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Transit Forward Philadelphia Announces Launch

Ten leading Philadelphia-based organizations have united to advocate for transit improvements to benefit all Philadelphians

PHILADELPHIA, PA - Transit Forward Philadelphia (www.transitforwardphilly.org), a new transit advocacy coalition has formed to organize residents and transit riders for a more equitable, accessible, safe, and sustainable transit network in Philadelphia. The new transit coalition will hold a launch event on Thursday, March 5 at 5:30 p.m.

With city-wide transit ridership falling over the past four years, including a nine percent drop in bus ridership alone, and more competition than ever from services such as Lyft and Uber, the coalition will work to make public transit a “first choice” option for residents and visitors.

WHAT: Transit Forward Philadelphia Launch Event & Panel Discussion

WHEN: Thursday, March 5, 2020, 5:30 - 7:30 p.m.

WHERE: Azavea, 990 Spring Garden Street, 5th Floor, Philadelphia, PA 19123

DETAILS: The event is free, however [registration is required](#).

PANELISTS:

Leslie Richards, General Manager of SEPTA

Chris Puchalsky, Director of Policy and Strategic Initiatives for City of Philadelphia's Office of Transportation, Infrastructure, and Sustainability (oTIS)

Helen Gym, Philadelphia City Council Member at Large

Discussion topics will include the challenges SEPTA riders face today, the opportunities to strengthen the network and improve service, the need for a transit coalition in Philadelphia, and the importance of advocacy leading to transit improvements across the country.

Over the past six months, the coalition has developed a plan to improve the transit network which will create a more affordable, accessible, and convenient option for Philadelphians. This plan prioritizes those that are disproportionately impacted by poor transit service but



depend on transit the most. This includes people with disabilities, people ages 50+, communities of color, low-income residents, and Philadelphia’s talented and diverse workforce, who do not all work during nine to five business hours.

“AARP Pennsylvania is proud to join Transit Forward Philadelphia to push for improvements to the transit network in Southeastern Pennsylvania,” says **Yocasta Lara, Associate State Director of Advocacy & Community Outreach, AARP Pennsylvania**. “In Philadelphia, we are working to create a livable community that has affordable and appropriate transportation options for residents of all ages. This means a public transit system that is safe, reliable, and accessible for everyone, especially older travelers.”

Ten organizations have launched Transit Forward Philadelphia in anticipation of SEPTA implementing a Comprehensive Bus Network Redesign and the City of Philadelphia embarking on a City Transit Plan. Transit Forward Philadelphia also will fight to eliminate the transfer penalty, allowing riders to use the system more efficiently.

Transit Forward Philadelphia will begin recruiting more organizations to join the fight to improve transit service in the Greater Philadelphia region. The transit coalition has hired a full-time Transit Coalition Organizer, Yasha Zarrinkelk, to lead its efforts. Yasha will work with riders and organizations to build the coalition’s membership base while coordinating advocacy efforts and delivering improved transit access for all Philadelphians.

“I am really excited to have the opportunity to partner alongside transit riders, labor unions, advocacy organizations, business associations, and environmental justice groups in campaigning for what we all deserve,” says **Yasha Zarrinkelk, Transit Coalition Organizer of Transit Forward Philadelphia**. “Every Philadelphian is entitled to transit that is clean, accessible, affordable, frequent, and reliable. That’s what we’re fighting for at TFP.”

Transit Forward Philadelphia includes the following organizations among its founding members: AARP Pennsylvania, the Bicycle Coalition of Greater Philadelphia, Clean Air Council, Conservation Voters of Pennsylvania, 5th Square, the Philadelphia Association of Community Development Corporations, Service Employees International Union 32BJ (SEIU32BJ), the Sierra Club and Philadelphia Climate Works, PenTrans, and the Sustainable Business Network.

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