



DISCOVER NIAGARA SHUTTLE

A Look at Three Years of Regional Impact

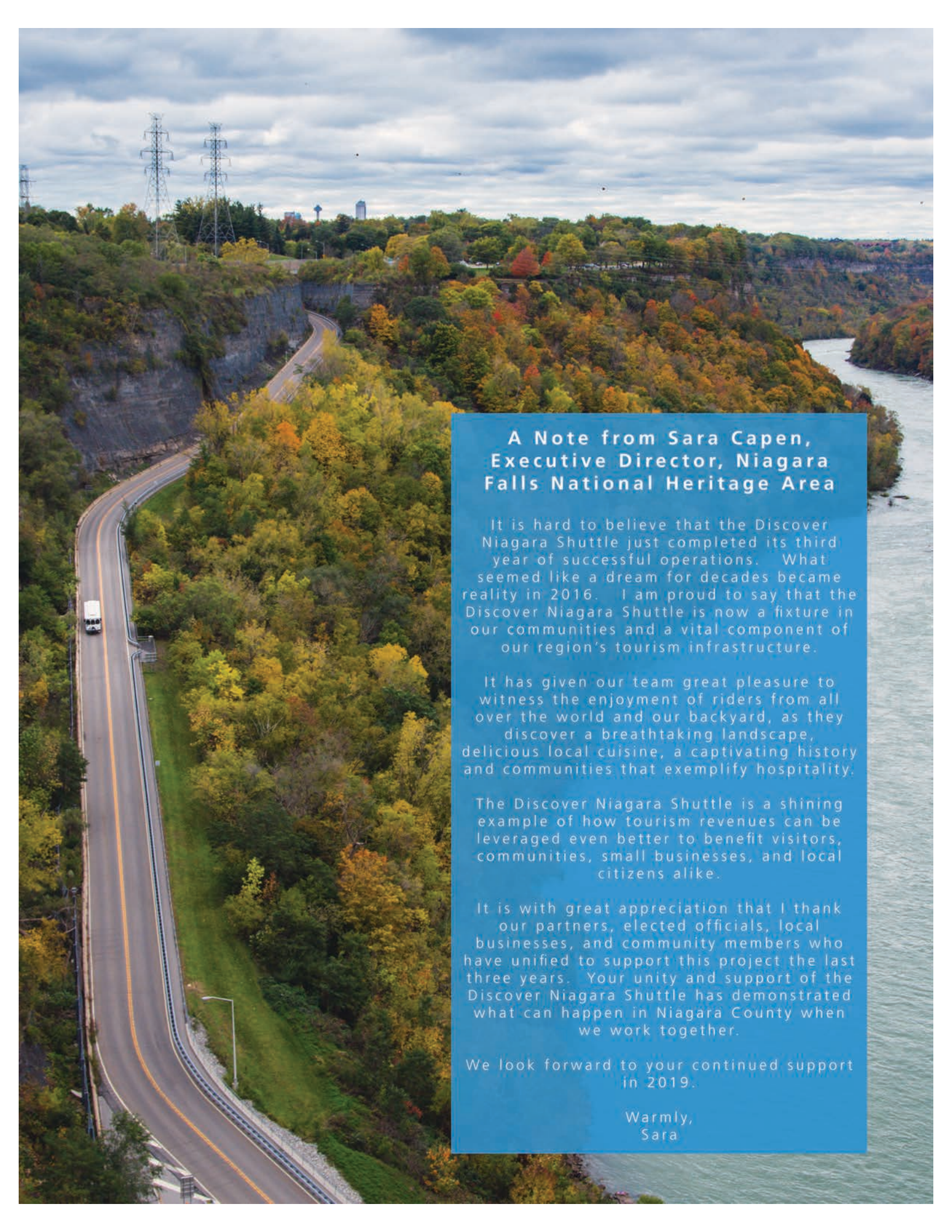
From the Falls to the Fort

FORT



FALLS





**A Note from Sara Capen,
Executive Director, Niagara
Falls National Heritage Area**

It is hard to believe that the Discover Niagara Shuttle just completed its third year of successful operations. What seemed like a dream for decades became reality in 2016. I am proud to say that the Discover Niagara Shuttle is now a fixture in our communities and a vital component of our region's tourism infrastructure.

It has given our team great pleasure to witness the enjoyment of riders from all over the world and our backyard, as they discover a breathtaking landscape, delicious local cuisine, a captivating history and communities that exemplify hospitality.

The Discover Niagara Shuttle is a shining example of how tourism revenues can be leveraged even better to benefit visitors, communities, small businesses, and local citizens alike.

It is with great appreciation that I thank our partners, elected officials, local businesses, and community members who have unified to support this project the last three years. Your unity and support of the Discover Niagara Shuttle has demonstrated what can happen in Niagara County when we work together.

We look forward to your continued support in 2019.

Warmly,
Sara



A Short Legacy of Huge Impact

The Discover Niagara Shuttle celebrated the completion of its third—and most successful—season October 28. What began as a concept in 2016 to tackle a major challenge in tourism infrastructure has become a staple to the tourism economy in Niagara Falls and the surrounding areas of Lewiston and Youngstown. With your support of the proposed 1% occupancy tax, the Shuttle can continue to grow and increase tourism and access to the Niagara Region for many years to come.

Since 2016, the Discover Niagara Shuttle has connected more than 100,000 visitors and residents to 17 destinations along the Niagara River corridor, all the way from Old Fort Niagara in Youngstown, through Lewiston's waterfront and small business district, along the Niagara Gorge to the bustling City of Niagara Falls and its beautiful parks and natural wonders.

A 2017 independent study of the Shuttle's economic impact in Niagara County conducted by Tripp Umbach, a nationally recognized consulting firm, found that operation of the Discover Niagara Shuttle injected \$35 million into the Niagara County economy during the 2016 season alone.

Attracting visitors to Niagara Falls is not enough to create a thriving tourism economy that impacts all of Niagara County. Keeping visitors here longer to experience the many natural, cultural, and historic assets should be our common priority.

The Discover Niagara Shuttle is unique in being able to connect visitors to these remarkable assets. Over half of all riders listed the Discover Niagara Shuttle as a deciding factor in their choice to visit the Niagara Falls region, as indicated by an intercept survey of 310 riders in 2017.

Robert Emerson, Executive Director of Old Fort Niagara, has noted the Shuttle not only attracts more visitors to the region, they also extend their stay and generate positive reviews, encouraging others to make the journey. Shuttle riders who visited Old Fort Niagara grew by 50% in 2017, and that number is expected to grow each year the Shuttle is operational.

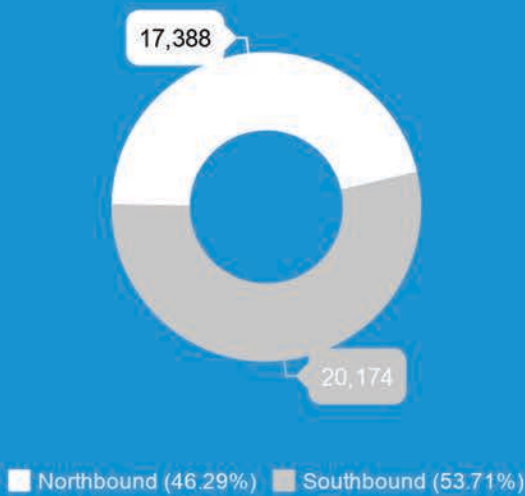
With increased partnerships, funding, and marketing, the Tripp Umbach study projects the Discover Niagara Shuttle will have a potential \$70 million economic impact by 2020. **Critical to the success of the Discover Niagara Shuttle is the proposed 1% increase in the occupancy tax in order for the Shuttle to continuing operating in 2019 and beyond.** Support of this measure will ensure that the Niagara Region continues to reap the benefits introduced by the Discover Niagara Shuttle for many years to come.



105,695

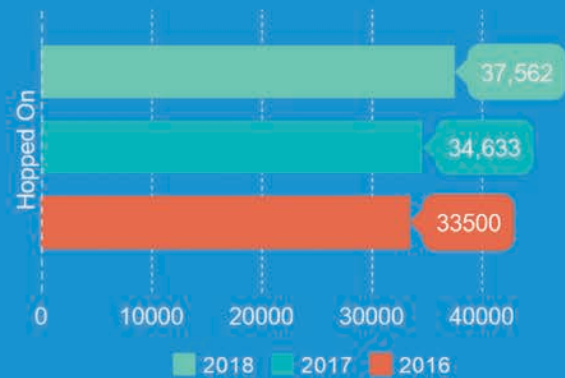
have hopped on a Discover Niagara Shuttle

Falls to the Fort / Fort to the Falls

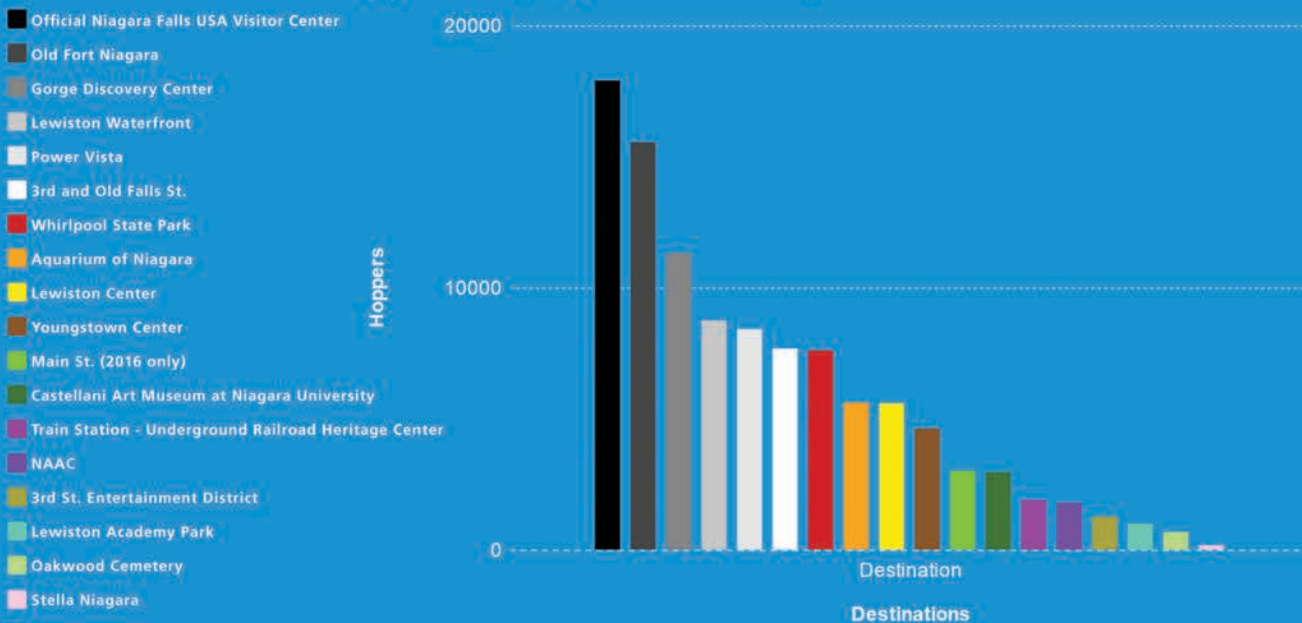


Who's hopping on?

The Discover Niagara Shuttle has seen steady growth in its first three seasons, increasing by over 12%.

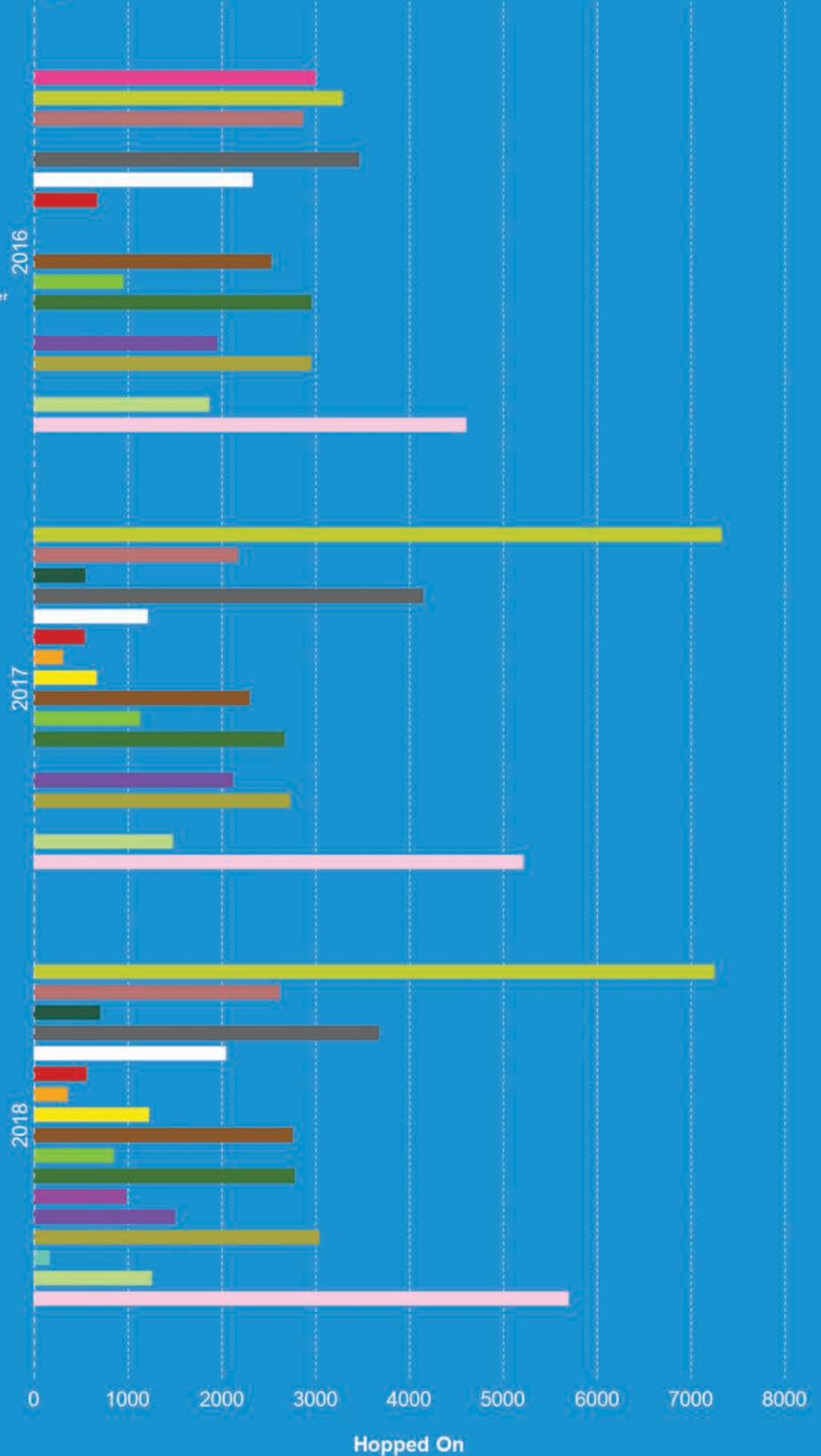


Hopped On, By Destination, Over Three Years



Destinations By Year: We Continue to Grow

- Main St. (2016 only)
- Official Niagara Falls USA Visitor Center
- 3rd and Old Falls St.
- 3rd St. Entertainment District
- Gorge Discovery Center
- Aquarium of Niagara
- NAAC
- Oakwood Cemetery
- Train Station - Underground Railroad Heritage Center
- Whirlpool State Park
- Castellani Art Museum at Niagara University
- Power Vista
- Lewiston Academy Park
- Lewiston Center
- Lewiston Waterfront
- Stella Niagara
- Youngstown Center
- Old Fort Niagara



Rider Gender



- Men (37.50%)
- Women (59.90%)
- Other (1.50%)
- No Answer (1.10%)



Connecting People Marketing Partners Promoting Our Region

The Discover Niagara Shuttle is more than just a transportation service, it is an opportunity to promote Niagara County and share the unique and important stories of the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area.

Promotion begins with our drivers who serve as ambassadors, ensuring that our riders have a great experience and know all that there is to do and see from the Falls to the Fort.

Throughout the season, we utilize web and social media efforts to engage locals and visitors by alerting them of events on our route. Any event within walking distance of our stops is promoted in our "Today at our _____ stop" social media posts, which inform our riders about exciting events happening along the route. We regularly engage our local partners and travel the community, looking for points of interest to share. It's exciting to share with a family that they can explore the Wildlife Festival at the Niagara Power Project stop. This is exactly what the shuttle program is about! Not only do we connect people to places, we connect them to experiences that showcase our stories, landscape, and communities.

In 2018, our targeted Facebook ads were a great success. We sought to engage folks visiting our area in the age demographics suitable for our service. This resulted in 5,621 link clicks, 58,976 visitors to the area reached, and 95,444 ad impressions. Most ads directed traffic to our website, where you can learn about the attractions on our route in addition to our standard service information. This increased audience led to larger levels of engagement and the opportunity to answer questions directly from visitors. Wondering what to do on a rainy day? That's on our route, and we're happy to tell you all about it!

Another method to inform visitors about our route is digital signage. Each of our shuttles are equipped with digital displays that play professionally produced, narrated segments about each of our stops on a constant loop. In addition to those pieces, advertisements from local businesses and attractions play and serve to inform riders what awaits at different stops.

To help foster a relationship between ridership and business patronage, we launched a program in 2018 called "Discover More." The idea is simple. Businesses can participate in the program by offering a discount of some sort to shuttle riders. That participation gives them a sticker for their window and promotion on our website. Discover More cards are distributed on the shuttles and at participating hotels, which riders can show to receive discounts. This free program was intended to make the connection between riders and businesses clearer and allow businesses to get creative in promoting themselves to our riders.

Most importantly, our work promoting the area begins with the stakeholders in the area. We closely monitor websites and social media, as well as directly engage entities on our route to make sure we know what is going on so we may help promote and educate our riders. This process requires us to be extremely active in these efforts, and we appreciate the help of local partners to work cooperatively with us to promote our region. This includes business owners, attraction operators, municipalities, community organizations and ordinary citizens.



"The Discover Niagara Shuttle was the catalyst the Niagara River Region needed to bring people to our communities from Niagara Falls. An entirely new segment of visitors was able to experience history, culture, shopping and fine dining in Lewiston and Youngstown, that might not have traveled the short distance from Niagara Falls. The Shuttle has become an important part of our tourist season, helping contribute a positive economic stimulus."

Jennifer Pauly
President, Niagara River Region Chamber of Commerce



Our drivers are trained to engage and educate our riders, providing an experience beyond transport. They are ambassadors.



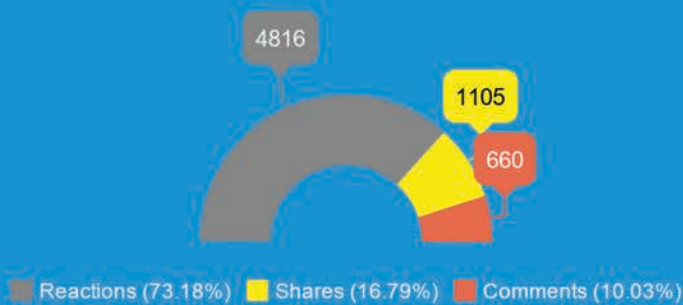
Our printed publications, apps and online presence help tell the story of our region to visitors of all ages.

Facebook Page Likes (2018)



The Discover Niagara Facebook page is the most popular of our social media offerings, with Instagram gaining ground. Our Facebook page is interesting in that it is not just our riders checking in, but local community members and stakeholders effectively cheering on the program and participating.

Facebook Engagement 2018 Season (143 Posts)



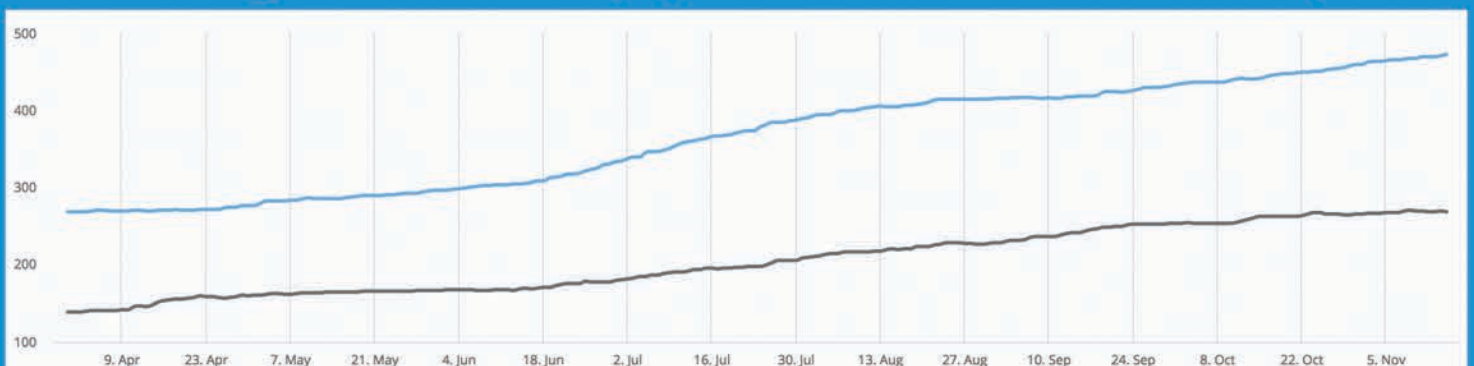
Social Shuttles

Our primary goals on social media are to promote the places on our route, encourage ridership, and share with riders events that are taking place at the 17 stops. We actively engage our social followers around the clock, answering questions and monitoring the social media accounts of local stakeholders to make sure that we are sharing information that would be useful to our riders. In addition, we also utilize social media to notify riders and partners about service updates. We have seen steady growth on all of our platforms, and plan to develop some fresh campaigns with an increased focus on Instagram in 2019.

Website Sessions/Day - 2018 Season



Instagram Followers (April-November 2018 vs. 2017)



Let's Hear It

Over the course of our three years of operation, we've received an overwhelming amount of positive feedback from riders, partners, businesses and organizations as well as ideas on how we can improve our service. Our favorite feedback comes in the form of online reviews, as they allow us to hear exactly how the Discover Niagara Shuttle has impacted actual people using our service to enhance their experience in our region.

RIDERS



TPASEA
Winter Haven,
Florida



Reviewed September 2, 2018

Free Shuttle from Falls to Fort Niagara

This free shuttle is something everyone should take advantage of. We had an excellent driver that gave us a lot of history and information on our 14 mile trip. The last stop is Fort Niagara and well worth the ride. Who can argue with FREE!



creativetraveler
New York

279 123



Reviewed July 4, 2017

Amazing!

Glad I asked at the hotel if there was something I should do in the few hours I had left at the Falls. The staff recommended this free service. It took about 1 hour each way and my family and I will use it as a reference for future trips to the area. You could of course, get off at the stops and catch the next shuttle. There is so much more than just the Falls!



Carla B
Centerville, Ohio,
United States

93 55



Reviewed August 29, 2018

Easy Exploring

Parking in Niagara Falls can be VERY pricey. Taking the Discover Niagara Shuttle - FREE - and being able to hop on and hop off made sight seeing a breeze. There is an app to download which allows you to check how close the shuttles are. It stopped at 15 or 16 venues. The guides were knowledgeable and were able to share a lot of the history of the area with us. Taking the shuttle took the stress out of trying to figure out where we were going and having to pay for parking at each venue we visited.



hopalongrving
Wilmington, North
Carolina

240 102



Reviewed August 29, 2018

Free Shuttle = Easy Exploring

This Free shuttle couldn't make exploring Niagara any easier. You can catch a ride from the parking area at many of the stops along their route and be able to explore even more of what Niagara has to offer. We recommend parking at Whirlpool State Park and taking the bus into the more congested areas.

Show less



Marlene R
Somerset,
Pennsylvania



Reviewed August 16, 2018

Free shuttle!

Our motel offered tickets for the free shuttle. Well worth taking. Drivers were helpful and friendly. The ease of riding the trolley and seeing Niagara Falls area without driving added to the enjoyment of the trip!



DebinCarb
Carbondale, PA

46 13



Reviewed July 13, 2018

Wonderful way to get around Niagara and surrounding areas.

We used the shuttle to explore the area and also to visit Lewiston. It was right on time and convenient and FREE. Our driver (wish I could remember his name) was very knowledgeable and friendly.



Svllana88
Chicago, Illinois



Reviewed June 21, 2018

Free shuttle to see huge area around Niagara Falls, NY

Nice comfortable buses with air conditioner. You may get in and out in any point. Last stop is Fort Niagara on lake Ontario. Don't forget to get to Ontario's beach when you are here!



Jennifer Foraker
August 13

recommends Discover Niagara Shuttle.



Diana J Lewandowski reviewed Discover Niagara Shuttle — 5*
July 24, 2017

This is the best idea come our way in a long time!! Love it! Living in Lewiston, we took the shuttle to go to dinner in Niagara Falls and play tourist. Another night we took it to Youngstown for a friends birthday and had some cocktails at the Jug. It was nice not to worry about driving. I also had a great girls day out and went to the Cave of the Winds. I've lived here all my life and never did that! Hard to believe. The drivers have all been wonderful and very helpful. I highly recommend it whether you are just visiting or if the Niagara River Region is your backyard!!!



Kate DeSantis reviewed Discover Niagara Shuttle — 5*
September 26

Discover Niagara Shuttle was a great experience and wonderful way around, from the Falls to Old Fort Niagara and points between! Saved so much hassle when you are not from the area, much more time to look around and enjoy & some of the drivers interacted very well and were great tour guides! Highly recommended and will definitely use this service when we return!



JuneNY



Reviewed June 9, 2018

Best Way to Get Around!!!

I absolutely love this shuttle service. It is free. It covers a large territory. It takes tourists to all the important tourist locations in the Niagara Falls region.



JuneNY reviewed Discover Niagara Shuttle — 5*
September 26

Tom and I played tourist last year and it was a delight! When you live in a tourist area, you tend to take the sights for granted. The Shuttle was a great way to get reacquainted with the wonder and beauty of our Niagara Falls and other adventures along the Shuttle's route!

THE SHUTTLE



M15W
Mumbai, India

17 11



Reviewed June 3, 2018

Excellent!

Connect to the shuttle via Niagara scenic trolley. It's free, available every hour, it takes you right up to the fort driving through 2 cute towns on the way. Make sure you ask your driver about the next shuttle when you get off at any stop! Our lady driver was amazing, she chatted with us all the way & was very cooperative. She shared lots of information about Niagara, its park, its city etc! We found the shuttle ride most enjoyable & memorable!



Alisa Little reviewed Discover Niagara Shuttle — 5★

March 31 · 🌐



What a lovely thing to offer especially not being from the area. You don't have to worry about the hassle of parking. The drivers are so polite and helpful. And it's FREE 💎



Kelly Lang Buckley reviewed Discover Niagara Shuttle — 5★

July 22, 2017 · 🌐



Great way to explore the region. safe, clean, comfortable, convenient, free WiFi. Driver was knowledgeable and welcoming.



Stacey A.
Lewiston, NY
3 friends
83 reviews
28 photos
Elite '18

5★ 8/1/2018
1 First to Review

I love the Niagara Shuttle. It is an easy way to get around all the sights in the Niagara area for free in air conditioned comfort. The drivers are friendly, informative and helpful when making decisions about what to see or where to go in the area. I've taken advantage of the bike rack in front of the vehicles many times. My most recent use of the shuttle was to bike around the area with my son. We boarded in Lewiston, with our bikes (there are only room for two on the shuttle), and got off at Whirlpool State Park. We rode on the upper gorge trail, a bit bumpy but doable, along the Niagara River, through the state park near prospect point. We continued along the river to just past the north grand island bridge where there's a nice little park. We had some fruit and rested a bit by the water. People were fishing, there was a group playing music (guitar and bongos) and a few more bikers in this quaint park near 60th street on Buffalo Ave. On the way back we stopped at the old stone chimney...built in 1756...moved 4 times throughout the years to this "final" spot. We went through the tourist area around Falls Street and headed to the Discover Center where we wanted to pick up the shuttle. We saw the shuttle just leaving as we were coming into the parking area but luckily it was the same driver who recognized us and stopped so we could board. We got to tour the stops in Niagara Falls on the way home like the NAAC (Niagara Arts and Cultural Center) and the Oakwood Cemetery (where daredevil Annie Taylor is buried). We got off in Lewiston completing our fun day. The shuttle continues on to Fort Niagara and stops in Youngstown but we didn't go that far. It was interesting to hear people coming on and off at different stops from all areas of the country and abroad. The shuttle added a lot of interest to our day. I'm glad to see many people taking advantage of this cool free service.



Joy Putnam-Fabiano reviewed Discover Niagara Shuttle — 5★

August 21, 2017 · 🌐



My daughter and I and my 3 grandchildren, (ages 4, 6, and 8) took the shuttle today. We live in Youngstown so we picked it up there. Went to the Power Authority to see the hands-on kid friendly activities there. Then went back to have lunch at the Silo, then went back to Youngstown. The children loved it. And all the drivers were so friendly. I hope it continues for many years to come. Free would be great but if they charged a minimal amount (\$5), I don't think people would complain.



Nancy Schrott-Greulich reviewed Discover Niagara Shuttle — 5★

July 22, 2017 · 🌐



What a great asset to our community...and can you believe it ...it is free. It's not just for tourists! A friend and I have taken the shuttle to the Falls for a lunch ❤️



Delivering for our Region

The Discover Niagara Shuttle currently serves 17 stops from the Falls to the Fort and we know for a fact that our service is having a significant impact on stakeholders of all kinds. A 2017 economic impact study by Tripp Umbach determined that 11.9% of riders surveyed indicated that the presence of the Discover Niagara Shuttle caused them to extend their stay in Niagara County. More than half of riders surveyed indicated that the presence of the shuttles influenced their decision to visit the Niagara Falls region.

2016 Rider Spending

This is all fantastic news for the businesses, attractions, parks, and lodging on our route. It is no surprise that we regularly hear from our local stakeholders that describe the positive impact the shuttle program has on them. That's the whole idea!

TYPE OF SPENDING	Average	
	Day Visitors	Overnight Visitors
Lodging [e.g. Hotel, Motel, cabin, camp ground, vacation home rental, etc.]	N/A	\$158.82
Gas	\$16.63	\$32.64
Entertainment [e.g. site ticket cost, movies, water parks, museums, theaters, casino, etc.]	\$53.13	\$70.66
Transportation [e.g. tools, bus trolley, parking, bike rentals, etc.]	\$12.00	\$20.00
Retail Shopping [e.g. merchandise, souvenirs, novelty items, etc.]	\$54.43	\$65.00
Grocery and convenience stores [e.g. food, drink, etc.]	\$17.14	\$27.51
Food/Drink at Restaurants/Bars	\$42.75	\$100.67

■ Spending averages by day visitors who reside outside of Niagara County
■ Spending averages by overnight visitors who reside outside of Niagara County

Voices of Support from Local Leaders

"Niagara Falls is an iconic tourism destination, known for its natural beauty and multitudes of visitors. It can also be the catalyst to a vibrant tourism economy where visitors experience the many natural, cultural, and historic assets Niagara County has to offer. Connecting visitors to these assets via the Discover Niagara Shuttle and further developing authentic experiences that highlight our heritage is an investment in our communities and a sustainable tourism economy."

- Congressman Brian Higgins

"I am pleased to see that the results of the Discover Niagara Shuttle's pilot program are so positive. The shuttle is responsible for an impressive economic boost to the Niagara County economy, and the area's destinations are expected to see even more reward in the coming years. This public-private partnership promotes Niagara County's rich history and culture while enhancing the tourism economy in the region."

- Congressman Chris Collins

"The most difficult task for an individual or family when visiting a new destination is making sure that you are able to see the most important and unique aspects your destination has to offer. The Discover Niagara Shuttle has taken the hassle of planning out of the equation. It has tied together all that the greater-Niagara region has on display with one convenient route and has stimulated an economic boom for our area's economy. The ease and comfort that the Discover Niagara Shuttle provides allows visitors to extend their stay in Niagara Falls and the greater-Niagara region and experience the vast amount of culture and history in our part of the state. The easier we can assist our guests in finding what makes Niagara County so special, the better the result for all of the parties involved."

- New York State Senator Robert Ort

"Anyone who's visited Niagara Falls knows it stands alone as one of the most beautiful sites in the country. The Discover Niagara Shuttle offers visitors a chance to experience the gorgeous landscape of Niagara County in an unprecedented way. This shuttle has proven to be a remarkable investment in our community that offers endless benefits to both local residents and visitors. If we advance this shuttle service, it will surely continue to benefit the economy and drawing in tourists from all around the world."

- New York State Assemblyman Angelo Morinello

The positive impact of the Discover Niagara Shuttle has reached beyond Niagara Falls and into other parts of Niagara County, including Old Fort Niagara. I look forward the success and growth of this project and will work with my colleagues to ensure the continued support for this initiative.

- Assemblyman Michael J. Norris

"From Niagara Falls to Old Fort Niagara the mission has been simple: preserve, protect and promote. Over the course of the past two years, the Discover Niagara Shuttle has gone above and beyond that mission, connecting thousands with the historic, cultural, and natural resources our region has to offer. Continued and longer term investments into proven programming like the Discover Niagara Shuttle and visitor app will no doubt broaden the visitor experience and bolster our tourism economy for many years to come."

- City of Niagara Falls Mayor Paul Dyster

"The Discover Niagara Shuttle is a critical component to our collaborative, ongoing enhancement of the tourism economy in Western New York – and Niagara County, in particular. Through the partnership that is embodied in the Discover Niagara Shuttle, we are reestablishing the Niagara region as a destination where visitors can be seamlessly connected to our bountiful natural attractions, educational, historic and cultural sites as well as our emerging and dynamic hospitality infrastructure. Establishing this bastion of hospitality to our guests will assuredly make a lasting and measurable economic and social impact in our communities."

- Rev. James J. Maher, C.M., President of Niagara University

"The Discover Niagara Shuttle has been invaluable in allowing our out of town guests, quick, easy and reliable transportation from downtown Niagara Falls, straight to our front door. Our staff can also confidently recommend the shuttle as the best form of transportation within Niagara for our jet boat guests."

John Kinney / Whirlpool Jet Boat Tours



"When we opened the Niagara Falls Underground Railroad Heritage Center in early 2018, we were fortunate to already be located on a stop of the Discover Niagara Shuttle. Many visitors to the area are not aware of the important role Niagara Falls played in the Underground Railroad, and it's wonderful to have the opportunity to tell our story to those boarding the shuttle. Our museum is a powerful experience for those who visit, and the shuttle has definitely brought us visitors that otherwise may not have experienced our exhibits. It is critical that visitors and locals alike are connected to the important cultural attractions in our region, and the Discover Niagara Shuttle creates the opportunity to do just that."

Ally Spongr / Niagara Falls Underground Railroad Heritage Center

"For some tourists, Oakwood Cemetery might be a tough sell. They come to see the Falls, unaware of the multitude of other attractions that are near the Cataracts. When a tourist gets on the Discover Niagara Shuttle, lured by the price (or lack thereof), they are exposed to most of the Heritage Area sites through the videos on board. Oakwood is so proud to be a stop on the Discover Niagara Shuttle!

Because of the bus, we see people who never would have thought to tour a cemetery! The shuttle ties together the area in a nice package for our area's guests. Oakwood is indebted to the Niagara Falls National Heritage area and the Discover Niagara Shuttle for making it easier for tourists to know about us, and visit us."

Tim Baxter / Oakwood Cemetery



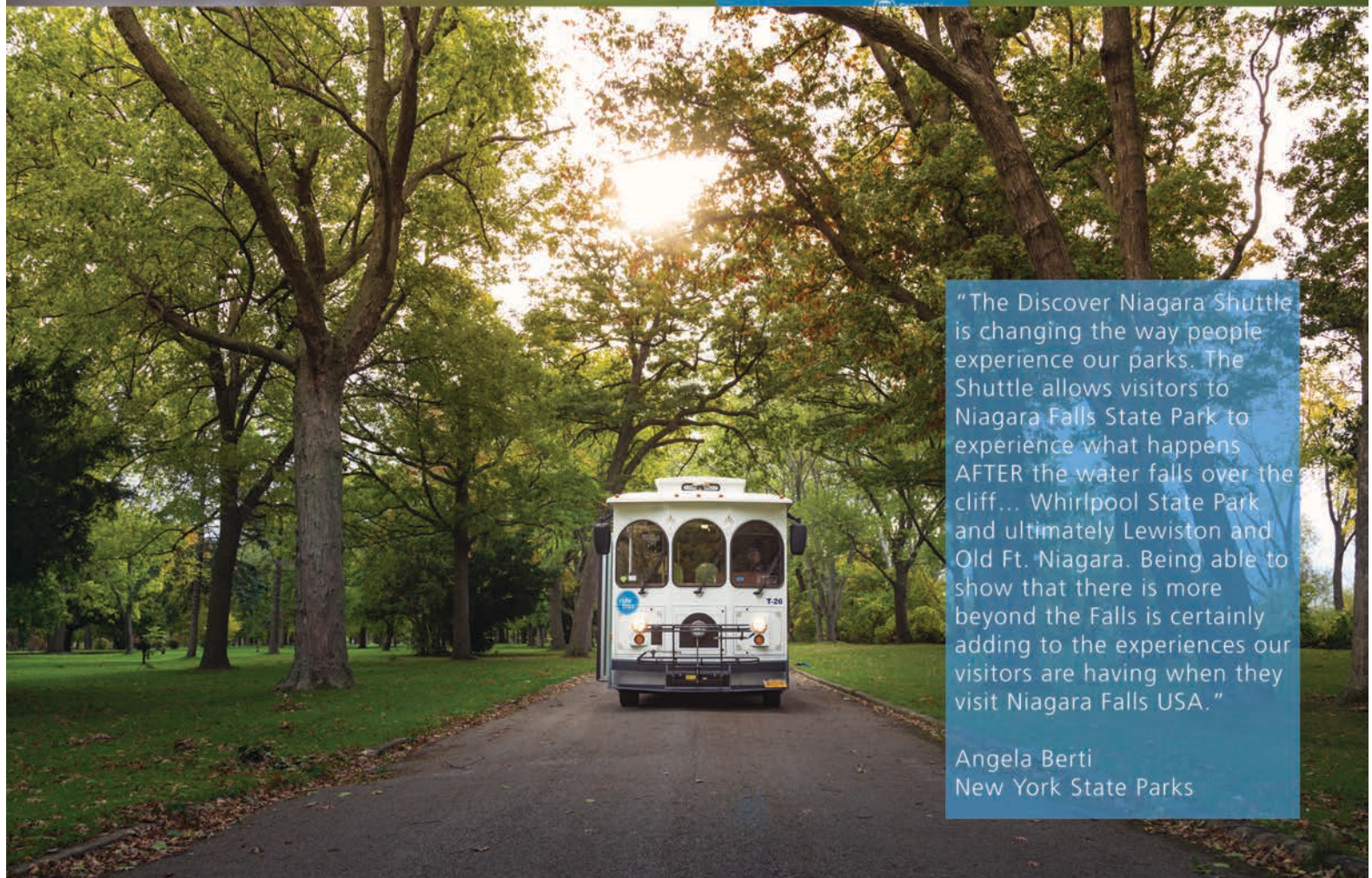
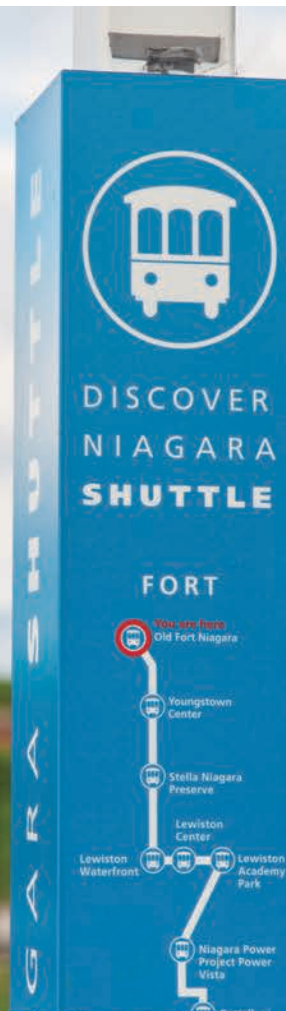
"The Discover Niagara Shuttle is great for our community. As a business owner on Center Street in the Village of Lewiston, I always ask people where they are from and I hear a lot of people say they are visiting Niagara Falls and took the shuttle to Lewiston. They are always incredibly happy when they find the town and the shuttle. Having the shuttle is a great asset to my business and the businesses in town."

Kathy Pignatora
Inspirations on Canvas

"The Discover Niagara Shuttle has been a great asset, not only to Old Fort Niagara, but to sites throughout Niagara Falls and the northern communities. In addition to bringing over 15,000 guests to the fort, the shuttle was a terrific amenity to visitors and local residents as well. Rather than worry about traffic and route finding, guests could relax and take in the spectacular scenery between Niagara Falls and Old Fort Niagara. The shuttle also helped raise awareness about attractions beyond the falls, helping to extend guests' sojourn in our region.

In a highly competitive tourism market, the shuttle provides our region with an edge that many other destinations do not offer. This service, which has proved its value over the past three years, is vital to the continued economic and cultural well-being of our area."

Robert L. Emerson
Executive Director
Old Fort Niagara



"The Discover Niagara Shuttle is changing the way people experience our parks. The Shuttle allows visitors to Niagara Falls State Park to experience what happens AFTER the water falls over the cliff... Whirlpool State Park and ultimately Lewiston and Old Ft. Niagara. Being able to show that there is more beyond the Falls is certainly adding to the experiences our visitors are having when they visit Niagara Falls USA."

Angela Berti
New York State Parks



In 2018, the Discover Niagara Shuttle installed its first bench in Niagara Falls, created by artist Ellen Steinfeld.



NORTH TO
FORT
NIAGARA

ride
free

T-26

Exploring Natural Wonders

One of the most common praises of our shuttles is the ease by which our riders can explore our terrain in so many different ways. Whether they are hiking, biking, kayaking or floating down the Niagara River, the shuttle provides a convenient way to plan your adventure.

DISCOVER NIAGARA SHUTTLE

The Discover Niagara Shuttle was made possible through the generous financial commitments from the following organizations:

New York Power Authority | New York Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation
Niagara Falls National Heritage Area | City of Niagara Falls | Niagara County
Village of Lewiston | Town of Lewiston | Destination Niagara Falls USA
WNY Power Proceeds Allocation Board | Niagara University
USA-Niagara Development Corporation | Niagara River Greenway Commission

