



Better by Bus
Ways to Improve Grocery Shopping by Bus in the Kansas City Metro



**GREATER KC
FOOD POLICY
COALITION**
kchealthykids



Food Insecurity: a socioeconomic condition of limited or uncertain access to enough food to support a healthy life.



About the Study

Between 2016 and 2018, KC Healthy Kids and participants in the Greater KC Food Policy Coalition conducted a comprehensive study on the barriers and challenges riders face when grocery shopping by bus.

This report highlights key results and outlines the steps policy makers, grocers and community members can take to make it easier. Funding was provided by H&R Block Foundation and Health Forward Foundation. Special thanks to Kansas City Area Transportation Authority and UG Transit.

We talked to more than 360 metro residents about what it's like for them to use the RideKC bus to buy groceries. Riders were surveyed at bus stops and by partner agencies providing direct services to low-income residents. In order to further understand the barriers, focus groups and ride-along interviews were conducted. We also assessed 44 bus stops serving 21 grocery stores in low-income neighborhoods in Kansas City, MO and Kansas City, KS. We collected and analyzed more than 30 pieces of data for each stop to determine barriers in existing infrastructure.

Quality Transit Improves Healthy Food Access

Food insecurity and obesity are common in the Kansas City metro, and they are closely linked with negative health outcomes like diabetes and heart disease. To make matters worse, many families do not own a reliable car. They are more likely to have a low income and to live far away from a healthy grocery retail. For them, a trip to a grocery store can be challenging.

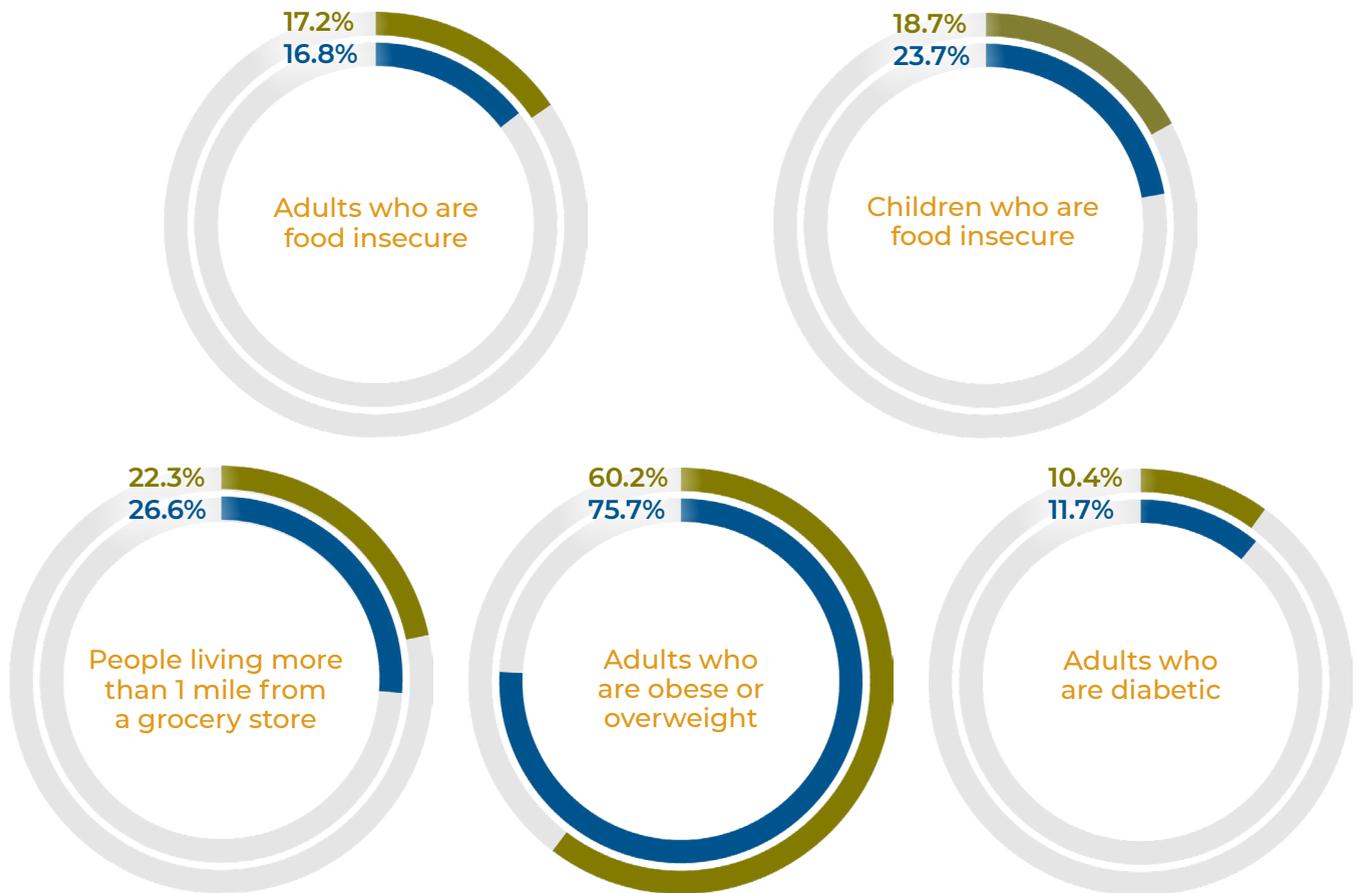
Many families, seniors, people with disabilities and others depend on RideKC buses to do their grocery shopping. Whether they can reasonably and practically grocery shop by bus depends on the usability and accessibility of the transit system in addition to surrounding infrastructure such as sidewalks and crosswalks. Research has shown that when active transportation is safe, accessible and affordable, people are more likely to walk, bike or use public transportation to get to their destinations, including grocery stores.

Households Without a Reliable Car



Food Insecurity is a Common Problem in Our Communities

○ Jackson County ○ Wyandotte County



Sources: Food Research & Action Center (2017), Smart Growth America, Feeding America (2015), USDA Food Environment Atlas (2015), KC Health Matters (2011), Mid-America Regional Council (2013), 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates



“In Kansas City, KS, at least, every 3 or 4 stops need a bench. It’s hard to stand there for half an hour.”

Complete Streets: streets designed to be safe and accessible for people of all ages and abilities. In 2017, the city council of Kansas City, MO adopted the Complete Streets Ordinance.



Key Findings and Ways to Make it Better

When asked about grocery shopping by bus, residents without cars frequently expressed concerns that fall into three broad categories: infrastructure, information and cost.

1. Riders need to feel safe and comfortable.

When riders feel safe or comfortable, they are more likely to use the bus for grocery shopping. This is especially true for seniors and those with health concerns or small children. Yet our study showed many repairs and improvements are needed for easier grocery shopping. For instance, cracked sidewalks and busy intersections without crosswalks put riders at risk of accidents.

Bus stops without benches mean riders have to stand and hold their bags for up to 30 minutes while waiting for a bus. Riders also said there is not enough space on the bus for groceries. This limits what they can buy and causes them to make several small shopping trips.

What You Can Do Decision Makers

- City council can direct more money toward creating safer and ADA accessible streets which comply with Complete Streets criteria detailed by the National Complete Streets Coalition
- Transit agencies can make sure every stop near a grocery store has a bench, shelter, route signage and ADA accessible landing pad

Grocers

- Add a grocery cart corral close to a bus stop in order to shorten the distance riders have to carry heavy grocery bags
- Install a safe, ADA accessible pathway from sidewalks to your store entrance so riders won’t have to share a driveway with cars.

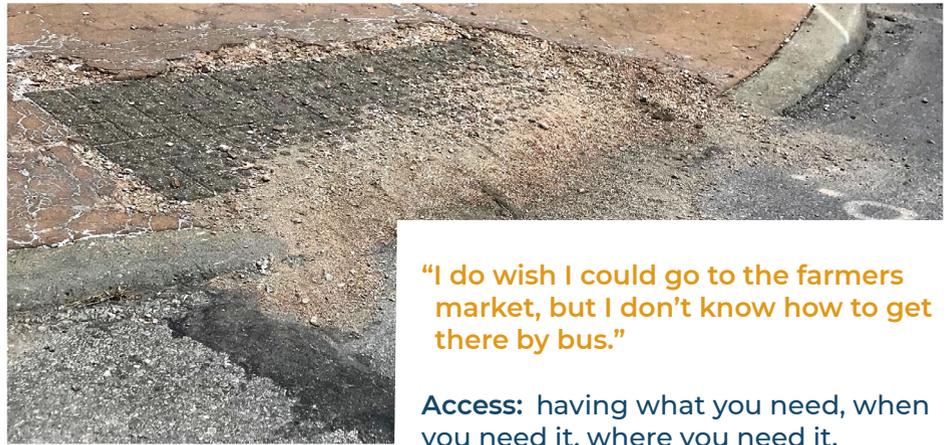
Community Members

- Contact your city council member and ask for more funding for safe and accessible streets that meet Complete Streets standards. Learn more at completেকc.org
- Contact your transit agency to request improvements at certain stops



6:19	9:17	12:17	3:47	6:22	9:22	12:22	4:22	No Service
7:18	10:17	1:17	4:48	7:22	10:22	1:22	5:22	
8:17	11:17	2:17	5:49	8:22	11:22	2:22	6:22	
						3:22		

405		Nall - Northbound	
MONDAY thru FRIDAY		SATURDAY	
AM	PM	AM	PM
7:05	No Service	No Service	No Service
7:35			



"I do wish I could go to the farmers market, but I don't know how to get there by bus."

Access: having what you need, when you need it, where you need it.

2. Riders need information at the right time and place.

Before they can ride, people need to know how to ride. That means understanding bus routes, schedules and special services RideKC offers. Easy access to information gives riders more shopping choices and helps them save money while encouraging would-be riders to use the bus for grocery shopping.

For instance, riders, especially those with limited or no access to the Internet, said grocery store locations should be added to paper schedules and route maps to make it easier to find the fastest routes to stores. In 2017, new "Grocery Shop with RideKC" signs with shopping tips were added to bus stops. Riders said the signs were helpful.

What You Can Do Transit Agencies

- Install "Grocery Shop with RideKC" signs at bus stops
- Add grocery store locations to paper schedules and route maps

Grocers

- Post or hand out flyers that show bus routes near your store and tips to make grocery shopping bus trips easier. Contact KC Healthy Kids at 816.523.5353 and ask for information about Fare Food Shopping

Community Members

- Help us get information to your community. Contact KC Healthy Kids at 816.523.5353 and ask for information about Fare Food Shopping



“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.”

3. Riders who lack income need reduced fares.

Results showed the cost of bus fare to be a major barrier for zero-vehicle households participating in SNAP (food stamps) or WIC as well as unemployed individuals seeking jobs.

RideKC currently offers free passes for veterans and reduced fares for seniors, youth and persons with disability. The reduced fare program should be extended to help low-income families and job seekers.

What You Can Do

Transit Agencies

- Offer reduced fare for SNAP and WIC recipients

Grocers

- Urge RideKC to offer reduced fare for SNAP and WIC recipients: call RideKC at 816.221.0660 or submit a comment online at bit.ly/commentRideKC

Community Members

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5 Tips for Grocery Shopping by Bus

1. Plan your meals and make a shopping list.
2. Use insulated bags. They are durable, reusable and will keep your food cold longer.
3. There is no bag limit. Carry as many as you can, but please keep them out of the aisle and close to your seat.
4. Use a pull cart. Yes, you can bring a pull cart on the bus! Please keep it out of the aisle and close to your seat.
5. Save money with passes and reduced fares.
 - If you board at least three times in one day, you can save money with the \$3 Day Pass. Be sure to ask the bus operator for the pass before depositing \$3 exact cash in the fare box.
 - Veterans can ride free with a RideKC Veterans Pass.
 - Seniors, youth and people with disabilities can apply for a reduced fare. Find out how at ridekc.org/fares/reduced-fares or call RideKC at 816.221.0660

Get pedestrian-friendly recipes and learn about food assistance programs at kchealthykids.org/fare-food-shopping





About KC Healthy Kids

KC Healthy Kids rallies the people in our communities to improve access to affordable fresh food and safe places to walk and play. When our neighborhoods support healthy habits, we are less likely to suffer from obesity, which is linked to Type 2 diabetes, heart disease, and poor mental health. To make a lasting impact, we shape policies that improve our food system and physical surroundings, and ultimately, the places where we live, work, learn and play.

About Greater KC Food Policy Coalition

Greater KC Food Policy Coalition brings together diverse stakeholders to advocate for our regional food system and promote policies which positively impact the nutritional, economic, social and environmental health of the community. KC Healthy Kids staff coordinates activities for the coalition.



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