

Transit Riders United

"Public Transit is a Public Good"

by Gerry La Londe-Berg
Chair, Transit Riders United

"If you want to clean up the planet, demand public transit."

We have the opportunity to create good jobs, save money and clean up our air, by using public transit. For some people, such as students and their families, public transit is a necessity. Transit Riders United (TRU), NBOP's transportation justice task force, is committed to bringing transit riders into the decision making process for public spending in Sonoma County, the Bay Area, and the State of California. Public Transit is a Public Good.

TRU members were very involved in the Reimagining Santa Rosa CityBus process. NBOP's participation helped get approval for the crucial at-grade Jennings Crossing for pedestrians and bicyclists at the SMART rail line near Coddington.

TRU and the Latino Student Congress won free bus rides on Sonoma County Transit in 2015 and 2016, for all college students. It increased ridership among college students by 30%. The Board of Supervisors did not include students in elementary and high school in this program; TRU and the Student Congress are working for all students to be included in 2017.

In each of the last three years, TRU also put before the Santa Rosa City Council proposals for free transit for students K through college on Santa Rosa CityBus. The need is high because free student transit increases attendance, performance, and well being for students. The members of our Student Congress have made this one of their top priorities for 2017.

Regionally, TRU and our allies in the Bay Area work together to amplify our power and compel the Metropolitan Transportation Commission to create programs and spending that benefits residents by reducing displacement, creating good jobs and improving and increasing transit. Gamaliel of California and TRU also lead an initiative at the state level for legislation that will create a pilot project to allocate funding (our tax dollars) for free transit passes for students.

Students are just the beginning! We can win frequent, reliable, and affordable bus service for everyone. The first step is to develop a free youth bus pass, so that our students can get to schools, jobs, health care, and other critical opportunities. First students – then you!

You can be part of Transit Riders United; you are invited to get involved and help move us all forward.