

Transit Riders Union



2024 highlights

Raise the Wage Movement Just Keeps Spreading: Progress in 2024

In 2022, TRU spearheaded a citizen’s initiative in the City of Tukwila that established the highest minimum wage in the country — rising to \$21.10 in January 2025. Our success inspired a new wave of minimum wage organizing around the state, and TRU has continued leading the fight for higher wages here in King County.

Last year, TRU assisted a minimum wage initiative in the City of Renton led by the Seattle Democratic Socialists of America and the Renton Education Association. That measure won at the ballot this February, bringing Renton’s wages up to match Tukwila’s. Up in Bellingham, the Community First Whatcom coalition also won a minimum wage increase.



This spring, organizing alongside labor and community allies and champions on the King County Council, TRU won an ordinance that raises the minimum wage in unincorporated areas of the county, including White Center, Skyway, Vashon, Renton Highlands, and Fall City. Starting in January, workers at large businesses will make at least \$21.10 an hour. Medium and small employers will start lower and gradually phase in, so that ultimately everyone will be at the same wage.



We also continued our fight to raise the minimum wage in the City of Burien. At first we tried to go through the city council. We built a coalition and gathered hundreds of signatures of Burien residents and workers. But the council turned out to be less pro-worker than we’d hoped, especially after the

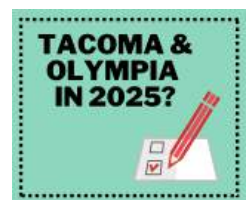
2023 elections. They worked with industry lobby groups to pass an ordinance that pretends to raise the minimum wage but would actually benefit very few workers. We couldn’t let a bad precedent stand, so we gathered signatures and qualified for a special election ballot next February. We are gearing up to get out the vote in 2025!



“We come from a working class family. We don’t have property, inherited from one generation to another. Whatever we have now we have built. A salary is a salary, workers need to get an increased wage and tips should be on top of that.”

- Sandra Aguilar, Burien resident and retired teacher at the Highline School District

Also this year, volunteers in Everett ran a minimum wage initiative inspired by Tukwila and Renton, and they won at the ballot against a watered down alternative measure



sponsored by the Washington Hospitality Association. TRU is now working with allies in Tacoma and Olympia who are planning to run workers’ rights initiatives in 2025... the movement just keeps growing!

TRU's Bus and Transit Service (BATS) Workgroup for the Win!



TRU's transit advocacy made a difference for riders in 2024. Some of the many things we worked on this year:

We pushed for restoration of trolleybus Route 47 service to the Summit neighborhood of Capitol Hill, and King County Metro responded by adding a new Route 3 extension to serve that neighborhood.

With allies at Ballard-Fremont Greenways, we succeeded in saving the Route 40 corridor improvement project from aggressive and persistent attempts by business interests to water it down.



We collaborated with Central Seattle Greenways on the FixTheL8 campaign, which is steadily making progress in winning infrastructure improvements to increase the speed and reliability of the notoriously late Route 8.

We also belatedly won one of the very first campaigns BATS initiated: The SeaTac airport pedestrian overpass is now open 24 hours a day, safely connecting the bus stops on International Boulevard to the airport!

We successfully rallied transit riders to urge Sound Transit not to embark on a costly study of an alternative South Lake Union station placement option favored by Amazon and Vulcan, one that we knew would be worse for transit riders.

With allies, we pushed to improve the mayor's Seattle Transportation Levy proposal and succeeded in increasing the size of the levy and directing more of its dollars to multimodal transportation projects, notably sidewalks.

2024 was a banner year for transit expansion in our region, and TRU went out into the community in a big way to celebrate with and educate people about all of our new transit options.

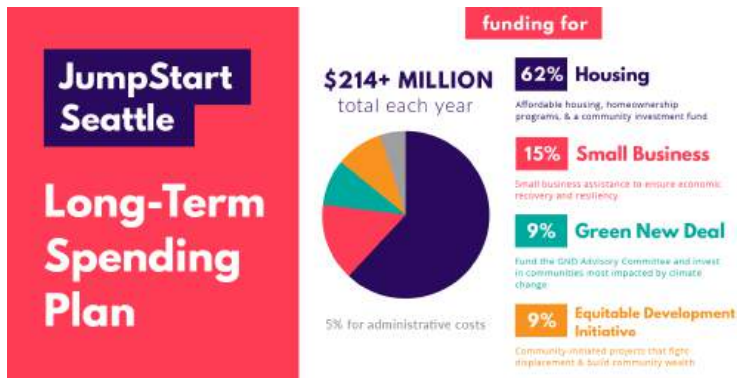


We attended the opening of Sound Transit's 2 Line on the Eastside; jointly tabled with Jackson Park 4 All and Seattle Neighborhood Greenways at Lynnwood Link opening day; tabled with JP4All at Lake City Summerfest; and joined Metro and the neighborhood for the RapidRide G opening day.

TRU hosted several community clean-ups with our very own Transit Fairy Pauline, who has continued to win recognition for her volunteer work picking up trash and pulling weeds around transit stops all over Seattle. Most notably, we organized a big joint clean-up with our ATU 587 transit operators and mechanics at the Chinatown International District transit hub.

Continuing the Fight for Progressive Revenue & Against Austerity

Back in 2020, TRU played a major role in winning JumpStart Seattle, a progressive payroll-based tax on our city's largest corporations—notably Amazon—which now raises over \$400 million annually, far more than the original \$214 million projected.



With the tax was passed a long-term spending plan to ensure that this revenue would be used to address longstanding crises the city faces. It was supposed to be used for affordable housing, equitable development projects, small business support, and investments to address the climate crisis. But Seattle is now facing a structural budget shortfall in its general fund, to the tune of over a quarter billion dollars a year. We knew at the beginning of this year that it would be tempting for the mayor and council to fill that hole using JumpStart revenue.

So TRU brought together a broad coalition of community groups, labor unions, and service providers to try to defend the JumpStart long term spending plan. We urged the city to seek a structural solution to the shortfall, including new progressive revenue. It was a politically challenging coalition to hold together and we worked mightily to push our elected officials in every way we knew how. But, as we feared, they chose to dig deep into JumpStart to balance the upcoming biennial budget. And they passed legislation making the long-term spending plan a non-binding guideline, rather than a commitment, moving forward.

Despite this loss, we succeeded in shaping the public narrative. Basically every piece of news coverage on the budget included voices from our coalition talking about the importance of preserving the integrity of the JumpStart long-term spending plan and the need for new progressive revenue. We created an environment in which even a fiscally conservative council entertained new progressive taxes. Councilmember Cathy Moore put forward a local capital gains tax, and Councilmember Tammy Morales proposed excise taxes on professional services and digital advertising. Although none passed this year, the proposals are there for us to continue pushing for next year. It was TRU's work last year on the city's Revenue Stabilization Workgroup, and [our report on progressive tax options](#), that paved the way. We will continue this fight next year.



Outreach & Mutual Aid to Houseless Neighbors

2024 has been a brutal year for our neighbors surviving outside. Here's a mid-year update from TRU's all-volunteer, donation-supported camp outreach team, which has continued their weekly outreach year round:

We are seeing 60 to 80 people, depending on the weather and if there have been any encampment sweeps in the area that scatter and displace our friends throughout Ballard. For food, we've been eating chicken taco bowls, pesto pasta salad, fruit, coffee, cocoa, water, gatorade, and lemonade. We do two set ups during our two hours, to reach multiple camps. We also walk with to-go containers to nearby streets to make sure we get to most people. We take

leftover food to our friends in shelters and Tiny Homes in Interbay.

We also have been getting harm reduction supplies through Stop the Sweeps and Long Haul Mutual Aid Kitchen. They make narcan kits, safer injection kits, wound care kits, and safer smoking kit - the latter two are highly requested by the folks we see at outreach! Finally, we've been lucky to have someone from Washington Health Outreach come to our outreach with pet food and supplies, and info about their mobile vet clinic at Ballard Food Bank.