State of New York
- Empire State Development
- Erie County Department of Environment and Planning
- Erie County Department of Public Works
- Erie County Legislature
- Erie County Division of Sewerage Management
- Erie County Water Authority
- Federal Transit Administration – Region 2
- New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, Region 9
- New York State Department of State
- New York State Department of Transportation – Region 5
- New York State Education Department
- New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation – State Historic Preservation Office
- New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation, Western District
- State University of New York (SUNY) and University at Buffalo
- Town of Amherst
- Town of Tonawanda
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers – Buffalo District
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency – Region 2
- University at Buffalo Construction Fund