



# Community Activism and Transportation

Bringing the voice of the community into  
transportation planning and policy



What is community activism?

An **activist** is a person who campaigns for some kind of social change. Often this involves community organizing in the form of direct actions like protests.

**Community Advocates** use that same passion to inform citizens about unjust environmental, animal, and human conditions in an effort to motivate them into action. A community advocate often works directly with policymakers and politicians to change laws. They are the liaison between governing organizations and the public.

A **Watchdog organization** is usually a non-profit group that monitors the activities of governments, industry, or other organizations and alerts the public when they detect actions that go against the public interest.



## History of Transportation Activism

- Mass transportation forms like buses and subways can be a place of contestation
- In America, since the 1950's, buses have been battlegrounds regarding racial segregation, ableism, sexism, and transportation accessibility for low-income folks.
- Transit has seen a variety of forms of activism, starting with the Civil Rights Movement
  - Rosa Parks and the Freedom Riders
  - Bus riders unions
  - Americans Disabled for Accessible Public Transit
  - Mobility Justice movement

## Activity

Examine a transportation activist organization and report back

1. What is the problem(s) this group is addressing?
2. What are their methods, tools, or strategies for addressing the issue?
3. Are they an activist, advocacy, or watchdog group?
4. Do you think their methods are effective?

- Oregon Walks
- Transportation Choices Coalition
- Vancouver Bus Riders Union
- Bike Portland
- OPAL
- Peatónito
- The Street Trust
- Motor City Freedom Riders
- Washington Area Bicyclist Association

**Free to Ride Documentary:**

<https://vimeo.com/300609750>