

Transit Equity Day

WHEREAS Rosa Parks was an iconic figure in the movements for social justice and racial equality, and played a major role in the inception of the Civil Rights movement that ended legal segregation in the United States; and

WHEREAS the immediate focus of Rosa Parks' historic protest was the unequal access of African-Americans to public transit; and

WHEREAS unequal access to public transit based on race, income, and disability have persisted to this day, and have to a degree become worse, with cuts in public funding for transit and consequent fare increases in many transit systems; and

WHEREAS public transit jobs in the United States have historically been good jobs that paid family-supporting wages, but in parallel to the cuts in public funding for transit and the trend of increasing fares, there is a growing marginalization of transit workers, who are facing worsening work conditions and erosion of their collective bargaining rights; and

WHEREAS affordable, reliable public transit is an essential public service, on par with utilities such as water and electricity; and

WHEREAS humanity is faced with the growing crisis of climate change, with record-breaking temperatures, with consequences including sea level rise, prolonged drought, more frequent wildfires, more severe storms and flooding, and spread of diseases; and

WHEREAS the effects of climate change disproportionately hurt workers, people of color, and poor people, and constitute a civil rights crisis of our time, as seen so vividly in the recent devastation from hurricane impacts in Texas, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, the Carolinas, and Florida, wildfires in California, flooding in the Midwest, and elsewhere; and

WHEREAS the overwhelming scientific consensus attributes the warming trend to human emissions of greenhouse gases from the combustion of fossil fuels such as oil, gas, and coal; and

WHEREAS it is essential for the survival of humanity to drastically cut our emissions of greenhouse gases and convert our economy to renewable non-emitting energy sources; and

WHEREAS in recognition of the realities of climate change and the need for a transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy, the AFL-CIO passed "Resolution 55: Climate Change, Energy and Union Jobs" at its 2017 convention; and

WHEREAS emissions from the transportation system are a major part of greenhouse gas emissions; and

WHEREAS transitioning our transportation system from excessive automobile dependence to public transit, especially electrified public transit with electricity from renewable sources, is key to transitioning our economy from fossil fuels to renewable energy and cutting our greenhouse gas emissions; and

WHEREAS the required expansion of public transit to address the climate crisis provides an unprecedented opportunity to continue the tradition of Rosa Parks and the civil rights movement by ensuring that transit

systems are affordable and accessible, and that people of color, economically disadvantaged people, people with disabilities, and other marginalized populations have full access to the benefits of public transit; and

WHEREAS the required expansion of public transit to address the climate crisis also provides an unprecedented opportunity to create a large number of good, high-skill, family-supporting transit operation jobs, as well as construction jobs for building new transit facilities; and

WHEREAS the growth of public transit will also reduce automotive pollutants such as nitrogen oxides and particulate matter that have the worst impacts on the communities closest to highways and other major roads, which tend to be disproportionately communities of color and economically disadvantaged communities; and

WHEREAS increased community access to public transit, reduction in racial, economic and other disparities in access to transit and clean air and in the burden of climate change impacts, and increased opportunities for employment in good jobs, form a key part of a “just transition” from a carbon-intensive, fossil-fuel based, highly unequal extractive economy to a pollution-free, regenerative, renewable energy based, just economy;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that 350 Wilmington supports the call to observe a Day of Action on Public Transportation as a Civil Right on February 4, 2020; and

RESOLVED that 350 Wilmington will draw attention to the continuing racial, economic, and other inequalities in access to adequate public transit, and the need for affordable and accessible transit, through the Day of Action; and

RESOLVED that 350 Wilmington will use the Day of Action to highlight the vital role that can be played by expansion of public transit in the required shift from a climate-destroying fossil fuel powered extractive economy to a climate-protecting, renewable-powered and regenerative economy, with a just transition for communities and workers; and

RESOLVED that 350 Wilmington will support legislation at the Federal, state, and local levels that:

- Increases public funding for transit, including funding to expand transit systems, especially in underserved neighborhoods, communities of color, economically disadvantaged communities, and communities burdened by pollution;
- Uses a part of the increased public funding to offset the need for fare increases, and reduces (or at least caps) fares;
- Eliminates or reduces fares for particular populations such as seniors, people with disabilities, and school and college students;
- Decriminalizes transit fare evasion, a measure that will make public transit much more accessible to those populations, particularly youth of color, who are disproportionately criminalized for a minor misdemeanor;
- Increases the accessibility of public transit for people with disabilities;
- Increases job opportunities in transit system operation as well as construction, and ensures that the new jobs pay family-supporting wages, provide good benefits, and give workers the opportunity to organize a union and bargain collectively without employer pressure and intimidation; and
- Prioritizes the hiring of economically disadvantaged people, people of color, people from communities currently underserved by transit and/or overexposed to vehicular and other forms of pollution, people with disabilities, workers displaced from polluting industries, formerly incarcerated people, and other marginalized populations for transit operation and construction jobs.