

MAPPING THE ROAD TO TRANSIT JUSTICE IN DETROIT

**Action Report,
Activist Toolkit &
Vision for Change**



"PEOPLE ALWAYS SAY that I didn't give up my seat because I was tired, but that isn't true. I was not tired physically, or no more tired than I usually was at the end of a working day. I was not old, although some people have an image of me as being old then. I was 42. No, the only tired I was, was tired of giving in."

—ROSA PARKS



THE DETROIT PEOPLE'S PLATFORM – TRANSIT JUSTICE TEAM

is an organized group of 500+ bus riders living primarily in the City of Detroit, dedicated to advancing transit justice for individuals and families who use Detroit Department of Transportation (DDOT) bus service as their primary or sole means of transportation.

We call these families and individuals "essential riders," because reliable, equitable bus service is essential for their day-to-day economic and social survival—and because these riders are essential to the transit system.

The Transit Justice team seeks an equitable, reliable, and safe public transit system for majority low-income, Black families and individuals who do not have adequate access to education, work, food, health care, social services, and other essential institutions via the bus. We also work to prevent privatization and to expand transit service to areas where it is most needed—majority Black and low-income neighborhoods throughout Detroit.



The Transit Justice team is here because:

- The Detroit Department of Transportation has a majority Black ridership of 87%¹...
- 1 in 3 Detroiters do not own or share a car with someone in their household, and the proportion of people without access to a car is even higher among Black and low-income residents²...
- DDOT bus systems have the largest ridership in the state of Michigan³...

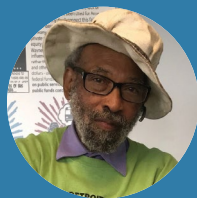
...But instead of directing resources where they would do the most good, the City of Detroit has focused on the development of transportation systems intended to appeal to wealthier, younger professionals and make Detroit look more "modern."

The current Detroit transit system creates unequal access to vital resources, services, and social connection for thousands of Detroiters.

**WE DESERVE BETTER.
AND WHEN WE ORGANIZE, WE WIN!**

**"PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION
IS THE CONNECTIVE
TISSUE BETWEEN
EVERYTHING. IT'S
ESSENTIAL.** Public

transit touches on just about every facet of life—shopping, visiting friends and relatives, getting to medical appointments, going out for entertainment, and getting from home to work and back again."



**—LARRY VERSE, TRANSIT
JUSTICE TEAM MEMBER**

¹ American Community Survey, U.S. Census Bureau.

² Gerber, E, Morenoff, J, Smith, C., "Detroiters' Views on Transportation and Mobility Detroit," Detroit Metro Area Communities Study, University of Michigan, Winter 2017.

³ Michigan Department of Transportation, 2017.

MAPPING THE ROAD TO TRANSIT JUSTICE IN DETROIT IS ABOUT:

ACTION...

We are pleased to report on the Transit Justice team's major actions since we got started in 2015. This is the story of our origins, our biggest wins so far, and ongoing campaigns.

INSPIRATION...

As a small yet focused team of transit justice activists, we hope the story of our struggles and wins will inspire you to act. That's why we've included an activist toolkit describing *how* we work, our *tactics* for success, and *best practices* for organizing around transit justice—and potentially many other issues.

RECOGNITION...

This document honors the inherent leadership of our community members. While it is true that living under white supremacy for 400+ years has created powerful barriers to achieving justice, this document is evidence that we CAN effectively organize, build power, and make change. It's about hope and recognizing that YOU can be part of this practice and get results.

CELEBRATION...

People often think organizing work is just struggle, struggle, struggle. But we always find the joy in every operation—celebrating our wins, our leadership team, our processes, and the caring community we've built around fighting for transit justice for majority Black Detroiters.

VISION...

What would happen if the City of Detroit pursued a truly just and equitable transit system, with accessible, affordable, dependable transit that met the needs of Detroit's majority low-income, Black families and individuals? This document highlights our collective vision for Detroit's public transit future.



"MAPPING THE ROAD TO TRANSIT JUSTICE IN DETROIT IS A POWER-BUILDING TOOL. The action report is the heart and soul of the work. The activist toolkit is about the practice and practical parts. This is our body of work—the fruits of the energy the Transit Justice team has invested in getting transit justice for the people of Detroit. We're building power, shifting narratives, changing priorities, and inspiring change. We take abstract ideas like 'transit policies' to the human level, making the case for the *human aspect of transit justice*—so everyone can see why we care so passionately about this. Maybe even our opposition will be moved to listen."

**—RENARD MONCZUNSKI,
TRANSIT JUSTICE
ORGANIZER**

INTRODUCTION

MAPPING THE ROAD TO TRANSIT JUSTICE IN DETROIT looks back on the Transit Justice team's six years of accomplishment, shares what we've learned, and imagines a better future.

We begin with where we are now...after over a year of upheaval, struggle, and signs of hope in the midst of seismic shifts...from the Covid-19 pandemic to the nationwide uprisings for Black Lives demanding—with ever-growing intensity and influence—an end to white supremacy.

Our work—like everything else—has evolved since March 2020. On March 17, 2020, essential bus riders were confronted with a morning announcement that Detroit Department of Transportation's (DDOT) bus service had been suspended by Mayor Duggan due to the Covid-19 emergency declaration and initial confirmed coronavirus cases in Michigan.

This abrupt shut-down stranded thousands of bus riders across the city. In an incredibly disorienting and dangerous moment, Detroiters were forced to arrange for costly alternative transportation...hike to their destinations...or miss work, appointments, and other necessary activities.

The Transit Justice team moved into action by immediately sending a letter to the Mayor, demanding:

- Prompt restoration of DDOT bus service
- Suspension of fares during this unprecedented public health emergency
- A sanitation plan for all buses
- Safe boarding practices, with reserved space in the front of the bus for disabled riders and rear-door boarding and exiting for all other passengers
- Free face-masks for all bus riders who needed them



Essential bus riders from across the city led this organizing effort with calls, social media posts, and other actions to proclaim to the Mayor and City Council the urgent need to:

- Preserve DDOT bus system as an essential service for Detroiters during the shutdown
- Implement appropriate Covid-19 safety precautions
- Ensure equitable access by suspending fares during the cascade of social, economic, and public health disruptions created by the pandemic

All our demands were met—critical, early WINS for essential bus riders in the midst of an emerging pandemic that has disproportionately harmed our community.

The Transit Justice team's Covid-19 Rapid Response organizing continued throughout the pandemic, with many more accomplishments:

- Sustaining fare-free bus service, and ongoing advocacy to make this change permanent, so Detroit can join 30+ other U.S. cities where fare-free transportation benefits local communities and economies
- A recommendations brief to inform DDOT's pandemic response, with budget recommendations in response to the CARES Act public transportation relief funding for Detroit, including bulk purchasing of PPE to protect riders and drivers
- Successfully advocating for equitable transit-related communications, with web-based and social media information, posters, and radio and TV announcements accessible in Arabic, Bengali, and Spanish
- Distributing PPE and Covid-19 prevention information while organizing on buses, at bus stops, and in DDOT transit centers

Like the pandemic, the accelerating BLM movement has shifted the context of our work *and* informed our activities. The Detroit People's Platform and Transit Justice team have always centered Blackness by:

- Grounding and guiding our work in racial justice principles
- Supporting Black and POC leadership
- Guiding our work by principles of Black liberation and striving to embrace principles of solidarity with movements led by Black people and BIPOC communities
- Organizing against white supremacy



"I'M 63 YEARS OLD, AND I'LL TELL YOU ONE THING:

before I leave this earth, as long as I can move around, I will not stop fighting for transit justice and housing. It's my passion. What I'm doing with the Transit Justice team is from my heart—every one of us on this team truly loves what we're doing. It gives me so much pleasure to achieve even the little things, because I know little things lead to something big. If we keep on going inch by inch, we'll get to that plateau where we want to be."

**—ROCHELLA L. STEWART,
TRANSIT JUSTICE TEAM MEMBER**

The BLM movement deepened our analysis of how overinvestment in the police department (over \$300 million per year) starves programs that would create true security for our communities. Detroit's public schools and libraries are suffering. Our physical infrastructure is crumbling. Our transit system—among the nation's most underfunded—barely has the resources to function at the most basic level. We need to reallocate resources toward programs and infrastructure that can prevent many of the concerns the police are funded to address.

We've always known transit justice to be a civil rights issue. Now, we see even more clearly how over-policing of Black and Brown communities directly reinforces transit inequity, and how impossible it is to separate transit justice from racial justice.

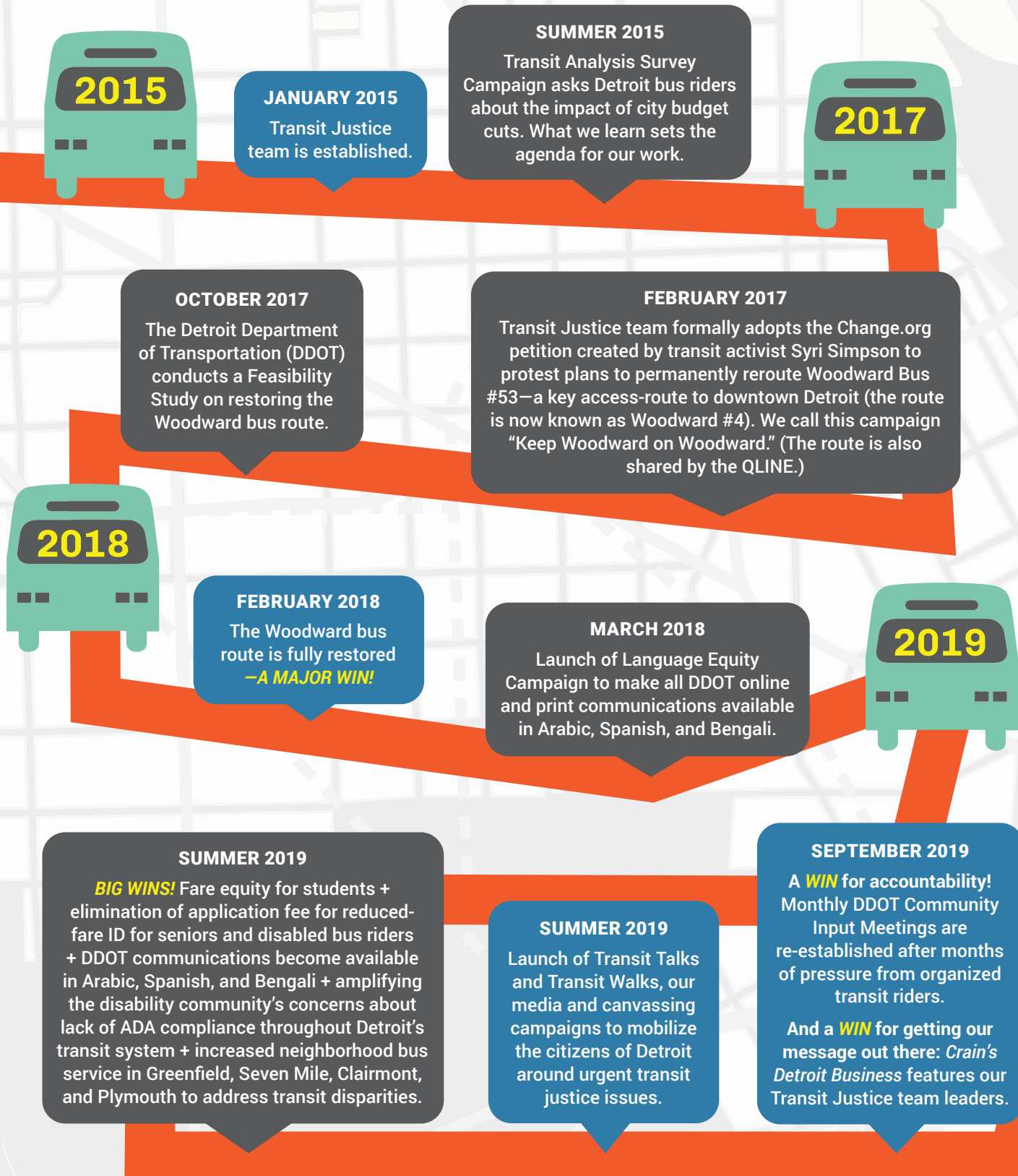
Liberating transit is liberating our freedom and our movement. It means prioritizing investment in majority Black neighborhoods left behind by—and systematically locked out of—the city's revitalization strategies.

As we share this documentation of our work with you, we invite you to join us in creating a just and equitable transit system that Detroiters can be proud of.

**THE DETROIT PEOPLE'S PLATFORM—
TRANSIT JUSTICE TEAM**

MAPPING OUR IMPACT

TIMELINE & WINS



IN DETROIT, WE FACE THE CONSTANT THREAT OF “TRANSIT GENTRIFICATION.”

This manifests as the misuse and redirection of public funding to private projects subsidized with public funds, like the QLINE, which took over \$74 million to develop a limited-service streetcar that excludes majority Black and low-income communities that need reliable public transit. Transit gentrification directs disproportionately large shares of transit resources to benefit occasional transit riders (“choice riders”), who already have cars and other transportation options. In this two-tiered system, our communities contend with chronically underfunded, inadequate service.

THE TRANSIT JUSTICE TEAM EXISTS TO AMPLIFY AND CORRECT THESE DISPARITIES.

OCTOBER 2019

Transit Triangle of Truth Demonstration at City Hall. Detroiters raise their voices for a transit system that works for *all* Detroiters.

NOVEMBER 2019–FEBRUARY 2020

In connection with the 30th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Transit Justice team collaborates with Warriors on Wheels of Metropolitan Detroit around paratransit accountability and participates in disability advocacy training.



SEPTEMBER–NOVEMBER 2020

Our public pressure campaign demands a public hearing on the relocation of the State Fair Transit Center, in alignment with the State Fair Development Coalition. On October 16, we organize a Rally Against the “Unfairgrounds.” On November 13, we succeed in getting a public hearing where essential riders can speak out.

MARCH 24, 2020

The Covid-19 pandemic hits Detroit. DDOT bus system abruptly shuts down at 9 a.m., stranding Detroiters citywide. We immediately demand that the Mayor resume essential bus services while protecting riders and drivers. Within hours, the Mayor announces that services will resume on March 25 at 3 a.m.



FEBRUARY 2021

We publish our Title VI Equity Analysis for the relocation of the State Fair Transit Center. The City Council and DDOT initiate a feasibility study on bringing paratransit back under DDOT control, rather than continuing to contract this service out (privatizing paratransit has resulted in a lack of accountability, service quality, and usability). We continue working with Warriors on Wheels of Metropolitan Detroit on our Paratransit Accountability Campaign to make progress on this core issue.

SUMMER 2021

Our work with our partners advances the Passengers’ Bill of Rights, Low-income Fare Program, and Transit Advisory Commission as part of the Revised City Charter. Proposal P, Revised City Charter Ballot Proposal is voted down in the primary election on August 3, 2021. The Transit Justice team publishes our American Rescue Plan (ARP) Transit Recommendations.

FALL 2021

We launch a Passenger Bill of Rights Campaign to restore bus service to pre-COVID-19 levels.

THE TRANSIT JUSTICE TEAM is always looking to the next opportunity to build justice around transit resources and infrastructure that centers the needs of Detroit’s essential riders! Join our campaigns to invest in neighborhood services, keep DDOT buses fare-free, direct American Rescue Plan federal stimulus monies toward jump-starting recovery and creating transit equity in Detroit’s left-behind neighborhood...and more!

IMAGINING WHAT'S POSSIBLE

A SHARED VISION FOR TRANSIT JUSTICE IN DETROIT

TRANSIT JUSTICE IS...

**GOOD
CUSTOMER
SERVICE,**
including a 24-hour
hotline.

**AN EQUITABLE
TRANSIT SYSTEM**
that allows people to live their
lives fully, access opportunity,
and advance socially.

**SERVICE
THAT'S FAST
ENOUGH**
to get anywhere in the city
within 1–2 hours.

**GOOD
AUDIOVISUAL
SYSTEMS**
to announce stops
along the way.

**PUBLICLY
FUNDED**
where everyone rides
without charge.

**WI-FI
SERVICES**
at transit centers, on
buses, and at bus
shelters.

**ENVIRONMENTALLY
RESPONSIBLE
TRANSPORTATION.**

**AN
AFFIRMATION**
of oppressed communities'
right to movement, mobility,
and the ability to thrive
without private
transportation.

RESPONSIVE
to the collective challenges
of low-income, working-class,
majority Black neighborhoods;
people with disabilities; youth;
parents; and
community elders.

**REASONABLE
WAITING TIMES:**

a bus every 15 minutes
(on busy routes) and every half-
hour (on the least-
active routes).

**A REGIONAL
TRANSIT SYSTEM**

that allows for mobility beyond
the Detroit city borders.

**A TRANSIT
SYSTEM**

where people with
disabilities have consistent
access to safe, accessible,
dependable, timely service
without charge.

**MORE
BENCHES.**

**QUICK
RESPONSE**

and replacement when
buses break down.

**CLEAN,
COMFORTABLE**

buses with heat in winter and
working A/C in summer.

**MORE BUS
SHELTERS**

with roofs that protect
from snow and rain.
Heated shelters at every
bus stop.

**BUS STOPS
AND SHELTERS**

that are fully accessible to
people with disabilities, including
paved waiting areas for people
in wheelchairs and barrier-free
access to get on and off
buses at the bus stop.

**A TRANSIT
SYSTEM**

that listens and
responds to the
feedback of riders.

**A RELIABLE
PARATRANSIT
SYSTEM**

that operates with
citizen oversight and
accountability.

**BUS-ONLY
LANES**

for increased speed
and efficiency.

**FULLY
FUNCTIONAL
INFRASTRUCTURE**

at the transit centers, including
restrooms and bus-schedule
monitors.

**CHARGING
OUTLETS**

with sufficient power
to charge scooters and
wheelchairs for mobility
assistance.

**BUS STOPS
SPACED
APPROPRIATELY**

so riders avoid navigating
long distances from one stop
to another when transferring
between bus lines.

**SAFE,
WELL-LIT**

waiting areas.

PASSENGERS' BILL OF RIGHTS

THE TRANSIT JUSTICE TEAM'S WORK on the City of Detroit Proposed 2021 Revised Charter included creating a Detroit Department of Transportation (DDOT) Passengers' Bill of Rights, which formed the basis for the revised charter's language on transit justice (in Article 7, Chapter 11: Transportation, Section 7-1106, Transportation Standards) stating that:

Citizens of the City of Detroit should expect the following transportation standards:

1. Respectful, courteous service
2. On-time bus service
3. Clean, safe, and well-maintained public modes of transportation
4. Receipt of transit information in a timely, transparent, and equitable manner
5. Unobstructed access to shelters, transportation stops, and transit centers
6. Adequate accommodations for a transit rider's special and other reasonable needs
7. Adequate and multiple means of notification of disruptions and delays in service
8. A fare structure that accommodates the financial condition of citizens and promotes increased access to transit for all citizens
9. Multilingual transportation literature, signage, and other communications that make transit services accessible to all citizens
10. A fair, impartial, and expeditious process for the filing and resolution of complaints and grievances with the Department of Transportation
11. Public input on transit and service-related decisions before implementation



“TRANSIT JUSTICE MEANS EQUITABLE ACCESS TO PUBLIC TRANSIT. It means transit service that offers the same quality across the board—no matter what your race or ethnicity is, no matter what your ability status might be, no matter what your social or economic status is. Equitable access means not having to have proximity to power in order to get satisfied.”

**—JAIME JUNIOR, TRANSIT JUSTICE TEAM MEMBER AND DISABILITY JUSTICE ADVOCATE,
WARRIORS ON WHEELS OF METROPOLITAN DETROIT**

ACTION REPORT

OUR CAMPAIGNS AND TACTICS FOR CHANGE

Necessary

Unstoppable

Accessible

Empowering

Awesome

Inspired

Grounded

Enthusiastic

Joyful

Caring

Intersectional

Engaged

Dedicated

Passionate

Powerful

**"TO ME, BUILDING POWER
MEANS** having enough
voices to have a positive
impact on decision-makers
to get things done in the
best interests of the public,
the people."

**—LARRY VERSE,
TRANSIT JUSTICE TEAM MEMBER**



“KEEP WOODWARD ON WOODWARD” —OUR FIRST CAMPAIGN, OUR FIRST BIG WIN

The Woodward bus #4 (formerly known as Woodward #53) is a key connector through majority Black neighborhoods to the downtown hub of government services, businesses, jobs, and cultural institutions.

This bus is the main North-South route connecting Detroit and Highland Park from State Fairgrounds Transit Center to Renaissance Center in downtown Detroit. This critically important route stretches from Eight Mile Road at the city’s northern boundary all the way to downtown Detroit.

The line was rerouted in 2012 during construction of the QLINE streetcar route. The rerouting was initially presented as a temporary inconvenience. But after QLINE construction was completed in 2013, the Woodward bus rerouting continued... for years.

When the Transit Justice team formed in 2015, the Woodward bus was *still* being rerouted.

In our earliest work—researching how transit cuts affected Detroiters’ lives—we quickly saw how the rerouting and loss of direct downtown bus service burdened riders who rely on this bus as their primary mode of transportation to, from, and around downtown Detroit. The rerouting:

- Forced riders to walk an extra third of a mile to get back to Woodward Avenue
- Increased workers’ distance from and travel time to downtown employment sites



- Limited access to cultural and entertainment destinations, as well as religious institutions, banks, government offices, 36th District Court, Detroit Public Library (Skillman Branch), and many other key resources
- Imposed physical and logistical hardships on vulnerable residents traveling to and from the downtown area, including people with disabilities, older adults, and families with small children
- Created a barrier to accessing the only congregate meal site for the homeless in downtown Detroit

Detroit transit activist, Syri Simpson, is a co-founder of the Transit Justice team who’d been advocating to restore the Woodward bus route for some time. In 2016, Syri created a Change.org petition to muster support to “Keep Woodward on Woodward.”



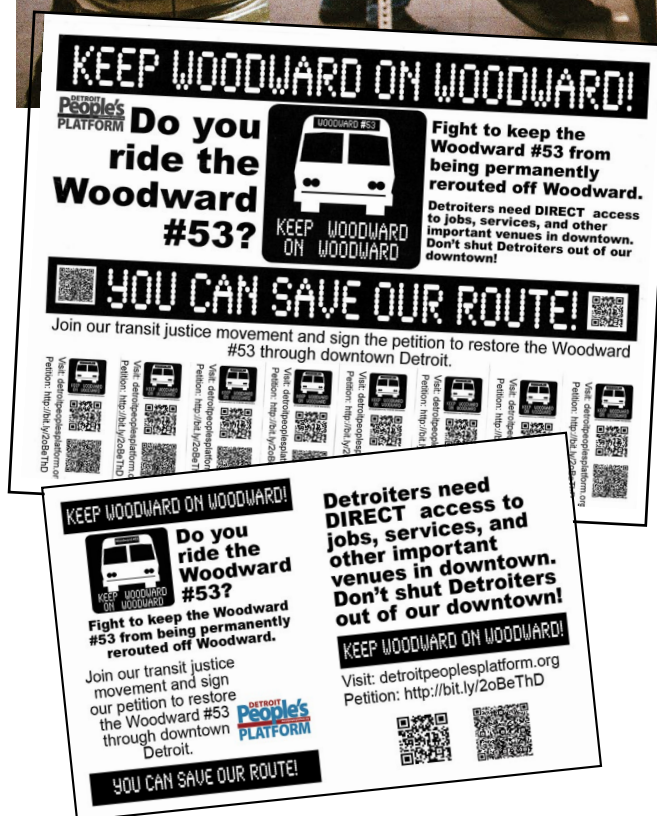
Petition to Keep the DDOT Woodward #53 bus on Woodward



We, the undersigned, including Detroit residents and those residents who are also Detroit Department of Transportation (DDOT) bus riders, assert our collective right as is stated in the Charter of the City of Detroit “to expect city government to provide for its residents reliable, convenient and comfortable transportation.”

Further, we the undersigned demand against the PERMANENT rerouting of the DDOT **Woodward bus #53**. We believe the rerouting of **Woodward bus #53** from Woodward Avenue to the Fisher Service Drive and then along Cass Avenue creates the following burdens for residents and riders who rely on the **Woodward bus #53** as their primary mode of transportation to the downtown area.

- It forces bus riders to walk an additional third of a mile to get back to Woodward Avenue.
- Increases the distance and time that workers have to travel to get to various downtown employment sites;
- Limits access to cultural and entertainment destinations; churches, banks, government offices, 36th District Court, Detroit Public Library (Skillman Branch);
- Creates an additional barrier to the only congregate meal site for the homeless in downtown;



In late 2016, the Transit Justice team threw its full weight behind the petition. We also agreed that we could do even more to push for the long overdue restoration of this critical bus route. *And so, our first campaign was born.*

Along with ramping up the momentum on gathering petition signatures, we:

- Developed informational materials to make the case for restoring the Woodward route

- Identified Detroiters willing to testify to the City Council on how the rerouting affected them
- Conducted citywide base-building around the need to Keep Woodward on Woodward—and end other transit disparities in Detroit

After months of pressure, in October 2017, the Detroit Department of Transportation (DDOT) took the important step of implementing a Feasibility Study on restoring the route.

In February 2018, we achieved full restoration of the Woodward route. Our first campaign and first major victory revived a crucial transit route that continues to benefit thousands of Detroiters who rely on this bus to access the downtown area.

The Keep Woodward on Woodward campaign created all kinds of ripple effects...

- Showing the city administration and DDOT that Detroiters are organized, powerful, and willing to assert their priorities
- Beginning a positive shift in DDOT's response to community pressure and feedback
- Communicating that DDOT's agenda needs to better align with bus riders' priorities
- Proving that when campaigns are organized by those most impacted, we win!

FARE JUSTICE CAMPAIGN

In March 2019, the Transit Justice team launched our Fare Justice Campaign in pursuit of a comprehensive low-income fare policy for essential bus riders in Detroit. We're pressing for a Low-Income Fare Pilot Program for people who are low-income, unemployed, homeless, veterans, and individuals returning home from incarceration.

This is an ongoing campaign created in response to a November 2018 Detroit City Council vote to approve a 33% DDOT fare increase (from \$1.50 to \$2.00), as well as fare-restructuring that increased the cost of monthly or weekly bus passes. We called out the negative financial impact this increase has on low-income families and individuals who already bear the brunt of profoundly inadequate bus service in underserved neighborhoods across Detroit.

In response to the rhetoric that bus service is "improving," we've continuously asked: *Who benefits from these improvements?* We've amplified the reality that most of the improvements we hear so much about have yet to reach underserved, majority Black neighborhood routes. We're still fighting for the basics—reliable, on-time bus service.

The Fare Equity Campaign highlights the stark truth that inequitable bus service perpetuates racial injustice by impeding access to healthcare, education, and employment



opportunities. We opposed the increase because the resulting revenue was not allocated toward increasing bus drivers' pay or making long overdue improvements in service frequency, bus stop shelters, and other necessities.

Although the increased fare structure went into effect on May 1st, 2019, the Transit Justice team stayed the course, and our hard work yielded two major wins in 2019:

- Fare equity for students
- An end of the application fee for reduced-fare ID for senior citizens and disabled bus riders

WE'RE NOT DONE YET! JOIN US!

Our organizing work includes an equity analysis, recommendations for instituting a 75% fare reduction for veterans, increasing investment in DDOT, and pushing for a comprehensive Low-Income Fare Pilot Program.

DETROIT BUS RIDERS WANT FARE JUSTICE NOT FARE INCREASES!

PROPOSED DDOT PASSES

INDIVIDUAL PASSES		DDOT ONLY PASSES	
4 Hour Ticket	24 Hour Pass	7 Day DDOT Pass	31 Day DDOT Pass
\$2.00	\$6.00	\$22.00	\$70.00
\$1.50	\$2.00	\$17.00	\$50.00

ADDITIONAL BENEFITS:

TRANSLATION FOR PEOPLE READING THIS ON A MOVING BUS:

4 HOUR TICKET	24 HOUR PASS	7 DAY DDOT PASS	31 DAY DDOT PASS
\$2.00	\$6.00	\$22.00	\$70.00
\$1.50	\$2.00	\$17.00	\$50.00

WHY SHOULD WE PAY 33% MORE TO RIDE THE BUS? WE NEED A LOW-INCOME FARE POLICY!

YOUR VOICE COUNTS! Flip for actions you can take today. **DETROIT People's PLATFORM**

“BUILDING POWER IS AMASSING INFORMATION that allows you to advocate better—sharing ideas and perspectives that make the whole greater than the sum of its parts. The Transit Justice team is small but mighty, with great impact.”

—JAIME JUNIOR, TRANSIT JUSTICE TEAM MEMBER AND DISABILITY JUSTICE ADVOCATE, WARRIORS ON WHEELS OF METROPOLITAN DETROIT

LANGUAGE EQUITY CAMPAIGN

The Transit Justice team launched our Language Equity Campaign to make sure language is never a barrier to accessing public transportation in Detroit. In summer 2019, our organizing efforts spurred major improvements at DDOT:

- DDOT applications, agendas, comment cards, print materials, and website content are now offered in Arabic and Spanish (print and online) and in Bengali (online)

- DDOT phone services are now accessible to speakers of Spanish and Arabic

We continue to hold DDOT accountable for ensuring multilingual signage and information across all aspects of our transit system, to advance our vision of a fully inclusive and accessible system that meets the needs of all Detroiters.

“BUILDING POWER MEANS ORGANIZING. Getting people together to make a good proposal to DDOT or the City about what we think transit in Detroit needs to be. Each of us contributes something different. It’s got to be well-organized, well-greased. In order to tell somebody what you want, you need to research and let them know, ‘This is what’s going on in other cities’ transit systems. They’re working well in those places, so why can’t we apply this or that to make ours better?’ If we do that, we will have a truly fine-tuned, well-run transit system.”

—ROCHELLA L. STEWART, TRANSIT JUSTICE TEAM MEMBER

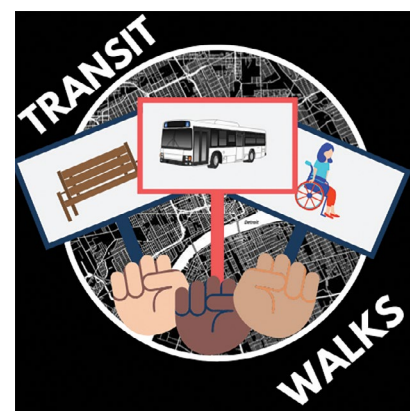
TRANSIT TALKS AND TRANSIT WALKS

Connecting and communicating is core to our work. In summer 2019, we created Transit Talks and Transit Walks to inform and organize Detroiters around a widening spectrum of transit justice issues affecting our communities.

We started with Transit Talks—our media and communications arm. Transit Talks includes digital communications and gatherings, in-person training, Power Building Forums (mutual learning and information-sharing sessions), and dissemination of flyers and handouts to mobilize the citizens of Detroit around urgent transit justice issues.

Our growing reach to more than 750 bus riders—primarily through social media—encouraged us to deepen our engagement practices by creating Transit Walks as a way to engage with riders on buses, at transit hubs, and at bus stops. We call the team members who do this work our “Bus Captains.”

Our initial Transit Walks canvassing route consisted of riding the Woodward bus #53 (now known as the Woodward bus #4) to the Rosa Parks Transit Center in downtown Detroit. Along the way, we spoke with riders, listened to their concerns, and gathered survey data to learn what mattered most to them. We shared information on our campaigns, our weekly Transit Justice team meetings, upcoming DDOT community input meetings, and future actions. Throughout the pandemic, our Bus Captains continued distributing personal protective equipment (PPE) and updated transit information, while organizing and base-building.



A CAMPAIGN FOR ACCOUNTABILITY, TRANSPARENCY, AND DIALOGUE

Transparency and accountability are the essence of public services that truly serve the public's needs. DDOT's community input meetings at the Rosa Parks Transit Center provide one of the most important mechanisms for communicating, in person and collectively, with DDOT. In these meetings, community members dialogue with DDOT representatives and raise issues DDOT needs to hear about.

In August 2019, DDOT suspended monthly meetings and announced a plan to shift to quarterly community input meetings. We knew we needed to preserve our community's ability to interact with DDOT face to face on a monthly basis.

To protest DDOT's unilateral decision to reduce both the frequency and number of community input meetings per year, the Transit Justice team decided that regardless of DDOT's cancellation, we would continue to convene the monthly community input meeting.

We arrived at the Rosa Parks Transit Center and held our own "unofficial" meeting until the Transit Center's staff and security police instructed



us to leave the premises. At that point, we shifted gears by canvassing transit passengers outside the Transit Center building to let them know about DDOT's intention to limit bus riders' opportunities to impact and inform DDOT's decision-making processes.

This action led to a meeting with DDOT's director the next day, resulting in resumption of DDOT monthly community input meetings at the Rosa Parks Transit Center in October 2019—a win for the accountability and transparency Detroit's essential bus riders need, deserve, and will always stand up for!

PODCASTING FOR TRANSIT JUSTICE

The Transit Justice team's uncensored, no-nonsense *Do Better DDOT* podcast launched in June 2019. Podcast co-hosts Samara and Ray chronicle the sometimes horrifying, sometimes hilarious ups and downs of navigating Detroit's public transit system.

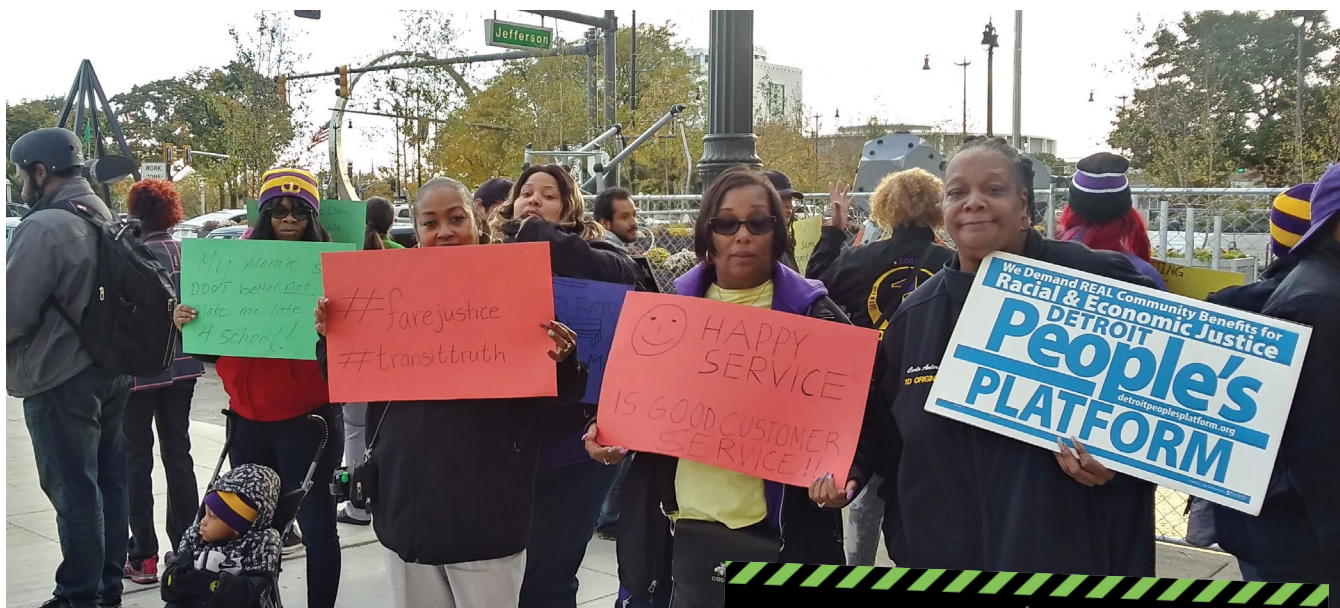
"We started this podcast out of anger. We were tired of how DDOT representatives brushed off our questions and demands. We felt they really needed to do better, so we created this podcast."

It's like our letter to DDOT every week, saying, 'Hey, this is what Detroiters want and need, and we're going to tell you whether you like it or not, outside of the settings and meetings DDOT controls. When DDOT sets a meeting, DDOT has all the power: they decide who can talk, how long they'll talk, and what they can talk about.'

We decided the podcast will be on our terms. This is a platform for bus riders and we're going to say what we want to say, with no boundaries."

—Samara Hill, Detroit People's Platform Community Organizer and Data Manager





TRANSIT TRIANGLE OF TRUTH DEMONSTRATION

In October 2019, the Transit Justice team organized our first major public action in front of City Hall. The Transit Triangle of Truth demonstration affirmed the rights of bus riders and bus drivers alike, through the following demands:

- Clean buses
- Adequate lighting at bus stops
- Bus shelters and benches
- Multilingual signage and literature
- Functioning wheelchair ramps on buses
- Timely and equitable bus route service
- Friendly, effective customer service
- Low-income fares



During the action, the Transit Justice team was joined in solidarity by members of Service Employees' International Union (SEIU) Local 1, and by bus riders raising their voices on behalf of a transit system that meets the needs of essential bus riders.

“PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION IS AN ISSUE THAT IS CLOSE TO MY HEART, mainly because I get around by bike and bus. Sometimes, we are looked at as ‘lesser than’ because we’re not driving a car. I want to make sure our voices are counted. I want to make sure our voices are heard. We matter. Transit matters. It needs money and resources, accountability and transparency—because as we all know, accountability plus transparency basically equals the truth.”

—NORMA J. POWELL, TRANSIT JUSTICE TEAM MEMBER



BUILDING POWER WITH DETROIT'S DISABILITY JUSTICE COMMUNITIES

Recognizing the intersectionality of disability justice and transit justice, the Transit Justice team builds power with aligned organizations, including:

- Warriors on Wheels of Metropolitan Detroit (WOW), which advocates for the rights of people with disabilities to ensure equity in transportation, housing, education, and civic access
- Detroit Disability Power, whose mission is to leverage and build the organizing power of the disability community to ensure the full inclusion of people with disabilities in Metro Detroit

In 2019, the Transit Justice team's collaborative solidarity work with these and other activists in Detroit's disability justice community helped to:

- Amplify the voices of the disability community regarding ADA accountability, bus-boarding policy, and bus stop and shelter restoration at critical bus stops
- End DDOT's practice of charging a \$1 fee to apply for reduced-fare ID for disabled and senior bus riders
- Improve, simplify, and reformat application forms and materials for the ADA, Medicaid, and Senior Citizen Reduced-fare Program
- Improve, simplify, and reformat ADA paratransit application forms and materials

We continually deepen our understanding of the intersections between disability justice and transit justice, as we engage in the ongoing work of supporting our overlapping constituencies of bus riders and people with disabilities in building power for change.



From late 2019 through early 2020, the Transit Justice team marked the 30th anniversary of the Americans With Disabilities Act by participating as a team in disability advocacy training led by Dessa Cosma, the Executive Director of Detroit Disability Power.

We also collaborate with WOW on a Paratransit Accountability Campaign. In Detroit, paratransit services are a public benefit that has been contracted out to private third-party providers, resulting in a complicated, inconsistent, and decidedly *non-user-friendly* paratransit system.

We are encouraged that the City Council and DDOT have initiated a feasibility study on bringing paratransit back under DDOT control, rather than continuing to privatize this crucial public service. We will continue our organizing and advocacy work with WOW and other disability activists to achieve our collective goals on this core issue.

“To me, transit justice means everybody, irrespective of their station in society—their color, economic status, employment status, whether they’re disabled or not—should be able to go where they need and want to go, at a reasonable cost, on a transit system that is dependable.”

—LARRY VERSE, TRANSIT JUSTICE TEAM MEMBER



“IT’S TIME WE ESSENTIAL BUS RIDERS—who depend on DDOT as our primary means of transportation—have our voices heard. We use the system and we have the knowledge and experience to provide critical input in this process.”

—RENARD MONCZUNSKI, TRANSIT JUSTICE TEAM ORGANIZER



TRANSIT RIGHTS = CIVIL RIGHTS: DEMANDING COMMUNITY INPUT ON THE STATE FAIRGROUNDS TRANSIT CENTER RELOCATION

In Fall 2020, Detroit’s City Council approved the sale of 142 acres of city-owned land at the former Michigan State Fairgrounds, including the State Fairgrounds Transit Center. The site-development plan includes construction of an Amazon Distribution Warehouse Center.

It also proposes to relocate the State Fairgrounds Transit Center, impacting the schedule and routing of the Woodward #4, Conant #12, Eight Mile #17, Hamilton #23, Livernois #30, and #54 Wyoming buses. These changes will affect 30,000 bus riders who travel these routes to work, school, and other daily activities.

Yet again, the rush to privatize public land occurred with insufficient community input and transparency. Years of work led by the State Fairgrounds Development Coalition to forge a sustainable economic development site-plan were shunted aside. Affected bus riders and local residents had no knowledge of the proposed changes. The community had no input into

the decision-making process regarding the location and design of the proposed new “North Transit Center” that will replace the State Fairgrounds Transit Center.

The Detroit Department of Transportation is mandated by Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Federal Transit



Administration to host a public hearing when contemplating major service changes that impact minority and low-income bus riders.

In September and October 2020, the Transit Justice team and a coalition of 25+ individuals and organizations—including Warriors on Wheels of Metropolitan Detroit, State Fairgrounds Development Coalition, and Equitable Detroit Coalition—fought for and won a Title VI public hearing on November 13th, 2020. Our public-pressure campaign included a Rally Against the “Unfairgrounds” in October and extensive community organizing.

In February 2021, DDOT published a Title VI Equity Analysis on the relocation of the State Fair Transit Center, in response to our demands. We insisted that DDOT conduct this analysis to determine whether the relocation and resulting service changes would have a disparate impact on Detroit’s Black communities and other communities of color. After analyzing the document, we are framing our next advocacy steps in this campaign to address the health impacts and environmental justice issues raised by the relocation plan.

D-DOT PUBLIC HEARING on the STATE FAIRGROUNDS TRANSIT CENTER

BUS RIDERS AND ALL DETROITERS HAVE A RIGHT TO THIS HEARING UNDER TITLE VI - CIVIL RIGHTS ACT OF 1964.

Ask Questions and Raise Concerns about the location and design of the new transit center, location of bus stops and shelters, and what will happen to the current Transit Center.

Two VIRTUAL Sessions - FRIDAY NOVEMBER 13th

<p>10 am Session</p> <p>Meeting ID: 872 9536 0231</p> <p>Meeting Link: cityofdetroit.zoom.us/j/87295360231</p> <p>Phone-in: (414) 826-9795</p>	<p>2 pm Session</p> <p>Meeting ID: 894 8184 6485</p> <p>Meeting Link: cityofdetroit.zoom.us/j/89481846485</p> <p>Phone-in: (301) 715-8992</p>
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*To participate at the time of Public Comment, please turn your name.
* Telephones participants: Raise your hand by pressing *9.
* Web participants: Raise your hand by clicking on the appropriate icon or pressing *.
* Windows computer: [ALT] + [V] * Apple computers: [COMMAND] + [V]

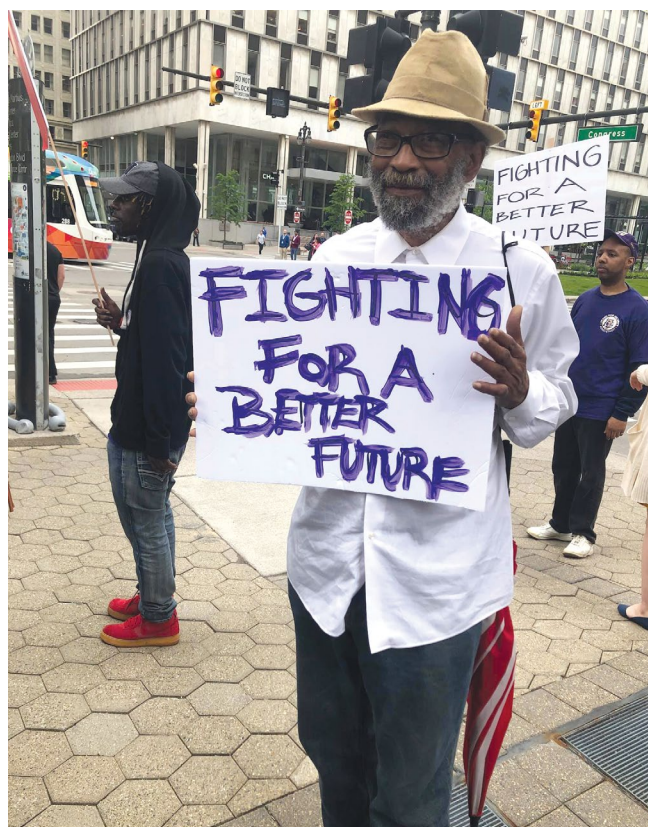
PUSHING TO PASS BALLOT PROPOSAL P: THE PEOPLE'S CHARTER

In mid-2020—in response to the national racial justice uprisings in protest of the murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Aubrey, and so many others—City Council President Pro Tempore, Mary Sheffield, and Council Member Raquel Castañeda-López convened a table of community organizers, activists, researchers, and organizational and coalition leaders—including the Transit Justice team—to form the Racial Justice Work Group.

Drawing on the collective wisdom and lived experience of community members, the Racial Justice Task Force proposed revisions to the City of Detroit Proposed 2021 Revised Charter, which serves as an organizing document and mandate that informs how the city operates. The Revised Charter includes a section on Transportation Standards rooted in our foundational work on a DDOT Passengers' Bill of Rights (see page 8).

The Revised Charter came up for a ballot initiative vote (Proposal P) on August 3, 2021, articulating provisions to increase government transparency and accountability:

- A FAIR fare for bus riders
- A water affordability plan
- Provisions for truly affordable housing
- A more accountable and transparent Board of Police Commissioners
- An Environmental Justice Office and Commission
- An Office of Disability Affairs
- Protection of immigrant rights
- And much more!



The Transit Justice team volunteered, alongside local allies and partners across Detroit, to get the vote out for Proposal P. To our great disappointment, the revised City Charter did not pass.

Although dismayed, we are not defeated. We are exploring other options and strategies to make sure the Transportation Standards set forth in Proposal P come to fruition. And, with our partners and allies across Detroit's social justice movements, we are defining next steps for advancing other provisions in what we now think of as our progressive manifesto.

“WHEN I THINK OF BUILDING POWER, I don't just think about myself. I think about my community as a whole. I think of not one voice, but of many voices, delivering the same message over and over again, until we get what we want done.”

**—SAMARA HILL, DETROIT PEOPLE'S PLATFORM COMMUNITY ORGANIZER
AND DATA MANAGER, AND TRANSIT JUSTICE TEAM MEMBER**



ACTIVIST TOOLKIT

ORGANIZING TACTICS AND BEST PRACTICES

Organizing is a slow, incremental process towards building power and winning change.

Organizing is about perseverance, and staying connected to the vision of social change that results in justice for our communities.

We continually remind ourselves that it takes time to grow our collective power and to get each of the wins we need to build toward much deeper change.

This Activist Toolkit highlights some of the Transit Justice teams' best practices and lessons learned over more than five years of organizing for transit justice in Detroit. The tools and tips in this section address key areas of our organizing tactics and processes:

- Shifting The Narrative, Getting Our Story Out There
- Recruiting Team Members— And Building Leadership
- How We Work Together
- Building A Base of Essential Riders
- Power Building Forums

We hope this Activist Toolkit will inspire others to pursue equity and justice. This information is offered with the intention of activating more Detroiters, and other allies, to work for societal transformation.

SHIFTING THE NARRATIVE, GETTING OUR STORY OUT THERE

Earned media gets our message out. The Transit Justice team builds relationships with the press, podcasters, freelance journalists, artists, and media workers to build a visible, positive public presence that:

- Draws attention to the injustices and inequities in Detroit's transit system
- Amplifies our mission and advocacy across diverse audiences and communities
- Attracts new members and allies to our organizing work
- Establishes a permanent public documentation of our impact
- Sparks dialogue, debate, and action grounded in our community's concerns
- Presses for accountability from our government officials
- Builds momentum for change

Detroit Free Press

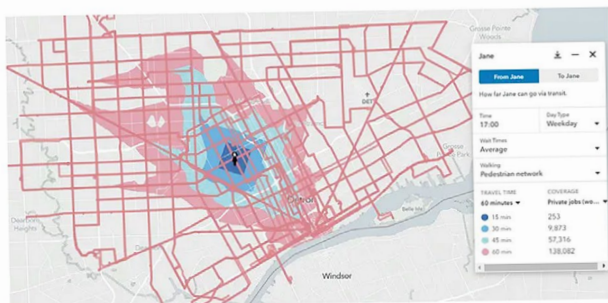
DETROIT

Funding better bus service in Detroit would mean access to thousands of jobs, group says

Eric D. Lawrence Detroit Free Press

Published 8:58 a.m. ET July 28, 2021 | Updated 3:18 p.m. ET July 28, 2021

"Increased investment in Detroit, especially in expanding neighborhood bus service, will have transformative and immediate positive effects on majority Black and (people of color) families residing in left-behind and disconnected neighborhoods, which currently have minimal access to essential businesses, social services, health care, employment, and education," according to Renard Monczunski of the Detroit People's Platform.



CRAIN'S DETROIT BUSINESS

September 22, 2019 12:01 AM

Verse, Cole and Smith: Detroit bus service needs to hit minimum standards

Larry D. Verse, Serena Cole and Kim Smith



The Detroit News

Column: QLine misses the mark

Renard Monczunski

Published 12:05 a.m. ET June 20, 2017

As the media flooded the airwaves and filled pages of print with happy talk about Detroit's new trolley, Detroit residents have been taking a deeper look at the M-1/QLine. At the start and end of the trolley's first day of operation, two separate protests asked some pertinent and, as of yet, unanswered questions.

We have dubbed it the "Why Line." Why all the money on a project that serves a select few; why no community benefits; and why do the funders continue to blatantly mislead us with regard to the project's role in real regional transit?



Detroiters Bill of Rights Riverwise Episode 11 with Renard Mo...

00:50:03 • [Leave a comment](#) • [Download](#)

EPISODE 11, "DETROITERS BILL OF RIGHTS WITH RENARD MONCZUNSKI"

As we end the year 2020, Detroit People's Platform Transit Justice team member **Renard Monczunski** gives Riverwise Podcast listeners reason to be optimistic about 2021. Renard is part of a broad, community-based coalition brought together by Detroit councilmembers Mary Sheffield and Raquel Castaneda-Lopez in order to radically reform the



MEDIA RELATIONS CHECKLIST

The Transit Justice team's best practices for interacting with the media from a place of power:

Find journalists who can cover your organization and news stories by working your connections and network. Ask around to find out who knows who. Connect with allied organizations to see who they work with.

Notice which media outlets, journalists, bloggers, and others cover similar issues with integrity. Connect with these outlets and individuals through press releases, social media, and other contact-points.

Send your press releases and opinion editorials to as many local and regional outlets as possible. Don't rely too heavily on just one or two key contacts or outlets.

Always reply to media inquiries as quickly as possible. Journalists and other media workers cover time-sensitive stories on tight deadlines. The faster you respond, the better your chance of being quoted or having your perspective included.

Before agreeing to an interview, make sure you're working with a reputable media source and/or journalist. Check out their past reporting to understand their editorial or political leanings, accuracy of coverage, audiences, and reach. Use this to guide your decision about whether to participate in an interview, and how to craft your talking points.

Before committing to an interview, ask the journalist or interviewer why they are covering this story and what their angle or perspective is. If you don't think your issue will get covered in a fair and accurate way, you don't have to consent to be interviewed.

When you do an interview, find out when the article or report will be published, posted, or aired, so you can share it with your networks while the news is still fresh.

Be clear about your rules of engagement when working with the media. Remember that you have the power to pause or end an interview at any time. You have the right to ask for clarification of a question, or to opt-out of answering certain questions.

Just before an interview, allow yourself a block of "clarity time," to sit with whatever questions you may have for the journalist or media contact, ground yourself in what you're speaking about, prepare or review your written talking points, and settle into "interview mode."

During the interview, take your time thinking about and answering each question. Don't let yourself feel rushed, so you can stay in charge of your answers, control your message, and respond strategically.

When speaking to the press, keep in mind that in practical terms, there's no such thing as "off the record." In theory, anything you say could end up being quoted, so be attentive even when making comments "off the record."

If you don't know the answer to an interviewer's question—or don't have the expertise to comment in a deeply informed way—it's fine to opt out of answering that question. Staying focused on your knowledge and experience builds credibility.



STAYING ON MESSAGE

Staying “on message” when communicating with the media—or in any public-facing situation—is essential to controlling your message.

The Transit Justice team works together to build a collective understanding of what we want to say, how we say it, and how we frame our narrative. We also participate in media training to grow our skills to make the most of every media opportunity.

Here’s what we’ve learned:

- **When we speak with the media,** we actively prepare ourselves to stay on message. *What narrative are we promoting? Is it a justice narrative? An equity narrative? How are we telling our story so others can understand it, feel it, and be moved to action?*
- **Before speaking with the media,** we map out what we’re going to say by preparing a clear, compelling narrative that speaks to the work of justice and equity.
- **Our narrative is always framed** to avoid undermining or discrediting any individual, movement, or campaign.
- **Staying on message** includes being careful to avoid saying anything that could undermine our voice, credibility, or case for change.
- **Our messaging includes** clearly identifying ourselves as members of the Transit Justice team, and noting that we represent more than 500 essential bus riders in Detroit. This conveys our collective power whenever any team member talks to the press, makes public comments, or speaks in any public arena.

The Detroit News

DETROIT

DDOT to drop, shorten some bus routes this fall

Sarah Rahal | The Detroit News

Published 6:39 p.m. ET Sept. 8, 2021 | Updated 6:59 p.m. ET Sept. 8, 2021

“We are already experiencing lack of adequate service to begin with and what is inexplicable is that we have a lot of federal money coming in from the American Rescue Plan and we don’t have a plan on how the department is going to use this money to enhance the department and yet we’re hearing cuts,” Monczunski told the Detroit City Council during Tuesday’s formal session.



Detroit’s NPR Station

HEARD ON ALL THINGS CONSIDERED, MORNING EDITION

As DDOT Cuts Service, Bus Riders and Drivers Worry About the Coming Winter

by Eli Newman | Oct. 4, 2021



“We are already experiencing a lack of adequate service to begin with,” transit organizer Renard Monczunski told City Council in September. “What is inexplicable is that we have a lot of federal money coming in from the American Rescue Plan, and we don’t have a plan on how the department is going to use this money to enhance the department, and yet we’re hearing cuts.”



Michigan’s nonpartisan, nonprofit news source

Billions coming to Michigan cities, bringing tough questions about priorities



Saginaw’s share of federal stimulus money is larger than the mid-Michigan city’s annual general fund. Like other municipalities, Saginaw has many needs and its elected officials are weighing how best to spend the money. (ehrlif / Shutterstock.com image)

“There’s a lot of people that’ve been left behind before the pandemic, and we’re asking for ... a demonstrated commitment to racial equity and inclusion in prioritizing the needs of investments,” said Renard Monczunski, the transit justice organizer with the group.

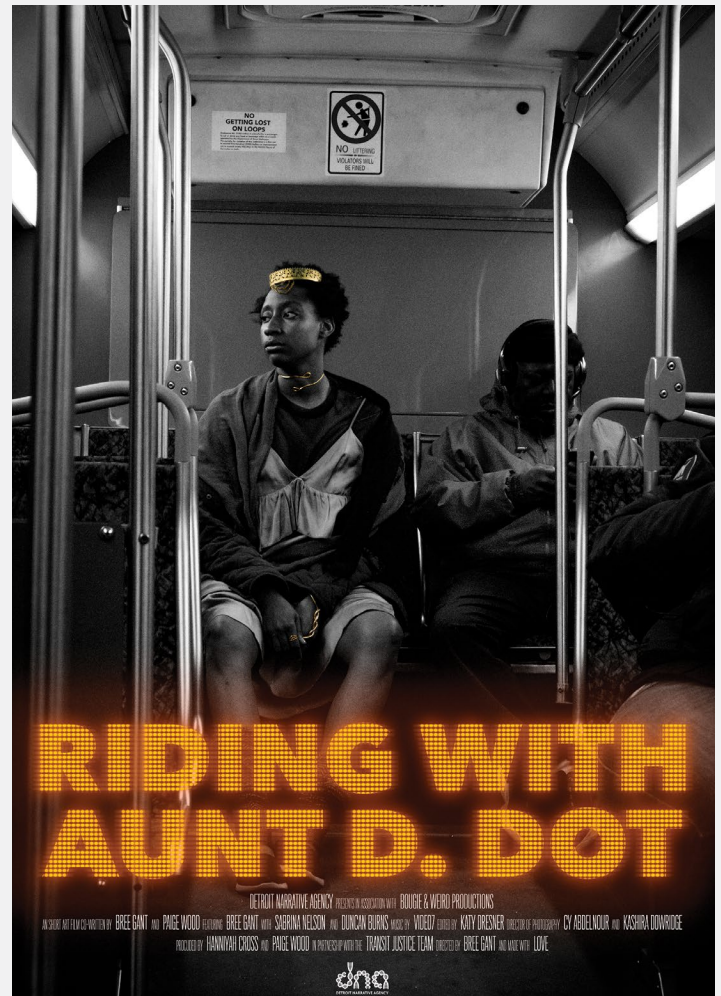
PARTNERING WITH ARTISTS

Beyond earned media, we've seen how working with socially conscious artists offers fresh ways to tell our transit justice stories—and connect with new allies.

A great example is the Transit Justice team's partnership with multidisciplinary artist bree gant—whose extraordinary photographs appear throughout this document, and grace the cover.

We connected with bree during their 2017 fellowship with Detroit Narrative Agency (DNA)—a community organization that disrupts harmful narratives about Detroit by supporting BIPOC Detroiters to explore and create media storytelling projects that build collective healing, power, and liberation. While working with us to shift negative stereotypes and narratives of bus riders to positive yet realistic portrayals by featuring their stories, DNA connected us with bree.

bree's long-term documentary photography project witnessing social politics around mental health on public transit in Detroit had evolved to include a moving image project and a podcast.



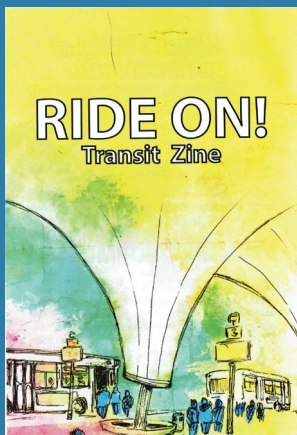
RIDING WITH AUNT D. DOT

DETROIT NARRATIVE AGENCY PRESENTS IN ASSOCIATION WITH BOUTIQUE & WERD PRODUCTIONS
 AN INTERVIEW WITH BREEE GANT AND PAIGE WOOD FEATURING BREEE GANT WITH SAGGINA NELSON AND DUNCAN BURNS MUSIC BY VIDEOU EDITED BY KATY DRESNER PRODUCTION PHOTOGRAPHY BY CY ADIELYOUNG AND KASHIRA ODAWODE
 PRODUCED BY HANNAH CROSS AND PAIGE WOOD IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE TRANSIT JUSTICE TEAM DIRECTED BY BREEE GANT AND MADE WITH LOVE
 dna

bree participated in Transit Justice team meetings and events, interviewed our team members and other bus riders for the podcast, and cast some of our team members in their film, *Riding with Aunt D. Dot*, co-written with Paige Wood.

We were proud to be in the audience when the film premiered in 2018. *Riding with Aunt D. Dot* is a story that unfolds through personal narrative and radical imagination on the midtown bus loop as it gets stuck in the city's historic North End neighborhood.

To see our neighborhoods, our transit system, and our stories reflected in the imaginative lens of this beautiful film was a powerful experience. We encourage other movement building organizations to explore collaborative projects with community artists that not only shift the narrative, but build power and inspiration to oppose injustice and oppression.



Another example of bringing creative energy into our organizing work was our collaboration with artist K. Guillory, whose work graced the cover of our *Ride On!* transit zine. We widely distributed this visually striking zine during various transit organizing activities.

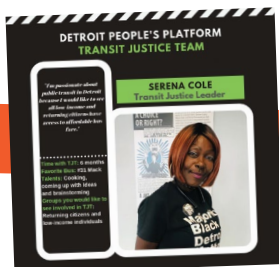
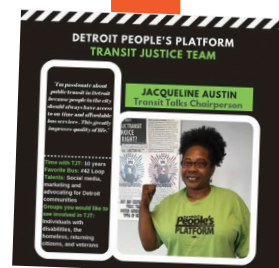
RECRUITING TEAM MEMBERS—AND BUILDING LEADERSHIP

Recruiting people for transit justice organizing—or any movement work—can be as straightforward as having a conversation with someone, asking for their contact information, following up to let them know about opportunities to act, and inviting them to join in.

The deeper work is keeping people engaged and sustaining strong relationships over time.

Here's how we've built our long-lasting Transit Justice dream-team:

- **One-to-one conversations to get to know each person.** We make a practice of exploring each individual's interests, needs, and motivations around the work. We learn about their skills and talents, the roles and activities they feel comfortable taking on, and new areas they want to explore. We ask lots of questions, encourage lots of questions, and get to know each team member in depth. Like most of the work, this process is ongoing.
- **Abundant opportunities for learning and leadership development,** including online and in-person learning opportunities, train-the-trainer sessions, field-days with practice opportunities, and individual coaching. We operate as an educational space, as a way of honoring our volunteers' time by sharing tangible skills that people can apply to their work on transit justice and other struggles they're engaged in.
- **Clarity about roles and responsibilities.** We ensure that each person has well-defined roles for their part of the process, so the organizer is not running the entire team and everyone on the team knows what they're accountable for. Team cohesion grows when each team member fully owns their role—whether as strategist, digital organizer, field organizer, or other position on the team. We match people with roles they enjoy and excel in, and support them in continually deepening their skills.
- **An organizing mindset that invests in long-term engagement.** In a 2014 training we attended with organizer Lacy Dawson, we learned that “people come for the mission and stay for the organizer.” We invest in our relationship with every member of the team, individually and collectively, by offering leadership guidance, coaching, strategic direction, troubleshooting, a friendly ear—and plenty of opportunities to apply their roles and skills to directing and leading organizing campaigns.



TRANSIT JUSTICE PROFILES:

A TOOL FOR RECRUITMENT, ENGAGEMENT, AND CELEBRATION

Our Transit Justice team member profiles are one example of the creative methods we use to:

- Energize our team by building a collective identity and sense of group cohesion
- Celebrate and honor our team members' leadership, hard work, and commitment to transit justice
- Equip our team members with a beautiful tool for showcasing their work with pride
- Give the public a picture of who we are and why we're fighting for transit justice

- Inspire people to see themselves reflected in this work, and to join us

We created these profiles as a recruitment tool *and* joyous acknowledgment of our transit justice leaders. This visual representation shows Detroiters that we are community members of different ages and walks of life, working together for equitable transit.

By showing a cross-section of Detroit's essential riders, we're inviting other bus riders to see that there's a welcoming place for them here if they join our team.

THE ANATOMY OF OUR MEMBER PROFILES

QUOTE

Each individual shares why transit justice matters to them. Personal stories inspire others to think about their relationship with transit and equity issues. With our different motivations for seeking change, we're unified in a vision of transit justice that's responsive to our collective concerns.

TIME

This reflects our members' commitment and determination to stick with the fight over time. It shows that campaigns aren't won overnight...the process happens over months or years. It also lets people know that we are always growing our team and seeking new members.

DETROIT PEOPLE'S PLATFORM TRANSIT JUSTICE TEAM

"I'm passionate about public transit in Detroit because I'm sick and tired of being sick and tired of slow bus service, poor customer service, and lack of benches/shelters at bus stops."

Time with TJT: 3 years
Favorite Bus: Grand River #3
Talents: Organizing and being everyone's calendar reminder
Groups you would like to see involved in TJT: Students and individuals with disabilities

SAMARA HILL Transit Walks Chairperson



NAME AND TITLE

Our Transit Justice "Who's Who" introduces each member and their role in the work.

FAVORITE BUS

Highlights our local roots and impact. Shows that we are a movement of bus riders. Affirms that we like using public transit, are work to improve things so that more people will want to use public transit. We see buses as one of our last public spaces—a place where conversation, community, and mutual aid are very much alive.

TALENTS

Amplifies each individual's skills, roles, and interests. Encourages community members to consider their talents and reflect on how they might participate in transit justice work.

GROUPS YOU'D LIKE TO SEE INVOLVED

Encourages people to see themselves in this work, know they are welcomed, and recognize our intersectional interest in achieving transit justice. We're continually reflecting on how and where to continue branching out to new constituencies in the transit riding community.

HOW WE WORK TOGETHER

MEETINGS

The Transit Justice team created a set of guidelines and practices to support effective meetings that hold space for us to grow knowledge and power together.

We're sharing this tool in the hope that it will inspire other organizers and groups to create their own collective guidelines for meeting and working together.



WORKGROUP AGREEMENTS

We will hold ourselves accountable to this agreement which will allow for a shared experience that fosters the opportunity for understanding, respecting, and connecting.

1. Cell phones on silent/vibrate.
2. Practice active listening.
3. Arrive on time.
4. Be encouraged to speak up.
5. Give others the opportunity to finish their thoughts BEFORE responding.
6. Respect, not undermine. Ask questions instead.
7. One mic. (One person speaking at a time).
8. Give space, leave space. Recognizing that people have different communication styles, and some people tend to speak up more quickly and often than others, we intentionally "give space and leave space" so everyone has a chance to speak their mind.
9. Expect to participate. We value your voice and it's crucial to have you engaged.
10. Check-in, respond, and follow-up in a timely fashion. The Transit Justice team has a "check-in culture," where we keep each other updated on the actions, tasks, and commitments we've agreed to carry out.



CARE CHECKLIST FOR MAINTAINING OUR CONNECTIONS

Treat each other like family. We routinely make check-in calls to see how people are doing and what's going on in their lives. We engage with and value the full person, not just in relation to their transit justice work. During the 2021 floods and power outages— and throughout the pandemic— we've continuously made wellness calls to our team to stay in touch and meet them where they are at in these challenging times.

Be intentional about avoiding one-sided (extractive) relationships within the organizing team and when conducting community organizing. We invest in our leaders' growth and learning. We invest in shared ownership of the work and our victories. We share the spotlight and the mic. We invest in the human relationships at the heart of our transit justice mission.

In meetings and other interactions, give time and attention to what is happening in people's current situation. We don't just "jump into the work" without first practicing some form of collective care, inquiry, and attention.

Provide food and refreshments at in-person meetings as an expression of care. Be creative about addressing people's needs while doing the work.

Enact community care during community organizing activities. We're always thinking about ways to respond to the challenges we face as Detroiters at any given time. In summer 2015, while conducting transit justice surveys in the midst of the Detroit water shutoffs, we distributed free water bottles and water. Since the pandemic started, we've distributed PPE and Covid-19 prevention information during our organizing events.

CULTIVATING A CULTURE OF CARE

Care is at the center of our work. We organize for transit justice because we care about our city... we care about other bus riders...we care about the priorities of majority Black and low-income communities throughout Detroit...and we care about equity and justice.

Our expressions of care take many forms, beginning with caring for our team members who organize for transit justice on a daily basis. We strengthen our collective power and team cohesion by cultivating an intentional culture of care.

We've always attended to care in working as a team and engaging with our communities. In the past two years, our culture of care has grown in response to the collective grief and trauma we've experienced around the pandemic, racist violence,



and other harms generated by white supremacy and other systems of oppression. As we witnessed the pandemic magnify the oppressions affecting our team members and constituencies, we became even more deliberate about attending to the wellness aspects of this work.

BUILDING A BASE OF ESSENTIAL RIDERS

The Leadership Ladder is one of our favorite tools for building and sustaining a base of essential riders and a dynamic Transit Justice team.

We use the Leadership Ladder to support people in deepening their involvement in our work, learning alongside us, and taking on greater and greater leadership responsibilities over time.

We've adapted this Leadership Ladder from the Economic Justice Alliance of Michigan (EJAM). The Detroit People's Platform and the Transit Justice team have worked closely with EJAM, participating in EJAM's trainings and fellowship program. We've recruited many members of our Transit Justice team through the EJAM fellowships.

The ladder shows the incremental steps that begin with our first conversations or contact with an individual, when their engagement with us is exploratory and relatively limited. From there, we offer continuous opportunities to grow with us by taking on more responsibility, ownership, and leadership at whatever pace or style is comfortable for them. The path culminates in "owning" and leading, where people step fully into the power they already have in their work with us, and in external environments where they can effect change.



THE DETROIT PEOPLE'S PLATFORM LEADERSHIP LADDER

SAVE THE DATE:

Upcoming public transit meeting!

Learn more about DDOT's flaws and how you can help improve bus services for Detroiters.

May 12, 2015
5:30 - 7:30 pm

7700 2nd Ave
Detroit, MI 48202
(directions on back)

Dinner provided.

Hosted by the Detroit People's Platform

ARE YOU CONCERNED ABOUT...

Safety?
Fare-increases?
Late Buses?
Route Issues?
Lack of Bus Shelters?

IT'S TIME FOR YOU TO SPEAK UP. START HERE.

WITH US

JOIN THE DETROIT PEOPLE'S PLATFORM TRANSIT JUSTICE TEAM

LET YOUR VOICES BE HEARD!

DETROIT PEOPLE'S PLATFORM

Virtual Community Input Meeting

Thursday, June 18 | 5 p.m.

Zoom Call ID: 1234 567890

Meeting ID: 1234 567890

Passcode: 061830

VIRTUAL COMMUNITY INPUT MEETING

Thursday, June 18 | 5 p.m.

Zoom Call ID: 1234 567890

Meeting ID: 1234 567890

Passcode: 061830

LEAD

OWN

CONTRIB

ENDORS

TRAIN

FOLLOW

OBSERVING AND

LEADING

- Run for office: Community Advisory Council (Detroit district-level council), Neighborhood Advisory Council, block clubs (neighborhood associations), zoning commissions, or elected office.
- Employment in progressive, social justice, and racial justice organizations that focus on policy and societal change.

OWNING

- Build and coordinate organizing teams.

CONTRIBUTING

- Lead or co-lead events and/or actions. Including, but not limited to: recruiting members and participants, designing the strategy and purpose, logistics, securing permits and legal observers for demonstration, coordinating with partner organizations, training participants.
- Being a spokesperson for the Transit Justice team and/or other progressive organizations.

ENDORISING

- Host an event or action. Including, but not limited to: setting up materials, hosting a table, and recruiting participants.

TRAINING

- Learn the basic facilitation skills and steps needed to host and lead events/actions.

FOLLOWING

(Member actively participates in the organization's scheduled events)

- Attend an action, event, or rally/demonstration.
- Participate in a membership orientation.
- Volunteer to phone-bank or gather petitions.
- Conduct canvassing.
- Attend a panel or forum.
- Help out with data entry, post-event follow-ups, or other logistics.
- Participate in training.

OBSERVING AND SUPPORTING

(Initial contact and basic level of interest/engagement)

- Sign a petition.
- Sign-up for online updates, e-newsletters, etc.
- Complete an information card with contact info.
- Follow and engage with our social media.

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VOLUNTEER SIGNUP SHEET									
Name		Address		Phone		Email		City/State/Zip	
How would you like to be contacted? (check all that apply)									
By Email	By Phone	By Mail	By Text	By In-person	By Other				
What are your skills? (check all that apply)									
Organizing	Public Speaking	Writing	Graphic Design	Photography	Video	Web Development	Social Media	Translation	Other
Accounting	IT	Marketing	Research	Training	Event Planning	Legal	Medical	Education	Other

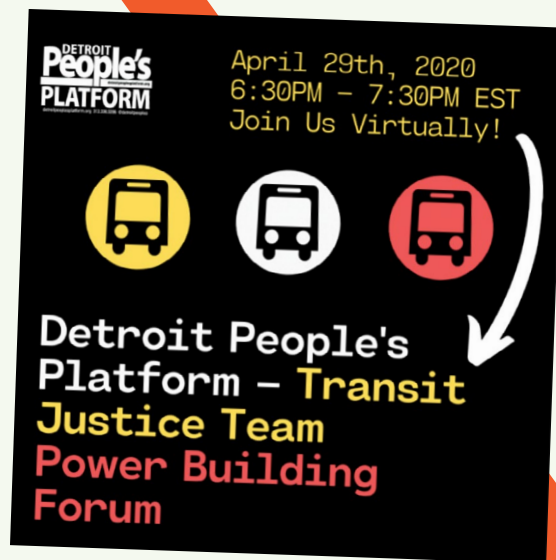
POWER BUILDING FORUMS

Pre-pandemic, the Transit Justice team conducted community organizing and recruitment activities at community centers, soup kitchens, churches, and other places where we could connect in person with essential bus riders.

We'd share information on our campaigns, distribute our literature, gather feedback on transit issues of concern to the attendees, and invite people to get involved.

When the Covid-19 pandemic hit, the Transit Justice team created a series of virtual Power Building Forums so that, despite lockdowns and social distancing, we could continue sharing information, learning together, and reaching out to essential bus riders across Detroit.

The Power Building Forums have allowed us to stay connected to essential riders virtually and sustain our grassroots organizing model. These live online forums follow a winning equation:



POWER BUILDING THROUGH PUBLIC COMMENTS

Every Power Building Forum tackles a different issue and set of skills. Our November 2020 forum prepared attendees to make effective public comments at a DDOT Title VI public hearing on the relocation of the State Fair Transit Center.

Participating in opportunities for public comment is an essential advocacy and accountability tool that is sometimes overlooked or undervalued by organizers for social change.

We consider public comments important in countering the perception that essential bus riders are voiceless or powerless. In our view, public comments are an accessible, relatively convenient way for bus riders and other residents to make themselves heard, whether at a DDOT public hearing, a City Council meeting, or other settings.

In the Transit Justice team's meetings with DDOT, we have seen how public comments serve as the



“eyes and ears” of DDOT, as we share valuable insights and feedback when we notice that something is not working properly. The system needs the public comments process in order to know what’s going and how to operate better.

Top Takeaways from Our Power Building Forum on Effective Public Comments

- **Support people** in shifting from complaining to influencing decisions and decision-makers.
- **Shift the narrative** away from having no voice to using your voice, asserting the right to equitable transit, and affirming that our communities matter.
- **Stay on message** with our narrative so we can speak in a unified voice to galvanize change. (This doesn't mean we're all saying the same thing or repeating a script, but it does mean that we speak from a shared understanding of what we're advocating for.)
- **Avoid saying or doing anything to undermine** your voice, credibility, or message.
- **Make the case** clearly and concisely.
- **Along with naming** the problems and concerns, be clear about your proposed solutions and the actions you want taken.



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page 23

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TRANSIT JUSTICE ORGANIZING

is a program of the Detroit People's Platform (DPP), which is building a Detroit where race and the priorities of **Majority Black Detroit** are centered. Our work advances racial and economic justice in the nation's largest Black majority city by organizing with community residents and community leaders to **build grassroots power and transform systems and structures** that make real the vision for a more racially just Detroit.

Learn more about DPP
and our transit justice work at
www.detroitpeoplesplatform.org



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