



## **Metro Amherst-Buffalo Corridor Draft Environmental Impact Statement**

### **TASK 4: PURPOSE AND NEED STATEMENT**

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**Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority (NFTA)**



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## Purpose and Need Statement

### 1.0 General

This document establishes the draft Purpose and Need for transportation investment in the study area for the Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority's (NFTA) Metro Amherst – Buffalo Corridor Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). A Purpose and Need statement outlines the reasons for proposing a project and the underlying needs for a project. The Purpose and Need Statement is the foundation of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) planning process. It provides the rationale and justification for undertaking a major federal investment and forms the basis for the range of alternatives to be studied in a NEPA document. The Purpose and Need also includes draft Goals and Objectives, which focus on related issues that reflect environmental, community, and transportation values.

The Purpose and Need Statement embodies transportation conditions that are observable and data-supported, as well as problems, opportunities and needs articulated by the public and stakeholders. Public and stakeholder input regarding problems, opportunities and needs will occur during the informal scoping meetings, the formal NEPA Scoping Meeting for the Metro Amherst – Buffalo Corridor DEIS, through preparation of the DEIS, and during the formal comment period on the DEIS. This draft Purpose and Need Statement states the purpose of the proposed action, documents the deficiencies in the existing transportation system and the foreseeable long-term consequences of these deficiencies, and describes the needs arising from these deficiencies and supporting the purpose. The Purpose and Need Statement serves as a cornerstone for the development and evaluation of alternatives.

### 2.0 Project Purpose

The purpose of the proposed project is to provide a fast, reliable, safe, and convenient transit ride in the Amherst-Buffalo Corridor linking established and emerging activity centers along the existing Metro Rail Line in the City of Buffalo with existing and emerging activity centers in the Town of Amherst. The project will better serve existing rail and bus riders, attract new transit patrons, improve connections to/from Buffalo and Amherst, and support redevelopment and other economic development opportunities. Importantly, it will serve to improve livability by increasing mobility and accessibility in communities throughout the project corridor. The project will:

- Serve increased travel demand generated by new development in downtown Buffalo and in Amherst.
- Provide high-quality transit service to and from key activity centers in the Amherst-Buffalo Corridor by providing a time-efficient transit option connecting and serving key destinations in the corridor (University at Buffalo (UB) campuses, Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus (BNMC), the Buffalo central business district (CBD), business parks, the Buffalo waterfront, among others).
- Better serve transit-dependent population segments and improve opportunities for participation of the workforce in the overall regional economy.
- Improve the system operating efficiency of the transit network.
- Support local and regional land use planning and transit-oriented design.
- Provide social benefits from transit investment that supports an array of economic and affordable housing development.

- Help meet the sustainability goals and measures as contained in state, regional, and local plans (One Region Forward-The Regional Plan for Sustainable Development, Buffalo Niagara 2050 - the Metropolitan Transportation Plan of the Greater Buffalo-Niagara Regional Transportation Council, Erie and Niagara Counties Framework for Regional Growth, the University at Buffalo 2020 Plan, the Western New York Regional Economic Development Council's (WNYREDC) Economic Development Strategic Plan, the City of Buffalo Comprehensive Plan, and the Town of Amherst Comprehensive Plan, among others).
- Help relieve parking constraints and capacity issues on the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus and surrounding downtown area to minimize traffic and parking-related impacts on neighborhoods.

### 3.0 Project History

The potential for providing high-quality transit service in the Amherst – Buffalo Corridor has been considered for nearly 50 years. The concept for Metro Rail evolved in the 1960s and 1970s as but one segment of a proposed 43-mile network of rapid transit rail lines across the region. Plans were developed for a 14-mile rail line running between Downtown Buffalo and Amherst to north of the planned University at Buffalo's North Campus. Due to concerns in regard to cost effectiveness and consistency with local objectives, the proposed project was scaled back to a six-mile rail line terminating at University at Buffalo's South Campus. This line opened in 1985 and continues to operate as Metro Rail.

In 2010, NFTA updated their 2001 Strategic Assessment. The review examined both available exclusive rights-of-way and existing major arterial corridors as possible locations for major transit investments. The study identified four corridors as candidates for future major investment. The Amherst-Buffalo corridor was recommended as a candidate for further study.

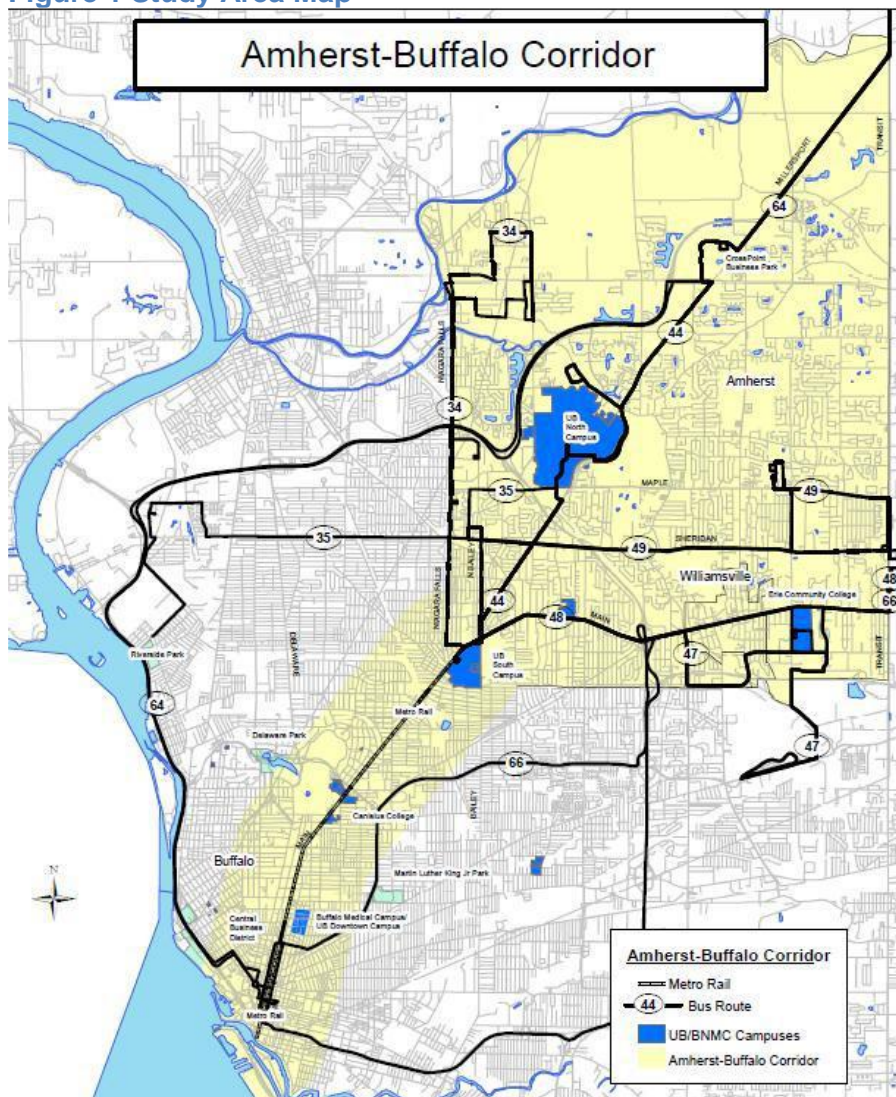
The following describes other key reasons that support the need to evaluate possible future transit improvements in the corridor:

- GBNRTC's adopted, Metropolitan Long-Range Transportation Plan includes a transit investment in this corridor.
- GBNRTC's congestion management system shows congestion along several roadway segments in the study area.
- Multiple regional planning efforts have identified the Amherst-Buffalo Corridor as a growth corridor
- The City of Buffalo, the University at Buffalo and the Town of Amherst have comprehensive plans, which promote compact, mixed-use, center-based development complementary to transit service.
- The University at Buffalo has several campuses with the need to transport students, faculty and staff between them in an efficient, safe and scheduled manner.
- The Federal Transit Administration's (FTA) project evaluation and rating system has changed significantly with MAP-21. Land use and economic development are valued differently, as are mobility and cost effectiveness.

### 4.0 Corridor Setting

The Amherst-Buffalo Corridor is marked by high transit usage and contains a large number of residents who do not own a vehicle. The NFTA Metro Rail line provides fast and reliable rail transit service along a radial (north-south) route that passes through the corridor to/from downtown Buffalo. By contrast, the NFTA Metro Bus service within the corridor is more limited in terms of frequency and span of service and of lower quality in terms of speed and reliability. Bus service is available, but it is not optimal because it operates in traffic on a congested roadway network as well as during winter weather conditions. The bus service is provided by NFTA and multiple private providers and often requires that patrons transfer between routes and providers to reach their destinations. The multiple provider environments create duplication of services. The study area extends from downtown Buffalo along the Amherst-Buffalo Corridor and is displayed on the map in Figure 1.

Figure 1 Study Area Map



The following subsections describe the existing and expected future land use patterns, existing transit services, transit service markets, projected population and employment growth, traffic conditions, and lack of transit system connectivity, which provide the context for the project need.

## **5.0 Existing Land Use**

This section describes the current land use and development context.

### **5.1 City of Buffalo**

The City of Buffalo remains the economic center of the metropolitan region, although over many years the rate of commercial and residential growth in suburban areas has exceeded that of the city.

As with most major cities, downtown Buffalo has a mix of office, business, retail, and entertainment and tourism uses. The downtown area has about 3.2 million square feet of Class A office space and 3.1 million square feet of Class B office space, and it is home to more than 1,100 businesses with over 58,000 employees. The largest private employers are HSBC Bank, Roswell Park Cancer Institute, which is one of the nation's top-rated cancer hospitals and research centers, M&T Bank, Buffalo General Medical Center, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Western New York, the new Gates Vascular Institute, Buffalo and the Buffalo News.<sup>1</sup> Downtown also has more than 60 restaurants and bars and more than 50 retail stores.

Downtown Buffalo has several entertainment, cultural, and tourism facilities. It attracts seven million visitors annually to sporting events, festivals, concerts, theatres, and tradeshows. It is home to eight live theaters, a cinema, galleries and significant architectural sites. Buffalo's Theatre District is one of the largest concentrations of performing arts venues in the country. There are 12 hotels located in the Downtown area, and more than 1,500 hotel rooms are within a ten minute walk of the Buffalo Niagara Convention Center. The First Niagara Center is a multi-purpose arena, which is the home of the National Hockey League's Buffalo Sabres who play 41 regular season home games plus preseason each year. The capacity for hockey games is 19,070. The arena also hosts basketball games, concerts, ice shows, and other family shows. Coca-Cola Field is the home for the Buffalo Bisons minor league baseball team. It is the largest minor league field in the country, with a capacity of 18,050, and it hosts 72 regular season games per year.

The Erie Canal Harbor Development Corporation and the City of Buffalo have revitalized several acres of downtown waterfront space creating a significant recreational and tourism destination. The revitalization features several fully restored facets of the original Erie Canal terminus and Buffalo's waterfront including the Commercial Slip, the wooden plank Central Wharf, a replica canal era building, and the Whipple Truss foot bridge. The area also includes Veteran's Waterfront Park, which features a naval armada of WWII ships, various monuments, and military artifacts. The ongoing Canal Side project focuses on developing Buffalo's Inner Harbor for public, commercial, residential and other mixed-uses. In 2012, over 750 events took place at Canal Side attracting over 750,000 visitors and those numbers will be exceeded in 2013. There is also a focus on improving access to the Inner and Outer Harbor areas with the Erie Canal Harbor Development Corporation (ECHDC), in cooperation with the New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) preparing an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for a new bridge .

In addition to University at Buffalo described in more detail in following sections, the City of Buffalo is home to a number of other colleges and universities including Buffalo State College, Erie Community College, Bryant & Stratton College, Canisius College, D'Youville College, Medaille College and Trocaire College.

The area surrounding the downtown commercial area has a number of residential neighborhoods: Lower West Side, Allentown, Hospital Hill, Fruit Belt, Delaware, and Cold Springs. Additional residential neighborhoods along the Buffalo portion of the study area include Masten Park, Elmwood Strip, Parkside, Hamlin Park, Kensington, Filmore-Leroy, Central Park, University District, and University Heights.<sup>2</sup> The 2010 population of the "Greater Downtown" area, as defined by Buffalo Place, is 23,334 while the entire City of Buffalo has a 2010 population of 261,310<sup>3,4</sup>.

## **5.2 Town of Amherst**

The largest and most populous suburb of Buffalo, New York, the town of Amherst encompasses most of the incorporated village of Williamsville and the hamlets of Eggertsville, Getzville, Snyder, Swormville, and East Amherst. As of the 2010 census, Amherst had a total population of 122,366. As previously noted, Amherst is home of the North Campus of UB, as well as the graduate campus of Medaille College, a campus of Bryant and Stratton College, Daemen College and a campus of Erie Community College. In the Amherst portion of the study corridor, the land uses include a mix of residential, commercial, and institutional.

Major single-family neighborhoods include the Eggertsville area, Grover Cleveland Terrace, Willow Ridge Estates, and Bucyrus Heights. In addition, the area has over 50 multi-family residential complexes, including many oriented to university students. Concentrations of private student housing are located along Chestnut Ridge Road and Sweet Home Road west of the UB North Campus, located in Amherst.

Amherst also has several senior citizen complexes including the Brewster Mews, Peppertree Heights, Daffodil, Shaarey Zedek, Hopkins Court, and Amherst Towne apartments, as well as the Weinberg Campus, Beechwood Continuing Care, and Elderwood Health Care senior living complexes, and the Audubon Adult residential facility for disabled persons. Low-income apartment complexes include Allenhurst, Jackson Square, Parkside, and Princeton Court.

With over 94,000 jobs, Amherst is a growing employment center. Commercial activity includes retail, office, business / industrial, and hotels / motels. Near the town's western border, the area including Niagara Falls Boulevard, Maple Road, and Sheridan Drive has a major concentration of retail / commercial activity. This area has many retail centers including Northtown Plaza, TJ Maxx Plaza, Boulevard Mall with over 100 stores, Raymour and Flanigan Plaza, Burlington Plaza, Boulevard Consumer Square, Wal Mart Super Center, Sheridan Center with over 20 stores, and Maple Crossing.

Amherst has significant office development, especially close to UB. The University Corporate Center, which has about 400,000 square feet of Class A office space in 7 buildings on 33 acres, is located off Maple Road. Several smaller office complexes are located in the area just north of the campus, particularly along North Forest Road and Audubon Parkway. These office locations include Audubon Office Park, Seevast Office

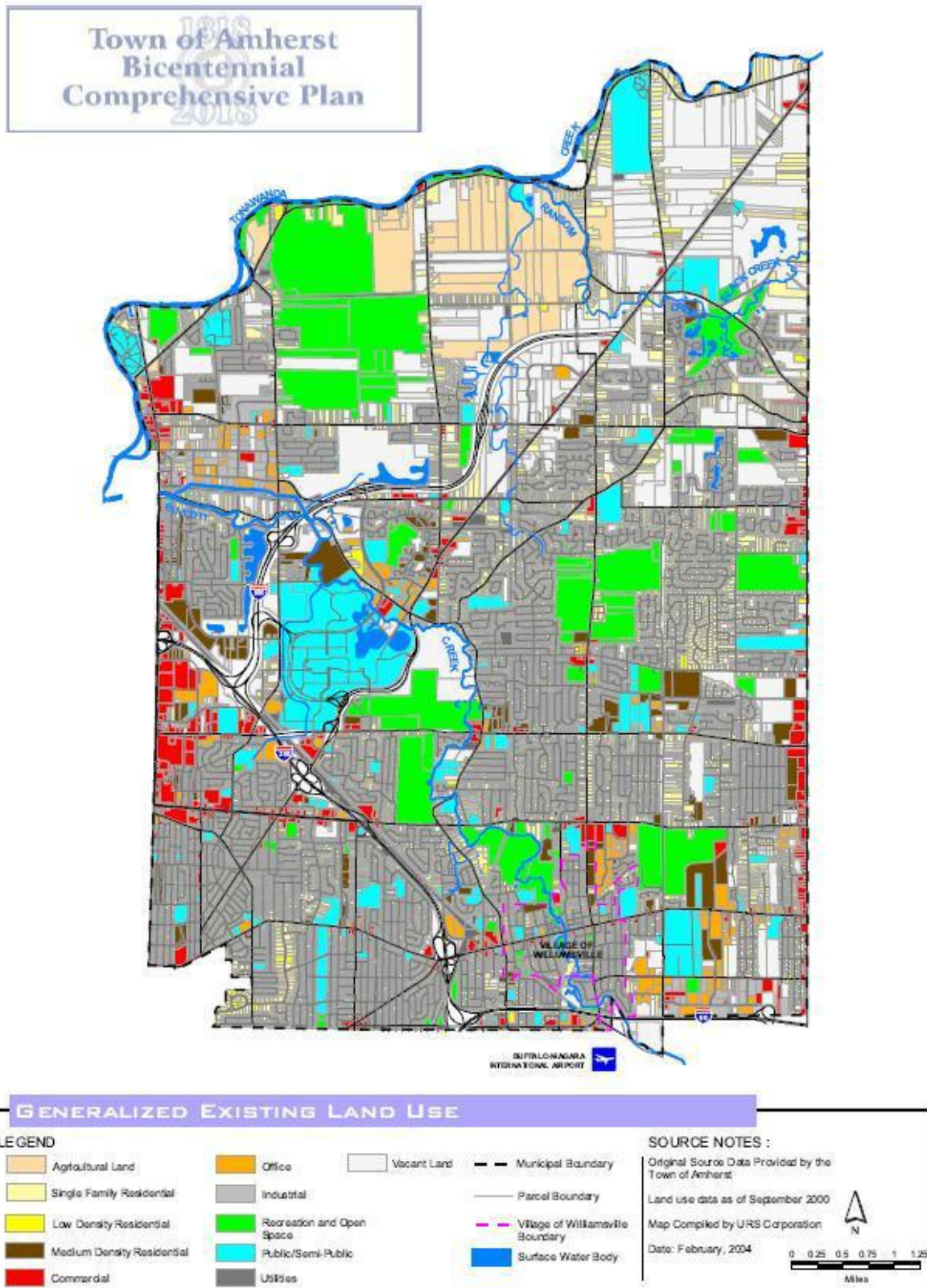
Center, 2410 North Forest, Audubon Center, Towne Center I and II, and Bryant Woods. Moving to the west and north, other office complexes include University Commons, Sweet Home Commons, and West Amherst Office Park. Further north, a major newer development is the CrossPoint Business Park (with over 1 million square feet). Another major business park is the Audubon Industrial Park.

Amherst has several hotels and motels. One concentration is located along Niagara Falls Boulevard near Exit 3 of I-290; it includes Holiday Inn, Extended Stay, Sleep Inn, Rodeway Inn, Econo Lodge, Knights Inn, and Red Carpet Inn (the latter three actually are on the west side of Niagara Falls Boulevard in Tonawanda). Another concentration is located just off Millersport Highway near Exit 5 of I-290. This area includes Homewood Suites, DoubleTree, Marriott, Comfort Inn, Red Roof Inn, and Candlewood Suites.

A complex of Amherst municipal facilities including court, library, and senior center is located along Audubon Parkway north of UB-North. Figure 2 shows existing land uses.



Figure 2 Existing Land Use Map, Amherst



### 5.3 Town of Tonawanda

A small portion of the study area is in Tonawanda. Tonawanda is a town in Erie County, New York, and as of the 2010 census, the town had a population of 73,567. The town is at the north border of the county and is the northern suburb of the City of Buffalo. The portion of Tonawanda that is in the study area is largely centered upon Niagara Falls Boulevard, a commercial strip corridor with primarily residential land uses behind the commercial. Niagara Falls Boulevard serves as the boundary line with the Town of Amherst. Niagara Falls Boulevard is a major commercial destination supporting both the Town of Tonawanda and the Town of Amherst, with “big box” style retailers on the Amherst side of the roadway, and smaller, supporting retail and commercial uses on the Town of Tonawanda side. Congestion and traffic problems have long plagued Niagara Falls Boulevard.

The Comprehensive Plan for Tonawanda recognizes that the character of Niagara Falls Boulevard is not uniform, but can be divided into four segments:

- South of Sheridan Drive: mixed use, with pockets of low density retail. The plan states that the focus should be on aesthetic standards, traffic calming and linking commercial uses with adjacent neighborhoods.
- Sheridan Drive to I-290: primarily commercial. The plan states that access management improvements are most needed in this section. More creative approaches to site design, including expansion from the rear of properties along Niagara Falls Boulevard should be explored over the long run.
- I-290 north to Ellicott Creek Road: primarily commercial, with some residential and mixed use. The plan notes that access management improvements also important in this segment, with efforts to tie convenience retail to neighborhood better.
- North of Ellicott Creek Road: mixed use, including park. The plan notes that improvements to bikeways and improving pedestrian facilities are needed.

### 5.4 University at Buffalo

The University at Buffalo (UB) is the largest and most comprehensive campus in the State University of New York system. UB is New York’s leading public center for graduate and professional education and is a premier, research-intensive public university. With 28,900 students, 6,622 employees and 2,298 faculty members, UB provides more than 400 undergraduate, graduate and professional degree programs and has an economic impact of \$1.7 billion a year. Times Higher Education named UB as one of the world's top 200 universities and UB is one of the best universities in the United States, according to the “Best Colleges” rankings by U.S. News and World Report. UB has three campuses: North, South, and Downtown.

#### UB Downtown Campus

Interspersed with BNMC is the burgeoning UB Downtown Campus. It currently has 600,000 gross square feet mainly in the Downtown Gateway Building and the Center of Excellence in Bioinformatics and Life Sciences with 195 students, 325 faculty and staff.

### **UB South Campus**

UB South Campus, located in the northeastern corner of the City of Buffalo, is the university's original campus. Today, this campus has about three million gross square feet of building space on 154 acres with 49 buildings. The campus has 5,758 students and 1,871 faculty and staff.<sup>5</sup>

### **UB North Campus**

UB's North Campus in the Town of Amherst is the location of most of the university's core academic programs. Opened in the early 1970s, it is the largest of the three campuses with 1,192 acres and 125 buildings. Its 125 buildings include academic and research spaces, student dormitories and apartments, the Student Union, athletics venues, and the university's administrative offices. It currently has 6.6 million gross square feet of building space, including 11 residence halls and five on-campus apartment complexes. The campus has 22,545 students and 5,473 faculty and staff.

The University at Buffalo 2020 Plan (*UB 2020* plan) establishes ambitious expansion plans for the all three campuses of the University at Buffalo, with the Downtown Campus plan specifically relating to the planned expansion of BNMC. Later sections of this draft Purpose and Need Statement provide more detailed information in regard to the *UB 2020* plan.

### **5.5 Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus**

The Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus (BNMC), a consortium of health care, life sciences research, and medical education institutions, is located on 120 acres on the northern edge of the downtown area and is developing. The major facilities on the campus include Buffalo General Medical Center, the Roswell Park Cancer Institute, UB's Clinical and Translational Research Center and the Gates Vascular Institute. In addition, the new John R. Oishei Children's Hospital and the Center for Women's Health (the Women & Children's Hospital of Buffalo) will also be located on the BNMC. More facilities are planned to open on the campus.

The University at Buffalo Medical School will open in 2016 on the BNMC. The building will serve as both an entrance into the growing Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus and a bridge to the nearby community. The new facility also is designed to encourage its 2,000 faculty, staff and students to filter into the surrounding neighborhoods to eat, shop and live. A new Allen/Medical Campus Metro Rail station will be integrated into the Medical School.

### **5.6 Traffic Conditions**

Due to the amount of traffic traveling to, from, through and within the study area, there are currently issues with traffic congestion. During peak hours, a number of roadway segments experience congestion. The GBNRTC compiles traffic volumes and assesses roadway congestion through its Congestion Management System (CMS). GBNRTC's 2035 long-range plan includes a map showing roadway congestion levels based upon 2007 data. This map, as displayed in Figure 3, shows several roadway segments with failing or near-failing conditions and these segments include: I-290 (Youngmann Expressway), Millersport Highway, Bailey Avenue, Niagara Falls Boulevard, and, Robinson Road.

In addition, significant congestion problems occur along key arterials, particularly at intersections. When accidents or incidents occur or traffic is rerouted for other reasons, many other roads and intersections in the study area can experience significant congestion problems.

**Figure 3 Roadway Congestion Levels (2007) From GBNRTC’s 2035 Long-Range Plan**



## 6.0 Existing Transit Service

The Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority (NFTA) is the public transportation operator in the Buffalo metropolitan region and the study corridor. NFTA operates the Metro Rail light rail system and a network of bus lines called Metro Bus. Overall system ridership has been increasing – it exceeded 30 million annual passenger trips in 2012.

### 6.1 Metro Bus

NFTA Metro Bus service in the region includes 14 express bus routes, 40 regular bus routes, and three Metrolink van shuttle routes. A majority of these routes intersect with or serve a portion the Amherst-Buffalo Corridor.

The Amherst portion of study area is served by the following routes:

Metro Bus Route 34-Niagara Falls Boulevard: This route has two branches. One runs between the Audubon Industrial Park and University Station, and the other runs between Amherst Development Park and University Station.

Metro Bus Route 35-Sheridan: This route provides east-west service along Sheridan Drive in the Town of Tonawanda and into the Town of Amherst. It serves Boulevard Mall and Northtown Plaza as well as UB-North.

Metro Bus Route 44-Lockport: This route runs primarily via Millersport Highway between Lockport and University Station. It serves UB-North and provides limited service to the Weinberg Campus.

Metro Bus Route 47-Youngs Road: This route provides service between University Station and Erie County College North Campus, the Amherst International Industrial Park, and the Buffalo Niagara International Airport.

Metro Bus Route 48-Williamsville: This route provides service between University Station and Erie County College North Campus and the Eastern Hills Mall primarily running along Main Street. Express service to and from downtown Buffalo is available on Metro Bus Route 66 -Williamsville from Transitown Plaza and along Main St. to the Thruway (I-90). The route serves the Main and Union park and ride lot.

Metro Bus Route 49-Millard Suburban: This route runs via Sheridan Drive and other roads between University Station and Millard Fillmore Suburban Hospital.

Metro Bus Route 64 - In addition, Metro Bus Route 64 is an express bus route running between Lockport, with a stop at CrossPoint Business Park, and downtown Buffalo.

These suburban routes provide a relatively limited amount of service, especially on weekends and especially relative to the amount of service that Metro Rail and Metro Bus provides in the City of Buffalo, as shown in Table 1. Table 2 provides further detail on these bus routes. In terms of average weekday ridership and the amount of service provided, Metro Bus Route 34 running primarily along Niagara Falls Boulevard, has the highest ridership and service levels of the bus routes in the study area. This bus route also has the highest farebox recovery ratio. Metro Bus Route 34 also has the lowest average weekday speeds showing the affects of roadway congestion on bus travel speeds.

**Table 1: Summary of Study Area Metro Bus Service Levels**

Metro Bus Route	# of Weekday Bus Trips		# of Saturday Bus Trips		# of Sunday Bus Trips	
	In	Out	In	Out	In	Out
34	29	30	25	26	23	22
35	17	18	11	12	11	12
44	17	21	4	5	2	3
47	14	15	0	0	0	0
48	20	21	11	12	10	9
49	7	8	0	0	0	0
64	2	2	0	0	0	0

Source: NFTA

**Table 2: Average Weekday Ridership, Farebox Recovery and Speed - Study Area Metro Bus Service**

Average Weekday Route Statistics March - June, 2013			
Route	Weekday Riders	Farebox Recovery	Weekday Average Speed (MPH)
34	1,470	28.9%	12.27
35	639	25.8%	13.82
44	795	19.8%	17.03
47	478	15.7%	14.31
48	885	24.1%	13.62
49	198	9.3%	13.03
64	73	13.2%	19.68

Source: NFTA

The effects of traffic congestion on bus operations can also be seen in on-time performance data for Metro Rail and Metro Bus as depicted in Table 3.

**Table 3: On Time Performance –Metro Bus and Rail (Study Area Bus Routes)**

Time Period	Route	34	35	44	47	48	49	64	RAIL
3/10-31/2013	Normal	878	576	141	1455	313	705	148	35616
	Total	992	639	159	1666	351	840	209	37334
	<b>On Time %</b>	<b>88.51%</b>	<b>90.14%</b>	<b>88.68%</b>	<b>87.35%</b>	<b>89.17%</b>	<b>83.95%</b>	<b>70.85%</b>	<b>95.40%</b>
4/1-30/2013	Normal	4732	3876	3649	2114	3370	952	199	53227
	Total	5617	4486	4170	2459	3854	1175	297	55572
	<b>On Time %</b>	<b>84.24%</b>	<b>86.40%</b>	<b>87.51%</b>	<b>85.97%</b>	<b>87.44%</b>	<b>81.02%</b>	<b>67.00%</b>	<b>95.78%</b>
5/1-31/2013	Normal	3984	3024	2789	1613	2675	768	168	53726
	Total	4785	3707	3280	1931	3120	931	241	56045
	<b>On Time %</b>	<b>83.26%</b>	<b>81.58%</b>	<b>85.03%</b>	<b>83.53%</b>	<b>85.74%</b>	<b>82.49%</b>	<b>69.71%</b>	<b>95.86%</b>
6/1-16/2013	Normal	2180	1724	1636	932	1563	442	108	26198
	Total	2693	2176	1919	1102	1812	521	143	27544
	<b>On Time %</b>	<b>80.95%</b>	<b>79.23%</b>	<b>85.25%</b>	<b>84.57%</b>	<b>86.26%</b>	<b>84.84%</b>	<b>75.52%</b>	<b>95.11%</b>

## 6.2 Metro Rail

Metro Rail runs along Main Street for 6.4 miles between the Erie Canal Harbor Station in downtown Buffalo and the UB South Campus (University Station). Figure 4 provides a map of the Metro Rail service. The first 1.2-mile segment in the downtown is above ground, while the remaining portion of the line is underground. Metro Rail vehicles have exclusive operations along Main Street in the downtown area, however, there is a new project to retro-fit Main Street to re-introduce cars for shared operations with Metro Rail. Construction is now underway on the 600 block, and construction is planned for the Fountain Plaza/ 500 Block sections in 2013-2014.

As of February 2013, the line has 13 stations. The Theatre Station was demolished as part of the project returning cars back on Main Street. A Special Events Station is located across from First Niagara Center. Park and rides are available at University Station (600 spaces) and LaSalle Station (800 spaces).

Figure 4 Metro Rail Line



Weekday service runs from 5:10 AM to 12:48 AM and includes 90 trips in each direction. Saturday service runs from 7:05 AM to 12:49 AM and includes 62 trips in each direction, and Sunday / holiday service runs from 8:00 AM to 11:49 AM and includes 46 trips in each direction. For hockey games and selected events at the First Niagara Center additional service is provided using the Special Events Station.

NFTA reports that during fiscal year 2011-12 a total of 7 million riders used the light rail system. The system has one of the highest ridership levels, per mile, of any light rail line in the U.S. Table 4 shows the current average weekday loads at each station for both the northbound and southbound directions. This data shows that the busiest stations are University, Church, Lafayette Square, and Fountain Plaza.



**Table 4 Metro Rail Average Weekday Passenger Loads**

<b>Rail Station Estimated Weekday Ridership</b>		
<b>April 1, 2012 - March 31, 2013</b>		
<b>Station</b>	<b>Boarding</b>	<b>Alighting</b>
<b>University Station</b>	3,246	3,112
<b>LaSalle Station</b>	1,243	1,254
<b>Amherst Station</b>	1,575	1,490
<b>Humboldt Station</b>	860	800
<b>Delavan/Canisius College</b>	1,313	1,063
<b>Utica Station</b>	1,998	2,373
<b>Summer-Best Station</b>	972	957
<b>Allen/Medical Campus Sta.</b>	1,367	1,358
<b>Fountain Plaza Station</b>	2,467	2,544
<b>Lafayette Station</b>	2,454	2,467
<b>Church Street Station</b>	2,162	2,466
<b>Seneca Station</b>	819	781
<b>Erie Canal Harbor Station</b>	919	730
<b>Totals</b>	<b>21,395</b>	<b>21,395</b>

Source: NFTA

The base fare for the underground segment is \$2, while the at-grade Downtown segment is designated as a free fare zone. Riders between any of the stations between Canal Harbor and Fountain Plaza do not need to pay a fare. This provision has existed since the system opened and was intended to encourage the patronage of Downtown businesses and promote economic development.

### **6.3 University at Buffalo Bus Service**

The University at Buffalo provides extensive bus and shuttle service for its students, faculty and staff, and visitors. The main service is the Stampede bus service, initiated in 2005, which runs between the North and South Campuses along Millersport Highway and Grover Cleveland Highway. Stampede buses run approximately every 5 to 10 minutes Monday through Friday during the academic year; every 30 to 60 minutes on weekends and during the summer. During peak times, the Stampede carries about 24,000

passengers per day. In 2012, the Stampede served 3,760,000 annual passengers.<sup>6</sup> Campus shuttle services include the following:

#### **North Campus Shuttle Services**

- **Express Service:** Runs between the Ellicott Complex and the Spine. During the Fall and Spring semesters, busses depart the Ellicott Tunnel for Lee Loop every 5-7 minutes.
- **North Campus Shuttle:** Connects the entire North Campus stopping at 18 different key locations. The service also provides a valuable park and ride option from the Alumni and Stadium parking lots. The Shuttle operates every 10 minutes during the semester between 8 am to 7 pm. After 7 pm the shuttle operates every 10 to 20 minutes.
- **Green Line Shuttle:** This service provides a valuable park and ride option from the Center for Tomorrow lot to Flint Loop in the heart of the campus. The Green Line operates Monday through Friday from 7:00am to 7:00pm with departures every 10 minutes.

#### **South/Downtown Campus Shuttles**

- **Orange Line Shuttle:** The Orange Line operates Monday through Friday from 8am to 3:30pm with departures every 20 minutes. The Orange Line is a rotator shuttle connecting all areas of the South Campus and connects to the Blue Line downtown shuttle and the inter-campus Stampede bus stops. In addition, the Orange Line provides a Park and Ride service from the Main-Bailey and Parker Lots.
- **Blue Line Shuttle:** The "UB BLUE LINE" is a route that connects the Downtown and South Campuses weekdays. Two shuttles operate daily on the UB BLUE LINE, with the first shuttle departing the Main Bailey lot at 6:30 am each weekday, and the final shuttle dropping off at Main Circle at 8:35 pm. Between 7:30am and 5:30pm the shuttle operates every 30 minutes.

**Mall/Market Shuttle Service:** The Mall/Market bus and shuttle runs Wednesday and Saturdays during the fall and spring semester when classes are in session. Shuttles will provide transportation to WalMart, Wegmans, Tops (on Maple Rd) and the Boulevard Mall from both North and South Campuses.

#### **6.4 Private Student Apartment Shuttle Service:**

A number of privately run, off-campus student-oriented apartment complexes also offer shuttle services to UB campuses, including University Village at Sweethome, the Villas at Chestnut Ridge, Collegiate Village, among others.

## **7.0 Changing Land Use Patterns**

This section focuses upon potential future land use.

### **7.1 City of Buffalo**

The Buffalo metropolitan region is undergoing an economic transformation. Buffalo is and has been experiencing a period of substantial economic restructuring, transforming the employment base from a manufacturing focus to a more diverse and contemporary economy that includes financial services, higher education and research, medical research and treatment, and bi-national logistics. Downtown Buffalo has over \$3 billion of projects completed, under construction, or planned, including projects at the Erie Canal Harbor and BNMC. Figure 5 prepared by the Buffalo Niagara Enterprise shows downtown Buffalo development projects by status.



The Canalside Land Use Improvement Project is the next phase of development for the Erie Canal Harbor area. Located on approximately 20 acres of land, the proposed development amounts to about 750,000 square feet of space for entertainment, hotel, office, retail, residential, restaurant, and other uses.

The following two projects are currently under construction.

- HARBORcenter is located on a 2-acre site across from First Niagara Center. The project comprises two hockey rinks, a hockey training center, a 200-room hotel, restaurant and retail, and 845 parking spaces
- One Canalside is the former Donovan State Office Building and is being renovated into new office space and a hotel.

The City of Buffalo is also undertaking a historic revision of Buffalo's land use and zoning policies that will promote investment, facilitate job creation, and improve the environment. Called "Buffalo's Green Code", the process includes a new land use plan that will guide the city's development over the next 20 years. In addition, a new zoning ordinance – a form-based, unified development ordinance – will promote investment by making the development process simple, transparent, and in line with the vision for the city. The code will reinforce mixed-use, walkable places anchored by smart growth and sustainability principles.

## 7.2 University at Buffalo

The new master plan for BNMC estimates that at build-out the campus will have 17,500 employees. Major projects currently under construction are the Women and Children's Hospital, new facilities for the Roswell Park Cancer Institute, and the Conventus medical office building. Also under construction nearby is a new UB Educational Opportunity Center. Also at BNMC, UB recently unveiled design for its new medical School of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences which will be built surrounding and encompassing NFTA Metro's Allen Medical Station Construction is underway and is expected to be completed in 2016. Several new residential projects are also occurring near BNMC and along Main Street.

The *UB 2020* plan calls for further expansion of the UB Downtown Campus, largely by relocating its five health sciences schools at this campus. The total amount of space would increase to over 4 million gross square feet, and the total number of students, faculty, and staff would increase exponentially to about 14,000.

Further, the *UB 2020* plan proposes "reinvention of UB South Campus as a new interdisciplinary professional education campus." The total building space will decrease slightly, and the combined student, faculty, and staff population will remain about the same.

The *UB 2020* plan calls for some new building and a substantial physical transformation of the UB North Campus. Proposed building would increase the gross space from 6.6 to 9.8 million square feet.<sup>7</sup> The *UB 2020* plan has an objective of housing a significant portion of the student population on the North campus. This effort is reflected in new housing developments at the periphery of the traditional campus core adjacent to the academic spine and sports stadiums. Recognizing the need for additional commercial services for the students, the University is also undertaking a redevelopment initiative concentrated on Lee

Road on campus to provide a new bookstore, restaurants, and retail uses. Thus, the once-insular campus is slowly extending to its edges, which provides the opportunity for more interaction and shared services with the Town of Amherst. This expansion is providing the potential for the development of student housing not accommodated on-campus and student-related retail/personal services in close proximity to the campus.<sup>8</sup>

Overall, the *UB 2020* plan proposes 7 million square feet of new building space, which would generate an estimated 10,000 new students and 6,700 faculty and staff. As noted already, the plan calls for substantial growth of the Downtown Campus, which would generate new travel demand between the three campuses.

A cornerstone of the plan is for each campus to have its own distinct identity while becoming better connected with each other and the community that surrounds them. Further the plan embraces Transit-Supportive Development (TSD) as a way to achieve sustainable expansion that minimizes traffic and environmental impacts. It includes a comprehensive transportation strategy that aims to reduce dependency on cars for travel to and around the campuses, minimizing impacts on local traffic and parking.

The development potential and prospects for UB received further enhancement in June 2013 when the Governor announced “START-UP NY,” (SUNY Tax-Free Areas to Revitalize and Transform Upstate NY) an initiative aimed to transform SUNY campuses and university communities across upstate NY into tax-free communities that attract start-ups, venture capital, new business, and investments from across the world and new employment opportunities. START-UP NY aims to generate economic growth and make upstate New York competitive nationally by eliminating all taxes – including business, corporate, sales, property and income taxes for owners and employees – for companies that partner with a college or university to further their academic mission.

### 7.3 Town of Amherst

Meanwhile, Amherst continues to grow. Exclusive of UB North, the Amherst portion of the study area currently has several projects in the development pipeline.

**Table 5: Development Projects – Town of Amherst**

Project	Type	DU	Sq. Ft.	# Rooms	Status
University Place	Hotel, retail, apartments	42	43,000	102	Under Construction
Stratford Apts	Residential	74			Approved
Alexander Estates Phase II	Residential	40			Approved
Grove at Buffalo	Residential	584			Approved
Sheridan Commons	Office		90,000		Approved

Amherst has additional opportunities for more commercial development, including infill of vacant properties and parcels. One major proposed project is Muir Woods, which would generate about 700,000 square feet of office space, along with a small housing component. Some existing office / business parks have undeveloped parcels. CrossPoint Business Park, a 200 acre multi-use development with major

corporations such as GEICO (Government Employees Insurance Company), Bank of America and Citicorp, has available acres for development, and Bryant Woods has three vacant parcels. In addition, some retail centers have vacant buildings or available space. For example, the former BonTon department store at the Northtown Shopping Center has about 100,000 square feet of space.

The town adopted its current Comprehensive Plan in 2007 and was amended in 2011. The plan proposes several mixed-use Activity Centers, including a University-Related Center, Special Use Centers, Highway/Intersection Centers, and Urban/Village Centers. The text below provides a summary of these proposed mixed-use centers as envisioned in the Comprehensive Plan and the goals and objectives of the Housing and Neighborhoods section of the Comprehensive Plan<sup>9</sup>.

The University-Related Center as contained in the Comprehensive Plan is located on one large, undeveloped property on the east side of Millersport Highway across from the UB North campus. Larger in scale than the other center types, this center is intended to provide for employment, housing, and other uses in support of the University, while helping to achieve Comprehensive Plan objectives and policies for land use and related elements. It is envisioned as accommodating a mix of residential and non-residential development with a variety of activities serving both the University community and private businesses and residents. It also would include open space and recreational trails. Examples of potential uses include:

- Off-campus student /faculty housing
- Other housing facilities catering to groups interested in living in a university environment
- Technology, research, and development functions
- Business development incubators
- Life-long and community outreach education programs
- Conference facilities
- Arts and athletic venues
- Hotels and other commercial uses typically found in a community center serving both the university and the town
- Skating and athletic centers
- Golf courses

The Comprehensive Plan recommends that Amherst actively engage the University in planning for the appropriate development of this property. This planning would include shifting some present and planned activities from the campus academic core to off-campus, mixed-use edges where businesses and the community can benefit from the presence of the University.

Furthermore, the Comprehensive Plan includes this proposed center as part of a larger “University” Focal Planning Area for which it presents conceptual development plans for these areas (other focal planning areas include Northwest Amherst and Eggertsville).

The concept plan for the University focal area as contained in the Comprehensive Plan includes the following elements:

- Work with UB to promote development of a new, mixed-use “University Village” east of Millersport Highway. Uses should include research and office, University-related activities, housing, open space, and public trails and rights-of-way along Ellicott Creek. Housing should be designed to appeal to members of the academic community and “knowledge workers” drawn to an attractive, stimulating environment with a mix of activities.
- Encourage re-use or redevelopment of properties in the Maple Road/North Forest Road commercial center and other locations along Maple Road and Millersport Highway.
- Build programmatic connections between UB, Sweet Home High School, and other institutional, governmental, and business resources as part of the “knowledge-based” Comprehensive Plan key initiative.
- Research-oriented facilities related to the University should continue to expand along Sweet Home Road in proximity to the Baird Research Park.
- The Sweet Home Road corridor should be the focus of major off-campus university-related activities. Higher density residential uses should dominate the portion of this corridor between Skinnersville and Chestnut Ridge Roads. The plan indicates that north of this residential area, a mix of office and higher density residential uses should extend to the I-990 interchange exclusively on the west side of Sweet Home Road. This pattern should be punctuated by a small commercial node centered on a Skinnersville Road Extension.

The Focal Area concept plan as contained in the Comprehensive Plan also includes several recommendations for circulation and design. The plan also recommends working with UB and NFTA to encourage alternative transportation systems to better serve and connect uses in the area. Transit service should be explored that links the UB’s North and South campuses. Similarly, expanded services should be explored for the Weinberg Campus to extend the mobility of resident senior citizens.

Other proposed centers are also part of the Comprehensive Plan. Special use centers are shown on the Conceptual Land Use Plan and include: Millard Fillmore Suburban Hospital and the John James Audubon Parkway Municipal Complex. Details from the Comprehensive Plan on special use centers are below.

Millard Fillmore Suburban Hospital: The Hospital, assisted living facilities, and adjacent office and higher density residential uses constitute an established activity center. Designation of this area as a special use center is intended to recognize, reinforce, and integrate its medical functions, providing a focus for future medically-related development, and limit incursions into adjacent lower density residential areas.

John James Audubon Parkway Municipal Complex: The municipal facilities located on the east side of the John James Audubon Parkway are designated as a special use center in recognition of their established function as a center of community activity. Future policy for this center should be directed toward increasing the integration of uses (e.g., shared use facilities) and improving accessibility and connections to surrounding land uses and to the Town as a whole, including a linkage to the open space and greenways network.

Highway/intersection Centers: Include community commercial centers intended to serve retail and office needs in the central part of the Town. Among these centers is Millersport Highway/North French Road: This intersection is largely undeveloped and abuts the CrossPoint Business Park, an emerging center of employment. Designation of this mixed-use center is intended to capture the demand for commercial uses along North French Road. Locating uses typical of community commercial centers here will provide opportunities for both residents of the surrounding area and persons working in the business park to shop and work. The predominantly undeveloped character of the area provides the opportunity to establish a visually attractive, pedestrian-friendly center with connections to adjacent land uses.

The Comprehensive Plan also designates several Urban/Village Centers including Main Street/Bailey Avenue/University Plaza: This center exhibits different characteristics as it extends west from Niagara Falls Boulevard along Kenmore Avenue and Main Street to Bailey Avenue across from the UB South Campus. In addition, smaller scale mixed-uses extend north along Bailey Avenue to the Grover Cleveland Highway.

The Grover Cleveland Highway Intersection Center: The center is anchored by the University Plaza, which has recently been renovated. The plan indicates that the location of moderately sized uses typical of a community commercial center should occur within the plaza. The remainder of the center features shallow lots located along Main Street, Kenmore Avenue and Bailey Avenue. These areas should feature traditional scale commercial uses that are consistent with and complement the surrounding residential areas. Given the transfer of undergraduate programs and student housing to the North Campus, shifting demographics in adjacent residential areas, and competition from newer, larger retail centers, opportunities should be sought to reinforce the area's attractiveness as a neighborhood and campus-oriented center. The programmed reconstruction of Main Street and the UB's University Community Initiative has the potential to improve streetscape character and stimulate investment in the center and surrounding neighborhoods. The Eggertsville Action Plan provides regulatory and urban design recommendations for this center.

Main Street/Eggert Road: Located at the first major intersection on Main Street in Amherst, east of the City of Buffalo, this area currently functions as a traditional commercial center with a mix of uses such as small-scale commercial, institutional, mixed residential, and office uses. Future policy for this center should be directed toward maintaining its viability through regulatory changes and visual improvements to protect its character and encourage appropriate new investment. This character should be reinforced through pedestrian-oriented streetscape improvements and encouragement of compatible mixed-use and commercial uses typical of a traditional commercial center. Several recommendations are provided in the Eggertsville Action Plan.

Both the Main Street/Bailey Avenue/Kenmore Avenue and Main Street/Eggert Road Centers are located in the Eggertsville Focal Planning Area.

Affordable housing is an important issue in Amherst as noted in the Comprehensive Plan. Housing diversity is also a significant issue in the town, from the standpoint of affordability and due to the potential effects of new development on the character and stability of Amherst's neighborhoods. The plan notes that in recent decades, the predominant trend has been a conversion of open space and vacant lands into single-family



homes, resulting in a more suburban setting throughout Amherst compared to traditional neighborhoods in the town like Eggertsville, Snyder, and Williamsville.

The Comprehensive Plan indicates that more recently, there has been a pronounced increase in the amount of multi-family housing, largely to accommodate the demand for off-campus housing by UB students. The Comprehensive Plan notes that while not currently a major problem, the deterioration of homes is a potential future threat to the stability of Amherst’s older neighborhoods. A substantial proportion of Amherst’s housing stock was built prior to 1970 and will be 50 years or older by 2020, the approximate time horizon of the plan. This trend will create the potential for an increase in the number of substandard housing units. To counter these trends, the plan includes goals ensuring decent and affordable housing choices available to all residents and providing healthy and diverse neighborhoods, including conserved and revitalized older parts of Amherst. Objectives relating to these two goals are: ensuring the availability of housing affordable to all socioeconomic groups in Amherst; promoting a diverse housing stock, with higher density housing focused on mixed-use activity centers; and implementing a coordinated program to conserve and revitalize Amherst’s neighborhoods.

## 8.0 Population and Employment Growth

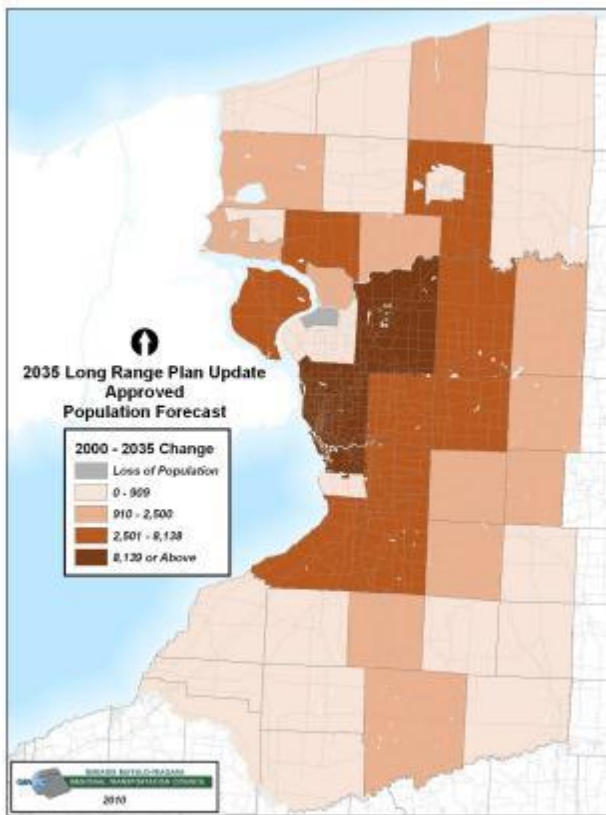
The GBNRTC generates data on population and employment, and develops projections of population and employment for forecast years. Table 6 provides the information, while Figure 6 provides a map. The GBNRTC regional population decreased from 2000 through 2010, as well as that for Erie County and the City of Buffalo, while Amherst experienced population growth during that period. For the period 2010-2035, the GBNRTC projections show increasing population across the board. The growth rates for the region and Buffalo are forecasted to be even greater than in Amherst. And more recently, the US Census Bureau reported a positive population growth for Erie County from 919,040 as obtained from the 2010 US Census to 919, 086 as of the Bureau’s 2012 population estimate.

**Table 6: Population Forecasts**

Population	Year 2000	Year 2010	Year 2035	Change 2010-2035	
				#	%
<b>Region</b>	1,170,111	1,135,509	1,294,370	158,861	14.0%
<b>Erie County</b>	950,265	919,040	1,048,440	129,400	14.1%
<b>Buffalo</b>	292,648	261,444	310,706	49,262	18.8%
<b>Amherst</b>	116,510	122,366	137,756	15,390	12.6%

Source: 2000, 2035 from GBNRTC RTP; 2010 from Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan

**Figure 6: Map of Population Forecasts**



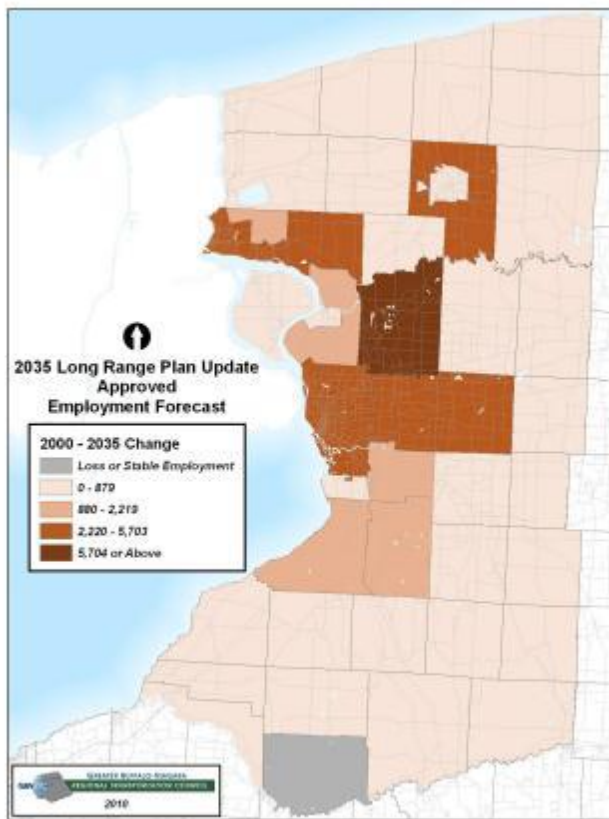
The overall regional employment increased in the period 1990-2000, but with substantial variation; Buffalo had a 16% decrease, while Amherst had a 34% increase. In terms of forecasts, the annual average growth rate for the region will be about the same (.2%) between 2000-2035, with less variation between Buffalo and Amherst. Between 1990 and 2035, the projected increase in jobs in Buffalo (about 35,000) is about the same as the projected increase in jobs in Amherst (38,000). Table 7 provides the information while Figure 7 provides a map.

**Table 7: Employment Forecasts**

Employment	Year 1990	Year 2000	Year 2035	Change 2000-2035	
				#	%
<b>Region</b>	638,068	650,819	700,900	50,081	7.7%
<b>Erie County</b>	537,955	555,556	587,350	31,794	5.7%
<b>Buffalo</b>	229,455	191,851	194,557	2,706	1.4%
<b>Amherst</b>	70,288	94,393	108,355	13,962	14.8%

Source: GBNRTC Regional Transportation Plan

**Figure 7: Map of Employment Forecasts**



## 9.0 Transit Service Markets

The primary transit service markets are the following:

- Employees: Persons who currently work or could work in the study area.
- Residents: Persons who currently live or might live in the study area and currently work or might work at locations near transit stations or stops or need to travel to these locations for other reasons.
- Shoppers, Visitors, and Others: The study area contains many medical centers, shopping, entertainment, and tourist attractions, particularly in downtown Buffalo and also significant commercial activity in Amherst.
- College and University Students: UB, Canisius College, Medaille, Erie County Community College, Byrant and Stratton (John James Audubon Parkway and Cross Point), ITT (Millersport Highway).
- Transit dependent populations.

## 10.0 Need for the Project

The previous sections help to establish the demand, or need, for expanding high-quality public transit service in the study area. The need for improved transit service has three main components: (1) the need to serve increased travel demand generated by recent, pending, and future development; (2) the need for high-quality service to key activity centers in the study area; and (3) the need to serve better transit-dependent population segments.

### 10.1 Need for Expanded Transit Service to Serve Increasing Development and Leverage Development Opportunities

As described, the Buffalo metropolitan region is experiencing substantial economic growth and transformation. Downtown Buffalo has many major development projects underway, and current planning efforts suggest the potential for even more development at BNMC, along the waterfront, and in the Outer Harbor area. Meanwhile, Amherst continues to grow, with opportunities for more commercial and mixed-use development, including infill of vacant properties and parcels and expansion of the UB North Campus. The most recent GBNRTC demographic projections call for increasing population and employment in the region and in the study area, including both Amherst and Buffalo, by 2035.

Further, the greater Buffalo- Niagara region, the GBNRTC, the City of Buffalo, the Town of Amherst, and UB have plans in place or are developing new plans and land development ordinances to support and encourage sustainable development and redevelopment. The plans and ordinances are geared toward a dramatic transformation of the built environment and public transit investment can help foster and leverage further reinvestment, redevelopment and revitalization. New public transit improvements in the study area are consistent with these regional and local plans and such investments are in line with federal livability principles.

Such growth, however, will require supporting infrastructure and public facilities and services, particularly transportation. Increasing development will increase the demand for work trips and non-work trips including shopping, medical services, and entertainment. Expanded transportation options will be especially important for workers to have access to the increasing employment opportunities both in Buffalo and Amherst. As job and population growth occurs, transportation issues and challenges will need to be addressed and improved public transit and increased transit usage will be an important part of any solutions.

The existing roadway network currently experiences traffic congestion, particularly during peak periods, and without mitigation, the anticipated level of new development further will increase congestion within the corridor. Expanding roadway capacity is not viable because of constraints on available right-of-way, environmental impact concerns, and concerns that highway investments are not a sustainable, long-term solution and that they do not encourage mixed-use, compact development—all goals of regional and local plan. Similarly, parking supply is constrained, particularly in downtown Buffalo, and it is unlikely as well as undesirable that new parking will accommodate projected employment increases. Additionally, access to automobiles is not available to all demographic groups. Thus, there is a need for new investments to provide a high quality, increased transit services in the Amherst-Buffalo Corridor to mitigate the growth of

traffic and congestion, to enable and support more sustainable development patterns, and to preserve roadway capacity. As a prime example, BNMC, in planning for its major expansion, has developed an extensive Transportation Demand Management program, including working with NFTA to increase transit service opportunities and usage as well as multimodal transportation.

In turn, as the study area continues to develop and redevelop, providing increased transit service would help to shape and support the patterns of future development. As noted various regional and local plans, including the Framework for Regional Growth, call for center-based development forms, which transit would promote and complement. Expanding and enhancing transit service along the Amherst-Buffalo Corridor would promote and support higher development densities and mixed-uses. Such development patterns would support more sustainable growth, possibly leveraging additional economic development and employment opportunities, while minimizing needs to expand roadway and parking capacity.

## **10.2 Need for High Quality Service to Key Activity Centers**

The only public transit service currently available for travel to and from activity centers in Amherst is bus service. The Amherst portion of the study area receives transit service from three NFTA Metro Bus Routes (Route 34, Route 44, and Route 49), which connect with the Metrorail University Station. The frequency of service on these routes is limited, ranging from 30 outbound trips daily on Route 34 to only eight daily outbound trips on Route 49. Also, the length of the routes increases travel times, and riders are subject to the same delays as are motorists due to congestion on the study area roadways. Additionally, travel by bus is affected by the region's significant winter weather, in terms of frequent ice and snow conditions. These conditions can make bus travel during winter difficult and time consuming. These bus routes serve various retail centers, office parks, and multi-family residential complexes in Amherst, but they do not serve several other activity centers and key corridors including Main Street, Bailey Drive, Maple Road, Sweet Home Road, and Audubon Parkway.

This situation makes bus service a less attractive option, especially for riders that need to complete their trip by making transfers. Many Metro Rail riders currently transfer to or from bus service to reach destinations within the study area. This minimum two-seat transit trip incurs the inconvenience of a "travel time penalty," which affects the desirability of the trip for current and potential transit riders. Providing high quality transit and eliminating the need for transfers at University Station would improve travel times of current riders and attract additional transit riders. These additional riders may include persons who may otherwise drive to and park at University Station or who are dropped off there. There is a need for faster, more reliable transit service and one that can offer a one-seat transit ride.

In sum, the major activity centers in Amherst are underserved by the existing bus service and do not link to the major activity centers in Buffalo without requiring another transit mode transfer. Improved transit service along the highest ridership travel corridor, the Amherst-Buffalo Corridor, which serves key activity centers would improve access both for city residents to suburban activity centers and suburban residents to city activity centers.

In the Amherst-Buffalo Corridor, there is a need for high-quality, high-capacity public transit service to provide a convenient transit ride. Such service would improve travel for current riders and make transit more competitive with the auto and thus attract choice riders. Such as service would increase travel options for all travelers in this important corridor.

### **10.3 Need to Serve Better Transit-Dependent Population Segments**

There is a need to improve and expand current transit service to increase its accessibility and attractiveness for transit-dependent population segments. The current transit service to and from Amherst especially limits the mobility and access of transit-dependent population segments in the Buffalo metropolitan region.

Transit-dependent population segments refer to people who cannot drive due to physical or financial reasons. Such segments include the elderly, disabled, low-income, and students. Households below the poverty level represents 13.8% of the region's total households and over half of the region's low income population are now residing in suburban locations<sup>10</sup>. Within the City of Buffalo nearly a third (29.9%) of residents are below the poverty level, while in Amherst it is 9.1%<sup>11</sup>. GBNRTC's On-Board Study found that the majority of transit riders using NFTA transit services are transit dependent: 82 % of riders do not have access to a vehicle and 55% of riders in the region do not have a valid driver's license<sup>12</sup>. Given these statistics, and with a growing aging population and with a rising number of students, increased transit service will help the region respond to the travel challenges faced by transit dependent populations and to changing demographic trends.

The lack of quality transit service in the corridor involves both residential origins and key trips destinations including work and other trip purposes. The study area has many senior living complexes, facilities serving disabled persons, low-income housing complexes, apartment complexes, and student housing. The current Metro Rail and Metro Bus routes serve some but not all of these locations. For example, current bus routes provide some service to the UB North Campus and the Weinberg Campus, but for the most part, the residents of the many housing complexes in this area do not have transit options.

This situation affects the ability of residents to access employment and other opportunities, and to travel to and from work or non-work purposes. The transit-dependent populations in the study area are impacted by limited connectivity of the existing transit services. Extending the reach of a high quality transit service would improve mobility and provide greater access to employment opportunities and other opportunities, in Amherst and the City of Buffalo.

### **11.0 Goals and Objectives**

The following goals and objectives of the proposed project complement the purpose and need, and focus on related transportation, economic, and environmental issues.

- Develop a cost-effective, attractive and high-quality transit service to serve the Amherst-Buffalo Corridor that provides reliability and convenience to riders in order to improve mobility

- Mitigate the growth of traffic congestion on study area roadways
  - Increase the share of trips using transit (both bus and rail) in study area
- Improve the accessibility of transit in the study area
  - Increase the number of transit options for travelers
  - Provide more convenient transit services for riders transferring to or from Metro Rail at University Station
  - Improve the connectivity of transit services
  - Improve livability by providing increased access to facilities, such as, medical services, food shopping, retail shopping, entertainment, etc.
- Increase the effectiveness of the regional transit system
  - Increase system ridership
  - Increase system revenue
- Support sustainable future economic growth in the study area
  - Serve new markets with high quality transit services to support economic development
  - Provide the basis for transit-oriented development and design to enable the development/redevelopment of quality neighborhoods
  - Strengthen the regional economy
- Avoid or minimize adverse community and environmental effects
  - Avoid or minimize impacts to sensitive environmental resources
  - Avoid or minimize negative impacts to neighborhoods
  - Avoid or minimize negative impacts to businesses

## ENDNOTES

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- <sup>1</sup> Buffaloplace.com
- <sup>2</sup> Buffalo Neighborhoods Map – University at Buffalo Libraries
- <sup>3</sup> Buffaloplace.com
- <sup>4</sup> United States Census Bureau
- <sup>5</sup> *UB 2020 Plan*
- <sup>6</sup> Article from UB website.
- <sup>7</sup> UB 2020
- <sup>8</sup> Town of Amherst Bicentennial Comprehensive Plan
- <sup>9</sup> Town of Amherst Bicentennial Comprehensive Plan
- <sup>10</sup> GBNRTC Environmental Justice / TITLE VI
- <sup>11</sup> United States Census Bureau
- <sup>12</sup> GBNRTC On Board Study Final Report