

Transit Stories

Tuesday Sept 28, 2021

Jess Wallace

(She/Her) | Cleveland, OH



I moved to Cleveland 16 years ago, from a small town in Ohio where there is no public transit. As a person living with a mobility disability, Cleveland's public transit system gave me a newfound freedom. I am able to commute to my

full-time job at Downtown Cleveland Alliance in downtown Cleveland from where I live in Shaker Heights. It takes 20 minutes on the Green or Blue light rail lines, plus a ten minute journey in my motorized wheelchair. Transit is also my primary way to access entertainment at the nearby art museum and botanical garden, using the #48 bus to get there. I also rely on it for life's necessities, such as making it to my doctor's appointments or going grocery shopping.

Without better transit service, I might be forced to move back to my family home and end up relying on governmental assistance. Without transit, I wouldn't be able to go essentially anywhere independently and my life would be completely different. I don't qualify for certain independent accessible transportation options. Ride sharing services do not have accessible vehicles, and their services are too

expensive. I might be forced to learn to drive an accessible vehicle, which would be a lengthy process and an expense I cannot afford. Public transit is the sole reason I moved to Cleveland, as I knew it would provide me the independent life I had longed to achieve.

In my first few years of living in Cleveland, using public transit was a struggle; not every train station was accessible and many buses had broken ramps. However, whenever there is more investment into this public service, the difference makes a huge impact. For example, once they updated their bus fleet and the stations to make them more accommodating, everything became easier. I depend on these systems to get back and forth to work every day and to live out my daily life. Without our public transportation system, I would not be able to maintain my independence whatsoever.

Without transit, I would not be able to work, have money or live independently. Without transit, I wouldn't be able to do what I do. Transit service is incredibly important to me, my livelihood, and my community.

transitjustice.org/transit-stories/jess-wallace

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.

National Campaign for
Transit Justice