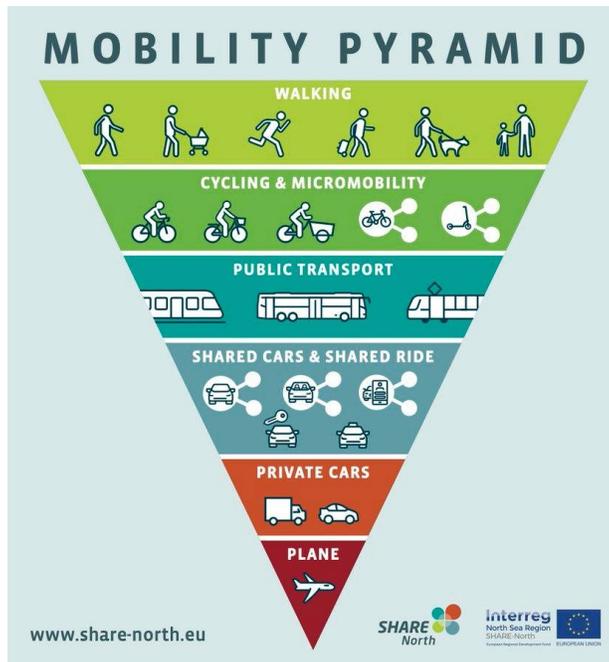




2023 Winter Newsletter

HAPPY NEW YEAR EVERYONE!



UTRU is excited to welcome you to the new year, and with some exciting news both within and outside of our organization, there is much to talk about in this quarter's newsletter!

First things first, we welcomed two new members to our Board of Directors: Zach Adams and Bre Clementine. They join our existing board in October after being elected to their terms.

Second, UTRU officially welcomed its first chapter: UTRUStudents, which is specifically dedicated to representing students attending Utah's colleges and Universities. To learn how to join or to start your own chapter, just keep reading.

Third, we are planning for our quarterly membership meeting on Saturday, February 18th at 10 AM. The event will be held virtually and feature Representative Joel Briscoe, who will speak about free fare and transit, and

representatives from UTA to discuss what steps they are taking to address the driver shortage and summarize their recently closed 5-year plan. This comes at the same time that Governor Spencer Cox announced that he would like to see a one-year trial run of free fare for transit by including this as an item in his budget. By attending, you can learn more about how you can advocate for this vision of better transit.

Finally, we were excited to provide a new way for our supporters to passively support UTRU while doing their day-to-day shopping. By taking just a few minutes to set up an account, you can donate to us simply by using your Smith's FreshValues card. The best part? It doesn't cost you a thing! Read on to learn how to set up your accounts today.

We continue to work hard fighting for transit. Our Community Advocacy Training for Transit (CATT) Proposal continues to gain supporters as we try to teach members of the community how to advocate for transit on the local level. So, stay tuned to find out how you can be involved in the fight for better transit in Utah!

UTRU Board

Zach Adams | Randy Atkin | Mike Christensen | Bre Clementine | John Pearson | Chris Stout

UTRU Staff

Curtis Haring - Executive Director | Stephanie Gallegos - IT

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

February Membership Meeting

Saturday, February 18 | 10 - 11:00 AM

Held Virtually



UTRU will be joined by Representative Joel Briscoe to discuss his history of fighting for free fare for transit and Governor Cox's announcement to include this in his budget.

We will also be joined by Greg Gerber and Joey Alsop from UTA to talk about the five-year plan update and updates to address the driver shortage.



Visit [UTRU.org](https://www.utru.org) for event details or go to:

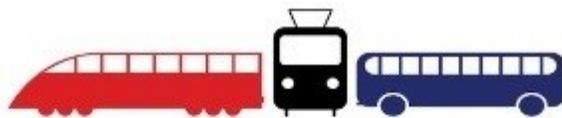
[bit.ly/UTRU FEB 23](https://bit.ly/UTRU_FEB_23)

UTRU Approves its Inaugural Chapter: **UTRU Students!**

Last month, UTRU's Executive Board officially approved the charter for UTRU Students.

UTRU Students formed to advocate for the transit needs of those attending Utah's colleges and universities.

To learn more and to get involved, visit utru.org/utru-students



UTRU *Students*

Start Your Own Issue Based Chapter

UTRU chapters guide the organization's advocacy and outreach efforts and the work chapters do create on-the-ground changes in actively looking for riders to start chapters based on their interests and the communities they serve.

Chapters can focus on locations such as neighborhoods or cities; transit types used such as bus, bike, or train riders; common interests like skiers, commuters, and those who use transit to access arts and entertainment; or demographics such as women, people of color, or teens.

The best part is that UTRU will help you in setting up and maintaining your chapter by providing the resources necessary to help you succeed!

If you have questions about starting a chapter, please contact UTRU's executive director by emailing curtis.haring@utru.org.

Beware the 209 Ghost Bus

(or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Route)

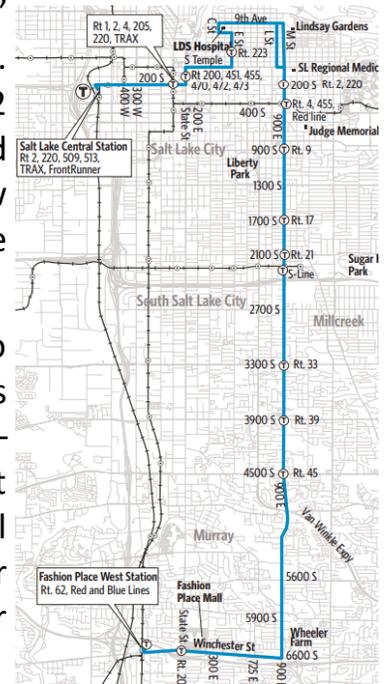
- By Chris Stout, UTRU Board Member

An Avenues resident recently contacted me about the “ghost buses” running there since the deviation of the 209 into the area occurred. He was amazed that only 142 riders (based on November 2022 ridership) were using the “empty” buses. He invited me to come and watch the “empty” buses as they sped furiously along the narrow Avenue streets, dodging cats, dogs, children, runners, all while blocking fire engines trying to get to an emergency. I declined.

But I did decide to ride the bus into the area and then back again to see what a “ghost bus” really looked like. Any transit rider who has been around knows that a ghost bus isn’t one with no or few riders – but one that shows up on the Transit app or Google maps as one that will arrive at the scheduled time, only for there not to be an actual bus. That’s a ghost bus, and unfortunately, due to the UTA operator shortage, has happened, and has resulted in service being further reduced this last December.

I decided to board the 209 near my house around 8 on a Friday morning in January. Including me, there were four riders onboard when we entered the Avenues. No riders boarded or exited the area, until the last stop when one rider got on. I got off about 2nd West and crossed the street to board the next Outbound 209. One rider was on when I boarded, and he got off when another rider boarded, then one more got on just before we exited South Temple into the Avenues. In total, two riders boarded, and one rider exited while in the Avenues. One of those exited at 9th South and the other exited at 30th South. Overall, the traffic was light, the busses slow, and no calamities happened.

The major complaint against those using the term “empty buses” is that they assume a bus must be full to be of value. We certainly don’t think that cars must be full to be of value. Oddly enough, if we banned cars from the road unless they were full, we’d have full buses. While 142 riders doesn’t seem like much, consider that the 1.71-mile deviation has more riders than 30 entire routes in the entire UTA system. I agree that a route through the Avenues could use smaller buses and should probably continue to the University, but considering the operator shortages, the deviation of the 209 seems to work for the neighborhood and seems to have little negative impact to the system. Overall, I would say that the change is a success.



Nandi and the Namma Metro: Lessons from South India for American Transit

- By John Pearson, UTRU Board Member

Transit in India has a reputation for chaos: cows milling about, interminable traffic, people riding on roofs of trains, and some of the world's worst air pollution. All of these things have an element of truth to them. However, after spending a month in the 11-million strong mega-city of Bangalore, I can confidently say there is much more to the story and many lessons Americans can draw from the colorful streets of the worlds most populous democracy.



The first thing I noticed on the streets of Bangalore was the speed and rhythm the traffic: there is continuous movement, albeit at slower speeds of around 15-20mph, the target speed for some of Salt Lake City's recent "20 is Plenty" campaign. While congestion plays a role, there is also a heavy use of traffic circles as well as speed bumps, and a notable lack of stop signs. These factors, in addition to the large number of pedestrians and a few cows (locally nicknamed Nandi, after the vehicle of the God Shiva) force attention in most drivers. This forced attention is the first lesson we can draw from India: put in infrastructure that makes you think and pay attention, and the streets get safer.

Before I get to transit, I did want to mention the prevalence of electric vehicles of the two, three and four wheeled variety. There is a large share of traffic dominated by 2-wheelers such



as mopeds and motorcycles with some e-bikes, bike shares, and electric scooters as well. There is also the ubiquitous "auto" or 3-wheeled taxi, also available in a blue-white electric version. The domestic manufacturers (e.g. Tata, Maruti) have introduced a variety of electric vehicles at price points that should make US companies blush (some as low as 10K USD!). And it should be noted that the three-wheelers can handle a lot of cargo! Smaller sizes require less expensive batteries and can make for safer roads. Perhaps we can learn from India that for many tasks a smaller size gets the job done and can enable an easier path to energy security.

Now when it comes to transit there is much to comment upon. First, there are buses literally everywhere and they are almost always full, with a transition to electric buses in full swing. Though they lack dedicated bus lanes in many areas, the frequency of service and extensive coverage appears to make up for this. Even rural areas see frequent buses and thus are well utilized. Here is another lesson for America: frequency, not fancy tech, fills buses.

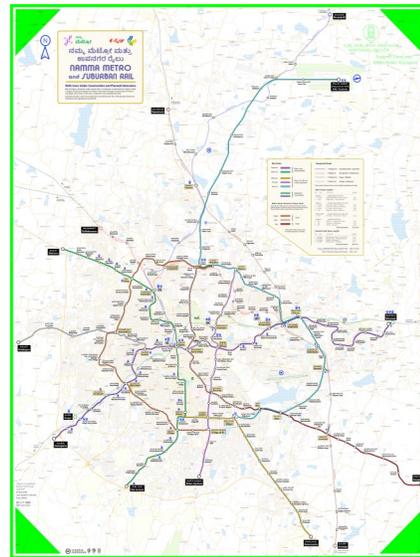
Far and away the most surprising and hopeful aspect of transit in Bangalore is the rapidly expanding Namma Metro subway. This is a mix of elevated and underground subway, and it is elevated at a dramatic height (50+ft) so as to reduce the blocking of light to



residences and shops. Since beginning construction just over a decade ago, they have made rapid progress and constructed 52 stations and over 50 miles of rail. Since beginning construction just over a decade ago, they have made rapid progress and constructed 52 stations and over 50 miles of rail. There are plans to complete an entire line this year, and by 2025 will have 5 lines with 80 stations and 100 miles of rail. While direct cost comparisons are fraught, the Phase 2 (3 lines, 80 stations) is estimated to cost just \$4.2 billion USD. Compare this to the \$4.4 billion 2nd Avenue subway of NYC which, also over similar timeframe of 10 years placed a paltry 3 stations. Already, with 2 lines that have limited urban coverage, average daily ridership is over 400,000 people thus exceeding most North American cities and showing the appetite for transit here is strong.

examine how India, with private land ownership has been able to make such rapid progress compared to our interminable transit projects. The use of highly elevated transit lines along major arterials is also another potential lesson learned that sidesteps thorny questions of land purchases.

Like any developing nation India has its share of challenges, but it is also building metros with lightning speed and embracing variety of wheels and sizes of electric vehicles. Their vibrant streets are therefore well poised to transition to a climate friendly sustainable transportation sector that may one day be the envy of the world.



This is yet another lesson for US transit: dedicated metro lines are essential if we are to break away from traffic and improve travel times, and our myopic focus on light rail that is not much better than BRT should be questioned. We also should

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- Select UTRU from the list by clicking "Enroll."

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