



**GREATER KC
FOOD POLICY
COALITION**
kchealthykids

April 16, 2024

Re: Testimony in Support of Ordinance 240378

Dear Chair O'Neill, Vice Chair Robinson, and members of the Transportation, Infrastructure, and Operations Committee,

The Greater KC Food Policy Coalition offers our continued support for zero fare transit.

Since 2016, we have advocated for accessible and affordable public transit to improve grocery access by bus. In 2019, we coordinated with KCATA and testified at city hearings to see zero fare transit adopted and funded. Yet, in the absence of a plan for sustainable funding, bus riders will be the ones to pick up the tab.

In Jackson County, over 23,000 households have no access to a vehicle,¹ and over 28% of residents live more than 1 mile from a supermarket.² These are two indicators of low access to grocery retail, which impacts consumers' food choices and health.

Between 2016 and 2018, we talked to more than 360 metro residents about what it's like for them to use the RideKC bus to buy groceries. When we asked bus riders how to improve grocery access, they told us that bus fares need to be reduced, especially for riders with low incomes.³

We found that the cost of bus fare was a barrier for zero-vehicle households on the brink of food insecurity, such as SNAP and WIC recipients, and unemployed workers seeking jobs. One rider shared this story:

"I don't have income to ride a bus. I have to depend on my mother, who's disabled, to take me to a grocery store. Most of the time I don't want to bother her. I have to just suffer and get chips and drinks from a gas station that is closer than anything."

In 2021, UMKC Center for Economic Information conducted research and analysis of the effects of zero fare transit on quality of life. **Nearly 92% of the bus riders surveyed reported that riding the bus for free allowed them to shop for food or other essentials more often.**⁴

We urge the city to fund zero fare transit and to be a strong advocate for zero fare transit throughout the metro. Kansas City received many accolades when it adopted zero-fare transit. We need all members of the city council, the Mayor, KCATA, and other stakeholders to continue to lead and stand up for innovative solutions for our community even after the spotlight has faded.

Sincerely,
Emma Shankland
Director, Greater KC Food Policy Coalition

¹ U.S. Census Bureau. 2018-2022 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. 2022.

² U.S. Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service. Food Access Research Atlas. 2019.

³ KC Healthy Kids. "Better by Bus: Ways to Improve Grocery Shopping by Bus in the Kansas City Metro." 2018.

⁴ Urban League of Greater Kansas City. "2021 State of Black Kansas City." 2021.