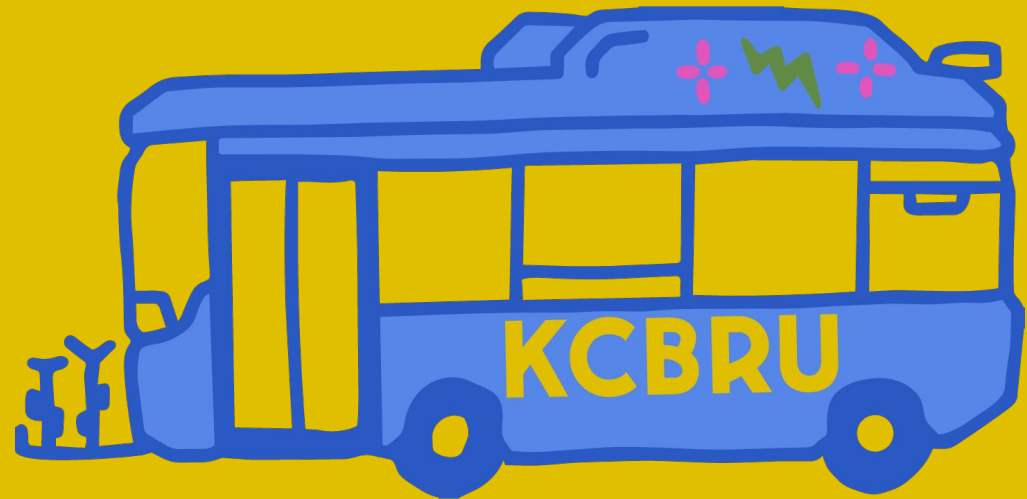


**THE  
BUS  
WILL  
SAVE  
US**

A Not-Too-Detailed  
Introduction To Transit Justice

Presented by the Kansas City Bus Riders Union



# Overview

Today's brief agenda

1. Why transit?
2. Collective action
3. Transit justice
4. What comes next?
5. Further reading

**Why transit?**

"One thing I've learned in my five years operating the bus is that the bus is the most unbeatable 'third place' in any city."

- **William Hazen, IndyGo bus operator**

**Why do we want better  
transit in our cities?**

## Freedom of mobility

## More affordable housing

Fewer car crashes

Shorter commutes

Better-connected communities and neighborhoods

## Improved accessibility

## Better air quality

Less lithium mining

Less money spent on car insurance/upkeep

Less reason for police presence at traffic stops and on the roads

Greater quality of life for children, older adults, disabled folks, low-income households, anxious drivers, college students, etc.

Less road repaving

## Safer streets

Decreased runoff pollution

No need for a designated driver

Fewer microplastics

Driving should be a  
*luxury*, not a  
necessity.

# Why driving needs to be a luxury

**The necessity of driving exposes vulnerable communities to greater police presence.** Traffic stops, some cop just hasn't met their quota, they just feel like it. All of these have life-or-death consequences.

**We can get dangerous drivers off the street without ruining their lives.** Drivers kill over 8000 pedestrians a year. Many are repeat offenders. Taking away a dangerous driver's car should be an inconvenience to them, not a life-ending consequence.

**Ok, cool!**

**So now the question is:**

***How do we make it happen?***



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= LIFELINE

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# COLLECTIVE ACTION

## Noncompliance and direct action

**Gang of 19 (Denver):** *July 5-6, 1978. A group of 19 members of the Atlantis community blocked an intersection with chants of "We will ride!" until the RTD opened discussions about wheelchair lifts in buses.*

**Montgomery Bus Boycott:** *1955-1956. After the Women's Political Council had conceived of a bus boycott, Claudette Colvin, Mary Louise Smith, and Rosa Parks refused to give up their seats, spurring months of non-compliance. In June 1956, bus segregation was ruled unconstitutional.*

*And many more...*

## From Direct Action to Transit Rider Unions

**El Sindicato de Pasajeros/LA Bus Riders Union:** 3000 dues-paying members

**Seattle Transit Riders Union:** Elected Katie Wilson as mayor

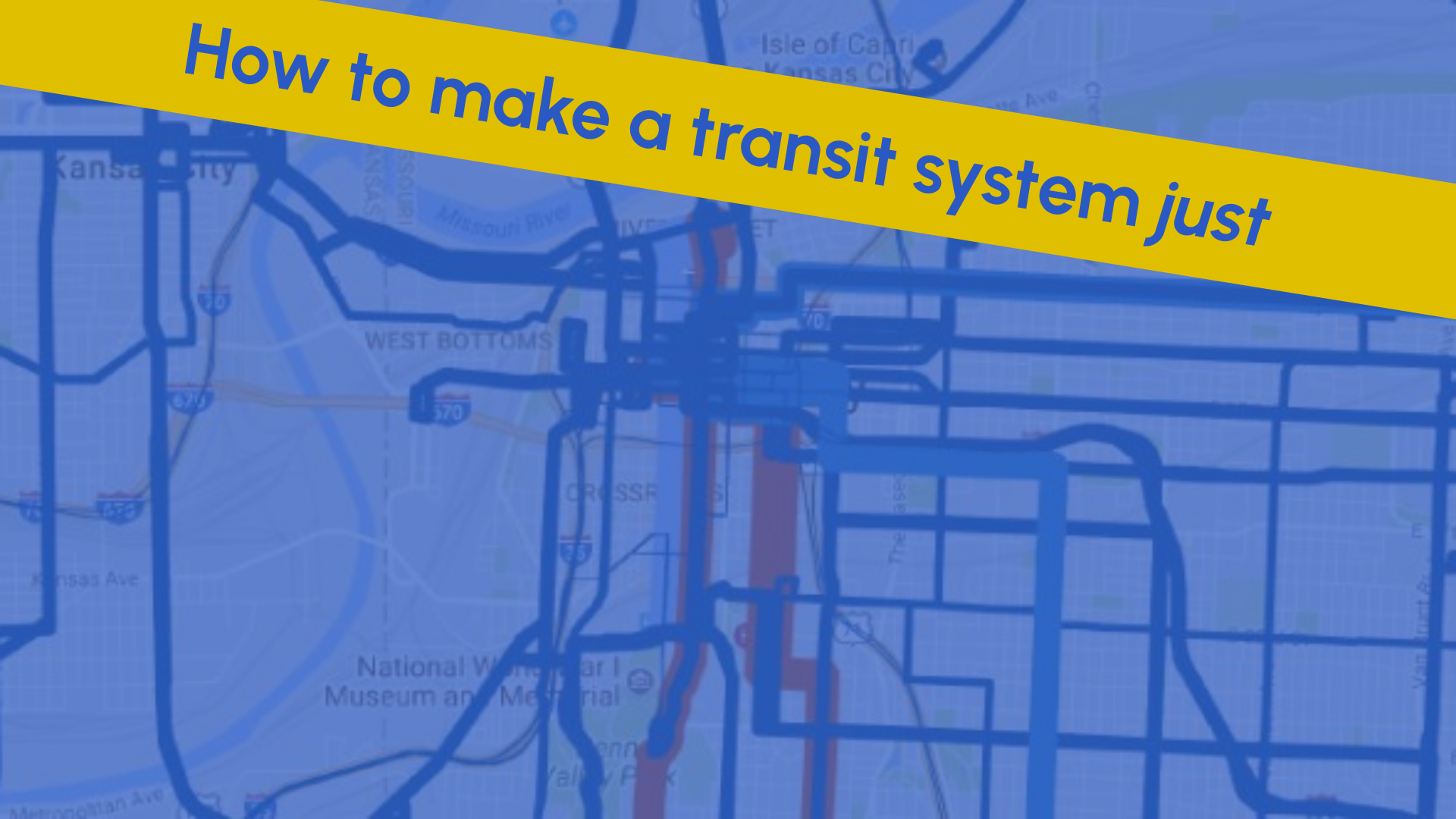
**Pittsburghers for Public Transit:** Urban/rural coalitions for statewide transit funding

**Riders Alliance (NYC):** Six-minute service campaign

And now...

**Kansas City Bus Riders Union:** Won \$6 million in additional bus funding to preserve our service until September

# *How to make a transit system just*



**Transportation has an infamous history of discrimination. We need to ensure our system is radically inclusive.**

## The best transit should serve the most vulnerable

**KC Streetcar:** It will remain free after June 1st. Why are bus riders, who aren't served by the fastest, most reliable service, expected to pay?

**NYC Subway:** Manhattan is well-served by frequent subway service. Meanwhile, the Bronx and Queens deal with delayed buses, lack of communication, and traffic.

**Historically underserved communities continue to be ignored by our current system.**

**Buses should be free.**

(and paratransit, too, but I don't have time to get into that)

# What is means testing in the context of transit?

The act of determining whether someone “deserves” free or reduced fare.

**Example:** RideKC Reduced Fare Programs

*Reduced fares will remain available for eligible riders, including:*

*Seniors*

*Riders with disabilities*

**Who does this leave behind?**

# Why making the buses free benefits us all

**Frequency:** Less time at the fare box means more time getting where you need to go

**Equity:** Transit is not meant to be profitable. Freedom of mobility is a basic right, and fares and means testing trap the most vulnerable.

**Ridership:** When everyone rides for free, more people from all walks of life will use transit. This pays for itself in (all the reasons listed in an earlier slide).

**Divesting from carceral fare enforcement:** It's abundantly clear that cops will be racist in who they "catch" evading fares. Just remove them from the equation entirely.



**What are we gonna do about it?**

## Inside game

### **Working with elected officials and folks in charge:**

- Setting up meetings with officials
- Getting on boards/councils! Our members are on:
  - KCRTA
  - MARC Kansas Programming Committee
- Writing a funding proposal for city council as a template for budget amendments

## Mutual aid

### **Buying and distributing fare cards to our fellow bus riders:**

- The way RideKC is implementing fares is horrendous.
- Many will be left behind.
- We want to step up and fill in those considerable gaps.

### **Training experts in applying for free/reduced fare:**

- We know the process will likely be inaccessible and discriminatory.
- We want to step up and fill in those considerable gaps. Again.

## Strength in numbers

**We packed KCMO city council budget hearings. We need you to stand with us during future ones.**

There is so much power in over 20 bus riders holding signs and testifying about how transit is a lifeline. We cannot do this without the help of all Kansas Citians.

Further reading:



<https://drive.proton.me/urls/4G0W8NF9AR#F7CGFOhxenwa>

## Sources:

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(all the books on my reading list)