

Utah Transit Riders Union

Community Advocacy Training for Transit (CATT) Program Proposal

Introduction

The Utah Transit Riders Union (UTRU) is a non-profit organization designed to serve as the voice of both the present and future transit rider in Utah and seeks to create transit systems that are reliable, accessible, comfortable, efficient, and affordable all while building a transit-affirming culture.

We are seeking funds for a pilot program we are calling the Community Advocacy Training for Transit (CATT) Program, which is designed to provide the knowledge, tools, and resources necessary to effectively increase citizen advocacy as it relates to increasing transit/people-oriented options at the local, city, county, and state level.

UTRU has, as part of its organization, decades of combined experience in effective organizing and advocacy. This, however, does not mean that we claim to know it all. Because of this, UTRU has been reaching out and working with grassroots advocacy groups that focus on economic equity, environmental issues, minority and immigrant communities, health care, and transportation (including Utah's largest transit organization, the Utah Transit Authority (UTA)), in order to ensure that will be able to provide a more complete and useful program to communities. These groups are excited and supportive of the CATT Proposal but lack the resources to provide funds to initially get the proposal off the ground.

Once established, UTRU will engage newly minted transit advocates to fight for transit based on the skills they learned from the CATT program to fight for both short and long-term improvements to transit along the Wasatch Front. We plan to maintain regular contact with these individuals through UTRU chapters that are formed around location and/or common interest. We also hope to take the CATT program on the road and reach out to smaller systems across the state.

The CATT Proposal

UTRU intends to increase community involvement, awareness, and advocacy for transit by holding community-based trainings that discuss the following topics:

- A history of transit in Utah.
- An overview of zoning laws and their impact on our lives.
 - Discussion on items such as density, single use vs. mixed use zoning, parking requirements, and transit-oriented development.
- The role the Utah State Legislature plays in transit-related policy making.
 - Discussion about UDOT and Transit Agencies.
 - Basics on infrastructure funding.
- The role the county plays in transit-related policy making.
 - Discussion on regional planning.
- The role a city plays in transit-related policy making.
 - Emphasizing the fact that the majority of transit/people-oriented planning comes down to the decisions cities make. Re-emphasis on zoning laws.
- How individuals can play a deciding role in transit-related policy-making through participation.
 - Discussion of citizen advocacy:

- Community Council Meetings
- The role social media can play
- How to participate in and become a member of a planning commission
- How to contact policymakers
- How to support candidates and run for office.

The bulk of the training will focus on the role cities play in transit decisions and how individuals can an active and influential part of this process. UTRU will tailor its presentations to the specific communities they are presenting to by providing localized transit histories, the contact information of local policymakers, and local zoning laws along with actionable solutions that can be achieved in the short, medium, and long term. We anticipate classes being 2 hours long and we would plan to hold them mid-morning on Saturdays to encourage maximum attendance.

Our goals for this project are to:

1. Provide trainings in no less than 15 communities along the Wasatch Front that are currently underserved by transit, either due to low or no access to transit in terms of frequency and/or coverage or because transit in communities isn't providing maximum economic potential because service, though it exists, doesn't go to where the people need it to go. These identified communities are:
 - a. North Ogden – Access Oriented
 - b. Roy – Access Oriented
 - c. Clearfield – Access Oriented
 - d. North Salt Lake – Access Oriented
 - e. Salt Lake City (Rose Park/Glendale Community) – Economic Oriented
 - f. Salt Lake City (University of Utah) – Economic Oriented
 - g. Magna – Economic Oriented
 - h. Kearns – Economic Oriented
 - i. Taylorsville – Economic Oriented
 - j. South Jordan – Access Oriented
 - k. Draper – Access Oriented
 - l. Tooele – Access Oriented
 - m. American Fork – Access Oriented
 - n. Saratoga Springs – Access Oriented
 - o. Spanish Fork – Access Oriented
2. Have at minimum 450 individuals (30 per training) participate in these courses and continue to be engaged by starting or joining a UTRU local chapter.
3. Remain engaged with attendees through the communication of general or specific transit-related issues as they arise, promote a long-term vision of transit, and remind attendees of the tools and resources they received as part of the training along with how to apply them.



Community Engagement

Over the past year, UTRU has been building relationships with community partners along the Wasatch Front as we work to gain support for the CATT program. Once adequate funding has been secured to

properly fund the program, we will reactivate these partners and call in the commitments they have made to be partners in the program. Community partners include, but are not limited to:

- ATU Local #382
- Bike Walk Provo
- Heal UTAH
- Sweet Streets Salt Lake City
- The Red Line Podcast
- UCAIR
- University Neighborhood Partners
- UTA
- Utah Center for Civic Engagement
- Utah Rail Passengers Association
- Utahns for Better Transportation
- Wasatch Transportation Academy

These organizations have primarily offered in-kind services such as presentation space, material translation, childcare for events, and word-of-mouth and free advertising through publications such as newsletters and email blasts. As discussed further in the Fundraising and Budget section, some have stated that they would be willing to provide some funding for location-specific presentations as well.

Fundraising and Budget

Several groups and organizations have expressed interest in the CATT Proposal and are eager to have presentations in their communities. However, most of these groups lack the monetary resources necessary to effectively and efficiently start the project in a cost-effective way (taking advantage of scale pricing for advertising and materials for example or ensuring that trainers and UTRU administration can effectively schedule their time). At minimum, we feel \$5,000 would be needed to start the project, while most of these groups could only offer between \$250 and \$500.

As with most things, once a few major donors contribute, we are certain that smaller donors would be willing to contribute. The CATT program is designed to be relatively low-cost once initial costs have been funded. Larger contributions would allow us to get the program established by covering the start-up costs and by taking advantage of economies of scale on things such as printing, advertising, and the effective use of administrative time.

Whenever possible, UTRU will use free or low-cost venues such as community centers and libraries, and earned media to help reduce costs related to trainings and advertising. Our proposed budget is as follows:

Budget:

Advertising - \$2,500
Materials - \$1,000
Teaching Space - \$2,000
Trainer - \$2,500
Transportation - \$500
Miscellaneous - \$500
Administration - \$1,000
Total: \$10,000

In the event that UTRU receives funds in excess of those, the additional funds will be used to provide additional trainings, either at locations previously served or in newly identified locations based on similar criteria.

Implementation

Once adequate funds have been received, UTRU's Executive Director will begin the process of reaching out to community leaders and educators at the University of Utah with expertise in zoning and transportation to start building area-specific training while also creating the more generalized trainings related to lobbying and advocacy. Indeed, between the Executive Director and the UTRU Executive Board, there are more than 40 years of political, organizing, and advocacy experience within the organization.

While the curriculum is being developed, UTRU will also be searching for dates and venues that work best for communities by working with local leaders to promote trainings.

After a training takes place, UTRU will send out surveys to participants asking what their opinions of the trainings were: what worked, what didn't, and what could be improved would all be asked. From there, UTRU will refine future trainings.

Projected Outcome

We know that the CATT program will become an important part of future community development and growth. After we have successfully created and implemented the program we will both expand the program to new communities within the region and return to communities we have presented to in the past in order to reinforce learning and allow for even better transit advocacy for the 2.6 million people in UTA's general service area.

Initially, we intend to educate 450 individuals along the Wasatch Front on the issues related to transit and how to effectively advocate for transit in their communities. From there, we will keep these individuals engaged through the creation and support of local UTRU chapters that advocate for short, medium, and long-term gains for transit.

UTRU plans to leverage community support to first return UTA's service frequency and coverage to pre-COVID levels, an action the agency has slowly been building towards, but not fast enough in UTRU's opinion.

Beyond this, UTRU is drafting the Transit: Imagined Initiative. This initiative will be a comprehensive guide for communities along the Wasatch Front to effectively integrate transit into current infrastructure while encouraging transit-oriented development in the future. Transit: Imagined will outline what it would take for 95% of the community to be within $\frac{1}{4}$ of a mile of a fixed bus route or train stop, have no more than 10-minute peak/20-minute off-peak/30-minute graveyard 24/7/365 service frequencies for bus, rail, and micro transit, expand service to rapidly growing communities adjacent to current service areas, and highlight the social, environmental, and economic benefits of such a system to both transit riders and for those who still use personal vehicles.

Armed with the Transit: Imagined Initiative, we plan to further engage those who participated in the CATT to fight for better transit along Utah's urban core.

Finally, it should also be noted that, though UTA is the largest transit agency in Utah, it isn't the only one. If successful, we would like to bring the CATT Program to the following transit areas within the state:

- Basin Transit Association - a rural multi-county system in Eastern Utah anchored by the town of Vernal at the east end of the service area. The BTA primarily travels along US Highway 40 and 60 miles long and, at most, 5 miles wide. The current service population of 20,000.
- Cache Valley Transit District - a micropolitan system in Northern Utah with the city of Logan at its core. The CVTD covers roughly 80 square miles (though it used to have routes that extended into Southern Idaho) and a current service population of 110,000; this system is adjacent to UTA's current service area but is not integrated with it.
- Cedar Area Transportation Service - a local transit system serving the rural city of Cedar City with a service population of 35,000.
- High Valley Transit - a micropolitan system along the Wasatch Back anchored by the city of Heber at the south end of the service area. High Valley Transit covers 120 square miles and has a service population of 45,000; this system has limited integration with UTA.
- Park City Transit - a local transit system serving the resort town of Park City with a service population of 8,400; this system is integrated into the High Valley Transit System.
- SunTran – a micropolitan system in Southern Utah anchored by the city of St. George at its core. SunTran has a service area is roughly 40 square miles and a service population of 141,000.
- Zion Canyon Shuttle System – a unique system funded by the federal government to transport people into, out of, and through Zions National Park and connects to the nearby village of Springdale. The system is two routes along one 11-mile-long road with the southern half serving a local population of 630. Due to the popularity of the park, however, this system serves more than 6 million people a year.

From there, we would love to go to other smaller communities that could benefit from the creation of local and regional transit districts.