

Transit Stories

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Jackie Williams

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania



My name is Jackie. I'm in my 60s, and I use transit everyday to get to work, attend meetings, do my grocery shopping, and to visit friends and family. I wasn't always dependent on transit, but once I made that switch, I noticed all the barriers that exist for where I can go.

I live in West Philadelphia, where there's plenty of transit, but once I go outside of this bubble, it takes me a long time to get to most places. If I have to go to Northeast Philly, or South Philly, it can be a very long journey. I soon realized that I had really limited myself to where it was easy to get on and off

public transportation. So there are a lot of places that I don't go to simply because it would take too long to get there. These areas have a transit line, but not enough service, so you probably won't get there in time, if at all.

I work with a small non-profit as their Director of Operations. If there was a community meeting I wanted to go to, I would do my best to go. But for many meetings, when I know transit wouldn't get me there reliably, I sometimes have to choose not to go. Even when I have to go shopping, I have to take transit into consideration. For example, there's a Home Depot out on Baltimore Pike that has more products in it than the ones in the city. Just to get out there, I have to make arrangements with someone to give me a ride. I knew I couldn't rely on public transportation. This limits me when I need to buy specific products, because what you can buy in the city is different from the suburbs.

Where I live, we have access to many transit options. We have the elevated subway. We have buses. It's almost like a transit hub. But even then, I don't think there's enough service. There's a lot of options, but you have to wait a long time for the next ride to come. The bus that's two blocks away from me comes about every 20-25 minutes, which is not frequent enough, so I don't get on that. Instead, I walk six blocks to get to another bus because that comes more often, every ten minutes.

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Transit Justice

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If transit was more frequent, accessible, and reliable, I would be able to reach more places throughout the day and night. For example, I avoid going out past 6 PM because the buses are not frequent at night, and I face the risk of being stranded because of unreliable transit. If the bus came more regularly outside of rush hours, I would have many more opportunities to meet my friends and be out in the city.

I moved to Philly because of increased opportunities and extensive public transportation. Having reliable transportation has given me peace of mind and helped me to feel safe as I move around the city. The frequency, accessibility, and reliability of transit shapes my daily activities, and not in a good way. Having lived here for as long as I have, I know that transit in Philadelphia needs to improve.

transitjustice.org/transit-stories/jackie-williams

Transit Justice Principles

Abundant transit unlocks freedom of movement. But good transit is very scarce in the U.S. today. Americans Need Transit That Is ...

- **Equitable.** Transit investment must prioritize the needs of Black and brown people, people with low incomes, and people with disabilities.
- **Sustainable.** To avert severe climate change, models consistently show that some car trips must shift to transit.
- **Economically productive.** Better transit expands worker access to jobs, employer access to the workforce, customer access to businesses, and business access to a customer base.
- **Safe and accessible.** Transit investment should eliminate the full range of limitations and achieve broad-based safety and universal access.
- **Affordable.** Access to transit should never be contingent on one's ability to pay. Transit investment should establish programs that provide fare relief for everyone who needs it.

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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