

Transit Stories

Tuesday June 15, 2021

Brian Colfer

Sterling Heights, MI

Public transit needs to be improved dramatically here in southeast Michigan. Right now it is not reliable. I am completely blind. I'm going to be getting vocational services and want to work as a receptionist. But if I had a job now, they'd fire because I'd be late all the time.

I used to use Suburban Mobility Transit but I don't anymore because I can't count on it. I don't use fixed route buses -- I need paratransit. But I found that you'd call, ask for a time to be picked up, and you'd be given a window, but you might not get where you needed to be on time. Once I was going to shadow a receptionist for a volunteer organization. They opened at 8:30, so I was trying to get there at 8:00. But the bus didn't show up until 9:20.

For my vocational assessment coming up, my career counselor arranged for one of the cab companies to pick me up. That's how I'm getting to my appointments. But I can't afford cabs on my own. Once I get trained, that's going to be the sticking point because they train you for the job, but you have to find your own job. They provide transportation just for the first month or so, and then you're on your own.

I want to start getting out. I have a home health provider who takes me to my health appointments, and somebody who does my shopping for me. But if I want general services, that's where I have a problem. I want to volunteer in an office as a receptionist, and a lot of the organizations in the neighborhood wouldn't talk to me because of my disability.

The one organization that would talk is 45 minutes away.

A few years ago, I served on a regional transit authority, where I tried to push for the changes we need. There have been some slight improvements but more is needed. I know I'm not alone. Many of us have been crying out for better transit for years.

transitjustice.org/transit-stories/brain-colfer/

Every Tuesday, we will feature the first-hand experience of public transit riders from across the country in this short newsletter. From large cities to small towns, we will document the experiences of the millions of users of busses, trains, ferries and other forms of public transit in the US. Public transit is essential to our communities, to cooling the planet, to advancing equity. Transit is essential to our very lives.

This year there is a unique opportunity for the country to make an historic investment in public transit funding to help the country build back better. This story and all the others will be archived at transitjustice.org. For media inquiries, contact Doug Gordon, doug@upshiftstrategies.com.

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