
M E M O R A N D U M

DATE: December 6, 2005
TO: City Council Members
FROM: Council Members Christensen and Saxton
RE: Legislative Action to dedicate a City street in honor of Rosa Parks

On October 23, 2005 one of the great Civil Rights pioneers of our time, Rosa Parks, passed away. During her lifetime and continuing after her death, she has been honored throughout the country and the world as one of the most important figures in the history of the modern Civil Rights Movement. Her refusal to give up her bus seat to a white man in Montgomery, Alabama in 1955 sparked a year-long boycott of the City's bus system, which inspired many and was a precipitating factor to the modern Civil Rights Movement. Because of her actions that day, and her leadership in the subsequent Civil Rights Movement, she was officially dubbed by the United States Congress "the first lady of Civil Rights."¹

Over the years, various arms of national, state and local government have taken steps to honor her courage and achievements. It is therefore only fitting that after her death, Salt Lake City join in honoring this important US historical figure. This Legislative Action Item proposes that we dual-name 200 East from South Temple to 600 South "Rosa Parks Boulevard."

PLANNING AND LOGISTICS

The re-naming of a street as a memorial would keep the street number the same, it would simply have a name attached to it - examples are "César E. Chávez Blvd - 500 South" or "Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd - 600 South". Signs designating the street name would be replaced by signs designating the current street name as well as the name "Rosa Parks Blvd."

200 East was selected because it is between the City and County Building and the Library, two important public institutions, and runs perpendicular to 500 and 600 South, also named for important historical figures in the area of civil liberties (César E. Chávez Blvd. and Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd., respectively). This street also has a bus route from South Temple to 900 South (#52). The Transportation Division raised the issue that this a stretch of the City's formal parade route, and is also often closed between 400 and 500 South due to events at Washington Square and the Library.

The request would be for the Administration to complete all of the work necessary to implement this legislative action item by Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, January 16th.

COST

This legislative action proposes that any costs associated with dual-naming the street (street signs, directional signs, labor, etc), be paid for through fundraising efforts of our own. No general fund contribution is contemplated. A “donation fund” will be set up in the City to collect and then distribute money for this project.

The Transportation Division estimated that costs would be approximately \$175 per intersection. Therefore, to dual-name the stretch of 200 East between South Temple and 600 South (7 intersections), would be \$1,225.

ROSA PARKS – A BRIEF HISTORY

Rosa Parks was born in 1913 in Tuskegee, Alabama and joined the Montgomery Chapter of the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People) after marrying her husband, who was active in the organization. There she volunteered as secretary to the president. She worked as a seamstress at the Montgomery Fair department store in downtown Montgomery, Alabama.

In December of 1955 she refused to give up her bus seat to a white man and was arrested. This incident sparked a 381 day boycott of the Montgomery City bus system, financially crippling the organization and calling national attention to the issue of segregation. The elected leader of this boycott was relatively unknown at the time but was an up-and-coming activist in the civil rights movement - Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

The Montgomery Bus Boycotts sparked many other protests around the country, and helped draw sufficient national attention to the issue to shore up a federal anti-discrimination case that next year. In November of 1956, the Supreme Court ruled that Montgomery’s segregation practices on public buses were unconstitutional (*Browder v. Gayle*, 1956). Because of her actions on the Montgomery City bus that day in 1955, Rosa Parks was dubbed by the United States Congress “the first lady of civil rights” and “the mother of the freedom movement,” in their resolution to award her the Congressional Gold Medal in May of 1999.

Upon her death in 2005, Congress passed a resolution to honor Parks by allowing her to lie in state, in the US Capitol Rotunda. She is the first woman, the second non-government official (after Pierre L’Enfant), and the second African American (after Jacob Chestnut, a US Capitol Police Officer killed in the line of duty) to receive such an honor. An estimated 50,000 people viewed her casket in the two days that it lay in the Capitol Rotunda. President Bush ordered flags to be flown at half-mast over all public buildings on November 2nd, the day of Parks’ burial in Detroit. City officials in Montgomery and Detroit declared that black ribbons would be tied around the front seat in every City bus until her burial. Before her burial, she also lay in repose at the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History in Detroit. As her casket was taken from her funeral in Detroit, the Michigan National Guard lay a US Flag over her casket, an honor typically reserved for veterans or highly regarded state and national figures. Metro

Transit in King County, Washington placed stickers dedicating the front seat of all its buses in Rosa's memory.²

In Detroit, there is a street as well as a middle school named after Rosa Parks. She also received the following awards and accolades in her lifetime³ :

- 1979- The NAACP Spingarn Medal, it's highest honor
- 1980 - The NAACP Martin Luther King Sr. Award
- 1983 - inducted into the Michigan Women's Hall of Fame
- 1990 - Was chosen as a member to officially welcome Nelson Mandela to the country after his release from prison
- 1994 - Rosa Parks Peace Prize in Stockholm, Sweden
- 1996 - The Presidential Medal of Freedom, the highest honor given by the US Executive branch
- 1998 - first recipient of the International Freedom Conductor Award, given by the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center
- 1999 - The Congressional Gold Medal of Honor, the highest civilian award given by the US Legislative branch
- 1999 - Time magazine named Rosa Parks one of the twenty most influential and iconic figures of the twentieth century.
- 2000 - Alabama Academy of Honor
- 2000 - Alabama Governor's Medal of Honor for Extraordinary Courage
- 2001 - The Rosa Parks Library and Museum was dedicated in Montgomery, Alabama

¹ "United States of America Congressional Gold Medal Recipient Rosa Parks", <http://www.congressionalgoldmedal.com/rosaparks.htm>

² "Rosa Parks Profile", en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rosa_Parks

³ "Rosa Parks: Biography and much more...", www.answers.com/topic/rosa-parks