

CA Union Protects Those Who Take the "Factory On Wheels"

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Step on a bus in L.A. County and you're automatically a member of a union. Although Southern California may be known for its million of cars, and the smog that goes with them, there are also thousands of bus riders, with the Bus Riders Union (BRU) representing the more than 500,000 daily commuters.

Manuel Criollo, lead organizer, says the BRU was founded in 1992 to provide a voice for transit users. He says the bus is essentially a "factory on wheels."

"They're the ones that clean the city, they're the ones who are nannies, and cooks, and chefs, and restaurant workers and security guards - the folks who, without their labor, you know, a city like Los Angeles would sort of stall."

Lisa Ranghelli, director of grant-making for the Community Impact Project of the National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy, is co-author of a report that analyzed the work of more than a dozen Los Angeles non-profits and found their efforts produced nearly \$6.9 billion worth of benefits to their communities.

She says the BRU is just one example of the ways in which organizations in Los Angeles County are winning policy innovations that improve life for lower-income people, people of color, and other vulnerable communities.

"They help grant makers understand how advocacy, organizing and civic engagement can be really valuable tools to help them maximize their impact and ultimately benefit the issues and communities that they care about."

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