

## 1915 Streetcar Transfers Part II – The Rider’s Rebuttal Introduction

In December of 1915, the Columbus Railway Power & Light Co. introduced their new streetcar transfer procedures as described in *1915 Streetcar Transfers Part I – The Company’s Proposal*. The streetcar riders, especially the ones most affected by the new policy, did not like it one bit.

Throughout December, 1915, letters expressing views on the new policy were sent to the Columbus Evening Dispatch’s Mail Bag editor.

The letters are interesting as a window into life in Columbus of 1915. Some of the letters expressed old grievances with the CRP&L Co., some were sarcastic, some humorous, some sober, clear and factual, and all informative.

In 1758, Benjamin Franklin published a saying, “A penny saved is a penny got.” 157 years later, in 1915, a penny was still important to the working man, as you will see in the letters.

### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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#### OWL CARS AND LUNCH

**(Columbus Evening Dispatch, December 4, 1915)**

To the Editor of the Dispatch.

Sir: The late move of the Columbus Railway, Light & Power Co. in regard to the transfers given out I regard as an encroachment on the rights of the people of Columbus. Is there anything in the franchise that calls for such action?

The people are the supporters of the company and to their interests the company should pay all possible attention. The service on the “owl cars” is very poor. Many people are forced to stand all the time. In my business I am obliged to take an “owl car” home every night, and for night after night, I have had to stand all the way home.

Why should the passengers be forced to pay a straight 5-cent fare on the owl car, when they can ride from 5 a.m. to 12 p.m. on a ticket? Why do the car men on the owl cars receive less pay than the day men?

Another thing which the company could remedy is this: Lunch hour on the car for the men is, indeed, a very poor excuse. While the motorman is eating, the conductor is obliged to run the car. He is inexperienced, and the rear end of the car is thus left unwatched. When the conductor takes charge at lunch time, he runs the car very fast so as to arrive at the end of the line ahead of time, giving the motorman plenty of time to eat. On the return trip the conductor

runs very slow, and then after the motorman is through eating, he must race his car to make up for lost time. This, to my knowledge, has been going on for years. This condition could be remedied by providing a man to take the places of the car men at lunch time.

Yours truly,  
C. R. Doolin.

Columbus, Ohio

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**THE NEW TRANSFER**

**(Columbus Evening Dispatch, December 4, 1915)**

To the Editor of the Dispatch.

Sir: [20 lines unreadable]

It is impossible for one to stop off on a transfer and do much shopping: neither should it be expected by anyone. But when one spends from 25 cents to 50 cents per day for street car tickets, one should expect to get something out of it besides walking three or four squares to get to their "station" in order to be enabled to use their transfer.

The Columbus Railway, Power & Light Co., as well as all other business concerns, are supported by their patrons, and the latter should have first consideration always. If this new transfer goes into effect on January 1, one will often have to use two tickets instead of one if the stop-off is to be of any material benefit to them. This would cost one 6 ¼ cents for one trip. In that case it would be better to have an option on a 5-cent fare and use the present standard of transfer.

Then, also, this proposed new system would work hardships for the conductors who already appear to have their patience taxed to the utmost in handling the crowds who board the cars. Adding the new system of transfer will be adding to their burdens and to patrons the already high cost of living.

A. Patron.

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**PRESENT TRANSFER ALL RIGHT.**

**(Columbus Evening Dispatch, December 4, 1915)**

To the Editor of the Dispatch.

Sir: [22 lines unreadable]

..... Every business has its profit and loss account, and every patron entering a car pays 5 cents or a ticket, and they get their money cash in hand, while men in other business lines are forced to take their chances on bad accounts and suffer losses.

The patron who rides a round trip on one ticket beats the company. But because some people do this, is it right that every other patron shall guarantee the company against this loss?

The injustice to the company is not nearly as great as this proposed change is to the public for the sake of a few dollars for the company.

A street car should be made to accommodate to the fullest extent as it serves the common people more today than ever since the advent of the automobile, and it is the middle and poorer class of our citizens that this strikes hardest, as it is their only way of getting around the city, and they need every advantage they now have and is given today by the company. What is the difference in what he does during the fifteen minutes allowed on a transfer? But the company says he must go to a certain place and wait, thereby abridging his present rights, so they can squeeze another ticket or nickel out of him if he doesn't wait. Efficiency has been their slogan, but where is this bringing into play more efficiency for the public? Efficiency must work both ways. I traveled twenty-five years and have lauded this street railway everywhere, but now this new regime comes to pull it down to what other money-grabbing systems are and put to naught what we have striven in years past to attain. I don't own any of the stock and so can take the part of the public fairly.

If the company was forced to furnish cars enough to give a seat for a ticket this would be an injustice to the company. This change of transfer is just as much of an injustice to citizens of Columbus. Here is hoping our present transfer is continued.

Traveling Man.

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### **PUNISH THE FEW.**

**(Columbus Evening Dispatch, December 9, 1915)**

To the Editor of the Dispatch.

Sir: The Columbus Railway, Power & Light Co., through their employees (motormen and conductors), say they have evidence of misuse of transfers, even claiming they know of downtown stores that have a basket where their employees deposit their transfers (a sort of a transfer exchange, the way I understand it). Now the Railway Co. claims it's "agin the law" to do these things. Why don't the railway company go after these people and have them arrested? If you or I were to break a law we would not expect the whole city to be arrested or locked up. Along these lines how does the railway company figure they have got a right to inconvenience all Columbus because a few of all the people who ride are cheating them?

Yours,

H. L. Baker

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### **FACTS ABOUT OUR CAR SERVICE.**

**(Columbus Evening Dispatch, December 13, 1915)**

To the Editor of the Dispatch.

Sir: I haven't noticed many letters for Livingston avenue patrons in all this storm of protest against the proposed transfer system. I ride on the Livingston avenue line four times each day for three days each week and then six times each day for the remaining three days, so consider myself a patron.

Now, if the railway company is to dictate our movements and the methods thereof when we want to go from one part of the city to another, we as citizens have a right to expect, and demand, if necessary, certain things in return, inasmuch as we are the means whereby the officials draw their big salaries and the stockholders their dividends.

Up until the last few days when the company started trippers at 4:30 p.m. instead of 5:30 it has been almost impossible to get on a Livingston car south of State street from 4:15 to 5:30. They "jam" us into three standing rows and after it is no longer possible to hang on the rear end the conductors get out somehow and goes to the front exit door and "jams" a few more into an already crowded front vestibule.

Not often am I able to get a seat going out at the noon hour and after 7:30 of a morning, when the last tripper goes in, the cars are then jammed for about an hour. The other morning, on the car leaving the end of the line at 8 o'clock, I counted 27 people whom we ran past from Eighteenth street in, because there was no room for another to hang on.

Two years ago, we had an eight-minute service on the Livingston line, now we have only a ten-minute service, notwithstanding the fact that the population in that section east of Livingston park has increased at least 50 percent in the last two years.

Unless we are given more cars or at least the present schedule of "Xmas trippers" is continued after the holidays, the company has no right, morally or otherwise, to expect its patrons to remain in a congested crowd, at a certain corner, when by walking two or three squares to meet their car they might be able to get on.

Furthermore, I am certain there is no law that will permit this company to refuse our transfers, tendered at any corner, so long as these congested conditions prevail. Their franchise specifies a continuous passage in a general direction, but it certainly does not prohibit us from boarding a car at any regular stop so long as there is room on that car for one more.

A Parton.

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## THE TRANSFER QUESTION.

**(Columbus Evening Dispatch, December 13, 1915)**

To the Editor of the Dispatch.

Sir: As the proposed transfer scheme is, in my opinion, of the utmost importance to the people of Columbus, will you permit me to add my objection to the change? In the first place, a great delay will occur when a dozen or more get on an inbound car. If each person must ask the conductor for a transfer, tell him what line they intend to take, and wait until he punches it for them, then looks forward and shouts "Move up in front." "Plenty of room in front," and other familiar expletives, before asking the next passenger where he is going, you can readily see

what the delay will be. It would require not less than three times as long to load a car as at present. Have you ever noticed when a crowd of 40 or 50 were waiting at Broad and High for a West Broad car and see them crowd to get on? Suppose you have two or three times that number, which the new transfer plan would do, you can imagine what a rush there will be to get on, and the timid ones would have to wait for the next car and probably be jostled away from it.

Again, if some patron of the car line in coming from the north, wishes to transfer at Chestnut, Spring, Long, or Gay, to a West Broad or Cemetery car, what advantage would it be to the company to tell him he cannot? It looks to be like a scheme of the company to collect more fares than they are morally or legally entitled to. No injustice is now done the company in this case. Again, the cry they raise about "doubling back" seems to me to be about as silly as some of their other complaints. Suppose that I were at Davis avenue and Broad street and wished to go to the Baby Camp. I would take a Broad street car to Scioto or Gay and transfer to a Camp Chase car. This car would take me to the place of my destination and no one will say that I would not be acting clearly within my rights and that no injustice would be done the company. But according to the company, if I got off at Davis avenue and Town street I would be a cheat and would have defrauded the company. The question we should now consider is "What do I pay  $2\frac{1}{3}$  cents for?" If it is for the transportation of myself from one part of the city to another, and as I have paid the regular price for said service, then the company cannot reasonably complain. But if a part of this sum goes to the company for holding a franchise which the people gave them, there may be some excuse for their complaint. Our new charter, which goes into effect January 1, 1916, provides that, in the event of the city purchasing any public utility, the franchise has no value.

There is a good reason why one person should not be permitted to give away a transfer, but I will venture to say that the loss to the company from this source is more than balanced by tickets lost, misplaced, or destroyed. I was on a tripper from Chestnut and High streets yesterday evening, and at Sandusky, I noticed there were 109 fares registered. As no one had gotten off at that time, there were that number of persons on the car, which is more than three times the number that can be seated. If the people of Columbus will quietly submit to the proposed change, then I will say that either our forefathers at Bunker Hill were wrong, or we have lost the spirit of resistance which their acts taught us.

Some 10 years ago this same company tried to compel its patrons to tell what direction they wanted their transfers punched but abandoned it after some months' trial, in which their conductors were continually quarreling with the public and the company incurred the displeasure of nearly all their patrons in the extent that thousands of them began to counter-attack by giving transfers away. No doubt this attack on the public, if carried out, will result in pledges by thousands that they will make a counter attack whenever possible. If the company will furnish the people adequate cars and pay their employes a living wage, they might come before the public with clean hands, but as they prefer dividends to either of the above, they come with a very bad [????].

Marsh C. Green

## ANOTHER PROTEST.

**(Columbus Evening Dispatch, December 16, 1915)**

To the Editor of the Dispatch.

Sir: As one of a class of citizens, I wish to add my protest against the proposed curtailment of street car privileges because it seems to plan an increase in revenue rather than the correction of an abuse of the transfer, as claimed.

It has always been understood that the transfer is as much a stopover ticket as it is an exchange to another line for a continuous trip. As it is not fair to the company and gives a special privilege in a few to permit a return on a parallel line, it is suggested that each line use a separate transfer for each general direction, which will not be accepted for returns on parallel lines unless more than [????] squares apart. As an example, a High street transfer marked [????] would not be good in State and Rich going north, a Main and Neil marked "north" would not be accepted to go east on Mound street, etc.

The street car is the wage earner's conveyance, and he cannot afford to purchase an automobile, for he has already helped pay for one for each of his merchants. As his income is on the salary or wage basis it is impossible for him to keep even with others for any increased charges. The price of leather goes up, he pays the shoe man; the price of lumber advances, he pays the furniture dealer; the street car company wants increased revenue and he is expected to pay again. Like the cats and monkey with the cheese, the salary has been "monkeyed" with in the above manner until the dollar looks like 30 cents.

No doubt the doubling back on a transfer is indulged in only because it is permitted. Therefore, care should be used for fear that in correcting a slight fault, the privilege of the citizen is abused and the full intention of the franchise ignored.

The company owes the citizen as much for the monopoly as the citizen owes the company, according to the franchise.

Salary

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## MARK THE CARS.

**(Columbus Evening Dispatch, December 16, 1915)**

To the Editor of the Dispatch.

Sir: I would like to know why the Columbus Railway, Power & Light Co. doesn't designate the cars of the Steelton line in the rush hours, that is, the regular cars from the trippers. On getting on a tripper and wanting to reach Parsons one is put off at Barthman avenue and compelled to walk the rest of the way or wait for another car and pay another fare, as the tripper is going to the barns. I think this is an injustice, and some sign should be gotten up so the public would know which car to take to reach Parson avenue.

William Henry

## **STREET RAILWAY TRANSFERS.**

**(Columbus Evening Dispatch, December 17, 1915)**

To the Editor of the Dispatch.

Sir: I have been wondering if the Street Railway Co. has tried to strike a balance between the gain of a few dollars by the proposed plan of transfers and stops and the loss of sympathy and goodwill in a city of 200,000 people. We have an excellent car service. I know of no city that has a better service. The cars are clean and comfortable, and our conductors in the main are courteous and obliging. The people are patient under the crowding conditions often imposed upon them. A 6 o'clock car on Long street, last Wednesday evening had more people clinging to straps and to each other than were seated, but there was good nature among them all. Is it worthwhile for the company to antagonize these people by imposing conditions that will add inconvenience and even hardship to nine-tenths of our population? Suppose one person in five hundred does give away a transfer, does the company lose as much by that as it will lose by making 200,000 people mad? The withdrawal of public sympathy from a corporation will result in the withdrawal of money.

For 20 years I have been using the Long street cars via high to go to my church on State street. Many, practically all of my people, use the cars from every part of the city; they transfer to State street from High to reach Sixth or Grant avenue. They make an equal transfer in returning home. How will they be treated by the new plan? It is a vital question to many of the downtown churches and it seems to be that this is a vital question to be brought before the ministerial association. The company is evidently making money. I know of no one who wants to sell his stock, and while no human situation is entirely perfect, is it a good business policy for the railway company to break up the system that is generally regarded as excellent and introduce a policy that will anger everybody and injure a very large number?

E. L. Rexford,  
Paster of All Souls Church.  
Columbus, O.

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## **LIVINGSTON CAR SERVICE.**

**(Columbus Evening Dispatch, December 17, 1915)**

To the Editor of the Dispatch.

Sir: I was delighted to see some patron of the Livingston avenue district at last tell the Railway company what he thought of the present bum service we are getting.

While I do not ride the cars every day, I ride enough to become utterly discouraged with the ten and fifteen minute service, but have blamed that entirely on our councilmen and can figure it out no other way but that they must be asleep on the job. However, we'll give our new council a chance.

I not only live in the section east of the Livingston park but also work in the same vicinity. If I leave my office promptly at 11:30 it takes me almost until 12 o'clock to reach Broad Street.

Think too of all the school teachers, firemen, and other business folks who must ride Livingston cars every day. Luncheon hours and hours of morning arrival are scheduled [to] patrons of Livingston cars as well as to those using Oak, Main, and courthouse cars, and are we not as stanch supporters of this railway company as above named patriots? Then why should we, any more than they accommodate the railway company by going to work without breakfast and taking our lunch downtown because we need our limited time to make Livingston avenue cars with ten minute service.

And besides this – how often are we compelled to take the impudence from car employees and be taken two squares past our stop because they weren't paying attention to signals?

Why it makes anyone laugh to think of the new transfer system and the arguments with the fresh and green conductors on a ten-minute service line.

Right you are, "Patron," when you say we are the means whereby salaries and dividends of the railway company are drawn, and we have a right to demand certain things of them.

Frequent visitors on our line never forget to tell regular patrons about this bum service, and when you stand on a crowded downtown corner, and gradually the crowd thins out, you can always bet the remaining folks are waiting for a "Livingston."

Therefore, let every Livingston avenue car patron warble his note, "Better service," we must have and will have.

East Side Resident

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## **FARES AND TRANSFERS.**

**(Columbus Evening Dispatch, December 17, 1915)**

To the Editor of the Dispatch.

Sir: There was a man in our town who owned and rode a high-class bicycle. When street car fares were reduced to seven for a quarter, he gave up riding his bicycle (except during the strike) and has since increased his street car patronage manyfold. With tickets eight for a quarter, he often rides on a street car even if the distance be but a few squares. Query: Did the street car company gain or lose by reducing the fares?

And when this man in our town found that transfers were useful, he used many a good ticket doing errands while "stopping over" and "doubling back." His good money spent for these tickets would never have reached the street car company if the transfer privilege had been restricted. Query: Why should the company reduce its earnings and also court criticism and ill-feeling on the part of its patrons by curtailing transfer privileges?

The writer and his wife spend a total of about \$100 per year for street car fares under existing conditions. With restricted street car privileges, it is probable that Henry Ford will



profit and that S. G. McMeen, et al. will lose proportionately from us. Doubtless some hundreds of Columbus street car patrons will follow the same procedure.

E. N. Webb.

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### **SUGGESTS A CORRAL.**

**(Columbus Evening Dispatch, December 17, 1915)**

To the Editor of the Dispatch.

Sir: As the street railway company is going to establish transfer stations, why not build a corral at each station for the convenience of the working men and women of Columbus who ride the cars in the early morning and evening. In that way it would be easier for the kind and courteous inspectors of the company to pack and jam the people in the cars like cattle or swine. If a man wants to ship live stock, he corrals them up somewhere and when the cars come all he has to do is to drive them in, but he exercises more care than the employees of the C. R. P. & L. Co., for if he did not, half of them would suffocate and he would suffer a serious loss. Under the new transfer system, the company says if I am westbound on Main street for Livingston avenue I must ride to Goodale and High before transferring to northbound cars: if southbound on High street cars, I must ride to Livingston or Main and High if I wish to transfer to either line mentioned above. The reason I cannot transfer at Main or Livingston and High when westbound on either line, to north bound cars, is because if I have to ride to Goodale and High I will probably have to wait until several cars pass before I can board one. By the time my transfer will be run out and the company will try to squeeze another fare out of me by having the conductor threaten to throw me off the car. This has happen to me several times, the conductor saying "I will get the motorman and we will throw you off." But they have not done so to date. Why is it the people and taxpayers of Columbus have to dance to the tune of the C. R. P. & L. Co. Let's get together.

Former Friend of the Co.

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### **LIKES THE PRESENT TRANSFER.**

**(Columbus Evening Dispatch, December 17, 1915)**

To the Editor of the Dispatch.

Sir: In answer to the railway company's request for suggestions and criticisms of the proposed new transfers, it is a foolish change. My husband, being a railroad man and living quite a distance from the Union Station could not stay home quite as long as now. The way the transfers stand, he can take a Mt. Vernon avenue car, transfer at Long, and take six different lines North to Union Station, and sometimes he remains home a few minutes later, knowing that he can catch any one of the cars. The way the transfers will be, it will require him to wait for a certain car, making it very inconvenient for him and other railroad men. Men working in stores are required to be at their place at a certain hour. If they are late, it may be adjusted

with the employer, but if a railroad man is a little late, it makes quite a difference. I do not believe in the misuse of transfers but let them stand the way they are.

A Railroader's Wife.

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## STREET RAILWAY TRANSFER.

**(Columbus Evening Dispatch, December 17, 1915)**

To the Editor of the Dispatch.

Sir: Kindly grant me a little space in your Mail Bag for the special interest of the Columbus Railway company. I have read with interest nearly all of the letters in regard to the proposed change in the transfer system and have seen that which would harm the company more than the present system.

About 90 percent of their revenue is derived from donations from the public. All unnecessary trips are donations. All short trips are donations. All trips downtown are donations to the theaters and parks, even to buy things which could be bought in their own locality, thereby giving their merchant the extra three or six cents which the company wants.

To prove what I say, think back to 1910, if I am not mistaken, and you will see that about 100 percent for four months was kept from the company.

A good, old, genuine public boycott placed on their heads with their operating service on schedule, "all going out and nothing coming in," for an unlimited time would soon make them come to their senses and realize which side of the ledger column their interest lies.

I think the people have something to say in return for their donations. I transfer early every morning and stop very often on my transfer to get an article at the supply house. If I make good on my time, well and good, and I am willing to pay an extra fare if the time limit has expired. But with their system, there would not be one out of ten good by the time I reach the place of rendezvous.

It is true people double back, and I, for one, say they have a right to. Many a fare is paid by people who just take a run downtown (for Northing) and come back on the same line or parallel line. The company gets the fare, the operating expenses are the same, and the patron gets it in the neck.

The company knew when it brought in these parallel lines that they were parallel lines and that the universal transfer was in effect. The company operates, without the public asking it to, lines of different colored transfer over the same lines, especially north and east, south and west, with regular service every once in a while.

Here is hoping the company will get into their hole and pull their whole thing in after them.

John F. Eichenlagh.

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## **DON'T CHANGE TRANSER.**

**(Columbus Evening Dispatch, December 18, 1915)**

To the Editor of the Dispatch.

Sir: The Columbus street car company has asked for suggestions as to the changing of the transfer. My opinion, as a passenger every day, is let the transfer remain as it is. Do not change it and compel the people who keep up the company to transfer at a place where it, in most cases, is inconvenient. The company is surely making enough money when the people are jammed into the cars more like cattle than human beings. Do not change the transfers. If any change put on more cars.

A Passenger.

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## **TRANSFER ABUSE.**

**(Columbus Evening Dispatch, December 18, 1915)**

To the Editor of the Dispatch.

Sir: For some time there has been discussion about the new transfer system. I am not exactly in favor of it, but is same not the public's own fault?

We have the cheapest car fare system here, not that I am sorry, but are we supposed to use our transfer, not to do our shopping or eat lunches, between times, or fifty and one more things. It is all right to do a five minute errand, but let it stop at that. How would you like, Mrs. Housewife, if your laundress would launder her own clothes with yours, or your seamstress bring some of her sewing along?

Or, Mr. Business Man, if your clerk, male or female, uses your paid time for their own, would it suit you? Is it honorable and honest?

"Honor thy neighbor as thyself;" just use common sense.

The only way I will regret the new transfer system is if get on a Long street car, ask transfer for a Main street car, but as I am forgetful sometimes, I recall before getting there I wanted to take a West Broad street car, and there I am. Or, coming from north, I had promised a friend on Oak street to stop there, then walking home, but being accustomed to change on Long street, ask for same. One should not be forgetful, but sometimes our minds run ahead.

E. V. Rudiger.

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## WOULD BUY THE COMPANY.

**(Columbus Evening Dispatch, December 20, 1915)**

To the Editor of the Dispatch.

Sir: So as to stop all further agitation in regard to car-fare and transfers, let the citizens call a mass meeting and agree to vote a sufficient bond issue to purchase the Rail-Light company's interest in all car lines and light plant. In doing this, the citizens would then have peace, car-fare and transfers with a seat at the cost of the same. Now, let us push forward without straps or a seat and see how patriotic the voters are for their own comfort. Municipal street cars and light plant without opposition and properly handled would make the old town of Columbus hum. Let us push forward.

Christopher Ross.

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## STREET RAILWAY SERVICE.

**(Columbus Evening Dispatch, December 20, 1915)**

To the Editor of the Dispatch.

Sir: I am not inclined by nature to be a knocker, and whenever I can conscientiously do so, I like to boost our city and its utilities. I have spoken very highly, both at home and abroad, of our street railway system and have especially commented on the cheap fare, large, comfortable cars and liberal transfer system. Now if this transfer system is sometimes abused by the patrons, the employees of the company sometimes abuse it, too. A short time ago, I stood on High street, waiting to transfer to an Oak street car. Three main street and three High street cars passed: so, though I kept no account of the time, it must have been ten or more minutes. Finally, an Oak street car came, crowded three deep in the aisle, rear platform and steps full. The conductor called out, "You can't get on: wait for the next car," which was almost as crowded but I got on. The conductor refused my transfer, though I explained the situation to him. I paid another fare and was compelled to stand all the way to my destination, at least a mile from High Street.

Many other similar instances have occurred. I never give away my transfers or know of any one else who does so. I do think we ought to have more cars. I very seldom ride on one, even outside of rush hours to which the S.R.O. sign should not be hung out. Even if I get a seat, it is very disagreeable to have someone hanging over me almost as bad as to be hanging on a strap myself, and I do not always get even a strap. The men have ceased to expect to get seating at least to keep them for any length of time. Right here, please let me thank them for their courtesy in yielding them to the ladies. That is one [????] on which I cease to be a suffragette. I do not ask for my rights but say "Thank you" for my privileges.

The point I am making, Mr. Editor, is, if the company has some just cause of complaining the patrons have also. Why not let us transfer at any corner we prefer? If I wish to stop in a

store or bank or hurry down to Front street and pay my gas bill, may I not as well spend the 15 minutes allowed on the transfer, in doing one of those things as spend them standing in a corner where I have no business or interest? Mr. McMeen says the city railway company seeks to serve the people, then let it serve them not less, but rather more than in the past.

Fair Play.