2014

Transit Justice for Youth in Multnomah County, Oregon: A For Youth By Youth Report

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TRANSIT JUSTICE for YOUTH

In Multnomah County, Portland, Oregon

A For Youth By Youth Report, June 2014
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction ......................................................... 1
Young people need transit! ............................................. 4
Our Youth Vision for Transit Justice ................................. 6
All Portland youth deserve the right to be independent and mobile at an affordable price. ................................. 6
Why Youth Pass? ..................................................... 8
Today’s TriMet Policies .................................................. 10
TriMet Fares for young people ......................................... 10
TriMet’s New Youth Fares .............................................. 10
What’s YouthPass? Who gets it? ...................................... 11
Fare enforcement has real consequences .......................... 11
The Youth Summit for Transit Justice: How We Got Here ........ 12
Partnering for Transit Justice .......................................... 12
What is the Youth Summit for Transit Justice? ..................... 13
Youth Summit for Transit Justice at David Douglas High School .................................................. 14
Youth people hear about transit, discuss their experiences, and present policy recommendations ............................ 14
At the Youth Summit for Transit Justice ............................. 15
Youth Voice Provides Background for the Summit ................. 16
Youth Pass and Fair Fares for Everyone ............................. 18
Fares are too high for Youth ........................................... 18
Challenges when youth can’t afford to ride .......................... 19
Routes, Schedules and Service don’t meet needs .................... 21
Routes ................................................................. 21
Schedules ............................................................. 22
What about safety on transit? .......................................... 26
Safety is a barrier to riding transit ...................................... 26
Two Types of Safety ................................................... 26
Safety in the Physical Environment ................................... 27
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

- Personal Safety .......................................................... 28
- **Policing and Enforcement to support youth** ........................................ 29
- Police Need to Protect, Not Profile .................................................. 29
- Feeling (Un)Protected .................................................................. 29
- Feeling Profiled and Targeted ......................................................... 30
- Youth + Police Relations .............................................................. 31

**Multnomah Youth Commission/**

- **Policy Recommendations** ....................................................... 33
  - An Equity and Empowerment Lens for Transit Policy ..................... 33
  - Fares ................................................................................. 33
  - YouthPass ......................................................................... 33
  - General fare recommendations .................................................. 34
  - Service/Routes ..................................................................... 34
  - Routes- use equity lens .......................................................... 34
  - Frequency ........................................................................... 34
  - Stops/Safety ......................................................................... 34
  - Reports ................................................................................ 35
  - Youth Safety ......................................................................... 35
  - Policing ................................................................................ 36

**Next Steps Towards Transit Justice For Youth** ..................................... 37

- Policy advocacy .................................................................... 37
- Building a youth-led campaign ...................................................... 37
- Get involved! ........................................................................... 37

**Report Appendix** ...................................................................... 38

- The Multnomah Youth Commission Sustainability Committee 2013-2014 is .......................................................... 38
- THANK YOU to........................................................................ 38
- Action Research Methods ............................................................. 39
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

- Focus Groups .......................................................... 40
- Interviews .............................................................. 40
- Surveys ................................................................. 40
- Focus Group Facilitation Guide .................................... 41
- Survey at the Youth Summit ........................................ 42
- **Best Practices for Transit Justice for Youth** .................. 43
- Youth Pass and fares .................................................. 43
- Routes, Service, Schedules .......................................... 46
- Safety & Policing supporting youth ............................... 47
INTRODUCTION

The Sustainability Committee of the Multnomah Youth Commission was established in response to the community’s request for a free TriMet transit pass for all high school students throughout the year. We’ve been successful in preserving YouthPass, the free transit pass for Portland Public School District high school students, but it’s not enough. Our goals are to expand YouthPass throughout Multnomah County and to improve transit service in East Portland and East County so that all youth have greater access and mobility.

The Multnomah Youth Commission is the official youth policy body for Multnomah County and the City of Portland. We are young people aged 13 to 21 who represent the voice of youth in local policy-making decisions that affect us. In addition to its advisory role within local government, the MYC provides youth input to its parent organization the Commission on Children, Families & Community and also works to improve the community through service projects. The MYC works to change policy affecting young people, as well as stereotypical community perceptions.
In May 2014, the MYC hosted young people at our first Youth Summit for Transit Justice. In this youth-led process, we brought together youth from across the county and adult policy-makers to address our region’s transit issues. It was an important step for building youth-adult partnership to improve transit access for young people in Multnomah County.

In this report, we report on the Transit Justice Summit and the youth perspective on transit fares, access, and the importance of transit justice for the success of all youth in Portland and Multnomah County. This report was created from research we conducted to learn about how youth get around, where they are going, and what problems they face when using transit. We provide a youth voice on major issues we learned about from focus groups, surveys, interviews, and discussion at the Transit Justice Summit:

- Why transit matters
- YouthPass and Fair Fares for Everyone
- Routes, Schedules, and Service don’t meet needs
- What About Safety on Transit?
- Policing and Enforcement to support youth
This is a report of young people’s experiences, and also their ideas for change. In our research and at the summit, a diverse group of young people developed ideas for how to improve transit, the built environment, and youth-police relationships. As you read the report, you will learn about our process, the summit, and the policy recommendations we’re delivering to adult policy-makers at local governments, police departments, and at TriMet. The Multnomah Youth Commission’s policy recommendations are about achieving transit justice for the youth of Multnomah County.

Our Partners

**OPAL Environmental Justice Oregon** was founded in 2005 to build power for Environmental Justice and Civil Rights in our communities. **OPAL** organizes low-income and people of color to collaborate in order to create a safe and healthy environment where people live, work, play, and pray. We educate and empower communities to participate in the decision-making process that creates policy.

**OPAL** began our Transit Justice program in 2010. The program, led by **Bus Riders Unite (BRU)** recognizes that transportation is a human right. **BRU** serves to represent transit-dependent people and works to promote affordable and accessible transit throughout the Portland Metropolitan region. **BRU** has prioritized youth access to transit and is building capacity to lead a YouthPass campaign beginning fall 2014.

**PSU Capstone:** The team from the **Portland State University** senior capstone Action Research With Youth worked on research with the **MYC**. This research asked what youth think about transit and how it affects their ability to get around, and helped develop policy ideas that could address youth-defined problems. The capstone team and sustainability committee members created videos of youth experiences on transit and designed the summit t-shirt and flyers! We work in youth-adult partnership, we learn together so we can act together on the issue of transit justice.
Public transit is a lifeline of opportunity that benefits people of all ages, especially youth. To us, access to transit means young people can become mobile and independent. Riding public transportation means that they have control over how we get around town. We use transit to get to school, to work, to do community service and participate in extra-curricular activities, to get to recreation, and to socialize with our family and friends. These are all important to our development as young adults. Our education is important and some young people are missing out on school when they can’t afford the fares to go. Young people want jobs to earn money and get life experience, and searching for jobs and getting to work on time means we need transit. Youth transit riders would be able to visit family more and sign up for after school clubs and sports if they had safe, reliable, affordable transit service. This matters so much to youth because for many of them, public transit is their only way to get around. We know that more youth would ride transit if it was safer, easy to get to, and more affordable.
High School students respond to why they ride transit...and why they don’t.
Our Youth Vision for Transit Justice

Transit justice means equitable access to transportation. Our vision for transit justice is a public transportation system that is...

- Fair – Safe, accessible, frequent and affordable
- Friendly – Easy to use
- Frequent – With region-wide schedules
- Fully-Funded – To meet the needs of all riders

Together our vision promotes equity and human dignity, respects our fundamental right to move, and protects the environment! Transit access is more than a privilege, it’s a right. Our goal is to get policy makers to hear our voices and bring us Transit Justice.

All Portland youth deserve the right to be independent and mobile at an affordable price

Unfortunately, many young people in Multnomah County have problems paying transit fares, or the bus and MAX service where they live and go to school isn’t connecting them to where they need and want to go. Five years ago, the Youth Commission worked with the Mayor’s Office, Portland Public Schools, and TriMet to create the YouthPass program that provides free fares to all 14,000 students in Portland Public High Schools. But YouthPass only helps some young people, and doesn’t address other problems with transit service for youth. The youth in East Portland and East County do feel neglected. We have learned that these youth value public transit a lot, but also have real problems with safety and access. We need to expand the YouthPass to other high school districts outside of the Portland Public School District and hold Trimet accountable to the youth who live East of 82nd Avenue.

Is the existing YouthPass program fair to east Portland and east county youths? No. But that’s not a reason to run away from our existing commitments to young people. It’s a reason to reinforce our commitment and establish a stronger, more sustainable model that can be expanded across the region to make transit accessible for all youths.

—Nicole Johnson and Jose Lopez Delgado writing in the Oregonian

High Schools. But YouthPass only helps some young people, and doesn’t address other problems with transit service for youth. The youth in East Portland and East County do feel neglected. We have learned that these youth value public transit a lot, but also have real problems with safety and access. We need to expand the YouthPass to other high school districts outside of the Portland Public School District and hold Trimet accountable to the youth who live East of 82nd Avenue.
Transit Justice for us would start with equal opportunity for us youth to be able to get to where we need to go and to be a voice in that process. The graph, “Do Transit Dependent Youth have YouthPass?” shows survey results from the Summit. Of the youth who participated in the Summit, the majority were transit dependent, about 75%. Transit dependent means relying mainly, if not solely, on bus and MAX service to get around. Three quarters of the transit dependent participants don’t have the free YouthPass. The number of youth riding transit is too large to not be considered. The issue is not just about YouthPass, but also access to transit service. According to our survey, there are many young people living in East Portland and East County who ride transit six or seven days a week. In fact, The east side of Portland houses a lot of youth who need reliable sidewalks and bus service, but don’t always have it. The need for affordable transit is there, and these young people don’t have access to the free YouthPass for Portland Public School students. In order to begin talking about youth transit justice, we need to include the youth in all corners of Multnomah County, including East Portland and further, and give them the same opportunities and transit access as the youth closer to city center.

“The cost is too expensive, especially if you don’t have a job and it’s your only way to get around.”
—Sarah, youth

“I feel like there could be better access to schools.”
—Stevie, youth

“If I had Youth Pass, I’d be able to use the money that I would spend on many tickets for cheer.”
—Destiny, youth

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**Do Transit Dependent Youth have Youth Pass (YP)?**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Transit Dependent</th>
<th>Yes YP</th>
<th>No YP</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No YP</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Why Youth Pass?

“Transit riders of the future are needed for a healthy climate.”
—Nicole Johnson and Jose Lopez Delgado

“Having the students using the transit system and developing the habits of citizenship... We’ve got to keep that program.”
—Portland Mayor Charlie Hales

Tempe, Arizona wants youth to ride buses and trains because it will encourage them to ride as adults!

“The free pass program gives youth transportation to and from recreation centers, work, and school.”
—City of Newport News
Young people have organized to fight for a youth pass that allows students from K-12th grade to ride transit for free until 11pm during the week! Right now, Boston youth are fighting for a $10/month pass that would allow all young people 12-21 unlimited rides on transit. These youth have also been successful at saving their current youth pass from being cut and have fought against price increases to youth passes.
The TriMet board has now adopted a new policy for youth fares that will go into effect in September 2014. This new policy will lower the single-ride ticket price to $1.25. It reduces the monthly pass for young people 7 to 17 by $2 to $28 per month.

Is this fare reduction enough to help Multnomah County’s young people afford to access transit?
What’s YouthPass? Who gets it?

If you are Portland Public School District (PPS) high school student, YouthPass is free during the school year as long as you show your PPS student ID to public transit officials. YouthPass is provided for PPS students in part because there isn’t yellow bus service for high school students in PPS. The YouthPass is funded by TriMet, the school district, and the City of Portland. Originally, the free YouthPass was only available to low-income students, but Portland’s previous Mayor, Sam Adams, expanded the pass to all. The MYC has been active in the campaign to create and maintain YouthPass since the program started!

Some GED programs, alternative schools, private schools, and other youth programs also provide young people with transit passes to help them to access education and services. But in general, the David-Douglas, Parkrose, Reynolds, and Gresham-Barlow school districts don’t have a free youth transit pass. These districts have yellow bus service for high school students, but young people must pay to ride TriMet to other destinations.

Fare enforcement has real consequences

The fine for riding TriMet services without valid fare is a minimum of $175 and could be as high as $250. There are no warnings and fines start from the first time someone doesn’t have their fare. Further consequences include being arrested and/or exclusion from the public transit system anywhere from 6 hours to 90 days.

If you are fined, you are given a citation and date to appear in court or pay your fine. The date you must appear and/or pay by cannot be changed and if you fail to appear or pay, further fines and penalties will be added to your case. The court times are during the school day, so a young person would have difficulty attending. There are only two locations in Portland where you can go to appear for your TriMet citations; one in the East County Courthouse and another at the downtown Portland Justice Center. If a young person contests the citation, a judge will look into the case and possibly lower the fine based on circumstances and might arrange community service. If you plead no contest, you are not admitting guilt, but a determination of conviction will be added to your record.
**THE YOUTH SUMMIT FOR TRANSIT JUSTICE: HOW WE GOT HERE**

**Partnering for Transit Justice**

In response to the community’s request for a free TriMet transit pass for all high school students throughout the year, we, the Multnomah Youth Commission, established the Sustainability Committee. We partnered with OPAL Environmental Justice Oregon in order to develop our understanding of transit justice for young people. Our goals are:

- Maintaining the current YouthPass program within Portland Public Schools
- Expanding the program to other East Portland school districts
- Broadening transit access all together for youth in East County

These goals are about providing young people with free, easy, and safe access to public transit. Access to transit means access to opportunities. It allows for young people to get to work, school, and youth activities. Even though some Portland young people can get the free YouthPass, overall the system is not meeting youth needs. Over the past school year, we worked with OPAL and PSU students to reach out to young people around Multnomah County to hear about youth needs and issues with public transportation. We used what we learned to create the first Youth Summit for Transit Justice.

In Los Angeles, CA a group of youth formed the L.A. County Student Attendance Task Force. They created a metro campaign to fight for a test program that gave youth free rides in certain communities with the possibility of it growing into the entire city.
What is the Youth Summit for Transit Justice?

The Multnomah Youth Commission creates forums for young people to speak to each other and to adult policymakers about issues we care about. These policy summits are not just any ordinary meeting, but a strategic conversation with adults who can work with us to make change. We ask for adults to be accountable to young people who are part of the community.

In May 2014, we hosted our first Youth Summit on Transit Justice. In this youth-led process, we brought together youth from across the county and adult partners to address our region’s transit issues. This is one of our first steps to increase youth access to transit in Portland and Multnomah County.

Our summit had three major goals:

- Providing youth with an understanding of the existing YouthPass program, and how it relates to youth access to transit for education, extracurricular activities, employment and other individual needs.
- Informing policy makers with the experiences youth face regarding transit and the importance of transit justice for the success for all youth in Portland and Multnomah County.
- Bringing diverse youth from across the region together to share their transit experiences and create ideas of how to build an equitable YouthPass campaign for all, and provide TriMet with recommendations to expand service to meet their needs, especially east of 82nd Ave.
Youth Summit for Transit Justice at David Douglas High School

Youth people hear about transit, discuss their experiences, and present policy recommendations.
The first part of the summit is for youth-only to caucus, and build awareness and community, while developing action steps in different ways. The presence of invited policy makers and community leaders was requested for the afternoon to listen to youth stories of challenges to accessing transit and engage young people in dialogue around how we can increase awareness and access in our community. The aim of the Summit is to provide both youth and adults with an opportunity to work together on Transit Justice in Multnomah County. For youth the Summit is a chance to collectively deliver a message and consider recommendations for improvement and how the MYC can help advocate for new policies. For adults, it is a chance to learn more about the young people in our community directly from young people, and to hear policy recommendations and talk about what they can do at their jobs to incorporate youth voice and equity for young people.

At the Youth Summit for Transit Justice

On the day of the Summit, more than forty young individuals from all over Multnomah County came to David Douglas High School to spend most of the day talking about young people’s access to transit. At the Summit, this group of diverse youth were presented with information regarding YouthPass and the concept of Transit Justice, not only in the Portland Metro Area but also nationwide. Youth Commissioners and organizers from OPAL shared information about transit issues here and how equity and transit justice could become important considerations for policy here. The presentations and materials provided an opportunity to learn about the existence of free YouthPass programs and youth campaigns in California, Boston, Seattle, and more. It was here that they had a chance to participate in small group discussions with peers, sharing experiences and debating the issues at hand. In each group, the MYC presented its proposals for policy recommendations. The
policy recommendations address YouthPass, services and schedules, improving safety, and improving policing. There were recommendations to the County, to Cities, to schools, and to TriMet. The young people attending the summit were able to approve or revise these recommendations, and add new ideas for policies. Everyone had a chance to vote on the most important policies that the MYC should advocate for.

In the afternoon, adults including police officers, TriMet staff, school district personnel, and elected officials came to the Summit. Young women and men had a chance to speak directly to these decision makers, sharing stories, ideas and thoughts. For some young people, it was their first time to directly address adult officials about youth issues, and they quickly realized the opportunity and raised the youth voice! The youth policy recommendations were shared and adults were asked to say what they could do and how they would be accountable to the youth.

**Youth Voice Provides Background for the Summit**

In preparation for the summit, we partnered with PSU faculty and students to conduct a youth-led research process. Our research focused on hearing from Multnomah County youth and on finding out how other cities and regions work to provide young people with transit access. The research included several methods. To obtain ideas and hear youth voices which benefited our understanding of what youth like and do not like about public transit, we held six different focus groups. Youth Commissioners facilitated these discussions with high school students who don’t have a free Youth Pass. They talked about their good and bad experiences on TriMet, where they want to go, and how transit could work better for them. We analyzed these discussion notes in depth, and found four main topics that affected young peoples’ lives. These topics are youth pass and fares, service and schedules, safety, and policing. At the Youth Summit for Transit Justice, we organized breakout sessions for each of these four topics, where we heard more perspectives and stories from diverse youth. These topics also organize our policy recommendations. During the summit, we also
had some young people create story maps of their journeys in Multnomah County, explaining where they go and how they get there, and any problems along the way. More young people were interviewed, and everyone at the summit took a survey about their needs and priorities. The next few pages will provide details about our findings during the focus groups, summit, breakout groups with youth and adults during the summit, and the discussion of policies that the MYC as well as other youth voices have created.

**Doing Research For Youth, By Youth**

The MYC worked with its community partners (OPAL Environmental Justice Oregon and PSU Capstone), to carry out a series of focus groups, interviews, and surveys, to get a better picture of what the real issues are for youth riding transit. We worked in a Youth-Adult Partnership. This information was then used to help us write policy recommendations that youth would really need.

**Youth-Adult Partnership**

Youth-Adult Partnerships happen when adults and young people work together on issues affecting youth. This way, everyone has an equal opportunity to make suggestions and decisions, instead of adults taking over the process.

**Youth-led Research**

Youth Participatory Action Research – is a type of research where young people can study the issues affecting their lives, and decide what should be done about it. This way, the solution is being decided by those who are most affected by the issue, youth!

**What’s a Focus Group?**

Focus groups are where a group of people come together to discuss a certain topic. The person(s) leading the focus group will usually have a series of questions to help guide the conversation. Focus groups are used to help the researcher get a better idea of what people really think/feel about the subject.
A common issue voiced by students in focus groups and at the summit was that they did not have enough money to afford paying the TriMet fares, even the reduced youth fares. We believe that Youth deserve to afford access to the places that they need to go, as well as the places that they want to go through public transit.

"Fares are going up, but service isn’t really expanding."
—TJ Summit participant, Youth

Not being able to afford fares led to missing out, like being left out of activities with friends, not being able to have a job or go job hunting as well as not being able to be independent. Problems paying fares are also stressing young people out. For example, some young people report having tension at home due to extra financial strain on parents. When young people and our families only have enough money for essentials, we have trouble paying for transit and can’t save money, which can add extra conflict to our lives.

If all youth were able to have free access to transit, they would:

- go hiking
- explore the natural environment
- look for jobs
- participate in more group activities
- hang out with friends
- participate in community service
- participate in educational activities after school
- visit family members who live far away

- go to the library so they can get internet access to work on homework
- participate in sports
- volunteer
- look at college campuses around Portland
- attend to summer school
- ...and much more!
Those without a free YouthPass often face challenges in even getting to the places that they are required to go, like school. They often have to walk long and dangerous distances just to get to school. With family tension over taking transit, getting rides from parents, or finding other ways to get to school, it can get stressful. When young people can’t reliably pay the fare and have to find other ways to school, they can be late to school and then suffer consequences at school due to things being out of their control. Not knowing how to afford to get to school the next day added a lot of stress onto many student’s everyday lives.

Many students in the focus groups said that they wanted to be more independent and do things on their own, but because they did not have easy and consistent access to transit they were not able to participate in the activities that they wanted to. Students also said that they believed that having a youth pass for all would keep kids out of trouble because they would have access to go do the kind of things that they wanted to do.

During the summit, as well as at focus groups, difficulty with ticket machines came up again and again. Many stated that ticket machines are often broken, forcing young people to make a choice of whether to ride the

**Taking the bus makes work and school difficult because [the buses] are so unreliable.**

—TJ Summit participant, Youth

**How could we do it?**

These cities fund their own Youth Pass Programs: Tempe, Boise, Boston, New York, Newport News, and many more.

Youth Pass can be funded by: Private grants & donations, local sales tax, utility tax, and extra city funding.

**San Diego** youth successfully convinced the school board and city council to provide funding for youth pass.

**New York** allows youth organizations to ride transit for free.
In San Francisco, CA Google donated $6.8 million to help anyone 5-17 years old ride transit for free. These young people have to qualify for low income in order to ride for free. Youth groups in San Francisco are fighting to keep their youth pass once the money from Google runs out and want the unlimited rides to continue.

MAX without a valid ticket, or be late going where we need to go. When riding the bus, summit and focus group participants stated that it would be really helpful to have change given, because rarely can youth pay with exact change, and then when you do pay, you are unable to get back the remaining change when riding the bus.

We should not have to carry the extra burden of worrying about how to get where we need to go on a daily basis. All youth in Multnomah County deserve a free youth transit pass!
 ROUTES, SCHEDULES AND SERVICE DON’T MEET NEEDS

Through listening to youth about their experiences riding transit, we found that many youth have faced similar issues with routes, schedules, and service. TriMet is not providing necessary routes and reliable schedules for youth to access, affecting youth negatively in their daily lives.

Routes

TriMet needs to provide better routes for students so they can have better access to school. Many youth are forced to take long commutes because they have limited access to routes. During the Youth Summit on Transit Justice, some of the youth participated in the Mapping and Access to Transit break-out session to share their everyday transit riding experiences with TriMet. Participants had a chance to draw their daily routes on a big map to share with other people.

One of the students talked about her routes during this session (picture right). She lives in East Portland but her school is in West Portland. Getting to school usually takes her around 1 hour and 20 minutes, even though she has some options for different buses. In the morning, her dad drives to the bus stop so she can take the number 20 bus. Sometimes she takes bus 17 because it is less crowded. The student said that bus 71 is always crowded and if she misses the bus, she needs to wait extra 45 minutes for another bus.
Since she does not have a frequent service and a faster route bus, she needs to commute longer than other students and get out of the house by 6:30 in the morning. Through this long commuting time, she is trying to read or do homework but she is not able to do it because of crowd and she feels too tired on the way home to focus on these tasks. If there are not better routes for youth, the students need to waste extra hours on using transit while they could use the time for other activities such as reading books and studying.

**Schedules**

TriMet schedules are not reliable for youth to use transit. We heard from multiple youth that they are having problems in school and in participating in other activities because of unreliable transit schedules. Some focus group participants said that they were late for school and they got a bad record for being late. The schools would not understand youth being late because they would say that it is the students’ fault that they could not get on their buses on time based on the transit schedule. However, the buses ran late in the mornings because a lot of people were riding and buses sometimes missed people because of overcrowding. Sometimes the buses did not show up at all. Focus group participants from Parkrose high school shared their experience with missing the bus. All the students went to a church for a group activity and they were waiting for a bus. The bus did not show up so they all had to walk home. Although their houses seemed not that far away, they were mad about the bus not showing up on time. One of the students said that “we beat the bus anyway and that was ridiculous.”

A lot of youth also talked
about being unable to work due to transit schedules. Some buses are not running on weekends, which prevents youth from getting jobs. A youth from Centennial High School said “I can’t work because the bus 87 doesn’t run on weekends. I take transit to school but have to walk a mile to the bus stop from my house”. One of the participants from the Youth Summit on Transit Justice said that “Not being able to depend on the bus is kind of hard sometimes because that’s the only way to get to my job.” Many youth expressed that TriMet schedules and their services are not reliable for having jobs or participating in other activities.

For solving these issues, youth agreed about having more frequent bus stops and more buses for circulation. For certain areas, shorter routes and frequent service buses would be helpful to run the buses on time and make them less crowded. Also, students suggested having bus stop ids and schedules for every single bus stop. Not all youth have a smartphone to check transit schedules and without visible materials, it is hard for youth to plan routes to get places on time. Participants from the Youth Summit on Transit Justice shared their thoughts about the importance of frequent service, along with some quotes from the participants:

“If there could be more frequent service buses, that would be great.”

“I think keeping on schedule is really important, and extended bus fare because sometimes I have to buy more than one ticket.”

“For one of the OPAL meetings in March, I got out late and it was dark and scary. So I was waiting for the bus and it was late, the bus was an hour late so I had to wait there by myself in the stop at night. Me being a female, I was scared.”

“I think more frequent stops are needed. I’d like to be able to get from Gresham to Oregon City in one ticket, just for more hours in the ticket.”

“An issue we have is timing.”

“If you miss the bus, you don’t know when the next one is going to come.”

“The further you go East, the harder it is to find a bus or train and that is a big issue.”
Youth are not satisfied with TriMet services. Many youth who participated in focus groups experienced some difficulties with TriMet bus drivers. The bus drivers sometimes miss the youth who were waiting for the buses or they passed the bus stops. Also, youth said that the bus drivers are mean to the youth. They stated that the bus drivers do not treat them well and are not communicative with youth. A student from David Douglas High School had an experience waiting in the bus garage until the next bus run because the bus driver did not inform her about transferring to the other bus. Students are not having a good relationship with the drivers because they are not communicative with youth.

Many students also said that the buses should be more clean and comfortable for youth. Many youth expressed that they were not comfortable riding TriMet because of the dirtiness, smell, and crowdedness. Youth mentioned that buses need more trash cans and should be cleaned more often. Students also thought because
of overcrowded buses, being too close to other passengers made them feel uncomfortable. One of the focus group participants said the bus is “like a sandwich” because of all other people in the bus. During the Youth Summit on Transit Justice, the majority of students, (30 students) said that they feel uncomfortable riding transit because of other passengers and overcrowded. The graph “What Makes Youth Feel Uncomfortable Riding Transit” shows all the summit participants’ answers.

In Detroit, MI the Detroit Bus Company had young people create their own routes and pickup locations based off of what was safest and fastest for them. With the help of parents, youth were able to create their own system where they could get picked up at safe locations like home, church, or school and go where they needed to go for free.
During the focus groups, we found that many students felt unsafe in two major different ways. First, many youth feel unsafe because of the physical environment. The lack of decent infrastructure can make for dangerous surroundings. There was also discussion of feeling unsafe because of the people around them. Though there were many conversations and ideas brought to the table around safety, we have highlighted a few issues that were brought up in both the focus groups and the summit breakouts.

**Two Types of Safety**

1. **Physical Environment**

   “There are no sidewalks close to the schools. Sidewalks are poor, dipped, rain collects and makes giant puddles, therefore have to go in the middle of the road.”

   —Youth at safety breakout
2. Personal Safety

“TriMet has a bad image because you always see bad things on the news that happen on the buses and MAX.”

—Youth during Focus Group

Safety in the Physical Environment

“...The incomplete roads and sidewalks are a barrier to us getting to school, the park, riding our bikes. We worry about walking and getting hit, we are fearful for our younger brothers and sisters.

—Summary of young people’s experiences shared at the Summit

Lighting at bus and MAX stops was an important issue for youth. Lack of lighting can create a dangerous environment. Many youth have encountered drug dealers and others who have created an unsafe environment. There is a sense of safety that comes with being alert and aware of your surroundings. The sense of safety is taken away when you don’t have the proper lighting infrastructure.

Another common occurrence that we found was the lack of sidewalks. During the focus groups, one student mentioned having to walk to and from school on a busy road which lacks sidewalks on either side. Many sidewalks in East Portland are eroding or non existent. During the breakout session, one student said, “Having potholes/lack of sidewalks is a huge barrier, I am afraid of riding my bike to school. Compared [east] to north Portland, it’s way different.” Safe pedestrian crossings are also lacking in many young people’s travels. Roads are also prone to flooding and people are forced to go around, many times getting closer to traffic.
Personal Safety

In both the focus groups and the breakout sessions, many students expressed concern of feeling unsafe because of other transit riders. Not only did students experience fear of their personal safety, but their parents did as well. One student described their experience... “My parents get mad and worry a lot when I get home and hour later than expected time, but it is because of different bus schedule. My mom worries about kidnapping, raping and other issues in public transit.”

Many of the youth have encountered people who were drunk, on drugs, or even carrying weapons. During the focus groups, students talked about thefts or “Apple picking” when tech devices are grabbed. Others talked about “creeps” who make them very uncomfortable. The lack of cameras and clarity of what to do in a dangerous situation was a major issue. One student even mentioned that “drivers can’t respond directly to security issues [on MAX]. You have to press the button [‘help’ button], sometimes they respond sometimes they don’t.” Students felt that they couldn’t ask for help if they needed it. Even bus drivers sometimes didn’t respond to situations they could observe happening, and other passengers don’t always help young people.

The issues of personal safety and better infrastructure were brought together in a discussion at the summit, when a young woman talked of how she would deal with feeling scared or creeped out by other people at a transit stop. Her strategy would be to go to a store or well-lit area to wait instead. Other young people chimed in to talk about how it might be hard to walk to anyplace safe if they are in areas without sidewalks and pedestrian crossing, and that they sometimes have to wait in unsafe locations because they really need to make the bus. Young people are forced to make choices that feel uncomfortable and make it hard to use transit to get around.
Policing and Enforcement to Support Youth

Police Need to Protect, Not Profile

Many young people shared experiences of negative interactions with police officers on TriMet, with fare inspectors, and with drivers. While these adults are supposed to create a safe environment for all riders, for many young people they are hostile and unhelpful. Young people experience profiling due to age, race, ethnicity, gender and report being harshly punished for minor violations. We feel that we deserve to feel safe and protected on transit, not intimidated and targeted by those who are in place to keep us secure. We found that fare inspectors are harsh in enforcing policies that were targeted towards youth and youth of color and at certain stops in some neighborhoods.

Feeling (Un)Protected

In focus groups and at the summit, youth felt that the transit police and TriMet police were not there to protect them and did not feel like there was adequate security on buses and MAX. If something happened to a youth rider where they felt threatened, they did not feel like the transit police or even bus drivers would do anything to help them. Youth often stated that they felt threatened or creeped out by adult riders. A widespread problem discussed in focus groups was that often times intoxicated adult riders of TriMet will be threatening and harassing youth and there would be no intervention from TriMet security. At the focus group at Centennial Park, a student recalled a time when his friend was beat up on the MAX train, and no one did anything about it despite the cameras on the train that are supposed to be there to create a safer environment.
Feeling Profiled and Targeted

We heard at focus groups and at the summit that youth all around the county have experienced targeting and racial profiling by TriMet police and fare inspectors. Youth in Multnomah County feel unsafe on TriMet and unfairly targeted. There is a lack of respect towards youth from adults involved and youth feel that police are not there to protect them, but instead out to get them. Fare inspection should be consistent and shouldn’t result in major punishments that disrupt young people’s education and lives. Youth want fair policing and fair consequences when young people are in the wrong.

Some of the stories young people shared about negative interactions with TriMet personnel include:

- At Reynolds Learning Academy, students voiced a range of specific issues, from being given hefty fines for not carrying ID with proof of age to being fined for other minor violations. One student stated that they reached into their pocket to take something out, and a piece of trash fell out, so they were fined $100 for littering.

- An African-American youth told about being targeted for talking loudly with a group of friends, who were kicked off the MAX by police as one girl cried. These young people felt racially profiled.

- Young people talked about fare inspectors demanding proof of age, arbitrarily deciding who looks young enough to buy a youth fare.
  - One student was issued a fine for not carrying an ID with proof of age, even though he had proof he’d paid fare. The student and his mother went to Multnomah County Courthouse to try to get the fine removed with the student’s birth certificate to prove their age, yet were still required to pay the fine.
  - Another student was falsely accused of using a fake I.D. because the police thought she looked older than youth aged and that her ID was fake.
Young people of color and those who live in East Portland and East County are especially experiencing hostile interactions and feel stereotyped and profiled.

![Graph showing Diversity of Transit Dependent Youth](image)

**Youth + Police Relations**

Many at the summit felt that there was no way to talk to police and that they were aggressive and unapproachable. Students feel that their experiences are not heard and their problems are not acknowledged. There were young people who did want to see more security and police around transit, because they don’t feel safe. Multiple focus groups mentioned that they would feel safer with more police presence. However—more police presence would have to mean a better relationship between youth and the officers, and a better understanding of each other. Many young people expressed need for more officers that would be there to protect them from other passengers, rather than intimidate youths. An idea expressed at the summit was to have more youth-police interactions so that police can better learn how to interact with youth, and youth can begin to see officers as those who work for them, not against them.
In reality, we feel afraid to come up to police officers because they are aggressive, and there is no way we would just come up to an officer and tell them how they feel about the police.

—Youth, Summit participant

Reducing penalties for young people to support their education and development

The Los Angeles Transit Juvenile Diversion Program keeps students out of the criminal justice system when they’re cited with fare evasion. Instead of fines or jail time, youth do community service at school.

In New York City, 16 and 17 year olds can be treated as adults even for minor offenses like fare evasion. A new program shifts juveniles into community courts so they don’t get a record for fare jumping.
At the Youth Summit, participants discussed and voted on policy recommendations to improve transit issues faced by young people. The recommendations are organized by the four major areas we discussed: fares and YouthPass, routes and schedules, safety, and policing. These recommendations were presented to adults during the summit so they could take them back to their organizations and institutions for consideration. These are the final recommendations created and chosen by young people seeking transit justice.

**An Equity and Empowerment Lens for Transit Policy**

TriMet adopt an equity and empowerment lens for policy analysis and input on fares, service, and security/enforcement. Include consideration of equity impacts for youth and youth voice in all decision-making.

**Fares**

**YouthPass: in order to provide access to school – work – extracurricular activities – social life**

1. First priority: Provide a year-round, free YouthPass to all young people age 13-21, with a valid student ID, who live in Multnomah County.
2. Second priority: Provide a year-round, free YouthPass to all young people age 13-21, with a valid student ID, who live in Multnomah County with family income that qualifies for free/reduced lunch, and provide a $15 monthly pass to all other youth age 13-21.
   - Make stops at schools that don’t have YouthPass.
   - Provide enough service for schools to qualify for YouthPass.
General fare recommendations

1. First priority: Change TriMet’s definition of youth from age 7-17 to 7-21.
2. Second priority: Change TriMet’s definition of youth from age 7-17 to 7-18.
3. Change the youth day pass from $3.30 to $2.00.
4. Change youth monthly pass from $30.00 to $15.00.
5. Extend transfers to four hours.

Service/Routes

Routes- use equity lens

1. TriMet’s priority for service expansion should be bus routes in East County.
2. Focus service expansions on routes to schools and connections to MAX.
3. Include youth voice in determining priority destinations & routes.

Frequency

1. First priority: Increase frequent service throughout to 10 minutes.
2. Second priority: Increase frequent service for AM/PM throughout to 10 minutes. Expand hours beyond 1 AM.
3. Third priority: Increase weekend frequent service to 15 minutes.
4. Priority for frequent service should be on lines east of I-205.
5. Increase ticket time to four hours long at all times.

Stops/Safety

1. All jurisdictions within Multnomah County ensure there are proper sidewalks on all streets where there is public transit service.
2. Ensure proper lighting at every transit stop, especially those stops with scarce street lighting.
3. All stops with high density use should have shelters with seating and lighting.
4. Prioritize East Portland/East County for upgrades first.
Reports

1. Create reporting system for phone/text problems with service, cleanliness, and transit pass-by. Post clear signs on all buses, MAX lines, and stops with phone number & how to report any problems.
2. TriMet have a clear and youth friendly policy on what they will do in response to a complaint.
3. Expand customer service hours - over the 238-RIDE
   a. Evening and weekends
   b. Morning rush hours
4. Faster text response from Transit Tracker.

Youth Safety

1. Post TriMet contact information on posters at all transit stops and vehicles to call or text to report and make visible
2. Jurisdictions within Multnomah County prioritize implementing Text-to-911 technology to enable reporting of emergency situations when people on transit cannot talk for safety reasons
3. All jurisdictions within Multnomah County ensure there are proper sidewalks with a curb and wide enough to walk/wheel chair on all streets where there is public transit service.
4. Ensure proper lighting at every transit stop, especially those stops with scarce street lighting. All stops should have shelters with proper bench seating and lighting.
5. Visible, youth-friendly TriMet security personnel on all MAX trains and platforms.
6. Provide training to all transit staff on proper intervention strategies regarding conflict on transit.
7. Place direct line phones at all MAX stops to TriMet and 911.
8. All jurisdictions in Multnomah County ensure there are visible crosswalk signals with working request buttons at all streets with public transit service to ensure safe crossing.
1. TriMet ensure drivers and fare inspectors are provided racial and cultural competency training and youth development training to eliminate profiling towards youth & youth of color.

2. Transit police officers are provided racial and cultural competency training and youth development training to eliminate profiling towards youth & youth of color.

3. Ensure fare checks and ID checks are consistent across all lines & transit stops so youth do not feel targeted due to their race, socio-economic class and/or neighborhood

4. Change fare enforcement ticketing and fines policy to support youth development.
   a. All youth ticketed for fare evasions are given community service instead of fines and not required to appear in court
   b. Youth ticketed for not having ID with them should have the fine/service waived if they prove their age later (similar to showing car insurance proof of coverage later)

5. Create and publicize clear way to make complaints against transit police officers.

6. Relevant jurisdictions should develop or promote existing anonymous reporting of transit law enforcement officials who abuse their authority.

7. Educate young people on what to do when they encounter transit law enforcement and what their rights are during the encounter.

8. When police violence is reported, respond quickly and seriously to maintain trust of the community.
Next Steps Towards Transit Justice For Youth

Policy advocacy

As the official policy body for youth in Multnomah County, the MYC will take our policy recommendations to the institutions and jurisdictions that can make the changes young people are asking for. The MYC will present our findings about youth issues with transit fares, service, safety, and policing to decision makers like the TriMet board and staff, school districts, mayors and city councils, transportation officials, and others who need to hear the youth voice on transit. The MYC will also follow up with adults who came to our Summit and told us how they would be accountable to youth needs.

Building a youth-led campaign

It’s not only the MYC who can advocate for transit justice for youth! Starting this summer, our partner OPAL is working to build community and a youth voice. This organizing will be the foundation of a youth-led campaign for an expanded YouthPass! Young people throughout Multnomah County will come together to push for a transit system that supports youth opportunity.

Get involved!

multnomahyouth@gmail.com

facebook.com/MYCommission

facebook.com/opalpdx
The Multnomah Youth Commission Sustainability Committee 2013-2014 is...

Adriana Rangel-Ponce
Ana Meza
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**Action Research Methods**

Utilizing the Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) model, we were able to conduct a series of focus groups, interviews, and surveys to effectively pinpoint the most prominent transit issues affecting youth. The MYC and its community partners engaged in Youth-Adult Partnership (YAP), in order to ensure that this was a youth-led process, and all parties were being held accountable for their roles in the project.

**What is YPAR?**

YPAR provides young people with the opportunities to study social problems affecting their lives and then determine actions to rectify these problems. What distinguishes young people engaged in YPAR from the standard representation in research is that YPAR research is designed to contest and transform systems and institutions to produce greater justice and respect for young people’s experiences and knowledge. In short, YPAR is a formal resistance that leads to transformation - systematic and institutional change to promote social justice.

[source: BEYOND RESISTANCE BY GINWRIGHT]

**What is a YAP?**

A Youth-Adult Partnership is a collaborative model where both young people and adults work together in order to teach, learn, and take action. Effective Youth-Adult Partnerships are mutual relationships, meaning that both parties have equal opportunity to contribute and make decisions. This method is often utilized when dealing with issues affecting youth, in order to ensure that the solutions are determined by those most directly affected.
What were the results?

Focus Groups

Portland State University (PSU) Capstone and the Multnomah Youth Commission (MYC) completed 6 focus groups to gather information about youth experiences on public transit. The goal was to gain an understanding of how public transit affected youth’s lives on a daily basis, focusing on what they liked or what could be improved. The MYC also utilized the focus groups to educate other youth about the Youth Pass, which provides free fare for youth in Portland Public School system.

Interviews

A series of video interviews were conducted at the Summit for Transit Justice, in order to understand what experience youth were having with transit on a personal level. The youth attending the summit were primarily transit-dependent youth living in East Portland, who did not have a youth pass. These interviews were then analyzed to pinpoint key issues and/or themes, information that will then be utilized to help shape the direction of the MYC’s policy recommendations, post-summit.

Surveys

At the summit, 45 youth participated in a real-time clicker survey pertaining to transit justice. Each young person had a clicker, which stayed with them throughout the course of the survey, meaning that we were able to track their demographics as well as their responses to the prompts.
Focus Group Facilitation Guide

Graffiti Boards for youth to write on:

- How do you pay for your transit?
- How do you get to school?
- What improvements would you make to transit service?
- Why do you ride transit? Why don’t you ride transit?

Focus group questions:

1. Where do you go and how do you get there?
   - How do you get around on an everyday basis? What kinds of transit do you take?

2. What can’t you do/get to because of your current transit situation?
   - Are there any reasons you avoid riding TriMet?

3. What obstacles/barrier do you face riding TriMet to get where you need to go?
   - How do problems using Trimet affect you?
   - Do you ever have problems at school, at work, or at home because of transportation problems?
   - Is there anything you wish you could do or participate in, but you can’t because of getting there or getting home?

4. “One issue for some young people is the cost of transit. One of MYC’s campaigns has been YouthPass, a free transit pass for youth in high school. We want to know whether transit fares are important to you and what you think about YP”...
   - What can you do because you have a free Youth Pass? (For those with YouthPass) OR
   - What kind of impact would it make if you had a free Youth Pass? (Without YouthPass) If you don’t believe there would be an impact, why?

5. If you could make any improvements to the transit system, what would it be?
Survey at the Youth Summit

1. What is your age?
2. What ethnicity do you identify with?
3. What gender do you identify with?
4. Where do you live?
5. What school district do you go to school within?
6. Are you transit dependent?
7. Do you have YouthPass?
8. How many days a week do you ride transit?
9. Where do you go most frequently on transit?
   - School; Work; Extracurricular activities; Friends; Other
10. How safe do you feel riding transit?
    - Safe, Slightly safe, Slightly unsafe, Unsafe
11. What makes you most uncomfortable riding transit?
    - Drivers/Transit police; other passengers; overcrowded; cleanliness; other; nothing
12. What is the most needed improvement for youth riding transit?
    - More frequent lines; cheaper/free fare; on time service; safer conditions; other

This research, taken in full, gave the MYC a rich collection of qualitative and quantitative data to direct future policy recommendations and MYC action. We also studied transit policies from other cities and regions to find ‘best practices’ for solving issues faced by youth in Multnomah County. These ‘best practices’ are also summarized in a following appendix.
Best Practices for Transit Justice for Youth

Youth Pass and fares

Boston, MA

- All Boston students, K-12 have access to a free pass for use on all buses and trains during the hours directly before, during and after school as long as they live two or more miles away from their school.
- A broad coalition led by youth organizations across Boston is pushing for passes to cover transportation full time as Youth Way On The MBTA. Boston youth are fighting for a $10/month pass that would allow all young people 12-21 unlimited rides on transit year round. These youth have also been successful at saving their current youth pass from being cut and have fought against price increases to youth passes. www.youthwayonthembta.org
- Youth Way on the MBTA released a report “Opportuni(T): Youth riders, the affordability crisis, and the Youth Pass solution” that shared youth-led research about how youth use transit to get to opportunities “to learn, to work, to thrive, and to contribute.” http://youthwayonthembta.org/report
- Boston’s youth transit justice campaign also focuses on more frequent service and larger capacity buses on key routes for youth access, and on transit policing with respect.

Oakland, CA

- Students age 5-18 have access to youth pass that costs $15/month with unlimited local rides during that time. This pass only applies to local trips within East Bay and no discounted rate to San Francisco.
- However, recent changes have been made that have made obtaining a youth pass more difficult, including the discontinuation of paper tickets and relying solely on an electronic clipper card that must be applied for in person by a youth in a public office with proof of age.
- The organization GENESIS is fighting for the creation of a free bus program for youth 3rd-12th grade with greater service and access than what the local transit authority (AC Transit) can provide (AC Transit has cut 15% of services
since 2011). GENESIS supported Proposition VV, which was voted in favor by 71% of voters and generates $17 million for county transit.

New York, NY

- Since 1948, all NYC students have had access to reduced fare or free bus and subway transportation, from 5:30am to 8:30pm on school days.
- In addition, youth serving organizations have access to free transportation passes seven days a week, year round for groups that serve youth - regardless of whether or not they are in school - to use public transportation to access services, travel to and from youth programs and participate in field trips.
- Over 500,000 students use free or half-fare passes each year.
- A broad-based coalition recently mobilized tens of thousands of youth and their families to protect NYC students’ long-held right to transportation.
- From 1948-1995, the costs were covered entirely by the MTA (Metro Transportation Authority) - in other words subsidized by other riders. Since 1995, the City and State of New York have provided 45 million dollars each toward the student passes each year.

Boise, ID

- High schoolers in Boise are able to ride the bus for free (since 1993)
- The Boise School District pays for the rides
- The purpose for the program was to assist in developing alternative transportation options at schools where there is limited parking availability and to allow for the school district to reduce busing in some areas where there is adequate public transportation service for students
- They also started expanding to Junior High Schoolers with a test program called MyRide Junior High, which is entirely paid for by the City/transit service. It flows into the MyRide Summer Pass program which offers free three-month summer bus passes to youth ages 6-18 for $24.

Corvallis, OR

- Since 2011, the Corvallis Transit System has been a fareless system providing
free passes not only to youth but also to all citizens. Any person wishing to ride Corvallis Transit System (CTS) or the Beaver Bus may do so without paying a fare.

- Funding for Corvallis Transit Systems (CTS) comes from State grants, Federal grants, Oregon State University, and miscellaneous sources like advertising and donations.
- The Transit Operations Fee (TOF) was established by the City Council in 2010. It’s collected monthly from all Corvallis utility customers - residential, commercial, non-profits, and OSU Housing and is indexed to the average price of a gallon of regular grade gasoline. Historically, bus service was partially funded with property taxes; the TOF eliminated competition with other essential services for property tax funding and provided a stable source of local funding for matching State and federal funds.

Newport News, VA

- The Ride On Youth Bus Program provides youth age 17 and under with unlimited free bus rides on any regular routes of Hampton Roads Transit originating in Newport News all year round. Registration requires youth to be a citizen of Newport News and at least 38” tall.
- The City of Newport News spent about $22,111,000 annually on several programs, including Ride On Youth Bus Pass Program.
- As a part of Recreation Programs and Operations, Ride On Youth Bus Pass Program gets its fund from the total 40% of General fund and self-supporting programs

Tempe, AZ

- The Tempe Youth Transit Pass Program allows all eligible Tempe youth ages 6 to 18 to ride regional and local Valley Metro bus routes and the METRO light rail for free. Registration requires proof of Tempe residency and birth certificate.
- The source of program fundings for free youth pass comes from local sales tax. The cost of such program is about $423,416 annually.
San Francisco, CA

- The Free Muni for Youth Pilot Program provides low and moderate income students residing in San Francisco free access to Muni for a 16-month period when using a Clipper. All San Francisco youth aged 5 to 17 with a gross annual family income at or below 100 percent of the Bay Area Median Income level are eligible for the program. Registration requires proof of San Francisco residency, age, and income.
- Coalition organizing for transit justice organizations involved - POWER, Urban Habitat, San Francisco Youth Commission, Chinatown Community Development Center, many more.
- Next Stop: Justice report included research, data-taking, and testimonies - Straw poll: booths setup at intersections asking for community input on free youth pass. Partnerships with other community organizations including the DataCenter and Urban Habitat led to an extensive research log and released journal detailing key funding sources responsible for transit programs. Urban Habitat helped with mapping funding sources and where they come from - city, federal, state, county, and regional. http://www.datacenter.org/wp-content/uploads/POWER_NextStop_Eng_midrez.pdf
- After utilizing personal and research data, the Free MUNI for Youth Campaign was able to testify, with hundreds of youth as well, to elected officials at different government levels about a model program and pricing structures. http://freemuniforyouth.tumblr.com/
- The City and County of San Francisco have been funding the Free Muni for Youth Pilot Program with grant funds, which mainly come from private donations. Google recently announced a major donation to support the program.

**Routes, Service, Schedules**

Vancouver, BC

- TransLink, Vancouver’s regional public transportation corporation in Canada, was looking out for upper-middle class ‘choice’ riders by focusing money on
projects that would primarily benefit ‘choice’ riders while neglecting the need for transit-dependent; ‘captive’ riders.

- The Vancouver Bus Riders Union, BRU, went bus-to-bus and spread their mission and goal to those impacted by service cuts (primarily the cutting of the daily late-night service: Night Owl). This service was significant for youth and women who worked late-night jobs or needed to get home from the downtown area.
- BRU focused their campaigns on those most impacted (minorities) and used a variety of organizing techniques to get TransLink to sit down and look over their report. The collection of testimonials served as the primary form of experience and information to draw off of the impacts and responses people face from bus service cuts. In the end, TransLink reinstated Night Owl Bus Service and carried out their own report that also cited the need for Night Owl Bus Service.

Detroit - Youth Transit Alliance

- Public-Private partnership with the Detroit Bus Company and area youth development non-profits
- Skillman Foundation provided $100,000 to the Detroit Bus Company to start a six-month pilot program to provide youth with safe and free bus pickup and drop-offs at safe locations (libraries, police stations, etc). Instead of expensive fixed routes, youth chose routes that they needed—the routes were crowdsourced, parents, youth, and youth program staff told the bus company when and where youth needed to go and chose safe stop locations.
- Pilot program ran through the summer with plans to run again in the fall. Started off in a dense-urban neighborhood and will expand to other neighborhoods after successful summer program.

Safety & Policing supporting youth

Policing in Los Angeles

- The L.A. County Student Attendance Task Force’s: Free Metro Pass Campaign had multiple goals for their project. They wanted to (1) Pilot a free transportation program in one or two communities to demonstrate impact
(2) Ensure free youth passes to everyone coming home from lock-ups (3) Eventually get free metro passes for all K-college youth in L.A. County.

- Transportation as an Educational Right report documented the link between transit and schooling
- Many youth were getting fined $250 every time they were cited with fare evasion, and if they couldn’t pay for it (which most couldn’t), they would have to serve time in jail - taking them out of school.
- In 2012, the LA Sheriff’s Department, the LA Metro, the LA School District, and the LA School Police announced an implementation of a Transit Juvenile Diversion Program with the goal of “keeping students who ride Metro buses and trains out of the criminal justice system in the event they are cited for minor infractions”. This way, students spend that time they would have spent in jail, at school.

Policing in San Francisco

- The DataCenter (research group) released a report detailing why issues with transit disproportionately affect low income folks and communities of color. One of their recommendations was to scale back aggressive fare enforcement and divert those funds to improve access.
- More officers are deployed in communities of color where incomes are already lower. A need for a “strong visual presence of officers” is to discourage the ‘problem’ of fare-evasion. The most aggressive form of policing is when 8-10 transit fare inspectors along with two to four San Francisco police (SFPD) board buses and perform “saturation stings” (fare inspection), which essentially act as Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). Many times when performing these “stings” SFPD have arrested and transferred large groups off of buses for deportation.
- “One extreme incident of aggressive proof-of-payment (POP) enforcement and racial profiling claimed the life of a young Black man in the Bayview in July 2011. Police shot Kenneth Harding (19) after he took off running when they
demanded to see his proof of payment... Youth under the age of 18 face the added threat of being charged with a criminal offense if they are fined for fare evasion.”

- Aggressive surveillance and policing have contributed to a sense of fear and lack of safety amongst communities of color. Even the San Francisco Metropolitan Transit Authority (SFMTA) acknowledged the existence of fear and harassment and held “sensitivity training”, which is only a superficial remedy that does not impact the issue of unaffordable fines and deportation.
- Multiple accounts of police harassment, sarcastic language, racial profiling, and abuse of power.

Diversion efforts in Cleveland, Ohio
- RTA announced in 2010 that they would be implementing a $150 fare evasion fine to youth who cannot show proof of fare and/or identification. Pressure got them to lower the fine to $50, but the ACLU of Ohio and other community members were concerned about the criminalization of youth and are pushing for an in-school diversion program rather than jail. Youth would still have to be “eligible” as determined by a judge.

Diversion in NYC
- Currently, New York is one of only two states where 16 and 17 year olds are treated as adults, even for non-violent offenses such as possession of controlled substances, petty larceny, fare evasion, trespass, graffiti, and criminal mischief. With their cases processed in Criminal Court rather than Family Court, adolescents in New York face the prospect of criminal convictions that could affect their future ability to gain employment, complete their education, reside lawfully in public housing, and pursue a range of other important life goals. Implementation of the Adolescent Diversion Program began in January 2012. The program build upon existing programs, with a particular focus on New York’s network of community courts operated by the Center for Court Innovation.