



ASSESSING KNOXVILLE BUS STOPS

SEEKING DISABILITY JUSTICE

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WHY STUDY PUBLIC TRANSIT?

A bus is a place of safety, warmth, community, and mobility. The bus stops create barriers to accessing the respite of being on the bus.



WHY THE BUS STOP?

I use the bus stop as a geographical site to explore critically Disability, crip time, temporality, and embodiment. Transit studies and disability studies have examined accessibility primarily in relation to mobility impairments, but less work has explored this conjuncture of crip time and embodiment in relation to transit. A consideration of crip time and embodiment can help us understand a significant shift in perspective, from one of city administration, to one of embodied experience, and a centering of Disabled voices in this narrative. Geography is improved by changing the position from which we write, from one critiqued by Donna Haraway as “the conquering gaze from nowhere” (Haraway 1988; 581) to one of changing the epistemology from which we look altogether, as proposed by Natalie Oswin in “An other geography” (2019).





WHY KNOXVILLE?

This is not just a project about public transit in Knoxville. I am interested in questions of mobility, the production and experience of public space, and those things are being answered through a case study of this specific place. Mid size and emerging cities struggle with these questions, and Knoxville, as a city that has been working on "reimagining" these things, is a good case study for examining these key questions.

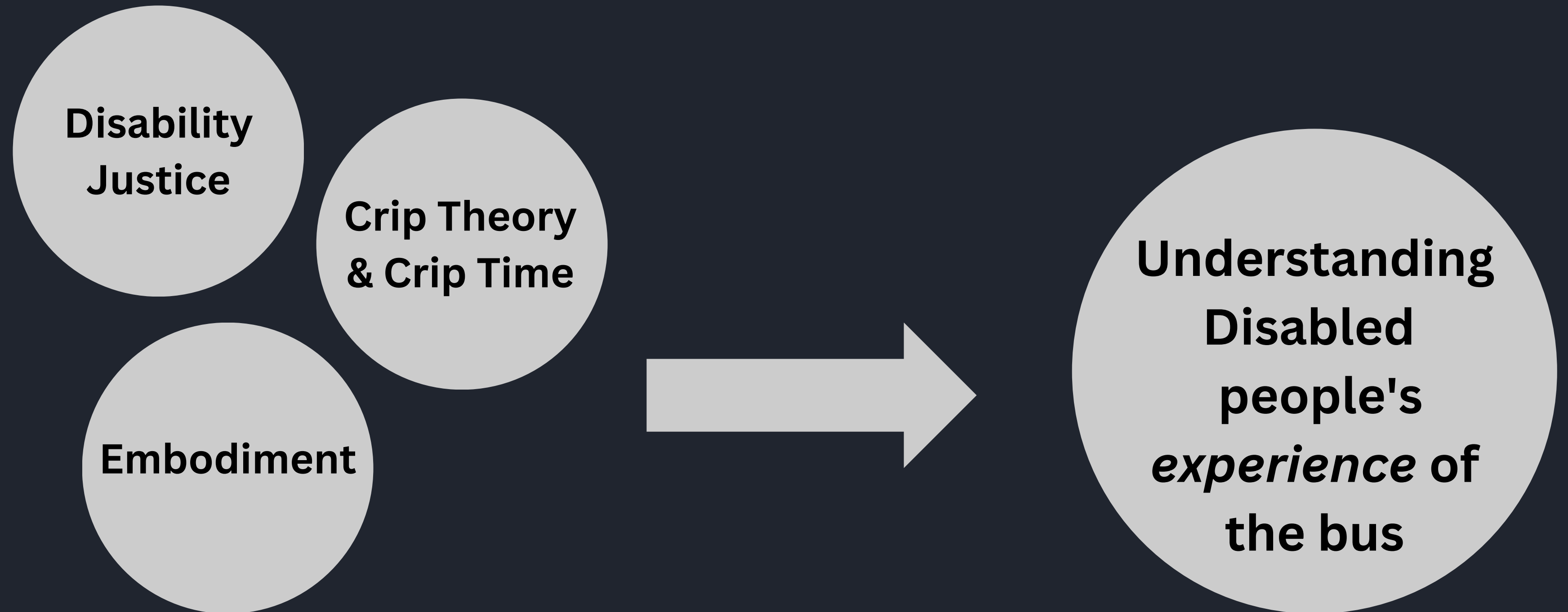
RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- 1) In what ways is public transit in Knoxville accessible? To whom? In what ways is it inaccessible to those who use it?**
- 2) How are the everyday lives and experiences of those who use public transit affected by public transit?**
- 3) What can we learn about the embodied experiences of disabled public transit users and how might this impact how we understand accessibility generally?**



**WHAT MAKES A
PLACE
ACCESSIBLE?**

THE FRAMEWORK





METHODS

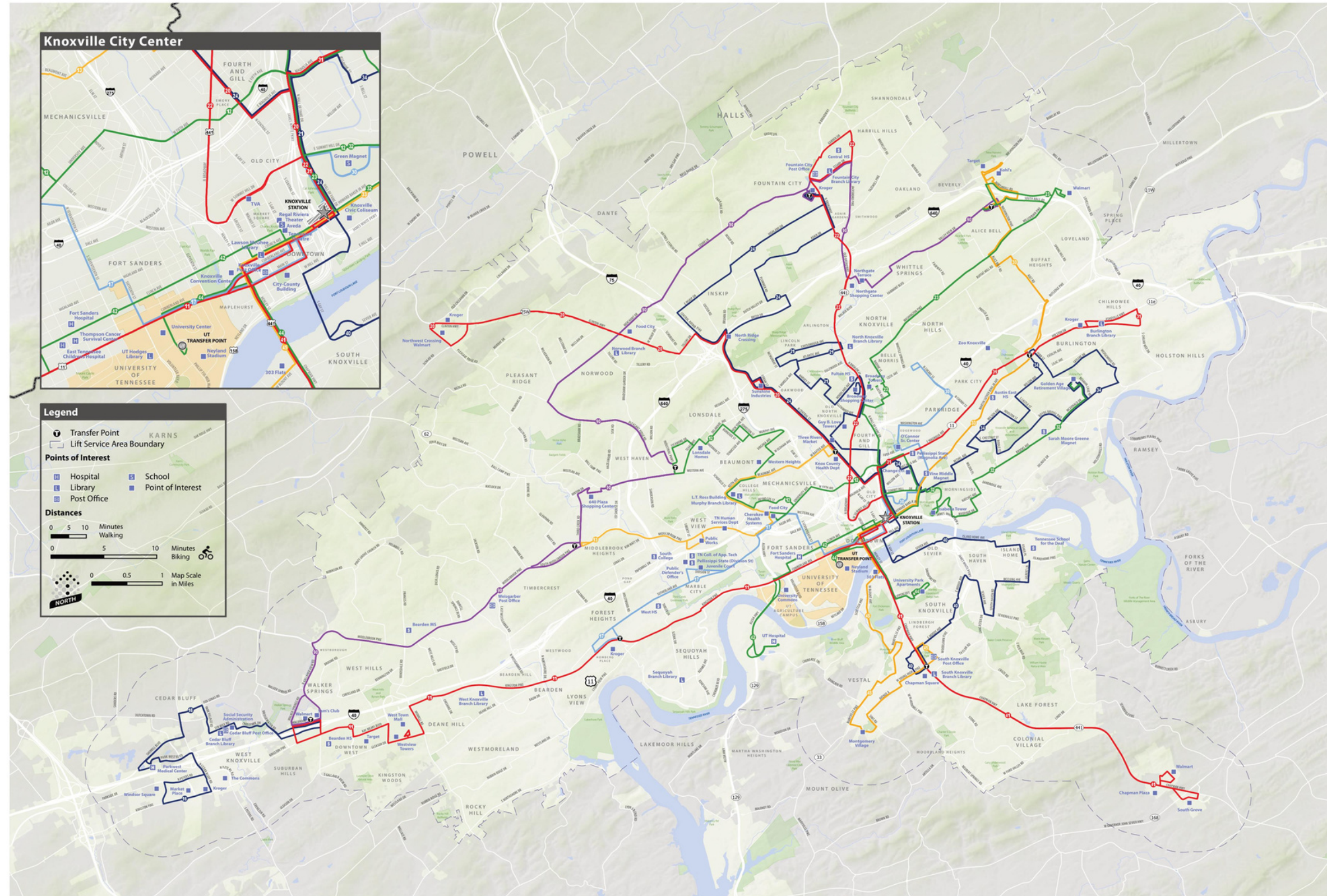
I aim to trouble traditional definitions of disability and aim to expand our understanding of who gets impacted by accessibility and inaccessibility. I want to conduct this survey of the bus stops and interviews with disabled riders to document the way that disabled people forge accessibility and mobility in the face of inaccessibility: the ways that disabled people “take up space, exist-joyfully, complicatedly, thrivingly, ornery-ly—in the present” (Piepzna-Samarasinha 2022, 17).

THE BUS STOP

The framework for the ADA accessible bus stops hinges on accessibility being about mobility impairments, ignoring ways that accessibility should be expansive and inclusive (Hamraie 2018; Berne 2015).



ROUTE PRIORITIZATION



FIELDWORK



Is there a pedestrian light?

Yes

No



Does the pedestrian light have auditory signals?

Yes

No



Is there a shelter for bus users to wait under?

Yes

No

- Survey 123 of physical assessment of bus stops
- Interviews with Disabled bus riders

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR DISABLED BUS RIDERS:

How frequently do you ride transit?

Why do you choose the route you do?

Tell me about an average day for you. Where do you go? How might you get there?

Do you face inaccessibility because of the bus stops?

Do you choose to get off at a different bus stop because of your access needs?

- What makes a bus stop accessible for you?**

What is your experience with Knoxville Area Transit?

Have you used the ETHRA system?

Why do you choose to use the ETHRA system or the KAT system?

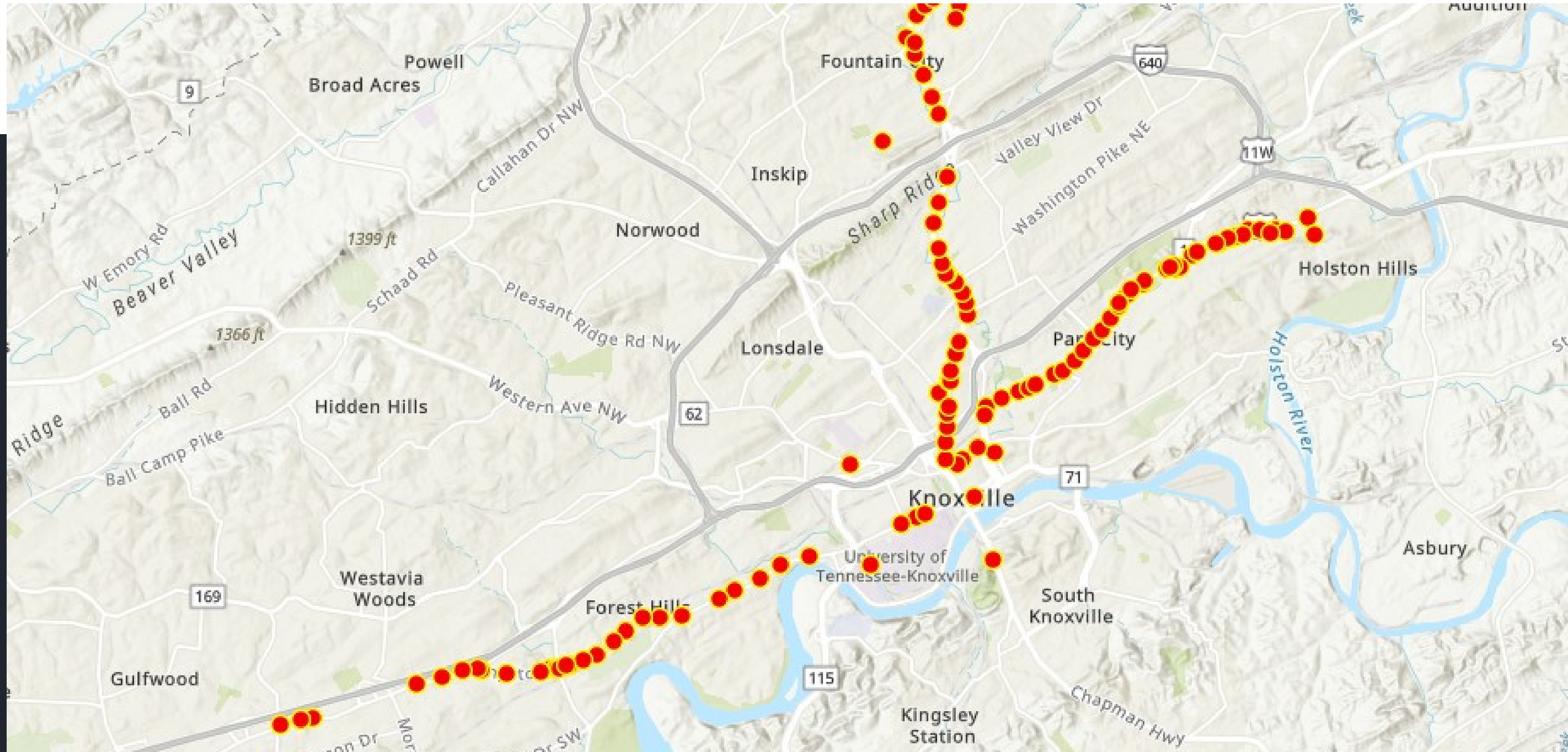
- Freedom**

- issues scheduling**

- accessibility of the KAT system**

Have you had to not go to certain places at all because of inaccessibility of a particular bus stop?

DATA FROM SURVEY123



MAGNOLIA ROUTE: STOP IN FRONT OF COMMUNITY COLLEGE



MAGNOLIA ROUTE: STOP AT MAGNOLIA AND KYLE





ETHRA: EAST TENNESSEE HUMAN RESOURCE AGENCY

ETHRA has provided transport for 1,066,000 elderly & disabled people (ETHRA About). Some serious drawbacks to the ETHRA system compared to the KAT system are that riding must be scheduled three days in advance (ETHRA Public Transit). This is a vital connection for disabled people to gain access to their cities, but there's serious limitations of where and how they are allowed to use this system, compared to the freedom that can be attained with riding the KAT bus, going to any bus stop, riding the bus wherever they want to go, and not needing to plan the trip three days in advance.

USABILITY OF KAT

"With 23 routes servicing over 1,100 bus stops, KAT reaches more than 80,000 Knoxville residents within a quarter mile of a bus stop." (KAT Bus Routes). Out of 192,000 residents, this means that KAT provides service to about 41% of Knoxville residents within a quarter of a mile.

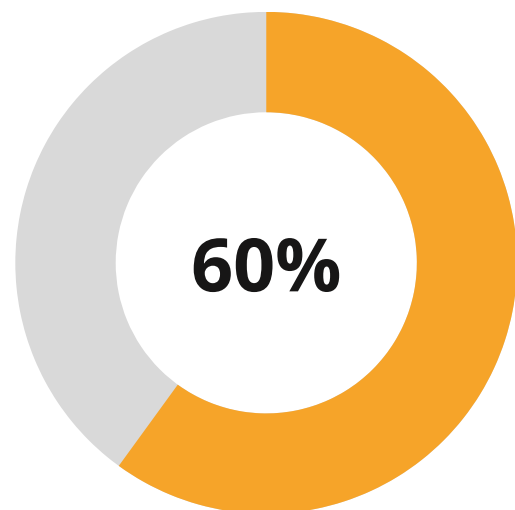
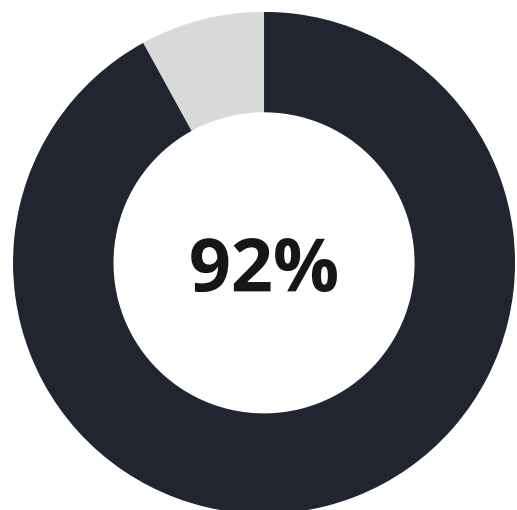
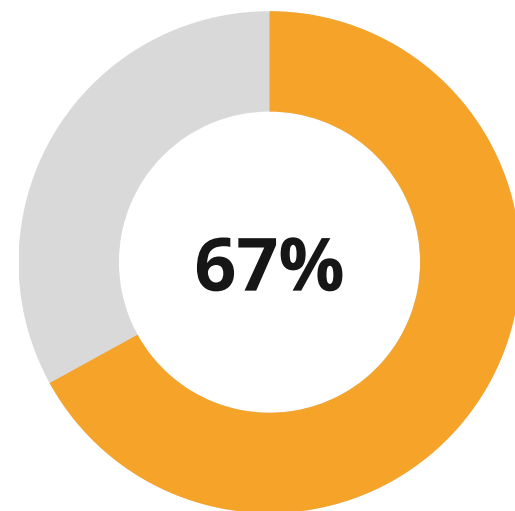
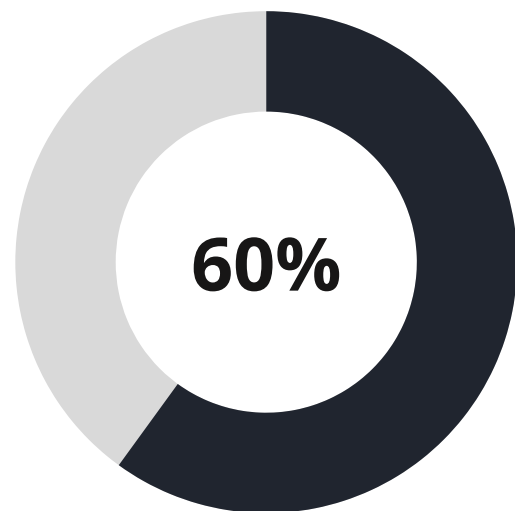
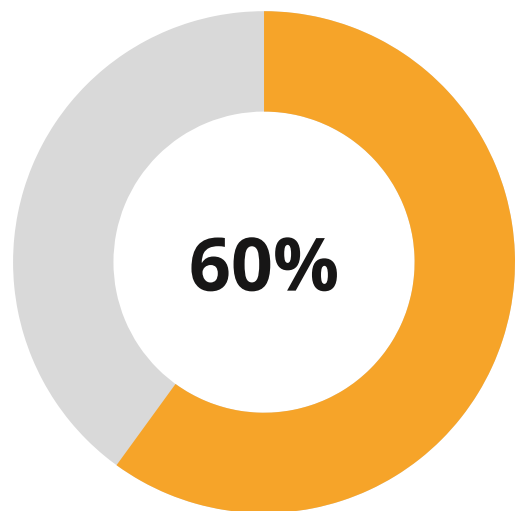
For bus riders with physical disabilities, the quarter-mile to half-mile distance to a bus stop can be impassable.





WHAT MAKES A PLACE ACCESSIBLE?

What is Universal Design?



PHYSICAL ASSESSMENT OF THE BUS STOPS

60% of bus stops that I have assessed do not have a pedestrian light. 60% of bus stops do not have a shelter for riders to wait under. 67% of bus stops do not have a bench. 92% of the benches are divided to prevent laying down. 60% of the sidewalks around the bus stops are not wide enough for two wheelchair users to safely pass one another.



FUTURE STEPS

01

Conduct interviews with 8-12 bus riders.

02

Conduct qualitative analysis of interview transcripts.



FUTURE STEPS

From this intervention of the intersection of disability geographies and public transportation research, I intend to muddy and complicate our simple definitions of accessibility and use Hamraie and Muñoz as guide posts for how to do work with Disabled partners and as a Disabled person, rather than as a scientist studying an object.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

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TEMPORALITIES OF RIDING THE BUS

A key factor of the experience of riding the bus has to do with the time and temporalities of waiting for the bus. Due to labor challenges for KAT to employ enough drivers to run the routes as they were previously, on August 29, 2022, routes that used to run every thirty minutes now run every hour. Routes that used to run every fifteen minutes now run every thirty minutes. Route 10-- Sequoyah and Route 19-- Lakeshore were eliminated. Prioritization began for routes that KAT identifies as "core routes" with the most ridership: 11 (Kingston), 12 (Western Avenue), 22 (Broadway), 31 (Magnolia) and 41 (Chapman Highway).



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THANK YOU