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FIRST BUS BENCH INSTALLATIONS IN BELLEVILLE UNVEILED DURING PROGRESSIVE RIBBON CUTTING

Goal is to Help Build Better Bus Stops Through the Addition of a Basic Amenity – a Bench

BELLEVILLE, IL (March 15, 2025) … An idea to improve the rider experience at bus stops without seating—often referred to as "forgotten stops"—has quickly become a transformative regional initiative. In less than a year, Citizens for Modern Transit (CMT) and AARP in St. Louis, together with St. Clair County Transit District, Metro Transit and local government officials, have installed nine bus benches across the bi-state area, including two unveiled in Belleville during a Progressive Ribbon Cutting Ceremony on March 13.

Project partners made formal remarks before the official ribbon cuttings took place at 9 a.m. and 10 a.m. The first was held at MetroBus Stop #15715, located one block from the Belleville Town Square at 101 N Illinois Street, followed by one at MetroBus Stop #12170, located in the Hexenbukel Neighborhood on Scheel Street and near the intersection of N Douglas Avene. MetroBus Stop #15715 is served by the #1 Main Street–State Street route and MetroBus Stop #12170 is served by routes #1 Main Street–State Street, #15 Belleville–O'Fallon, #16 St. Clair Square and #23 Belleville–College.

These MetroBus stops now boast a red, all-weather, 6-foot-long bench featuring the slogan "Enjoy the Ride." Each has a customized sponsor plaque and QR code inviting 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, fosters ongoing engagement and helps 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. The Belleville bench installations were funded by Citizens for Modern Transit and AARP in St. Louis and installed by St. Clair County Transit District.

"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."

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.

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PARTNERS UNVEIL BUS BENCH INSTALLATIONS
FIRST AND FINAL ADD

The first installations sparked further investment, including new concrete pads and trash receptables funded by the St. Clair County District, as well as a $30,000 investment by Swansea Mayor Jeff Parker and the Village of Swansea to install 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.

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.

About St. Clair County Transit District
The St. Clair County Transit District (SCCTD) was founded in 1981 and contracts with Bi-State Development to provide public transportation services in St. Clair County, Ill., by way of 11 MetroLink stations and 14 MetroBus routes and with Southwestern Illinois College to offer paratransit services as well as on-demand, micro transit via the SCCTD Flyer in seven communities. SCCTD has also established and maintains the ever-evolving MetroBikeLink System of interconnecting trails and bike paths that seamlessly connect to six Metro Transit Centers – linking individuals to jobs, education, healthcare, entertainment, trails and other destinations throughout the bi-state region. To learn more, visit www.SCCTD.org or follow the District on Facebook, X, Instagram or LinkedIn.

About Metro Transit
Metro Transit operates the St. Louis region's public transportation system, which includes 24 battery electric buses and 237 clean-burning diesel buses that serve 59 MetroBus routes in eastern Missouri and southwestern Illinois. Metro also operates MetroLink light rail vehicles on 46 miles of track serving 38 stations in the two-state area, and operates Metro Call-A-Ride, a paratransit fleet of 123 vans. Metro Transit is a Bi-State Development enterprise. To learn more, visit www.metrostlouis.org or follow Metro Transit on Facebook, X, Instagram and LinkedIn.

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