

# Transit Stories

Tuesday June 22, 2021

## Tatyana Atkinson

Cleveland, OH

My name is Tatyana Atkinson, and I am a non-driver. I never learned how to drive. I grew up in Atlanta and Washington DC, where public transportation supported me well enough not to need to learn the skill.

Upon moving to Ohio as a student at John Carroll University in 2015, I immediately understood that I had been taking my access to reliable, affordable, and timely public transit for granted. To begin with, the campus is not directly connected to transit. This immediately felt isolating as a student who wanted to not just stay on campus, but be an actual part of Cleveland's communities.

As a working student paying my way through school, I got a job interviewing transit riders in Cleveland through the Ohio Student Association where hundreds of community members responded that a lack of service on top of rising fares were their biggest concerns as riders.

As a Black woman, I want to support other Black women in my community, and public transportation was not only lacking for me, but Black mothers, students, and workers who had been living here much longer than I have. I found out that in the decade prior to my moving to Cleveland, service had already been cut 30%. And by the end of 2015, Cleveland's RTA was both cutting service, and increasing fares- again. I also learned that as a state, Ohio ranks among the lowest in terms of funding for public transportation.

Funding public transit seems like a no-brainer, but it has simply not been accessible for me as someone without a car here in Cleveland. As a worker, I often have to walk to work or find a ride, because I cannot rely on the bus. Without reliable, affordable, and timely transit, getting around takes so long. It becomes almost impossible to get anywhere on time. Service can be so unreliable that one never knows if the bus will actually come. Again, this isn't just an issue for me, but for Black people in my community. There is no economic 'recovery' until it reaches All of Us. So when it comes to funding the bus to show up? That would be a major improvement to my quality of life, and for the people of Cleveland.

[transitjustice.org/transit-stories/tatyana-atkinson/](https://transitjustice.org/transit-stories/tatyana-atkinson/)

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](https://transitjustice.org). For media inquiries, contact Doug Gordon, [doug@upshiftstrategies.com](mailto:doug@upshiftstrategies.com).

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