Central New York Regional Transportation Authority
Report on Operations and Accomplishments
New York State Fiscal Year 2017-18

New York State Budget

New York State operating assistance (STOA) makes up a significant portion (about 49%) of the CNYRTA’s Fiscal Year 2017-2018 operating budget. The Fiscal Year 2017-2018 budget increases in operating assistance and capital allocations reflected the work of Centro management and coordination with the New York Public Transportation Association (NYPTA). Centro, along with our NYPTA partners, worked intensely with the Executive Chamber and our New York State legislative delegation to educate them on the importance of public transportation in Upstate New York. In the final enacted FY 2017-18 budget Upstate transportation received a 1.98% increase in STOA, although far from the increase being advocated. It is important to note that New York State operating assistance fluctuates each year and over the last twelve years the average overall increase is well under two percent. The unpredictable nature in STOA funding year over year makes it impossible to plan transportation services for the citizens and business in our four-county service area.

Federal Budget Proposal – Transportation Legislation

The Trump administration's Fiscal Year 2018-19 budget is devastating to public transportation agencies across the county. The cuts the Administration are suggesting in its Fiscal Year 2018-19 budget mirror the reductions in its proposed Fiscal Year 2017-18 budget which Congress already rejected in the Fiscal Year 2017-18 appropriations process. The Administration proposes a 19% decrease in funding (compared to FY 2017-18) for the U.S. Department of Transportation. This amounts to a cut of $3.7 billion from FY 2017-18 enacted levels of $15.6 billion of discretionary dollars, and $600 million less than the previous budget proposal.

This budget, like the last budget, does not address the issue of long-term solvency of the Highway Trust Fund (HTF), and does fully fund HTF programs. It does, however, propose, like last year, to phase out the Capital Investment Grants program. This program was authorized at a level of $2.3 billion by Congress in the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act. We will continue to work with our federal legislators and our partners in the American Public Transportation Association (APTA) to strongly oppose the administration’s budget.

Interstate Route 81 Project

The Route 81 replacement project timeline was changed when Governor Cuomo required the inclusion of a study pertaining to the development of a tunnel option as one of the construction alternatives. Centro continues its role as a partner in the ongoing process to develop plans with the New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT), the Syracuse Metropolitan Transportation Council (SMTC), and many other community stakeholders regarding the Route 81 project. Centro role will coordinate the process to develop a commuter Park-N-Ride system as part of a much larger system to attempt to mitigate traffic congestion issues in the downtown Syracuse area. It is anticipated that there will be a material financial impact due to the operational costs necessary to adjust Centro bus service.
Day Pass

Centro introduced a Day Pass option for customers in Syracuse and Utica. The pass allows customers to pay one price for unlimited rides over a 24-hour period. Centro customers have taken more than 160,000 rides using the Day Pass thus far.

State Fair

It was a record-breaking year for Centro’s popular Park-N-Ride shuttle services for the New York State Fair. Centro provided more than 258,000 rides to and from the Main Gate of the Fair during its 12-day run. That set an all-time record in the 40+ year history of the service and was a 40% increase over the previous year. New locations at Destiny USA and Long Branch Park helped bolster the ridership, as did a newly revamped New York State Fairgrounds that attracted a record number of fairgoers as more than 1.1 million people attended the 2016 New York State Fair.

FTA Triennial Review

Every three years transit agencies across the country are evaluated by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) to ensure they are following federal regulations regarding how federal grant funds are spent. This comprehensive triennial review is thorough and consists of a desk review of many of our records, as well as a site visit where FTA representatives physically inspect the property and interview staff members. The areas evaluated include procurement practices, financial management and capacity, maintenance, ADA/paratransit service, satisfactory continuing control practices, legal and service planning.

The 2017 review was completed and Centro attained a perfect score indicating no deficiencies were found. Further, this success is amplified because this perfect score was earned for the fifth consecutive triennial review! This level of success is a testament to the hard work and dedication of each of our employees over this eighteen-year period.

Syracuse Metropolitan Area Regional Transit Study – Phase 1

The Syracuse Metropolitan Transportation Council concluded its two-year study to determine the feasibility of an enhanced transportation system in the City of Syracuse. The “SMART1” study, commissioned by Centro, focused on two corridors: The James Street / Eastwood – South Avenue/ OCC corridor and Syracuse University – DestinyUSA / Regional Transportation Center corridor. The study recommends a mixed traffic Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system along each of the corridors. Efforts will now begin to explore funding options to pay for the estimated $34M up front capital costs and $8M annual operating costs.

SMS Real-Time Arrival Information

Centro began offering customers access to bus arrival times at any Centro bus stop via text message. The SMS text service, available on any cell phone, follows Centro’s recent launch of the GoCentroBus mobile app, which displays real-time transit information on smartphones or tablets.
To receive bus arrival information, Centro can text the word GOCENTROBUS (followed by a stop ID number) to the easy-to-remember short code 41411. Customers who are unsure of their stop number can easily look it up via the Bus Tracker page on Centro’s website.

**New Max Pass and Day Pass Program Expansion**

In November, Centro began offering new pass options to its customers. The new pass options included an Adult and Reduced Fare MAX Pass in all its properties, along with Day Passes in Auburn, Oswego, Rome, and Fulton.

Priced at the cost of five round-trip fares, the MAX Pass provides customers with unlimited rides for seven consecutive calendar days.

Additionally, customers traveling on Centro buses in Auburn, Oswego, Fulton, and Rome now have the option of purchasing Day Passes. Day Passes were previously only offered in Syracuse and Utica.

**State Fair Park-N-Ride Service Expansion**

Centro offered new features for its 2017 New York State Fair express bus service including round-trip tickets, additional bus service, and new Park-N-Ride locations. Not only did Centro offer its express bus service to the Main Gate each day of the 2017 New York State Fair from multiple Park-N-Ride locations throughout Central New York, it also sold round-trip passes at its busiest Park-N-Ride locations in order to move people quicker. Fairgoers were able to purchase their round-trip passes from sales representatives located on site at Destiny USA, Long Branch Park, ShoppingTown Mall, Camillus Mall, and Fingerlakes Mall prior to boarding the buses.

To help alleviate traffic congestion and move Fairgoers even quicker, New York State Governor Andrew M. Cuomo called upon regional transit authorities from around the State to provide additional bus service to and from the Fairgrounds. Centro Operations personnel coordinated the effort with assistance from Capital District Transportation Authority, Regional Transit Service (Rochester), and Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority (Buffalo) who collectively provided a total of 16 buses at designated locations, including the brand-new John Glenn/Farrell Road Park-N-Ride location. For the 13-day event, 297,105 rides were provided to customers from various Park-N-Ride locations across Onondaga, Cayuga, and Oswego counties directly to the Fair’s Main Gate during the 2017 Fair. That number represents a 17% increase in rides from 2016. Centro also provided shuttle rides to 279,815 Fairgoers from the State Fair’s Parking Lots to the Main Gate.

**Centro Partners with Syracuse City School District to offer “Blessings in a Backpack”**

Centro executives, board members, and employees assembled and delivered 600 bags of food to the students at the Dr. King Elementary School in Syracuse kicking off a year-long commitment to providing meals to Syracuse City School District students in need.

Students at Dr. King Elementary School received backpacks filled with healthy food each weekend throughout the school year thanks to the Blessings in a Backpack program. The national child hunger relief non-profit organization implemented the program as part of a City of
Syracuse Public Schools Backpack Coalition Program, which supports existing school programs that provide food for hungry students during the weekends and extended breaks.

Two Main Transfer Locations on the Move

Centro relocated its main transfer point service the City of Rome to West Dominick Street in November due to the closure of the Liberty Street Parking Garage. The garage has housed Centro’s public information Center since 2005. The move to W. Dominick St. is only temporary, and Centro will permanently move its transfer location near City Hall on W. Liberty Street later in 2018.

In Auburn, Centro will relocate its main transfer location from Loop Rd. to Dill St. to make way for a new Welcome Center. The change will go into effect in late Spring and moves Common Center closer to Lattimore Hall, which houses Cayuga Community College students who use Centro to travel to / from the college.

New Service in Baldwinsville and Midland /Salina Corridor

To meet the changing needs of its riders, Centro offered service adjustments providing more access to popular destinations.

In May Centro began offering seasonal weekend bus service to Lakeview Park and the New York State Fairgrounds. The new service provides express bus trips from the Centro Transit Hub in downtown Syracuse to the Loop the Lake Trail off Exit 7 of Route 690 and the Main Gate of the Fairgrounds. Trips operate every Saturday and Sunday from late May to early September. In addition to this new seasonal service, Centro’s Sy 82 Baldwinsville bus line also provides year-round service to the Loop the Lake location at select times Monday through Friday.

Centro implemented route enhancements to its Sy 10 S. Salina St – Nedrow and Sy 54 Midland Ave – Valley Dr. bus lines. Service improvements include:

- Increased frequency of service to/from The Bernardine Apartments and Valley Vista Apartments, including more direct connections to Valley Plaza
- Increased frequency of service on Seneca Turnpike and S. Salina St – south of Valley Plaza
- Increased frequency of service to Nedrow
- Access to Tops Valley Plaza via the Sy 54 Midland Ave bus line
- Simplified routing for Sy 10 S. Salina St and Sy 54 Midland Ave bus lines

Centro added service to River Mall on its Sy 82 Baldwinsville – Lakeland bus route. The change provides customers with Monday-Friday service to River Mall. Previously, the Sy 82 Baldwinsville – Lakeland bus route only traveled as far as Rite Aid on Downer St.

CENTRO Receives 2017 InterFaith Works Award

Centro was honored to be among the eight recognized agencies, companies, and businesses during the 2017 InterFaith Works of Central New York Leadership Award Dinner.
The theme for 2017 “Inextricably Bound Together” embodies each of the award recipients who were recognized as being inextricably bound together with the communities they serve in the most essential ways. Centro was recognized for its commitment to the community and the role it plays in the lives of the people it serves. Particularly, how Centro’s Travel Training and Shopper Bus programs helps provide independence, and therefore, dignity to individuals.

CENTRO Adds New Fixed route and Paratransit Vehicles to its Fleet

Centro took delivery of 36 new transit buses and 12 new paratransit buses in 2017, each replacing an older vehicle that had reached the end of its useful life. The transit buses, 33 of which are now on the road in Syracuse and 3 in Auburn, were manufactured by the Gillig Corporation. Each of the 40-foot vehicles is fueled by Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) – the most cost-effective propulsion system in the Centro fleet. The four 30-foot buses are diesel powered.

In January 2018, Centro added 12 new Coach & Equipment Ford Phoenix buses to its Call-A-Bus paratransit fleet - three in Utica and the remaining nine in Syracuse. The new vehicles are gasoline powered and offer riders a quieter, more comfortable ride.

The acquisition of these vehicles is part of a 5-year plan to replace more than 100 buses within Centro’s Syracuse and Utica fleets. The multi-year replacement plan was designed to minimize capital cost expenditures within a given year.