Signature Projects FYE 2019

New York State Budget

New York State operating assistance (STOA) makes up a significant portion (about 42%) of the CNYRTA’s FY 2018-2019 operating budget. The Fiscal Year 2018-2019 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 2018-19 budget Upstate transportation again received a 1.98% increase in STOA. Transit Authorities and Agencies across the state continue an effort to educate elected leaders statewide of the importance of increased, dedicated funding for public transportation. 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

There are currently several issues being discussed by President Trump, the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate. Recently, the House Committee on Appropriations the Department of Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies (THUD) Appropriations Act for Fiscal Year (FY) 2020 was approved with a vote of 2921. The bill provides increased transportation funding levels, providing $16.2 billion for public transportation and intercity passenger rail grants, including $13.5 billion for public transportation specifically. In total, these funding levels are:

   a)  $150.5 million more than FY 2019 enacted funding levels (including $60.5 million more for public transportation);
   b)  $1.1 billion more than FY 2020 FAST Act authorization levels; and

While the House legislation offers $1.9 billion more than the FY 2020 President’s Budget request, it is unclear at this point on what the President’s view is on this or what the Senate will do with their legislation.

This budget, like the last budget, does not address the issue of long-term solvency of the Highway Trust Fund (HTF). This is a key issue to the stability of the future funding of public transportation in the United States. We will continue to work with our federal legislators and our partners in the American Public Transportation Association (APTA) to secure the necessary funding in the final budget.

Interstate Route 81 Project

The Route 81 draft environmental impact statement (DEIS) has been released by the New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT). Centro continues its role as a partner in the ongoing process to develop plans with NYSDOT, the Syracuse Metropolitan Transportation Council (SMTC), and many other community stakeholders regarding the Route 81 project. Centro’s staff will work with NYSDOT officials to determine how a commuter Park-N-Ride system, as part of a much
larger plan, to attempt to mitigate traffic congestion issues in the downtown Syracuse area might be developed. It is anticipated that there will be a material financial impact due to the operational costs necessary to adjust Centro bus service. While the final public input and decision making process is underway, it will likely be several years before any physical changes are seen in the downtown area. However, even with this timeframe, Centro staff has informed NYSDOT officials of the lead time needed to purchase buses and hire necessary staff.

**Syracuse Metropolitan Area Regional Transit Study – Phase 1**

The Syracuse Metropolitan Area Regional Transit Study-Phase 1 (SMART 1) has been completed. Phase two of the study began in 2018 and is being conducted by Centro staff. 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. In phase two of the study we are exploring funding options to pay for the estimated $34M up front capital costs and $8M annual operating costs. We held meetings with local and state legislative leaders to review the ongoing operating costs which continue to be a significant barrier to complete this project.

**State Fair**

It was another record-breaking year for Centro’s popular Park-N-Ride shuttle services for the New York State Fair. Centro provided more than 263,000 rides to and from the Orange parking Lot to the Main Gate of the Fair and 317,000 rides from the various Pak and Ride locations throughout Central New York during its 13-day run. That set an all-time record in the 40+ year history of the service and was up slightly over the previous year. A newly revamped New York State Fairgrounds attracted a record number of fairgoers as more than 1.2 million people attended the 2018 New York State Fair.

**CENTRO Adds New Fixed route and Paratransit Vehicles to its Fleet**

Centro took delivery of 8 new transit buses and 8 new paratransit buses in 2018, each replacing an older vehicle that had reached the end of its useful life. The transit buses, two of which are now on the road in Syracuse, two in Auburn, and four in Oswego were manufactured by the Gillig Corporation. Each of the 40-foot vehicles are diesel powered.

In January 2019, Centro added 8 new Coach & Equipment Ford Phoenix buses to its Call-A-Bus paratransit fleet – two are in Syracuse, two in Auburn and four in Oswego. 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.