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CITIZENS FOR MODERN TRANSIT BUS BENCH INSTALLATIONS AMONG PARTNERS MOST IMPACTFUL PROJECTS

ST. LOUIS, Mo. (Jan. 28, 2026) ... What began as a simple idea to improve rider experiences at bus stops without seating across the bi-state region—often referred to as “forgotten stops”—has quickly grown into a transformative movement. In less than a year, Citizens for Modern Transit (CMT) and AARP in St. Louis—along with St. Clair County Transit District, Metro Transit and local government officials—have successfully installed seven “Story of a Bench” bus benches in geographically dispersed locations, surpassing the program’s original goal of five installations in its inaugural year. These installs have prompted further enhancements at transit stops and serve as a catalyst for continued growth as four additional bench projects are currently in the works.

Launched in April 2025, the program set out to build better bus stops through the addition of bright red, all-weather benches featuring the slogan “Enjoy the Ride,” a customized sponsor plaque and QR code that invites riders to share how the bench has impacted their transit experience. This feedback loop, along with narratives compiled at these MetroBus stops by program ambassadors, fostered ongoing engagement and helped measure the program’s impact in real time, telling the story of the bench. Rider feedback indicates that the benches are helping to ease physical and mental stress after a long day at work or school, when carrying groceries or dealing with mobility challenges or health conditions.

“It’s convenient, affordable, well connected, SAFE, environmentally responsible and allows me to drink my coffee in the morning and disconnect on the way home,” commented an individual who has been riding MetroBus from the city out to Edward Jones in Des Peres for work ever since he graduated from Mizzou and moved back to St. Louis a decade ago.

Another bus rider echoed satisfaction stating, “What’s great about the bench is that it tells transit users that we are being taken into consideration, that we belong here too, and deserve infrastructure that makes this type of travel comfortable and convenient.”

To date, benches have been installed at MetroBus Stops #11223 and #11303 along North Illinois Street in Swansea; MetroBus Stop #926 at 4402 Natural Bridge Road and MetroBus Stop #4134 at 1100 S. Grand Avenue in the City of St. Louis; MetroBus Stop #5609 at the southwest corner of South Lindbergh Blvd. and Baptist Church Road in St. Louis County; MetroBus Stop #12961 at 505 S. 8th Street near the Comprehensive Behavioral Health Center in East St. Louis; and MetroBus Stop #12985 at 1110 Camp Jackson Road near McDonald’s in Cahokia Heights.

The first installs sparked further investment with St. Clair County Transit District pouring concrete pads and placing additional trash receptacles, and the Swansea Mayor Jeff Parker and the Village of Swansea

purchased \$30,000 bus shelters to cover the benches at both stops. St. Clair County Transit District has also invested in a shelter for the stop in East St. Louis.

“This program exemplifies how small, thoughtful interventions can yield profound impacts, making transit stops more than just pass-through points by becoming places of rest, connection and community,” stated Kimberly Cella, CEO of CMT. “It has been among our most impactful programs, and we will be moving full steam ahead with it in 2026.”

Partners are currently working with the City of Maplewood on three benches along Manchester Road on the Missouri side and with the City of Fairview Heights on one in Illinois.

CMT and AARP in St. Louis are also actively seeking additional partners— including businesses, organizations, municipalities, community groups and individuals—willing to support the installation of “The Story of a Bench” program at bus stops community wide. An investment of between \$1,000 to 5,000, depending on the selected location, is needed per bus stop to cover the cost of each bench installation. Sponsor recognition is included on a commemorative plaque at each location.

To learn more about partnership opportunities, visit www.cmt-stl.org or call 314.231.7272.

Citizens for Modern Transit

Citizens for Modern Transit is the St. Louis region’s transit advocacy organization. Established in 1985 to help bring light rail to St. Louis, CMT’s mission is focused on championing, challenging, encouraging and advocating for public transit in an effort to drive economic growth and improve quality of life. To help support this mission, the organization works to develop ridership programming, transform spaces around transit stops, help secure local and federal transit funding, serve as a strong and effective voice on transit-related issues and opportunities, and ensure safe, convenient, user-friendly and affordable access to the area’s integrated public transportation system. To learn more, visit www.CMT-STL.org or follow the organization on Facebook, X, Instagram or LinkedIn.

AARP in St. Louis

AARP in St. Louis is the local connection for AARP - the nation’s largest nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to empowering people to choose how they live as they age. Locally this is done through virtual & in-person engagement opportunities, legislative efforts on the local, state and federal level, educational resources, and volunteer opportunities. Advocating for and supporting efforts that contribute to creating a lifelong community is at the core of what we do in the St. Louis region. Learn more at www.aarp.org/stlouis