



Transportation Equity: Youth Fare Free Transit Access

Presented By: Oluwaseyi Oluborode

Agenda

1. Introduction/Background in Advocacy
2. Problem: HS students can't afford bus passes
3. What HS students and gov. officials are doing to address gaps in accessing transit
4. Solution: Fund free and reduced transit fares for HS students
5. Q&A & Closing



Introduction

- My name is Oluwaseyi Oluborode, also known by "Olu"
- I'm a senior in Hartford Public Schools, specifically, University High School of Science and Engineering
- I have a vested interest in the ways public policy can create healthier, more connected societies: public transit equity being a huge part in that.

Background in Advocacy



How did the advocacy campaign at my school begin?

The call for youth fare-free transit would begin following the rescinding of free city bus passes for students within a 2-mile radius of the school's campus who were ineligible for a district funded bus. We would see a 5% increase in chronic absenteeism, which is especially significant given that post-covid most schools reported drastic decreases, and more students unable to participate in extracurricular activities and sports. From this realization was born the Social Justice League, which is a social justice group.

What inspired me to get involved in youth fare-free transit advocacy?

My involvement in my school's Social Justice League began my sophomore year, when I became increasingly aware of how a lack of transportation quietly excluded students from accessing opportunities. My own struggles with transportation access would make this issue hit close to home.

Speaking Events:

THE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE



JUVENILE JUSTICE POLICY OVERSIGHT





Youth Advocacy Day, April 2025

Fare Free Transit Advocacy Day, May 2025

Transit Equity Day

Transit Equity Day, February 4, 2025



2. How Transit Inequities Marginalize Youth



Limits their access to vital services

Many young people in Hartford face challenges getting healthcare, mental health support, and other critical services because of financial barriers and transportation issues.

Can undermine their connection to positive role models

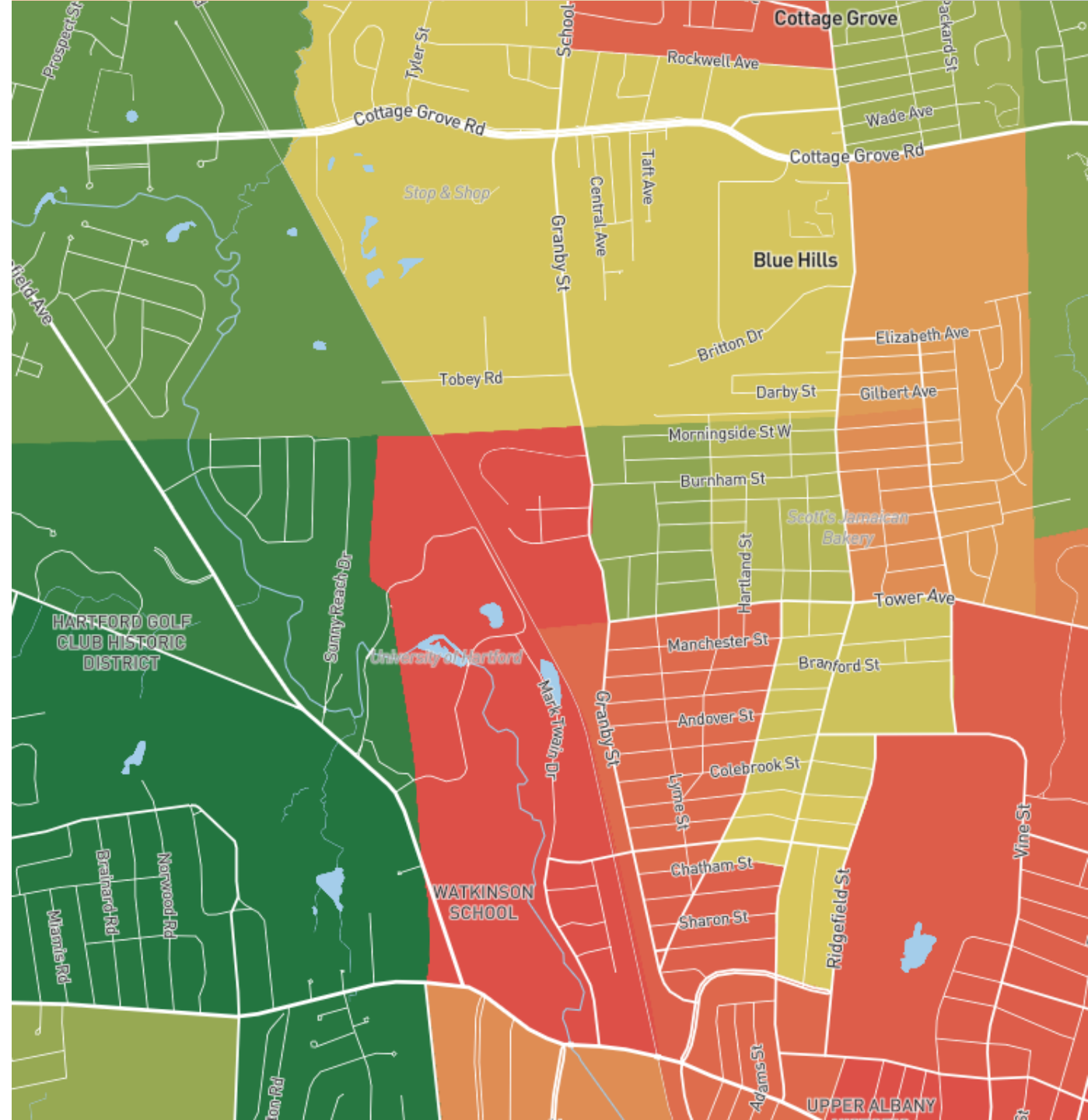
Without affordable ways to get to rec centers, mentoring programs, or after-school activities, youth lose connections to positive role models. This isolation leaves many without guidance during crucial years.

Makes it Harder for them to Stay in School

Missed buses, long commutes, and unsafe walking routes cause many Hartford students to be chronically late or absent. Some teens drop out altogether when transportation becomes too difficult to manage.

Racial and Economic Disparities in Transit Access

This is a heat map of the surrounding area of my school based on income. The red areas are low-income.



59%

of Black households in the Greater Hartford
area face transportation insecurity

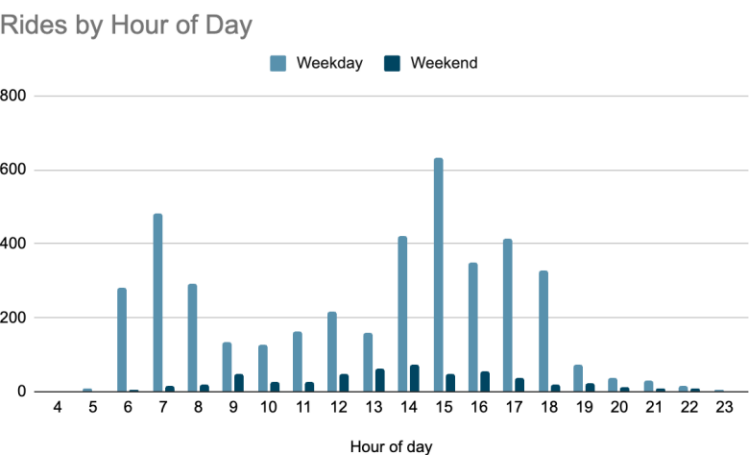
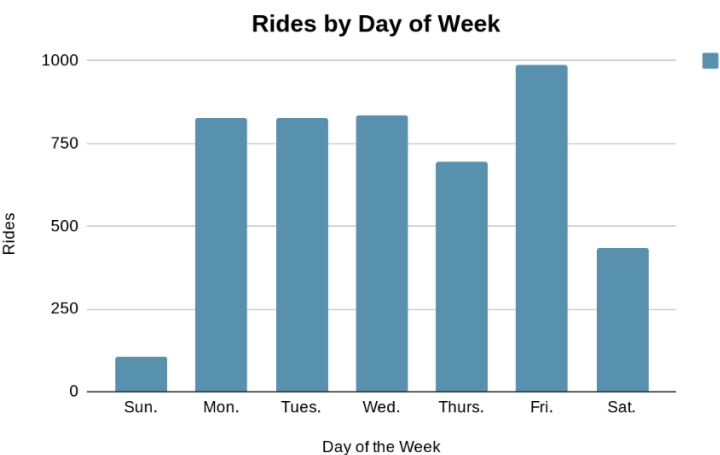
(Greater Hartford Community Wellbeing Index, 2023)

3. The Current Fare-Free Transit Program at UHSSE

- HB 5523 allocated a total of \$175,000 worth of ARPA funds to reinstate free access to the city bus for students
- This is enough to support roughly 500 young people for an entire school year
- The bus passes have been distributed to University High School, Bukley, Classical, Weaver, and the Center for Latino Studies. The amounts distributed are not the same.



Pilot Program Data



Description of Ride Behavior	of kids who used bus pass percentile	rides
65 kids use the pass 3 or less times	20th percentile	3
266 kids use the pass 4 or more times	25th percentile	4
176 kids use pass 9 times or more	50th percentile	9
83 kids use the pass 20 or more times	75 percentile	20
32 kids use the pass 35 times or more	90th percentile	35
16 kids use the pass 45 times or more	95th percentile	45
3 kids use the pass 64 or more times	99th percentile	64
one kid rode 99 times in a month!	Max	99

4. Overview of SB 1243

SB 1243 is an act concerning **transportation services for high school students and veterans.**

- Requires the CT DOT makes a program by August 1st, 2025 that allows school districts to negotiate for free or reduced city bus passes
- It would also allow veterans with a valid ID to get on the city busses for free



Timeline of our Fare-Free Transit Campaign

Historically, University High School and other schools in HPS would give free city bus passes to students within a 2-mile radius who didn't receive a school bus. This would end April 21st.

April 21, 2022

The Connecticut Department of Transportation would instate a free bus program which offset the impact of getting rid of the program. It would ultimately end, April 1st.

April 1, 2023

From Fall, 2023, we would begin advocating for fare free transportation for students. Through the help of a state rep, we were able to get HB 5523 passed which reinstated access.

May 9, 2024

Present: Advocating for SB:1243

DEEP & DOT submit joint request for state funds for Reduced Transit Fare Program

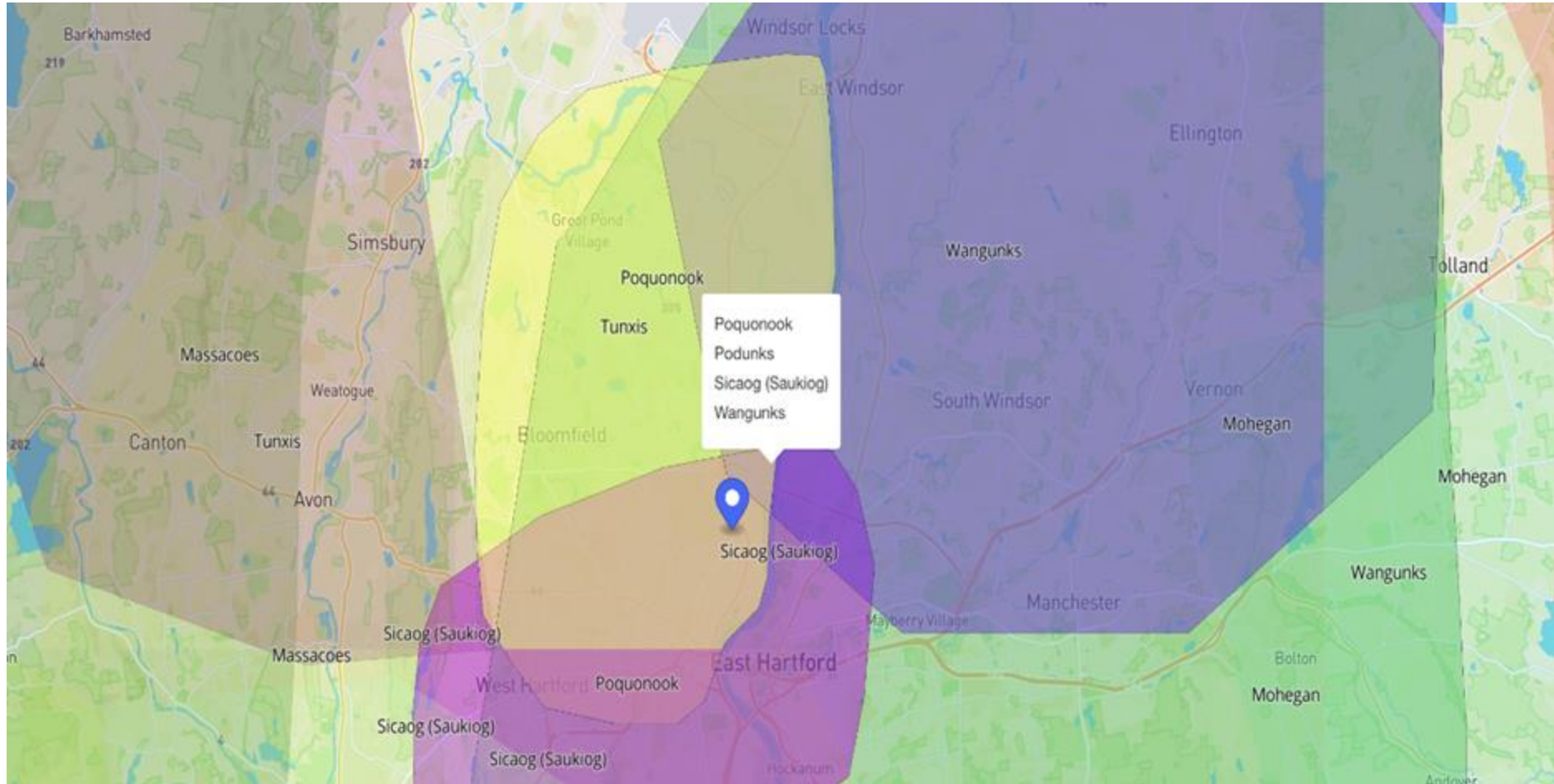
Recommendation

**ANY
QUESTIONS?**



“We organize our community to advocate for racial equity, social and environmental justice in our schools and community...”

The Acknowledgement of the Land We Stand On



Agreements for the Day

We will practice Call-In culture today-not Call-Out culture so that we can ensure

Humility, Authenticity, and Trustworthiness is accessible for everyone today!



- **Environmental Racism:** "racial discrimination in environmental policy making, environmental enforcement and environmental remediation, but it's also the exclusion of people of color in the decision-making around environmental justice, environmental hazards and environmental policy making."

~Dr. & Rev. Benjamin F. Chavis

- **Anti-Racism** is defined as the work of actively opposing racism by advocating for changes in political, economic, and social life. Anti-racism tends to be an individualized approach, and set up in opposition to individual racist behaviors and impacts.

~Race Forward, "[Race Reporting Guide](#)" (2015)

Defining Community Organizing for Social Change!!!

*Addressing White
Supremacy and Systemic
Racism!*

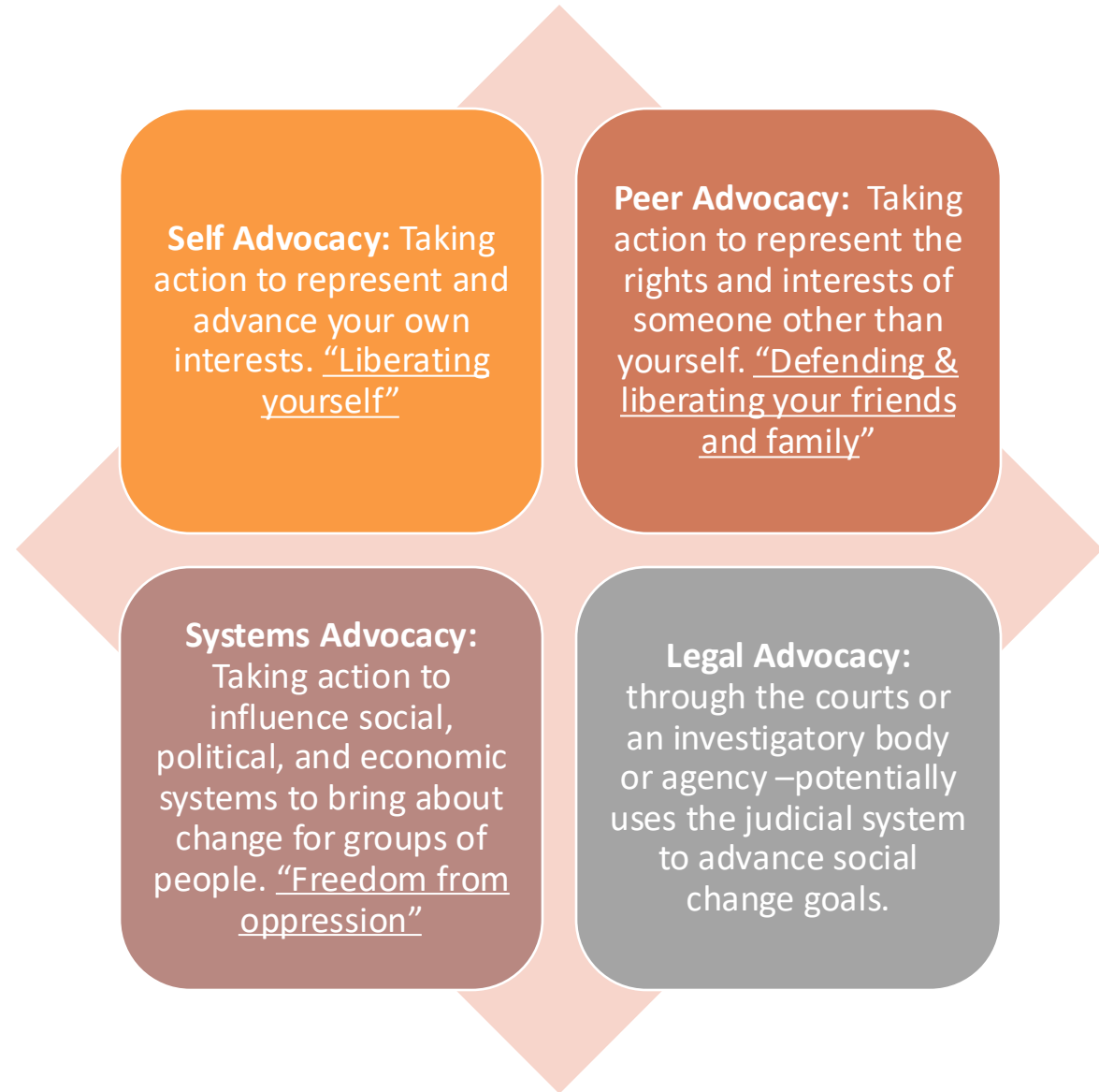
The act of organizing the motivated and capable community folk who are currently unorganized and unsupported to advance our common goal of having a more fair and just communities.

Activities include Base Building, Leadership Development, Campaign Advancement and Participatory Action Research

Its different than advocacy!



We believe
successful
advocacy
campaigns
are the result
of good
community
organizing!



Community Organizing:

is a long-term strategy to create meaningful relationships and build power so that you can use that power to create social change or improve the material conditions people are forced to exist in.

Engagement is a shared responsibility that requires shared goals and objectives to be advanced as a result of the activity.

Advocacy Campaigning:

is a short-term strategy to achieve a goal associated with changing or creating a policy that you and your colleagues agree is a good thing.

Outreach is generally considered a 1-way communication that relies on one person or group providing information to an individual or group that is presumed to not have it already.



Advocacy Campaigning

Single streams of data used in isolation to address “thin” policy or regulatory gaps.

Community Organizing

Multiple streams of varied data that are owned, collected and analyzed by impacted parties.

Engagement =s Participatory Action Research

“Participatory action research (PAR) is an approach to research that prioritizes the value of experiential knowledge for tackling problems caused by unequal and harmful social systems, and for envisioning and implementing alternatives.”

~Flora Cornish, Department of Methodology, London School of Economics & Political Science, London, UK

Digital divide, poverty, safe neighborhoods, over-policing, language, and political apathy.

Accept local knowledge, culture, and history must drive decision-making plus training, compensation, and support to access and understand the difference between low-cost sensors (LCS) to reference-grade equipment (RGE).

Hyper-local mobile air quality monitoring (LCS) that “paid” community members execute and capture a multitude of pollutant data.

PM 2.5 NO2 VOC's OZONE

Building trust requires training, support, and a guided-decision making process on how, when, and where data is released to the public.

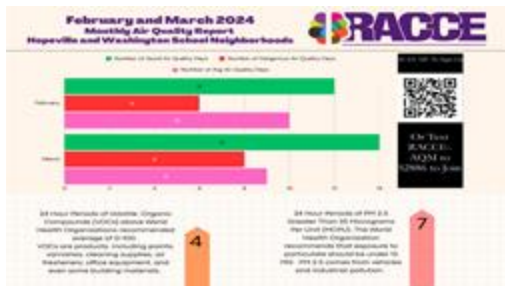
Establish community operated air quality dashboard.

Launch and operate a community owned air quality alert system.

Scale to stationery monitoring in neighborhoods with most volatile air quality and most vulnerable people. (RGE)

Experienced mobile monitoring teams execute outreach within impacted neighborhoods with AQM reports and engage by recruiting new team members, collecting narratives, and hosting public education events on their findings.

ON LOOP



COMMUNITY-BASED AIR QUALITY MONITORING AND ALERT SYSTEM COST ESTIMATES

Start-Up: Technology and Infrastructure Costs Per Grantee Include:

Purchase three stationary air quality monitors (2) Level 1* & (1) Level 2** and connect them to a public and internal administrator dashboard, with opt-in text alerts and all software and tech support, and hardware maintenance costs; purchase and integrate data from (6) mobile monitors to one location and publish on the community dashboard maintained by organizations; and advanced advising by technical consultants to deploy and manage the air quality network(s).

Expansion and Maintenance: Years 2 and 3 Costs Per Grantee Include:

Ongoing access to all software, advanced advising, and technical services for (9) stationary monitor licenses and (12) mobile monitor licenses and the purchase of (4) additional Level 1 monitors and (2) additional Level 2 monitor and annual maintenance of (9) stationery monitors; plus purchase of (6) more mobile monitors; and maintenance of the localized air quality alert system.

Project Management (PM):

Establishes and maintains relationships between community-based organizations (CBO), technical consultants, and government based agencies; directly addresses feasibility and logistical challenges; manages timeframes, goals, tracking and measuring progress within their (CBO) and with all other PM's; and coordinates all activities with community organizing staff and impacted community members for their region.

Community Organizing and Engagement :

Each CBO will establish and execute a multifaceted community organizing and engagement strategy that focuses on developing a participatory actions research model that balances research and data with local knowledge, culture, and history to support decision-making on policies or programming to address poor air quality; compensates and trains citizen leaders acting as local air quality experts; and launches and maintains a hyper local air quality alert system that is informed by localized data collection.

*Level 1 Monitors capture, measure and report on PM, Temp, RH, and are solar powered

** Level 2 Monitors capture, measure and report on a maximum of (4) of the following PM, CO, NO, NO2, O3, SO2, CO2, Temp, RH, and are solar powered

A green circular icon with the word "START" in white capital letters.

Start-up Costs-Year 1 Estimate

\$40,000.00



Expansion and Maintenance Years 2 & 3

\$75,000.00



Project Manager(PM)

\$35,000.00 per year



Community Organizing and Engagement

\$85,000.00 per year