

Make the Road CT



Walking Towards a Brighter Future



In 2016, Make the Road CT formed the Youth Power Committee to build the leadership of young people in Bridgeport. There were not a lot of leadership and organizing programs for immigrant youth in Bridgeport so young people were looking for a program like Make the Road to be a part of. After much discussion and research, our young people began their “Walking Towards a Brighter Future” Campaign. This campaign seeks to create a Bridgeport Youth Advisory Committee to address unsafe routes, unreliable transportation, and the policies that impact youth when they are late; an option for school transportation or stipends for public transportation; and create a Youth College/Career Advisory Committee to address educational inequities in accessing higher education or career preparation in Bridgeport.



In 2019, our Youth Power Committee had a huge victory when recommendations they made to the city about safe walking routes to school were included in the City of Bridgeport Master Plan. This included streetscapes to create safer crossings at intersections and the designation of routes specifically for walking to school with sidewalk and infrastructure improvements on those routes. In order to achieve this victory, our youth attended City Council hearings, met with city officials, including the Mayor, held demonstrations, and rallied with their fellow students. One of the powerful moments from the campaign was all of our young people sitting around a conference room in City Hall, presenting to the mayor about our campaign and what the concerns of young people were. It really helped to shift who had power and show that young people deserve a voice in their city.





The pandemic delayed the start of the streetscape and infrastructure work but the first permanent streetscape was finally installed in September of 2020. This is the first of several streetscapes and infrastructure improvements that will happen over the next few years. This campaign relates to much larger transportation and education justice issues. Connecticut is known for being a very car-dependent state but many Bridgeport residents rely on public transportation and walking, meaning it is important for safe walking routes and reliable transportation to be key issues for all stakeholders. Also, reliable and safe transportation means students get to school on time and ready to learn. Our youth leaders will continue to work on this and other transportation and education justice issues as we move forward!

"There was a moment in the campaign that was really powerful for me and that was when one of my peers had to go up to speak to the council and was told to sit down because her story was repetitive. But with all of us behind her, she stood up proud and still spoke her piece. At that moment, the youth committee showed its power."

-Crystal Aguirre