

A Guide for Prospective Board Members of Transportation Riders United

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TRU's Past, Present, and Detroit's Future

In 1999, TRU began as a handful of people outraged by the Detroit region's poor transit service and lack of meaningful leadership to improve it. Some were angered by the connection between poor transit and Detroit's economic struggles. Others were concerned about the health impacts of air pollution from so many cars and trucks. Still others just wanted their bus to show up on time.

By 2001, TRU became an official 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to improving bus service, breaking down the barriers to real rapid transit, and advocating for smart investments in transportation. Over the next twenty years, we successfully:

- **Blocked** the expansion of I-375 further onto the riverfront, a **wasteful boondoggle** which would have made impossible the resurgence of the Riverfront as the attractive pedestrian destination it is today;

- **Defended transit service** against efforts to gut funding during Macomb SMART elections, throughout Detroit's bankruptcy, and by state legislators who only care about roads and drivers;
- **Expanded public transportation throughout all of Oakland County**, finally making Novi, Rochester, and Bloomfield Hills accessible to people who don't drive; and
- **Supported the creation** of the Regional Transit Authority and regional transit **plans that led to improvements** including regional DART passes and pay-by-app, seamless FAST bus routes, the D2A2 express bus, and the Detroit Airport Express service.



Most importantly, **we led a transformation in public opinion on the importance of public transit in greater Detroit.** When we began, many people didn't think we even needed transit in the Motor City, or thought it was impossible here. Years of consistent outreach and education through presentations, events, media coverage, and more convinced people that quality transit is essential for this region to thrive. Now questions focus on how and when the region will improve transit, not whether or if.

Today, TRU's staff, interns, board members, volunteers, and partners work together to not only improve public transit for Detroiters but to modernize Michigan's mobility to ensure everyone has affordable, sustainable access to the great schools, jobs, shopping, and recreation our community has to offer. We invite you to join us on this critical journey!

TRU's Mission



“TRU believes everyone should be able to get where they need to go.

We educate, mobilize, and advocate for more and better public transit and other affordable mobility options throughout metro Detroit.”

- *TRU's mission statement, officially adopted Nov 13, 2019*

TRU's Vision

All people in greater Detroit will have reliable, safe, and affordable access to the places they live, work, shop, and play through a high-quality transit system.

An integrated network of buses, trains, bike routes, and other transportation options will seamlessly connect our cities, region, and beyond.

This system will foster attractive livable neighborhoods, vibrant cities, and a sustainable region.

TRU's Values

- **TRU is dedicated to serving the public's best interest.** We are part of the community and work on behalf of the community.

- TRU works hard because we are confident that we can make a difference over the long-term.
- We are results-oriented and **mission-driven**.
- TRU believes in **collaboration** and **teamwork**. We seek to engage new and **diverse partners** and supporters.
- TRU is committed to providing **trustworthy** information and to making well-reasoned, evidence-based decisions.
- TRU values openness and **respectful candor**. We strive to always act with **honesty** and **integrity**.

The Role of the TRU Board of Directors

The Board of Directors is the governing body for Transportation Riders United (TRU). This includes determining TRU's mission, budget and strategic priorities as well as ensuring the organization has the resources and relationships to fulfill its mission. The Board also selects the Executive Director and provides financial, legal, and ethical oversight and accountability.



Board Member Expectations

Attend Important Meetings and Events

- **Attend Board meetings** 5-8 times a year, mostly on Zoom on weekday evenings, along with one weekend board retreat. Board members are expected to make every effort to participate in most of those meetings.
- **Attend major TRU events** such as our annual State of Transit event.
- **Participate in a Committee** - Board members serve on a committee or project team which may meet monthly or quarterly:

- The **Executive Board** consists of the Board officers and committee chairs who meet monthly to plan board meetings, support the staff, and act in place of the Board on urgent matters.
- The **Fund Development** / Finance committee meets four times a year (virtually) to oversee TRU's finances and guide and support fundraising efforts to ensure the organization has the capacity to achieve its mission.
- The **Board Development** / Governance committee meets four times a year (virtually) to evaluate the Executive Director and to plan, recruit, and guide new board members.
- The **Policy** committee meets monthly (virtually) to track transit-related legislation and policy development at the local and state level and to advise the board and staff.

Support TRU's Fundraising

Part of leading TRU is ensuring the organization has the resources needed to achieve its mission, so every member contributes and helps in TRU's fundraising efforts in some way. Each board member strives to donate and/or raise at least \$1,000 a year or to recruit ten new members to join TRU.

- **Contribute** - To support TRU's work and demonstrate leadership, each board member makes a personally-significant contribution to TRU each year. Because each board member's finances vary greatly, the amount varies among board members but is expected to be a stretch gift that is among the member's top three contributions.
- **Personal Fundraising** - Each board member helps raise funds for TRU in whatever way works best for them, whether by encouraging friends to donate, garnering sponsorships, introducing staff to potential corporate or individual donors, or other ways

Be an Ambassador

Board members are important ambassadors between TRU and their community and network. Board members enthusiastically **share information** about TRU and our projects among their networks and recruit friends and colleagues to TRU events. And Board members **introduce TRU staff to contacts** that may be useful and bring information back to TRU from their network. As Ambassadors, Board members also means publicly supporting official Board decisions and helping recruit future board members.

Desired Skills and Traits of Prospective Board Members

TRU seeks a Board of Directors as diverse as the Detroit region to best guide TRU's decisions and effectively represent our community. While we evaluate prospective board members and

individuals and no one person is expected to meet all of these measures, some gaps we've identified that we're particularly seeking to grow in include:

- Skills
 - Organizational development and nonprofit capacity building
 - Fundraising and sponsorships (i.e. sales, real estate, business community)
 - Accounting and finance
 - Media and marketing
- Network & Affiliations
 - Business / corporate community
 - Civic / community leaders
 - Macomb County
- Geographic and Demographic Needs
 - People from an African Americans / Latino / Middle Eastern background
 - Transit riders (by need or by choice)
 - Seniors and/or people with disabilities

Next Steps – How do I become a Board Member?

1. [Complete an online application](#), sharing your experiences and interests, by November 30
2. TRU's Board Development committee will evaluate candidates in comparison to the skills and affiliations we need and make recommendations to the full Board, who will propose a 'slate' of recommended candidates. They may reach out with questions or to get to know you more.
3. On January 28, 2025, the TRU membership will vote to officially adopt the slate of candidates at TRU's annual State of Transit meeting.
4. New Board members begin in February for three-year terms.

Becoming a TRU Board Member

Steps to Complete		Important Dates						
#	Description	Oct 31	Nov 13, 18, 26	Nov 30	Dec 31	Jan 28	Feb 28	Mar 31
1	Apply Online DetroitTransit.org/Join-TRU-Board							
1a	Attend an Info Session <i>Available Dates: Nov 13, 18, or 26</i>							
2	Check Inbox for Questions from TRU							
3	Attend the State of Transit and get approved by TRU's membership							
4	Serve your term, starting February 2025							

Learn more at [DetroitTransit.org/Join-TRU-Board](#)

Have Questions or Want to Learn More?

1. **Learn more about TRU** and our priorities
 - a. On our website - DetroitTransit.org
 - b. On social media channels (@DetroitTransit)
2. **Meet with a current Board member** to get your questions answered and get to know our board better.
 - a. Contact TRU staff at Info@DetroitTransit.org
 - b. Contact Nicole Brown, Board Chair, NBrown@DetroitFutureCity.org, 313-622-4806
 - c. Or contact Greg Jakub, Board Treasurer, 313-720-7711
3. **Attend a Prospective Board Member Info Session**
 - a. Wednesday, November 13, at 12noon, on Zoom
 - b. Monday, November 18 at 5pm on Zoom (preceding our board meeting)
 - c. Tuesday, November 26 between 4-6pm in-person (tbd)

