Story of the Bench in 2025 - What will the benches tell us?
Swansea, Illinois Story

Citizens for Modern Transit (CMT) teamed up with AARP in St. Louis in 2025 to launch the *"Story of a Bench"* – a Bus Bench Placemaking Program. This program gives partnering organizations the opportunity to help provide and chronicle the impacts of bench installations at bus stops across the region. It is grounded in the ability to gather and share narratives on how these seats positively influence riders and local communities and have the potential to help spark further investment in and around transit regionwide.

THE SWANSEA STORY

CMT and AARP in St. Louis – in partnership with St. Clair County Transit District (SCCTD), the Village of Swansea and Metro Transit – unveiled the first two bus bench installations in June 2025 as part of the newly launched program. Project partners made formal remarks before the official ribbon cutting ceremony at MetroBus Stop #11223 – Walgreens and MetroBus Stop #11303 – McDonald's in the Village of Swansea. These stops are serviced by the #16 St. Clair Square MetroBus route, which also serves Belleville, Fairview Heights and Collinsville.

SCCTD served as the general contractor and invested $4,550 in each stop, covering concrete work, installation and a trash receptacle at each site. Community engagement surrounding the project – both on site and through direct mail – demonstrated significant community support for the benches. Riders and residents shared that the benches add a thoughtful touch that makes their daily routines more comfortable. A sampling of statements follows:

- *Allows me to rest as I wait for the bus after my shift.*
- *It makes me smile to see how nice it looks and the saying of "enjoy the ride" is a great touch.*
- *Finally, a place to sit after shopping.*

Whether riding for work, personal errands or to get to St. Louis, the majority of riders found the benches a respite on their journey. Shelter or shade was the next biggest ask as part of the engagement. Since the installation, the Village of Swansea has committed to fund two shelters to add to these sites. Benches were ordered in September. Each shelter is $10,725 and will be installed in the spring 2026.

The tiny investment of a bench at two stops in the Village of Swansea has resulted in an additional investment of more than $30,000 across the two sites, creating spaces that add to the fabric of the community for riders and residents alike. Riders matter, and transit matters in Swansea, Ill.