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MEDIA RELEASE

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CIVIC MAPPING INITIATIVE AND NATIONAL HEAD START ASSOCIATION PARTNER WITH TRANSIT ORGANIZATIONS TO PROVIDE SAFER TRANSIT ACCESS FOR FAMILIES OF PRESCHOOLERS

Memphis Area Transit Authority to serve as a national model for transit access, jointly hosts a ribbon-cutting of newly relocated bus stop at Head Start Center in Memphis, Tennessee.

Memphis, Tenn. - A host of national civic, social, and public services organizations have partnered to ensure families of infants and children have greater access to public transit, and ultimately, social and economic mobility.

The National Head Start Association (NHSA) and the Civic Mapping Initiative (CMI), powered by the Seldin/Haring-Smith Foundation, partnered to produce an interactive, national map and analysis measuring the distance between each Head Start location and the nearest fixed-route transit stop. Only 42% of Head Start programs have a transit stop accessible to preschoolers and families in walking distance (0.2 miles). CMI found that an additional 19% of locations do have a stop within one mile, offering transit agencies across the country low-cost opportunities to support participating families and the critical early childhood workforce.

“We shouldn’t make it hard for families with young children to access one of America’s most successful anti-poverty programs. Through low-cost changes – like bringing bus stops within walking distance of Head Start Centers -- transit agencies across the country will be supporting both families and the critical early childhood workforce,”



said Abigail Seldin, Civic Mapping Initiative co-founder. “We’re excited to be kicking off this series of new and relocated bus stops with our trusted partners here in Memphis.”

Civic Mapping Initiative’s findings on Head Start and community college transit accessibility have been highlighted by the American Public Transportation Association (APTA), and the first joint convening with APTA and the National Head Start Association launched this summer.

Memphis Area Transit Authority has taken the charge nationally to relocate bus stops nearby three Head Start centers in their service area.

“We’re thrilled to be a part of this innovative initiative that affects the next generation and directly benefits our families and children in Memphis,” says Gary Rosenfeld, MATA CEO. “This collaboration shows public transit has the power to elevate the lives of infants, toddlers and children of all ages.”

“New tools to overlay transit route data with Head Start center location data helps underscore the need for vital mobility options in communities,” says Arthur L. Guzzetti, Vice President of Policy and Mobility, American Public Transportation Association. “APTA applauds the connections made possible through the Civic Mapping Initiative and commends the leadership of the Memphis Area Transit Authority.”

A ribbon-cutting will be held at the Early Head Start on Southwest Tennessee Community College - Macon campus (Memphis, TN) on Monday, October 23 to formally introduce the relocated bus stop to the public. To boost awareness, a wrapped bus from MATA’s fleet featuring artwork from local Head Start students will operate throughout the service area. More public transit providers are expected to perform the necessary analysis to relocate bus stops across the country moving forward.

Sheronda Smith, President of the Tennessee Head Start Association, shared, “One of Head Start’s core values is “fostering a relationship with the larger community.”The National Head Start Association, Memphis Area Transit Authority, Porter-Leath, and Memphis-Shelby County Schools are collaborating to serve as Head Start’s larger community. Shorter commutes reduce barriers to accessing Head Start services, benefiting both the children and staff members involved. The additional bus stops also have the potential to boost attendance by keeping children enrolled, which directly



impacts educational advancement. While staffing is a concern for all employers, closer bus stops can help recruit and retain staff. I am excited about how this affects the Memphis community and the potential it has to affect other communities in Tennessee.”

“The collaboration with and support of MATA in ensuring that parents of young children have access to stops that are within 500 - 1,000 feet of a Head Start center is an absolute ;win’ for everyone. These enhancements for parents improve the system for all riders, including staff. The entire community will benefit from the additional stops,” says Dr. Detris Crane, Director of Head Start Early Childhood, Memphis Shelby County Schools. “It has been an honor to collaborate with MATA, Porter-Leath and the National Head Start Association on the City Mapping Initiative. What an awesome way to celebrate National Head Start Awareness Month!”

“We are grateful for the partnership with Civic Mapping Initiative and Memphis Area Transit Authority (MATA). MATA is helping us cultivate young minds by providing greater access to safer transportation for our families in our Memphis-based centers,” said Yasmina Vinci, National Head Start Association executive director. “By relocating these stops, our young students have fewer barriers for success and we look forward to more in the future.”

Visit [Civic Mapping Initiative](#) to access the latest report and map.

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About the Civic Mapping Initiative and the Seldin / Haring-Smith Foundation:

The Seldin / Haring-Smith Foundation (SHSF) is a family foundation that invests in solutions that expand equitable access to public services and support accountability for abuse of authority. In addition to grants, SHSF produces high-impact public policy research through its Civic Mapping Initiative , a research center charting the proximity of public transit stops to public services. Through corporate partnerships with Getty Images and FormSwift, SHSF co-developed new stock photos of today’s college students and produced SwiftStudent , a free tool for students seeking financial aid appeals. To learn more, visit www.shsfunds.org and follow us on Twitter at [@shsfunds](https://twitter.com/shsfunds) .



About Porter-Leath:

For over 170 years, Porter-Leath has been the primary resource for Memphis' children and families. By focusing on the essential building blocks of healthy development, we not only give them access to the tools they need, but also a sense of hope. The result is Porter-Leath helps build stronger children, stronger families and a stronger Memphis.

About Tennessee Head Start Association:

The Tennessee Head Start Association promotes and protects the integrity of quality Head Start services to children and families through training, advocacy, and collaboration for and with member programs.

About MATA:

The Memphis Area Transit Authority (MATA) is the public transportation provider for the Memphis area. As one of the largest transit operators in the state of Tennessee, MATA transports customers in the City of Memphis and parts of Shelby County on fixed-route buses, paratransit vehicles and vintage rail trolleys.

About Memphis-Shelby County Schools

[Memphis-Shelby County Schools](#) (MSCS) is Tennessee's largest public school district and is among the 25 largest public school districts in the United States. Formerly comprised of two smaller districts, Memphis City Schools and Shelby County Schools, MSCS serves over 100,000 students in more than 200 schools. We are the second largest employer in Shelby County with over 13,900 employees, including 6,000 teachers.