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MEDIA RELEASE

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Citilink Installs Special Seats Honoring Rosa Parks

Citilink is marking the 60th anniversary of an event that put public transportation at the center of America's struggle for civil rights.

Rosa Parks earned her reputation as the mother of the civil rights movement by refusing to surrender her seat on a bus to a white man in Montgomery, Alabama on December 1, 1955. That sparked a national movement that eventually brought an end to legal segregation.

Citilink is recognizing that moment in history by installing a yellow "Rosa Parks" permanent seat on 31 Fort Wayne Citilink fixed-route buses in her honor.

This project was suggested by Citilink board member Glynn Hines after learning of a similar tribute by another transit system.

"Rosa Parks' quiet strength helped make a seat available for everyone," Hines said. "Freedom and justice for all' is not just a phrase - it is a journey. It is important to recognize how far we have come and how far we have yet to travel."

Participants in an event revealing the tribute to Mrs. Parks include: Fort Wayne Urban League President Jonathan Ray, Fort Wayne NAACP President Larry Gist, Fort Wayne Citilink Board Member & City Councilman Glynn Hines, Lewis Sims-Fort Wayne's first African American public transit bus driver (hired in 1955), three generations of African American Citilink bus drivers (John Thomas, Richard Thomas Sr. & Richard Thomas Jr.), and Citilink board members and staff.

Mrs. Park's act of defiance encouraged over 50,000 riders to participate in a 381-day boycott of a private bus company, Montgomery City Lines, and ignited a national movement that ended legal segregation on buses (and the bus boycott) when the Supreme Court declared the practice unconstitutional under the 14th Amendment. The bus she rode on that fateful day is on display at the [Henry Ford Museum](#) in Detroit, Michigan.

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Throughout her lifetime Rosa Parks was active with the NAACP, Montgomery Improvement Association (led by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.), Voter's League, Planned Parenthood, and served on the staff of Michigan Congressman John Conyers. She received the World Peace Prize, Presidential Medal of Freedom, Congressional Gold Medal of Honor, and more than 43 honorary doctorate degrees. She co-created two charitable foundations: The Rosa L. Parks College Scholarship Foundation and the Rosa and Raymond Parks Institute for Self-Development; which operates [Pathways to Freedom](#) educational bus tours for youth. She also co-authored four books *Rosa Parks: My Story*, *Quiet Strength*, *Dear Mrs. Parks: A Dialogue with Today's Youth*, and *I AM ROSA PARKS*. The [Rosa Parks Museum](#) is located at Troy University in Montgomery, Alabama.

Mrs. Parks, a resident of Detroit, Michigan for nearly 50 years, was born on February 4, 1913 and died at the age of 92 on October 24, 2005. In mourning, the cities of Montgomery and Detroit reserved the front seats of their buses with black ribbons. Her casket was transported, by a bus similar to the one in which she made her protest, to lay in state in the Rotunda of the U.S. Capitol; the first woman and second African American to be honored in this way. A quiet example of courage, dignity, and determination; Rosa Parks stated, "I am leaving this legacy to all of you to bring peace, justice, equality, love and fulfillment of what our lives should be. Without vision, the people will perish, and without courage and inspiration, dreams will die – the dream of freedom and peace."

We gather today to honor this one woman's dream of freedom and peace, represented by this token of appreciation. However, this seat also serves as a reminder and a challenge for us to take her place and repeat her message as we continue to chase the dream.



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