

# Transit Stories

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## Leslie Ramirez

Atlanta, Georgia



I am the CEO and Founder of House Of Ramirez. I am a mother of three, and I use transit for everything I do. I rely on the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority's (MARTA) bus and train service to get around the city and the suburban areas. As

such, being connected to different neighborhoods is important to me.

From a very young age, public transportation has played a major role in my life. When I was 16 years old and in high school, I was out on my own and employed at a local mall. My school bus did not take me all the way to my job, so I would get off on the main street, walk to the opposite side, and get on a public bus. If I were to miss the connection from my school bus to public transportation for any reason, my job and livelihood would be in danger, and I would suffer.

Even a slight delay leaving my high school could delay my route to work. Fortunately, my job understood my

predicament and as a result, I was never fired for being tardy due to issues with transit. But I am very much aware of those who were not as fortunate, and subsequently, lost their jobs.

I usually clock out of work at 10 P.M. At that point, no more buses were running since service stopped at nine (suburbs). My only other option was to walk back home (ride shares, like Uber, did not exist then). The walk home was about three miles, and it took me about an hour and twenty minutes. I did this three to four times a week by myself. By the time I got home, it would already be midnight, at which time, I would complete my schoolwork, and then prepare for school in the morning. This routine was normal for me. I grew to expect late buses and I adapted to the situation.

As an adult, in my professional life, I have encountered similar problems. I am a full-time entrepreneur, so when a bus is off schedule, it has an impact on my ability to do my job. If I am late for a meeting, then that is a missed opportunity. My budgetary needs fluctuate depending on the mode of transportation. I have to create space in my schedule, in case traffic is bad, or if the bus is local (where it needs to stop at every bus stop), if it's at full capacity, or if something happens to the bus. It has happened numerous times before and as a result, I have been late to various

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appointments and meetings. There are other mitigating factors such as, the bus not operating on Sundays in suburban areas, or the connecting routes that need to be taken so that my commute will be efficient. Strategic planning of my routes is a part of my daily life.

Even my children can recognize how much work goes into taking public transportation. When my kids were younger, my oldest son would be holding my hand as well as my middle child's hand while I struggled to push a stroller with my youngest child in it as I was walking down the street, hopping onto transit while running errands. They love going out with me while I take care of business and errands, but at this point, my children would rather stay at home with my family while I go to work. They are getting into YouTube and have become a part of my marketing team, but if they had to choose, they would rather avoid getting on the bus or train because of the difficulties that come with it, and quite frankly, there is no suitable accommodation for mothers who travel with their children. There are times when I am not able to leave them at home and they have to accompany me. They have their electronic gadgets and other things to distract them, but they would rather not stand there in the sun or the evenings waiting for the bus.

People have suggested that I purchase a car, but I do not believe that it is the best solution. The cost of public transit here in Atlanta is \$2.50 which allows me to take two buses, one train, in addition to a bus that gets me to the other side of town. Why am I going to pay around \$200 for car insurance

and pay around \$300 for a car note each month when I can easily pay \$2.50 one way to get around on a daily basis?

Now don't get me wrong, I want to be clear in saying that MARTA is doing pretty good right now.

Specifically, with the incoming of new train fleets. I was excited to partake in the city-wide survey, provided by MARTA. It is not my intention to bash its system. I think MARTA is doing the best that it can. However, I do think that if we had more public transit available (expanding into the suburban areas) at a consistent flow, workers, like myself, would not have to deal with problems similar to what I have experienced. My family has been in Atlanta since the sixties in East Atlanta Village. I have witnessed how transit has evolved, but I know that it could be better, and my hope is that it will get better.

[transitjustice.org/transit-stories/leslie-ramirez](https://transitjustice.org/transit-stories/leslie-ramirez)

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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