



News of how working people are fighting for a planet that is sustainable -- environmentally, economically, and socially. If you like what we are doing and want to connect, please sign up for our newsletter and other information on the Labor Network for Sustainability website ([Sign up here!](#)). You are welcome to repost anything in this newsletter to spread the word!



Help us build a powerful national organization for workers and communities to confront climate change. Membership is open to anyone interested and who endorses our [mission and principles](#).

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## Transit Equity Day

On February 5, people in 15 cities celebrated the birthday of Rosa Parks with the first Transit Equity Day. Michael Leon Guerrero, Executive Director of the Labor Network for Sustainability and lead organizer for the event, gives an overview:



Dozens of organizations in at least 15 cities participated in activities recognizing Transit Equity Day (TED) on February 5. TED was a collaborative effort of an 11-organization national sponsoring committee anchored by the Labor Network for Sustainability and the Amalgamated Transit Union. February 5 was chosen to honor Rosa Parks' birthday (Ms. Parks' birthday is actually February 4, which landed on a Sunday this year - so February 5

was chosen as the day of action).

Organizers of the event wanted to make the connection between the legacy of the Civil Rights Movement, social justice issues related to transit today and the need for more public transit to combat climate change. As LNS historian Jeremy Brecher wrote in an op-ed circulated nationwide: "Transit Equity isn't just about where you sit on the bus. It's about whether you can get on a bus at all."

The Graduate Employee Union-United Auto Workers Local 6950 at the University of Connecticut passed a resolution recognizing Transit Equity Day citing the limited transportation options of their own members to get to and from campus.

The Santa Fe, NM City Council and Mayor also passed a proclamation recognizing the day. Linda Martinez-Ortiz, Chainbreaker member and bus rider stated a common refrain throughout the country: "We need to expand service. What if I get off work and the buses are stopped? I'm stranded."

Chainbreaker members boarded buses to distribute a new voter guide explaining where candidates stand on transit issues. "We will continue to organize after the election until true transit equity is realized in Santa Fe," concluded Martinez-Ortiz. In Nashville, Music City Riders United and ATU Local demanded bus safety, workforce development and more buses. Meanwhile, the metro council is considering the mayor's \$5 billion transit plan.

"Even with this transit plan, they're saying some of this money will go to these busses but they have money that is supposed to go to these busses and they don't go," MCRU member Kutonya Smith-Bond said.

Georgia Stand Up, Jobs with Justice and others kicked off a week of action with a press conference that included Georgia State Senator Valencia Seay, a member of the Senate Transportation Committee. "The racist policies and planning decisions that have historically stifled MARTA's growth in the suburbs has far reaching implications in light of the suburbanization of poverty."

"When I moved to Clayton County and learned there was no public transportation I was floored. I was told by the then sitting commissioners that they did not want transit because it would bring the 'wrong kind of people'. Ms. Seay helped to expand MARTA into Clayton, now a part of her district, in 2014.

"We have got to make sure that transit in Denver is accessible, affordable, and that service routes are available to all of our working families and communities," said United for a New Economy Director Felicia Griffin. UNE and representatives from

Colorado Cross-Disability Coalition, 9to5 Colorado, Mile High Connects and Montbello Organizing Committee gathered at the Civic Center Station to advocate for state lawmakers to reduce a " vendor credit" and repurpose a portion of those funds for a discounted fare program. Only the largest retailers like Walmart and Target would be affected.

RTD is also considering a fare hike in 2019. "For RTD to consistently raise the fares on a simple service that is supposed to get you from home to work, from school to work - all of the places that folks need to access to have a better, booming, vibrant economy... it is unethical, it is wrong, and it is becoming a civil rights issue," said Jenee Donelson, the transit organizer at 9to5 Colorado.

Organizing People, Activating Leaders (OPAL) in Portland, OR won a major victory in January, securing a fare reduction program that will save \$10 million for low-income bus riders in the city. OPAL organized Bus Riders United in 2010. "We build relationships with bus riders," says Bus Riders Unite Organizer Orlando Lopez. "We get on the buses and ask people about their experiences, not to meet a quota of signatures but because we genuinely care about these stories. We help people see that telling their stories to decision makers can change the decisions.

On Transit Equity Day, OPAL and BRU members hopped on the buses to share information with riders and held a victory celebration in the evening.

Bay Area Systems Change Not Climate Change took to the streets in Berkeley, singing songs penned by Occupela. One of the songs was a takeoff of a civil rights song that began "If you miss me in the back of the bus and you can't find me nowhere, come on over to the front of the bus I'll be riding up there."

*If you miss me in an SUV, and you can't find me nowhere . .  
Come on over to the public bus, I'll be riding right there  
If you miss me in an Uber car, and you can't find me nowhere . . Come on  
over to a BART train, I'll be riding right there...*

### SPONSORING ORGANIZATIONS:

Amalgamated Transit Union, Jobs with Justice, Institute for Policy Studies, Chainbreaker Collective, The LEAP, Labor Community Strategy Center, Pittsburghers for Public Transit, Americans for Transit, Partnership for Working Families, OPAL Environmental Justice Oregon, Labor Network for Sustainability





**Endorsements:**

Greenpeace, Grassroots Global Justice Alliance, People's Action



**Local Actions from Around the Country**



[Atlanta](#) - Georgia Stand Up worked with JwJ, Sierra Club and others to kick off Black History Month with [Transit Equity Week](#)

[Berkeley](#) - Bay Area System Change Not Climate Change will be engaging with neighbors and shoppers about public transportation, public investment, and the connection of transit equity to civil rights and climate justice. There will also be street theater performed by [Occupella](#).

[Denver](#) - United for a New Economy in conjunction with the Rocky Mountain Bus Riders Union is planning "Ride with Rosa" Day.

[Jersey City](#) - Jersey Renews held a rally at City Hall for Transit Equity and #electrifyNJ



Los Angeles - Labor Community Strategy Center. Join their work on the "[No Cars in L.A. - No Police State in L.A.](#)" campaign started in 2014

[Nashville](#) - Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1235 and Music City Riders United joined public transit employees and riders across the country in a Transit Equity Day of action where they demanded fulfillment of Rosa Park's vision for transit, worker, and community justice at the Music City Central Downtown Bus Station. ([Video from the Day](#))

New Haven - [350.org](#) and ATU held activities surrounding the State Transportation Fund

[Orlando](#) - Rethinking the City held a successful community forum on Tuesday Jan. 30th about what transit equity, community organizing and climate change mean for Orlando's future as an accessible, inclusive, healthy and sustainable city.

[Pittsburgh](#) - A radio program and Op-ed are planned as part of a communications program for February 5th (More details to come)

[Portland](#) - OPAL, 350pdx, Portland Forward, Portland Bus Lane Project are organizing rider outreach and an evening celebration ([Read about OPAL's fare reduction victory](#))

North Carolina - Leafleting took place in Durham and Greensboro from locals

Santa Fe - The [Chainbreaker Collective](#) successfully passed a City Council resolution to make February 5th officially Transit Equity Day ([Video from the Day](#))

[Tucson](#) - A community gathering on Transit Equity at El Pueblo Activity Center took place where attendees heard from bus riders, union bus drivers and clean fuel transit advocates.

[Washington, DC](#) - A press event was held in front of the Wilson Building with the [Save Our System](#) campaign



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## New guide: Should Your Union Divest from Fossil Fuels?

The Labor Network for Sustainability has just published a "[Guide for Trade Unionists: Should Your Union's Pension Fund Divest from Fossil Fuels?](#)"

As we reported in our last newsletter, officials in New York City and New York State have pledged to divest their huge pension funds from fossil fuel investments [link]. Now, according to the new LNS Guide, it is time for every union pension fund official to consider whether they have a duty to explore divestment from fossil fuels - and whether they may be guilty of breaching their fiduciary responsibility if they don't.

This guide is designed to give trade unionists an introduction to pension fund divestment and links to further information about it. It will help you and your union decide whether you should explore divesting from fossil fuels; how you should respond to proposals that you do so; and what questions you need to answer to reach a decision.

350.org co-founder Bill McKibben, who helped launch the divestment movement, says

Pensions are about the future--and the biggest fact facing our collective future is the rapid heating of the planet. We have an historic opportunity to make the transition to clean energy in a way that benefits us all, and divestment is one of the crucial tools for making that switch happen in time. This guide is an essential resource for any union or institution looking to join the fight.

-- Bill McKibben, [350.org](#) co-founder

The guide and other Divest/Invest materials can be found on the [Divest/Invest Resource Hub](#)

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## CLIMATE SOLIDARITY: Workers vs. Warming



What have unions done to fight climate change? [New Labor Forum has just published an excerpt from Jeremy Brecher's Climate Solidarity: Workers vs. Warming](#) revealing the extensive and little-known actions that workers and their unions have taken to protect against global warming.

[Link to full Climate Solidarity text](#)

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## A Labor Rights Resolution for Environmentalists

Unions are often asked to support resolutions to protect the climate and the environment. Shouldn't environmental and climate organizations be asked to pass comparable resolutions supporting worker rights?

The board of the Labor Network for Sustainability recently passed a resolution on workers rights that we hope many other environmental and climate protection organizations will consider and pass:

### **We support**

the rights of workers to organize into unions free of coercion, intimidation and harassment, and to bargain collectively with their employers. This is the law of the land as embodied in the National Labor Relations Act.

### **We reject**

all efforts to weaken our national labor laws and union security laws and provisions. And we reject all efforts to undermine rules and regulations designed to protect working people, and our environment.

### **We further support**

local content requirements (domestic content), project labor agreements, the use of union labor and well defined ladders out of poverty for those who could never aspire to good union apprenticeships and good union, family supporting jobs.

### **We support:**

Build local, shop local, eat local.

### **We will work**

with labor to resist all trade agreements that do not contain strong protections for working people and the environment. With the re-negotiation of trade agreements, NAFTA chief among them, we can fight for border adjustments and carbon pricing mechanisms.

## **We pledge**

to work together for job creation in a climate-friendly economy; fight together for full employment in an economy that uses union labor. For example, American steel made by USW members must be used to make wind turbines erected by union building trades workers.

Most green energy capitalists hold anti-union positions.

## **We oppose**

them on that point, and will work to help them see the wisdom of cultivating a high quality, well trained, union workforce.

## **Together,**

we with our partners and allies, place people and planet first

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## **Washington State Labor Backs Climate Legislation**



At a hearing January 17, [Jeff Johnson, president of the Washington State Labor Council, AFL-CIO, testified to the costs of action - and of inaction - on climate change.](#) "As we invest more in renewable energy, the cost of renewable energy decreases," he pointed out. "But even more importantly, the cost of climate disaster has been rising exponentially year after year."

"Clearly, carbon pricing will lower carbon emissions," Johnson said. "And investment in the clean-energy economy will reduce emissions further - and it'll also create jobs."

Johnson was testifying about a bill that would put a tax on carbon emissions. The majority of the revenue would be used for emissions-reduction programs and a transition fund to help low-income communities cope with rising gasoline and electricity prices. [According to E&E News](#) "organized labor is pushing for Inslee to better define how transition money would be spent and is calling for an oversight committee to be formed to monitor the state's carbon regimen."

Johnson told *Making a Living on a Living Planet*,

I was testifying in support of the framework for the climate legislation but was suggesting that the bill needed to be improved by adding quality labor standards in investment criteria for the renewable clean energy economy and that there needed to be real equity for individuals and communities who have been disproportionately impacted by



carbon pollution and climate disaster. A true "Just transition" requires that workers and their communities not be left behind in the economic restructuring that will take place in the transition to a clean renewable energy economy.

Ever since a ballot initiative it opposed was defeated last year, organized labor and allies have been preparing a new initiative for a labor-friendly climate law. Johnson said if lawmakers fail to act "a coalition of labor, environmental and minority groups" will unveil a proposed ballot measure next month. "We need to be ready, and we need to be collecting signatures and educating on the initiatives." He added, "If we could pass a bill that had many of the values that we're imbedding in the initiative that would be tremendous. We would love that."

For more on the coalition and their proposals visit [the Alliance for Jobs and Clean Energy](#)

A new report by the Political Economy Research Institute (PERI) at the University of Massachusetts lays out a plan for a transformative Green New Deal for Washington State.

[Read the text of the report](#)

[See a video](#) with Washington State Labor Council president Jeff Johnson and report author Prof. Robert Pollin

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