



# Every Place Counts Leadership Academy

STORIES FROM COMMUNITY TRANSPORTATION LEADERS



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 U.S. Department of Transportation



# The Pulse of Greater Fulton



## Rosa Coleman

When campuses were still segregated, Rosa Coleman was not allowed to attend school in Fulton Hill. Years later, the first time she set foot in the school was as a participant in a community charrette to help decide the direction of a transportation project called the Pulse Bus Rapid Transit (BRT). Her childhood experiences built her interest in bringing Greater Fulton's neighborhoods together. Today, Rosa is President of the Greater Fulton Hill Civic Association.

Rosa remembers a time when a person could get everything they needed in the neighborhood, from groceries to medical appointments. That all changed when she was a teenager and those opportunities started leaving the area. After the nearby James River

## PROJECT INFO:

- Name of project: Pulse BRT
- Project Sponsor: Greater Richmond Transit Company
- DOT Support: FTA Transit Oriented Development (TOD) Technical Assistance Program
- City and State: Richmond, Virginia







Rosa's story also shows how small individual actions can blossom in to a new economic opportunities. Businesses have started to set up new locations in Greater Fulton and have taken active steps to engage the community because this has become a neighborhood norm. A company like Stone Brewing, a large California-based brewer, is a great example. They saw the desires of the community laid out in the priority list document that Greater Fulton's Future created. The CEO of Stone Brewing attended a City Council meeting about setting up their facility in the area and quickly decided that they should actively engage with the community. They quickly hired Juliellen Sarver, a local resident familiar with planning, and made use of her professional skills and local ties to create a community engagement office. Juliellen indicated that even though she had years of community planning experience, she was humbled and learned so much through the community participation efforts in Greater Fulton.

Community engagement and participation can lead to benefits for the entire community, from economic development to access to education to a stronger sense of community. It isn't always clear where the process will lead but over the long term community engagement can pay off. The Greater Fulton's Future planning initiative took place over four years beginning in 2009, and provided infrastructure that allowed the community to respond when Stone Brewing was considering Greater Fulton for its East Coast brewery and restaurant.



Margaret explained, “In the past, this river was abused – reversed, straightened, dredged, and made part of the sewer system. Now it’s important for people to understand that it’s a living natural resource, to experience the pageantry and magic of a river.”

The City opened Phases I and II of the project in 2015 and 2016, and is nearly finished with Phase III. The Riverwalk is a car-free, 1.3-mile corridor along Wacker Drive that also functions as a public, linear park. It provides space to walk and bike on the south bank of the river, and to enjoy a picnic, sit on a bench to watch the river and the boats, or visit a restaurant. The Riverwalk links downtown to the 18-mile Chicago Lakefront Trail.

This project “gave the river to everybody,” said Margaret. “Everybody can come and feel welcome in a place that nobody could get to before.”

In years past, the walkways along the river were not united; to stroll along the water, you had to go down a set of stairs at the beginning of each block and then back up a set of stairs at the end of the block. Now, a 20-foot wide Riverwalk is built out into the 200-foot wide river, and the walkway is continuous thanks to under-bridge connections. The Riverwalk connects to Lake Shore Drive and the Chicago Lakefront Trail. At the confluence of the North and South Branches of the Chicago River, the Riverwalk is built out 50 feet into the river.

**“Everybody can come and feel welcome in a place that nobody could get to before.”**  
– Margaret Frisbie

Public engagement: The Chicago Riverwalk Development Committee, formed in 2007, was comprised of city and park district employees, community groups, recreational user groups, and river-based businesses including water taxi and tour boat companies and building managers. The Committee spent several years envisioning the Riverwalk, and considering how it could celebrate the unique spirit of Chicago. After participating on the Committee, Margaret Frisbie remembers the first time she stepped foot on the Riverwalk. “It was like being in a painting that you’ve looked at a million times, and then you’re standing in it. It came to life! We are literally touching the water in a way that was never possible before.”

Connectivity: From a commuting point of view, the Riverwalk increases connectivity and access to transportation. Many folks walk and bike along the river instead of on city streets, using the Riverwalk as a first- and last-mile connection to their offices along Wacker Drive and North Michigan Avenue. The Riverwalk increases access to Metra commuter rail stations, Chicago Transit Authority buses and trains, Divvy bike share stations and water taxis.





**Economic opportunity:** When Phase II of the project opened, the restaurants along the water became an anchor of activity. Gross revenues from the restaurants increased from \$4.6 million in 2015 to \$8.5 million in 2016. This growth created economic opportunity for employees, business owners and the City. Building owners are now negotiating three to ten year leases to make the economic base more stable and sustainable.

**Educational opportunity:** The Riverwalk is encouraging folks to get outside to learn about science and nature. For example, two employees from the Environmental Law and Policy Center, which is located on the Riverwalk, go fishing during their lunch break and talk with passersby about improvements in the water quality.

Further down the river, the Chicago Park District has installed a jetty featuring wetlands with water level and underwater habitat and a riparian zone. The District educates students and families about the river, native plants and climate change.

**Health opportunity:** In addition to walking or biking along the river, it's also possible to kayak down the river. Phase III of the project will include a zero-depth fountain where kids and people with disabilities will have access to play in the water.

**Cultural opportunity:** Tour companies located on the Riverwalk offer opportunities to learn about architecture, birds and other wildlife, and the McCormick Bridgehouse and Chicago River Museum explains the history of the area. In the summer months, the Riverwalk is home to concerts, lectures and wine tasting events.



# Get on the Bus



## David and Darius Young

Like a lot of people in Detroit, David and Darius Young ride the bus everywhere they go: to school, to work, to visit family and friends. And until recently, it was common for them to experience long waits for the bus. “The old buses kept breaking down,” said David, a 17-year-old football player at Cass Tech High School.

Then their commute times changed for the better. In May of 2016, the City received a \$25.9 million bus grant through the Federal Transit Administration’s Ladders of Opportunity Initiative to purchase hybrid and clean diesel buses.

### PROJECT INFO:

- Name of Project: Hybrid and Clean Diesel Buses
- Project Sponsor: Detroit Department of Transportation
- USDOT support: \$25.9 million FTA Bus and Bus Facilities Ladders of Opportunity Initiative Grant
- City and State: Detroit, Michigan









enhances the identity of West Baltimore by highlighting its residents and what's important to them culturally. Denise is an organizer who builds community capacity advocates on various projects and developments affecting West Baltimore.

Denise's own family was personally impacted by the Highway to Nowhere when her father, who lived in the path of the highway, was displaced. As Denise tells it, "People had very strong feelings about what occurred during that period and felt the neighborhood lost its place." That loss and the need to acknowledge and heal from it led Culture Works to gather people from West Baltimore to hear their stories about the impacts of the Highway to Nowhere. This was a formal opportunity for the community to get together to talk about this loss.

Culture Works created space for remembrance through storytelling and art by setting up a temporary gallery for community residents who didn't necessarily identify as artists to visually express what's important to them in their community. Those efforts led to a five-day learning exchange in 2011 and a two-day national festival with celebrations held on the pavement of the Highway to Nowhere. Denise highlights that "most people see West Baltimore as a crime ridden part of town – but on that particular weekend, the festival attracted over 10,000 people into West Baltimore and there were no reports of any crime!"

**This is the cultural piece of West Baltimore that we want to highlight in terms of its people and assets. I hope that other things will be manifested as a result of honoring this space.”**  
– Denise Johnson

In December of 2016, Culture Works put on a theater performance about Baltimore's Highway to Nowhere. The performance highlighted West Baltimore's history, the residents and cultural attitudes of the community. The performance was a way to help people not to focus away from deficits and instead on resident's cultural sense and how this shapes the place in which they live.

Acknowledging the past and learning from it is part of what Denise Johnson sees and honors in efforts around restorative justice in West Baltimore. In late 2016, she spoke on a panel that focused on Ladder<sup>STEP</sup>. She is excited about Ladder<sup>STEP</sup> and appreciates that US DOT is willing to step outside the box and share the impact of transportation through stories instead of only focusing on data.

The Ladder<sup>STEP</sup> approach demonstrates to Denise that restorative justice can play a significant role in increasing transportation options, housing opportunities, community safety, workforce training and a sense of hope.



# A Tale of Three Cities



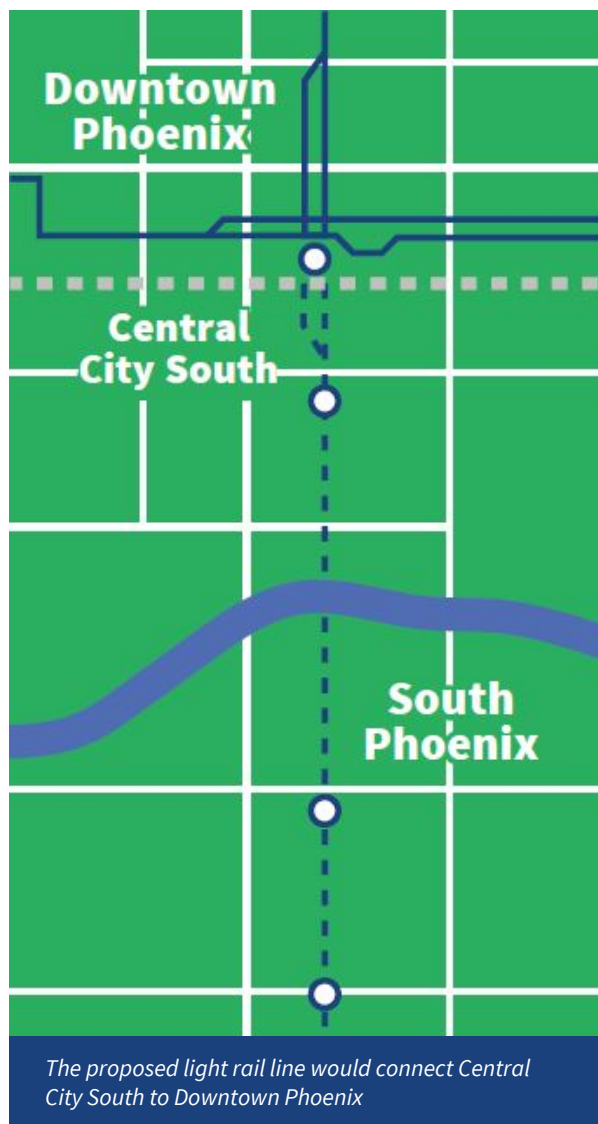
**Eva Olivas**

Eva Olivas traveled from Phoenix to Washington, DC to attend the launch of USDOT’s Every Place Counts Leadership Academy, an experience that trains community members to engage effectively in transportation decision-making. “The first thing that I felt was hope,” she said. “We had this massive department actually caring that people want to contribute and telling us that we have a responsibility!”

Eva said the Academy was valuable not only because it exposed her to the curriculum in the Transportation Toolkit, but also because she met people from communities all across the US. “At the grassroots level, sometime you can’t see what’s happening at the grassroots level in

## PROJECT INFO:

- Name of project: South Central Light Rail Extension Project
- Project Sponsor: City of Phoenix
- USDOT Support: Ladder<sup>STEP</sup> and Every Place Counts Leadership Academy
- City and State: Phoenix, Arizona



*The proposed light rail line would connect Central City South to Downtown Phoenix*





development will happen as result of the light rail, making the transition from Downtown to Central City South less dramatic and disconnected,” she said.

“Now that we have a lot of people who are engaged and trying to give ideas and direct the development, I hope the light rail system will help us connect everyone in a much stronger way than ever before,” said Eva. “Connectivity is the priority. Development and investment will no longer leapfrog over our community. You will have to improve our community. We’re using the light rail to really push equity. We’re hoping to be a hub for employment. Also, light rail will bring a diversity of people to the neighborhood and I would assume that the quality of education will improve.”

As the Executive Director of the Phoenix Revitalization Corporation, Eva has recruited City of Phoenix staff to meet with residents and businesses along Central Avenue. “Our goal is to give feedback to the City to minimize the impact of construction, which we saw had a big effect on local businesses during construction of the existing light rail system,” she said. To provide additional support to the community, the organization publishes a newsletter to keep the neighborhoods and business informed of project updates. Eva credits the City of Phoenix with being very open to providing information to the community and genuinely listening to the needs and desires of local residents. As she explained, “We need to bring that education to the grassroots level and to people’s front doors,” she said.

Eva is very committed to involving the community in the transportation decision-making process to create development that is inclusive. “We are trying to stop using the word gentrification. We want to maximize the benefit to neighbors instead of having them pay the price,” she said. “Residents didn’t know what they could have or what they should have. By involving the community in the planning process, we have broadened residents’ view on what transportation can do.”