

Transit Stories

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Special Chicago College Student Edition!

Sarita Cavazos

Chicago, Illinois

As a full-time college student, owning a personal vehicle has never been fiscally possible. I rely on public transportation to travel to school, work, and extra curriculars.

I'm an out-of-state college student attending the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC), my family is over a thousand miles away and I live alone. Public transportation is how I get everywhere: school, work, doctors' offices, the airport, the grocery store, and so on. UIC's school shuttles to and from campus are notoriously unreliable, so students who live off campus have had to employ city buses and trains to get to classes on time.

Grocery stores are at least a 20-minute bus ride for me on a good day with no traffic, but I've often had to commute upwards of an hour on the combination of two bus routes, or a train and a bus route to make it to a job. If funding for the CTA is cut, my ability to reach necessities and connect with my community will be severely impacted and limited.

Public transit is also affordable, and as a college student this is extremely beneficial to me when expenses like loans and

tuition quickly pile up. If funding for public transportation is cut, I could be looking at higher fares for lower quality service, and having to battle with my own personal budget when deciding to choose transportation and other basic necessities.

Transportation connects communities and provides opportunities. If public transit was improved in Chicago, it would help with the massive historical segregation problem that still haunts our city, it would massively benefit our lower income communities, and it would provide our city with a greener, more efficient way to get around while also clearing up our congested city roads.

Lynn Chong

Chicago, Illinois

During my second year at the University of Chicago, I was given the amazing opportunity to intern for the Chicago Public School downtown headquarters near State St developing programs that can help refugee and immigrant families in Chicago become better integrated into the public school community. As an intern, I had to be in the office for the full workday on Fridays, and my only method of transportation was the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) since Uber was too expensive (around \$40 for a one-way trip).

The South Side of Chicago where my school is located is not very transit-friendly, so I had to take the 55th bus for

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about 30 minutes to get to Garfield Station and take the red line subway for another 30 minutes to arrive at Monroe Station. Luckily, my internship was during the warmer seasons, but with frequent delays caused by snow storms in the winter, this commute would have taken well over an hour. This would have been extremely stressful for me as a female student commuting through relatively poorly maintained and geographically isolated subway stations in the South Side, for elongated commute times would have necessitated me travelling alone in the dark. Nonetheless, without public transit, I would not have been able to accept this internship and grow my passion for public service. I also had the rare opportunity to work downtown as a student, which enriched my education and worldview!

To this day, my peers in university find the notion of regularly visiting downtown arduous, and it is. Students are left with the debilitating option of spending an hour to go to an area just 20 minutes away by car or paying \$40 to go the same distance. With better public transit, so many more students will gain greater access to valuable experiences outside of the college bubble.

transitjustice.org/transit-stories/chicago-students

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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