<u>AGENCY TRANSPARENCY PLAN UPDATE: 2024</u>

Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority (NFTA)

February 15, 2024

DELIVERABLES ACHIEVED. This is a summary of some of the achievements that the NFTA has already implemented to improve transparency to the public. This is not intended to be an exhaustive list.

1. **<u>Website Improvements</u>**. To improve transparency, we "scrubbed" our website code to add Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 compliance standards. WCAG guidelines and to provide a single shared standard for web content accessibility that meets the needs of individuals, organizations, and governments. We have implemented techniques to improve adaptive equipment such as screen readers and braille readers to better interpret our websites. These measures included, adding code to the website that gives context to what the visitor is reading, enforced better text descriptions on images, applied better code and structure to the navigation of the website as it relates to adaptive equipment, and added and enforced Americans with Disability Act (ADA) standards for links to pages on our site and off of our site, including anchor tags for quick linking to email address and phone numbers. Additionally, the following changes were also made to our website:

- Responsive Website Development

- Web Page Development

- Accessibility and Compliance Development

- Center websites will be Web Content Accessibility Guideline (WCAG) and Americans with Disability Act (ADA) Level AA compliant

- Social Media Workup

- Language Translator: It is on the bottom of the home page of the website: https://www.nfta.com. Image looks like this:

  The link is https://translate.google.com/
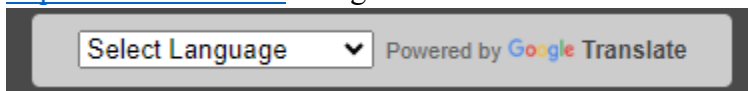
- Search Engine Optimization (SEO) Work-up

- Website Load Optimization Services

- Website-wide Search Tool

2. **Granicus (Board management)**. Granicus is a digital board and civic engagement platform used by agencies to modernize their online services, effectively manage records, and enhance user meeting experience. Granicus provides for the creation of internal review/approval workflows for documents being prepared for board meetings including agendas, minutes of previous meeting, resolutions, presentations, etc. Granicus also provides for the documents to be publicized for review and download by Board Members and the community at large. Here is the link to these materials: https://www.nfta.com/about-nfta/meetings.

3. **Centralization of Freedom of Information Law (FOIL) processing**. To continue our focus on FOIL compliance, and to ensure an appropriate level of resources and support, we reorganized the FOIL compliance function by establishing a Records Access Officer in the Office of General Counsel.

4. **See Something Say Something Application**. We implemented the NFTA's See Say Something Application which offers the public a quick and discreet method for reporting suspicious activity directly to the NFTA Transit Police. The App can send pictures, text messages, and locations of suspicious people or activities. Here is link to the App: https://go.elerts.com/nfta?ref=website.

5. **Public Engagement**. Our current level of public engagement is significant and very positive and productive. Our board meetings have been webcasted live for at least the last 10 years and so the public has the option of viewing a live webcast or attending in person, if COVID rules permit. We fully comply with NY Open Meeting Law §103(e) by making agency records that are going to be discussed by our Board available to the public prior to a Board meeting.

6. **Public Participation Committees**. To increase and maximize public participation and input, and to further ensure that the needs of the public and the para-transit community are being heard and being met, the NFTA has established two critical committees, the Accessibility Advisory Committee, and the Citizens Advisory Committee.

    a. **Accessibility Advisory Committee.** NFTA's longstanding and very active Accessibility Advisory Committee is tailored to the para-transit community. The Committee has approximately 20 members and meets nine times a year to discuss system accessibility and the services NFTA provides. Committee meetings are open to interested community members and the Director of Public Transit reports on the workings of the Committee to the Board of Commissioners at every board meeting.

    b. **Citizens Advisory Committee.** In 2012 the NFTA established a Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) to support and encourage broad-based public participation in the development and review of programs and project carried out by the NFTA. The CAC is comprised of 25 active members composed of organizations and individuals representing transit riders. The CAC makes

recommendations to NFTA Metro Management Staff on a broad range of transit issues (i.e., fare changes, Long-Range Plan updates, and major or new projects). The CAC will also provide comments on regularly schedule service changes and impacts on riders. Committee meetings are open to interested community members and the Director of Public Transit reports on the workings of the Committee to the Board of Commissioners at every board meeting.

7. **Project Sunlight**. We continue to train and educate our workforce on Project Sunlight. We think it is important to present initiatives like Project Sunlight as part of a "live" training session to our workforce rather than simply relying on written policy distribution. Thus, we have included Project Sunlight training as part of our ongoing "live" Procurement training.

8. **Positive reviews by outside entities**. The public information that is available on our website and our FOIL process is highly regarded and receives positive reviews by outside entities. For example, the New York Coalition for Open Government, Inc., a nonpartisan, not for-profit organization comprised of journalists, activists, attorneys, educators, news media organizations, and other concerned citizens who value open government and freedom of information, assessed our practices and procedures, and ranked the NFTA as having the highest score of 14 agencies they evaluated and as having the only passing score of the 14 agencies they evaluated (http://www.nyopengov.org/reports.asp). Our website contains voluminous information about our operations and this information is fully available to the public. However, we are always looking for ways to improve and for additional items of information that we can post. Our Records Access Officer does an excellent job keeping our FOIL backlog to a minimum and is always looking for ways to reduce or eliminate costs associated with providing data or records. A significant number of our FOIL records are satisfied with records being transmitted by email at no cost to the requesting party. As indicated above, we have recently restructured the FOIL office to further improve efficiency and processing.

INITATIVES TO BE IMPLEMENTED IN THE FUTURE. This is a summary of the initiatives we intend to implement and is not an exhaustive list.

1. **GovQA**. To improve our Freedom of Information Law (FOIL) process, we are in the process of onboarding GovQA and expect that this will improve our FOIL process resulting in increased transparency. Among other benefits, we anticipate GovQA will improve FOIL processing by more efficiently sending out 5-day acknowledgment letters, facilitating the centralization of requests, sending reminders to entities possessing responsive records, preparing and housing FOIL FAQs to assist the public, and better tracking of FOIL request data.

2. **Improved Website**. We continue to plan future website initiatives that will result in increased transparency. We have an Agreement with Acuta Digital to produce the following deliverables:

- Database-Driven Forms - Standard: Based on the proposal deliverable from the main NFTA project, we will deploy basic contact forms that automatically send email correspondences and information in a database that can be accessed by non-technical users.

- News Announcements Blog Platform: Based on the proposal deliverable from the main NFTA project, deployment of a blog-based platform to publish and house posts.

- Emergency Alert Tool: Based on the proposal deliverable from the main NFTA project, visitors will quickly be made aware of priority notifications. A system will be developed that l allows admin to publish time-sensitive content to appear in a highly visible area of the website.

- Public Information Platform: Based on the Consolidated Directory proposal deliverable from the main NFTA project, deployment of a searchable database-driven solution to manage files (i.e. Forms & applications, policies & procedures, public notices, etc.).

- Interactive Milestone Timeline: Deployment of an interactive timeline tool.

- 3rd Party Tool Integration: Linking, embedding and inbound integration (i.e., iframe) services.