

Transit Stories

Tuesday June 29, 2021

Deborah Olson

Gresham, Oregon

I am almost 65 and live alone. I have been disabled for thirty-one years, next month. It is an anniversary I would like to forget. I can walk and I am not in a chair or walker yet. Six years ago I was a half-a-block from a good running bus. And with high rents and shabby housing I had to move. That is how I ended up here in Gresham.

I live in a senior building 3/8ths of a mile from the only transportation we have, the MAX, which is train service. Some of my neighbors cannot make it to the MAX stop. It is just too far for them to walk. One block is unpaved. It is a lot harder when you're in your 60s, 70s, 80s and 90s. If the MAX is late, so are we. I have waited for fifteen, thirty minutes, and even longer.

If I hike another twenty minutes, and have a good day, I can make it to Division Street. There is a small incline to get to the #2 bus. Many times I have watched the bus go by. But usually another Division bus is there in fifteen minutes.

I live three hundred feet from Burnside Road. There are no #20 buses on Burnside. The #20 runs up Stark which is more than a mile away. There is a bus that does run down 223rd Avenue. Not a bus that runs very often, and it is farther away. Most of these areas you have to go home to use the toilet. No grocery stores. Kmart is closed.

The fare is \$1.25 per ride on MAX or the bus. Sometimes, I use the TriMet LIFT paratransit with its door-to-door bus service, which is three times as much for a ride. I have had

four rides in one day which comes to \$10.00. Because of cost I do not travel as much. I live on a fixed income and food stamps.

When TriMet was doing work on the track, the shuttle buses were helpful. In the evenings we would get a courtesy stop on Burnside and Shattuck, but not in the day time. But the shuttle stop was past the MAX stop, so some of us had to hike even farther. I know TriMet can do a shuttle for us.

The medical ride programs were terrible and left me stranded, or they run very late for pick up. I watched one bus drive by and I yelled at him. He told his dispatch I was not there. Since the Medical ride program has been revamped it seems to be somewhat better.

transitjustice.org/transit-stories/deborah-olson

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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