

# Transportation for All Coalition Report



December 2024



# Table of Contents

- 1** Executive Summary
- 2** Background
- 3** Coalition Members
- 4** Transportation Landscape
- 5** Data Collection & Analysis
- 6** First Year Activities
- 7** Next Steps
- 8** Conclusion

*“Sin transporte, es como no tener pies.”*

*“Without transportation, it’s like not having feet.”*

- Individual survey respondent

# Executive Summary

BikeWalkKC established the [Transportation for All Coalition](#) (T4A Coalition) in 2024 with support from the [Equitable Transportation Fund](#). The coalition brings together grassroots nonprofit organizations, community groups, and social service providers that are led by and/or work with priority communities. The coalition had several key goals:

- Develop and administer a transportation needs survey among the coalition members;
- Create a shared policy platform that defines the principles and priorities for a multimodal transportation network; and
- Provide advocacy training to transportation coalition members.

Through the coalition, BikeWalkKC sought to better understand some of the most pressing transportation challenges across the Kansas City region. This requires a foundational understanding of some of the issues facing the distinct geographic areas within the region, including:

- **Eastern Jackson County, Missouri:** Affording more opportunities for social service agencies closer to community centers to connect with clients served further out.
- **Johnson County, Kansas:** More commute-focused connections between existing walking and biking routes, while also strengthening transit between the smaller communities in the northeast part of the county with the larger communities in the south and southwest.
- **Kansas City, Missouri (south of the river):** Finding ways to enable major arterial roads to better serve the variety of users (especially to the east and south) who don't have access to a personal vehicle.
- **The Northland (Clay and Platte Counties in Missouri):** Creating options in annexed portions of Kansas City that still lack elements like sidewalks while also working with municipal and county leaders elsewhere to establish reliable transit options between the various pockets of new and planned development.
- **Unified Government (Wyandotte County/Kansas City, Kansas):** Focus on elements that bring in outside funds and limit maintenance obligations, at least in the short and medium terms.

[Porchlight Insights](#), a local women-owned data firm, led the data collection and analysis efforts. They designed survey tools, provided BikeWalkKC staff with training to do listening sessions and survey administration, and compiled and analyzed the data during the first year. Through their work analyzing data from the United Way of Greater Kansas City's 211 program as well as organizational and individual surveys, they made a number of important findings:

1,570

The number of unmet needs in the area of transportation in 2022

53%

The share of organizations surveyed who said transportation insecurity negatively impacts service for clients

82%

Surveyed individuals who said the lack of transportation makes it hard to handle daily needs

In addition to the surveys and data analysis during the first year, there were a number of other activities that BikeWalkKC organized with the coalition:

- **Initial Meetings:** Conversations with key staff in some 20 organizations who work directly on transportation elements for their clients.
- **Coalition Meetings:** Convenings of the partners to develop a collective understanding of the transportation challenges they are facing.
- **Advocacy Training:** Organizing a workshop to help coalition partners more effectively navigate the transportation advocacy space.
- **Listening Sessions:** Working with Porchlight Insights to hold a series of conversations with key groups of people around the region.

Based on the feedback from partners through these activities and the data analysis, BikeWalkKC developed a [policy platform](#). The policy platform identifies key issues that, if addressed through policy change, can help to create a better transportation system for people and organizations across the region. The platform covers issues at the federal level as well as issues in individual geographic areas of the metropolitan region.

Based on requests from coalition partners, BikeWalkKC also developed a [resource guide](#) of transportation programs across the region. The guide includes information about different types of transportation services and key information for potential users. This includes (but isn't limited to) contact information, costs, and key populations the program is intended to serve. The guide is meant to be a dynamic document we hope to update on a periodic basis.

Beyond the work that has already been done within the coalition, next steps will mostly fall into two categories:

1. **Further Data Analysis:** The coalition plans to deploy the organizational and individual surveys again and gather additional insights to guide and shape future activities.
2. **Partner Subgroups:** Several partners have expressed interest in organizing more targeted groups to work on issues relevant to those sectors. They will likely include public health organizations as well as business partners.

BikeWalkKC wishes to thank our numerous coalition partners for their participation in this endeavor, Porchlight Insights for their efforts with the data analysis, and the Equitable Transportation Fund for their financial support of this vital work.



# Background

Founded in 2010, [BikeWalkKC](#) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit transportation advocacy organization based in Kansas City, Missouri. At the heart of our work is the belief that people should not need to drive to thrive. Our mission is to redefine local streets as places for people. Our vision is a greater Kansas City where everyone moves through the region equitably, safely, comfortably, and sustainably. BikeWalkKC's comprehensive and integrated approach to education, community planning, regional bike share management, public policy, data collection, research, and community engagement makes us unique among our peer organizations across the nation and locally. The organization's primary service area includes Johnson and Wyandotte counties in Kansas; and, Clay, Platte, and Jackson counties in Missouri.

BikeWalkKC started the [Transportation for All Coalition](#) in 2024 with a 12-month grant from the [Equitable Transportation Fund](#):

*The Equitable Transportation Fund (ETF - formerly known as The Mobility Fund) is a project of the Global Philanthropy Partnership. This fund supports community transportation advocates working at the intersection of health and climate justice as they change transportation systems across the United States. This fund asks its grantees to focus resources on priority communities in rural and urban areas alike to create accessibility to attractive, affordable, clean transportation. Priority communities are most immediately impacted by racial injustice, poverty, disproportionate health risks, and the extreme events caused by climate change.*



BikeWalkKC's goals for the grant project included:

- Establish a regional Transportation for All Coalition that brings together grassroots nonprofit organizations, community groups, and social service providers that are led by and/or work with priority communities;
- Develop and administer a transportation needs survey among the coalition members; compile and analyze results; disseminate the results to targeted audiences, media, and the general public;
- Create a shared policy platform that defines the principles and priorities for a multimodal transportation network that meets the needs of priority communities across the Kansas City region; and
- Provide advocacy training to transportation coalition members to prepare them for meetings and informational presentations to elected officials and local governments.

**This report provides an overview of the Transportation for All Coalition's first year, what it accomplished, a summary of data results, and a discussion of next steps.**





# Coalition Members

There is often concern that any plans or initiatives labeled “regional” will by default focus on or primarily benefit KCMO proper. BikeWalkKC staff were intentional in their efforts to recruit Transportation for All Coalition members from **all** areas of the metro. Recruitment efforts are ongoing. To date, the following organizations have joined the coalition:

- AARP Kansas
- Amethyst Place
- Catholic Charities of Northeast Kansas
- Children's Mercy Kansas City
- City Union Mission
- Clay County Public Health Center
- Community Services League
- Cross-Lines Community Outreach, Inc.
- El Centro
- Greater Kansas City Coalition to End Homelessness
- Hope Faith Ministries
- Independence Boulevard Christian Church
- Jackson County Health Department
- Jerusalem Farm
- Johnson County Aging and Human Services
- Kansas City, Kansas Community College
- Kansas City, Kansas Public Schools
- KC Healthy Kids
- Kansas City, MO Health Commission
- Kansas City, MO Public Library
- Mid-America Regional Council - Area Agency on Aging
- National Federation of the Blind, Ivanhoe Chapter
- National Federation of the Blind, Johnson-Wyandotte County Chapter
- National Federation of the Blind, Kansas City, MO Chapter
- Newhouse
- Northland Health Alliance
- Northland Health Care Access
- Phoenix Family
- Platte County Health Department
- Rosedale Development Association
- SAVE, Inc.
- Statewide Independent Living Coalition of Kansas
- Sunrise Movement KC
- Unified Government (Wyandotte County/Kansas City, KS) Public Health Department
- University Health Medical Center
- Wyandotte County Economic Development Corporation

# Transportation Landscape

The Kansas City metropolitan region is a sprawling, varied, and diverse community. It straddles two states, up to nine counties, and nearly 120 cities. One element that ties much of the region together is the challenge of transportation. The Kansas City region comprises several distinct geographic areas. To understand the region's transportation landscape, it is important to understand some of the unique characteristics and challenges of these areas. These include:



## **Eastern Jackson County**

Eastern Jackson County is a local shorthand term for the portions of Jackson County that do not include KCMO. There's a mix of working-class communities, like Independence and Raytown, alongside wealthier communities like Blue Springs and Lee's Summit. While some of the communities closer to KCMO have had limited development, communities further out from the city have grown faster and with a greater degree of sprawl. Consequently, travel times have increased and multimodal elements have not kept pace with highway, residential, and commercial construction.

Finding ways to improve transportation options in this part of the region will rely on affording more opportunities for social service agencies closer to community centers to connect with clients served further out. This will likely mean a greater investment along key corridors that cut across multiple jurisdictions.

## **Johnson County, Kansas**

Johnson County is the wealthy suburban community of the region. Much of its growth as a county came after World War II when white families moved out of KCMO's urban core and began to develop housing and other amenities in the area. Much of the development here is sprawling, single-family developments along major arterial roads. There is limited space for transit options and for walking and biking infrastructure that is not geared towards recreational use. There's also a growing concern that without significant change, [the suburbanization of poverty](#) will overwhelm the limited resources that county and city leaders have allocated to support the needs of under-resourced populations.

Finding ways to improve transportation options in Johnson County must include more commute-focused connections between existing walking and biking routes, while also strengthening transit between the smaller communities in the northeast part of the county with the larger communities in the south and southwest.





### **Kansas City, Missouri (south of the river)**

Kansas City, Missouri (KCMO) south of the river has somewhat different challenges depending on which part of the city you are in. For the sake of this explanation, we will divide the city into three areas:

- **Midtown/Downtown** has a considerable mix of dense residential and commercial development with more single-family development further south. Major corridors have sidewalks, but little consideration has been given to how non-drivers move through this area.
- The **East Side** has historically been home to a high concentration of the city's Black population and other groups isolated by racial discrimination and displacement through the development of I-70 to the east and Highway 71 to the south.
- Finally, **South Kansas City** has large swaths of land that were not originally part of the city, but annexed into the city following World War II. As a result, they have more limited sidewalk elements than portions of Midtown/Downtown.

To address transportation challenges in these parts of KCMO, it will require finding ways to enable major arterial roads to better serve the variety of users (especially to the east and south) who don't have access to a personal vehicle.

### **The Northland (Clay and Platte Counties in Missouri)**

Even though portions of KCMO are found within both Clay and Platte counties, the two counties have combined to carve out an identity (and a transportation landscape) unique from the rest of the region. Known simply as The Northland, it has played a major role in the area's development over the last half century. Following World War II, [Kansas City leaned heavily into annexation and gobbled up unincorporated portions of both Clay and Platte counties](#). While this added land and taxpayers to the city's coffers, it came at a price. Many parts of the "new" Kansas City lacked the same development standards that the more established portions of KCMO had to follow. As a result, resources like sidewalks had to be planned over time. Coupled with the pockets of development within and outside of KCMO city limits in both counties, the area has long been difficult to navigate without access to a car.

Improving transportation options in The Northland must include a focus on creating options in annexed portions of Kansas City that still lack elements like sidewalks while also working with municipal and county leaders elsewhere to establish reliable transit options between the various pockets of new and planned development.

### **Unified Government (Wyandotte County/Kansas City, Kansas)**

The Unified Government (UG) of Wyandotte County and Kansas City, Kansas is a unique political structure in the region. [In 1997, voters chose to unify the two governmental entities](#), while allowing two of the other municipalities (Bonner Springs and Edwardsville) to maintain a level of sovereignty. While the UG has its own separate transit agency, it has been beset by serious financial challenges for the better part of a decade. This has led to growing backlogs of maintenance and traffic safety improvements that the UG simply can't afford to address.

Finding ways to improve transportation options in this part of the region must focus on elements that bring in outside funds and limit maintenance obligations, at least in the short and medium term.

# Data Collection & Analysis

[Porchlight Insights](#), a local women-owned data firm, led the data collection and analysis efforts. They work with organizations across the public sector to gather and analyze data for everything from performance management coaching and training to storytelling, to community engagement and more. Porchlight Insights designed survey tools, provided BikeWalkKC staff with training to do listening sessions and survey administration, and compiled and analyzed the data during the first year. Highlights from Porchlight Insights are included in the sections below. Porchlight Insights also created a broad presentation which presents more details on the data analysis ([click here](#)).

## Data from the United Way of Greater Kansas City

The first key portion of the data analysis was gathering and reviewing data from 211 requests through the [United Way of Greater Kansas City](#). Residents of the 23 counties surrounding the Kansas City area call **United Way 211** in search of different types of assistance. This often includes requests for transportation. In those instances, United Way 211 refers to agencies that will accept direct referrals for transportation needs. Key highlights include:

**2,200**

Average number of calls about transportation needs received between 2021 and 2023

**Employment or Health**

The most common needs for rides in 2023

**1,570**

The number of unmet needs in the area of transportation (e.g., issues with eligibility or no resources available) in 2022

Porchlight Insights also took a look at data from the **Ride United program**, which is a program for rides from Lyft that is funded with grants from Lyft and coordinated by United Way. There are no eligibility requirements besides a need for transportation. The program becomes unavailable when Lyft grant funds are exhausted. In an attempt to extend the availability of the program, United Way has created a limit of **six rides per caller per grant period**. Of the 2,550 requests for the Ride United program:

- **76%** were for transportation to employment (getting to a job interview, commuting); and
- **22%** were for access to education (commute to class or daycare), legal services (court, eviction hearings), financial services (tax preparation, financial coaching), and housing (accessing services; emergency shelter).

### **Organizational Surveys**

Porchlight Insights also designed a survey for organizations (both coalition members and outside agencies). There were 30 responses from 24 unique organizations or programs of organizations from across the region. Below are some of the key findings:

- **53%** of organizations surveyed said that transportation insecurity has a negative impact on access to services for their clients.
- For the clients they serve, negative outcomes of transportation insecurity include, but are not limited to: **poor health, limited housing opportunities, and an inability for their children to attend school.**
- All participants said that **organizational and/or programmatic expenditures for transportation had increased** in the prior year.



## Individual Surveys

Additionally, Porchlight Insights designed a survey for individuals to better understand the challenges that everyday people face with transportation around the region. This survey was created with feedback from the Transportation for All Coalition. It was also provided in Spanish. The survey was administered with support from coalition members who provided it to their clients and partners via QR code, URL, email and paper copies.

In total, we received 166 responses. Some of the highlights from the survey are included below:



**82%**

**Respondents who indicated that a lack of transportation makes it hard for them to take care of their daily needs**



**46%**

**Percentage of survey respondents who are car owners who said that the costs of owning a car (buying, operating, and maintaining) are not affordable**



**66%**

**Respondents who noted that they don't have transit stops near places they want to go**



**50%**

**Respondents who expressed that the walking environment near their home is not safe**



**59%**

**Respondents who own a bike and are concerned about not having a place to store it to prevent theft**



# First Year Activities

In addition to the surveys and data analysis during the first year, there were many initial recruitment meetings, coalition meetings, and community listening sessions that took place. At the end of the first year, the coalition produced a local transportation resource guide and shared policy platform. Each of these activities is described below.

## Overview of Initial Meetings

In order to build the coalition, BikeWalkKC reached out to a number of organizations across the region. Many of the initial conversations were introductory meetings with key staff in organizations who work directly on transportation elements. Over the course of several weeks, BikeWalkKC had meetings with some 20 organizations. Through meeting with these partners and reviewing information they were able to share, several themes emerged:

- *Access to key destinations is limited* - Many of the organizations that BikeWalkKC met with noted that a major challenge for them and their clients is not only the sprawling distance between key destinations, but the lack of options to get there. For most organizations, this meant limited public transportation, but several partners also noted issues with using rideshare services.
- *Challenges exacerbated for key subgroups* - The challenges of access were often more so for people living with disabilities as well as families with young children. For people living with disabilities, a common refrain was the challenge of getting reliable service that could accommodate assistive mobility devices, such as wheelchairs. For parents with young children, a common issue cited by the organizations serving them was that rideshare was an unreliable option for them.
- *More cohesive advocacy is needed* - Among all of these organizations, there was also a clear sense that without better advocacy, these conditions were unlikely to change. While some organizations are limited in *how* they can advocate, numerous organizations noted that they themselves needed to learn more about how to do transportation advocacy *effectively*.

## **Overview of Coalition Meetings**

As part of the Transportation for All Coalition, BikeWalkKC organized four coalition meetings over the course of 2024. The purpose of the meetings was threefold: 1) to develop a collective understanding of the transportation challenges our partners are facing; 2) to coordinate data gathering efforts (via surveys and listening sessions) and share insights and results, and 3) to inform and shape the coalition's policy platform. All four meetings were held virtually in order to ease the transportation burden for our partners. The presentation slides for each meeting are linked below.

### **[First Coalition Meeting \(February\)](#)**

The first coalition meeting served as the formal group introduction to each other and for the coalition itself. Much of the meeting was devoted to partners introducing themselves, their organizations, and what brought them to the coalition. The remainder of the meeting was split between explaining aspects of the coalition's work as well as breakout groups to discuss priorities and desires of coalition partners based on the policy areas and affinity issues that their organizations focus on (e.g., aging services, health care, etc.).

### **[Second Coalition Meeting \(May\)](#)**

The second coalition meeting built upon some of the themes brought up from the first meeting and the initial insights we got from the organizational survey. Porchlight Insights data consultants were able to show that transportation access (or lack thereof) was having a significant negative impact on the organizations that responded. While there were various types of transportation services offered, there were few responses on questions related to *specific* types of transportation resources. The remainder of the time was spent discussing some of the general themes that would inform the eventual policy platform.

### **[Third Coalition Meeting \(July\)](#)**

With the third coalition meeting, there were additional insights provided from responses to the individual surveys and updates on the resource guide and policy platform. With the individual survey, we began to get a clearer picture of how a lack of transportation options negatively impacts people in their everyday lives. We were also able to provide an update on the resource guide, explaining to members that we needed additional insights to create something more useful for them and the public at large. The meeting ended with more details on how the themes identified by partners were beginning to crystalize into portions of the policy platform.

### **Fourth Coalition Meeting (September)**

The fourth coalition meeting was focused on bringing everything together. Porchlight Insights gave a final update on insights gathered from the organizational and individual surveys. We discussed insights from the third listening session with Sunrise Movement KC. We were also able to provide updates on the status of the resource guide and present the finalized policy platform for discussion and approval.

### **Transportation Advocacy Training**

BikeWalkKC recognizes that for many of our partners, transportation advocacy is not something they are familiar with. To help partners begin to navigate this space, we organized an advocacy training workshop. [You can see the slides here.](#) The workshop focused on four key elements: 1) What is advocacy?; 2) Transportation decision making at each level of government; 3) Major issues; and 4) How to get involved.

The transportation advocacy workshop borrows heavily from the Advocacy 101 series that BikeWalkKC has put on for our members in the past. In addition to Advocacy 101, which covers the basics of transportation advocacy, we have offered three additional trainings: [Advocacy 102](#) discusses aspects of public speaking and how to prepare for public meetings; [Advocacy 103](#) explores how to build and maintain a coalition; and [Advocacy 104](#) details how to build relationships with elected officials and staff.



## **Listening Sessions**

To help us better understand the challenges that people were facing with transportation in the region, BikeWalkKC and Porchlight Insights worked together to organize a series of listening sessions with key groups throughout the region. [Click here to see the outline and the questions we asked.](#)

### **Listening Session 1 - Don Bosco Center/MARC Agency on Aging**

This listening session was with older residents who rely on a combination of services offered by the Don Bosco Senior Center in Columbus Park (a neighborhood in KCMO) and MARC Area Agency on Aging. Big concerns were expressed around bus stops, safety, and empathy. The participants expressed strong support for RideKC Freedom. Multiple participants also explained that there were major challenges throughout the transportation system for people with disabilities. They ended by saying that they believe that better transportation options would create cleaner, healthier places.

### **Listening Session 2 - University Health Patient Family Advisory Council**

This listening session was with patients and hospital staff who either work for or receive services from University Health. The biggest concern expressed by participants was the unreliable transportation options (either the bus or [MTM](#)). There was considerable debate and mixed support for the zero fare transit system in Kansas City, Missouri. At its worst, participants explained that the transportation system itself becomes a barrier to care. In a better transportation system, they would feel greater autonomy and respect.

### **Listening Session 3 - Sunrise Movement KC**

The third listening session was with young people who are leaders with [Sunrise Movement KC](#), a local advocacy organization that works on climate issues. The big concern expressed by this group was about the limited transit shed (proximity to a transit stop) in the region. They expressed strong support as a group for keeping zero fare transit in place. A major challenge several of them expressed was that the general lack of sustainable transportation options left them with diminished mental health. A better transportation system for them meant better options, better finances, and a cleaner environment.

## Resource Guide

As coalition members discussed the various transportation services that their organizations pay for and/or utilize with their clients, there were several resources that were unknown to some of the members. It was agreed that a comprehensive and centralized list of transportation resources would be helpful. BikeWalkKC organized a resource guide to bring more of those resources into one place. This guide is intended to be a dynamic, living document that will be updated and changed over time as needed. Key elements include:

- Program Name
- Contact Information
- Costs
- Hours of Operation
- Resource Type
- Target Population
- Program Description

You can access the resource guide by [clicking here](#).

## Policy Platform

Beyond the data analysis, the other key deliverable for the first year of the Transportation for All Coalition was the development of a policy platform. The policy platform identifies key issues that, if addressed through policy change, can help to create a better transportation system for people and organizations across the region. The issues identified here are based in large part on the findings from the coalition meetings, surveys, and listening sessions with our partners. They include key issues in the following areas:

- Federal
- Regional
- Specific areas (Northland, Wyandotte County, etc.)

You can view the policy platform by [clicking here](#).

# Next Steps

The Transportation for All Coalition has done a considerable amount of work to better understand some of the pressing transportation challenges in the region and determine ways to address them through policy changes. With that said, there are additional steps BikeWalkKC and Porchlight Insights would like to take with the coalition. This will largely center on aspects of further data analysis and developing key partner subgroups.

## **Further Data Analysis**

The data analysis that Porchlight Insights conducted has helped to paint a clearer picture of the transportation inequities in our region and what users of that system would like to see addressed to make it more reliable, safer, and more dignified. With additional time and resources, there would be a clear opportunity to get additional feedback from both the organizational and individual surveys. In a second iteration, we believe that being able to hire a dedicated canvasser could help us to get increased responses on both surveys.

## **Partner Subgroups**

In speaking with partners over the course of the initial grant, it was made clear that while there are overlapping issues which bring unconventional partners together, there is also a value in digging further with established issue groups. We identify some of those groups below and elements that we would like to explore further.

- *Business Groups* - Though not as prominent as other partners, we've been able to count several business or employment-adjacent organizations within the coalition. This includes Catholic Charities of Northeast Kansas, Community Services League, Kansas City Kansas Community College, and the Wyandotte County Economic Development Corporation. The idea here would be to gather more data from employers and employees specifically about transportation challenges and ways to address them through policy change.



- *Hospitals and Public Health Departments* - The Transportation for All Coalition has also been fortunate to have partners from the health sector. This includes Children’s Mercy Kansas City, Clay County Public Health Center, Jackson County Health Department, KCMO Health Commission, Northland Health Alliance, Platte County Health Department, Unified Government (Wyandotte County/Kansas City, KS) Public Health Department, and University Health Medical Center. These organizations have expressed concern about medical transportation options for their patients. We believe there is increased opportunity and potential in a targeted subgroup to identify and work on transportation issues for these partners.
- *Accessibility Rights Organizations* - The Transportation for All Coalition also includes several area organizations working specifically on issues for the elderly and people living with disabilities. This includes AARP Kansas, Johnson County Aging and Human Services, the Mid-America Regional Council’s Area Agency on Aging, and multiple local chapters of the National Federation of the Blind. While aspects of the policy platform were identified as priorities by individuals from these groups, we’d like to organize these entities specifically to learn more about additional policy opportunities for the populations they serve.

# Conclusion

The Transportation for All Coalition report details the work of the coalition to better understand the transportation challenges of the region. It offers data insights and policy recommendations to inform decisions on how to make the transportation system of the Kansas City region work more effectively for more people. BikeWalkKC wishes to thank our numerous coalition partners for their participation in this endeavor, Porchlight Insights for their efforts with the data analysis, and the Equitable Transportation Fund for their financial support of this vital work.





BIKE  
WALK **KC**

December 2024

