



TRANSIT IS ESSENTIAL.

It's Time Our Leaders
Understand That.

FALL 2026



INTRODUCTION

“... public transit is an essential piece of our transportation system. For many, public transit is a primary connection to work, school, health care, groceries and family. For others, public transit is an affordable travel option that frees their hands from the steering wheel and keeps our air cleaner and traffic flowing.”

The Washington Department of Transportation: *The Benefits of a Robust Public Transit System.*

The numerous benefits of a robust public transit system cannot be overestimated.

It provides a cost-effective way to get to daily tasks. It connects communities across the state, with rural towns, suburban communities, and urban centers using buses, light rail, and van pools. It reduces congestion and pollution, and it supports economic activity and growth.

Transportation is the second-most-expensive item on the average household's budget, after housing.¹ Many people live in communities that require them to drive long distances to get to work, school, the doctor, and more, increasing their transportation costs.² This places working- and middle-class people in Washington state and across the country between a rock and a hard place: Either pay more than \$10,000 per year to own and drive a car or pay the time tax of having to rely on low-quality public transit, walking, or biking to get around (if public transit service, sidewalks, and safe bike infrastructure even exist where they live).³ This has been called the “impossible paradox of car ownership.”⁴ Quality, reliable public transit can help households avoid this choice and save thousands of dollars per year, whether they can replace just a few car trips with public transit or have the freedom to make all their trips without a personal vehicle.⁵

For nondrivers, who make up close to thirty percent of Washington state's population, transit is a lifeline.⁶ Nondrivers include seniors, students, low-income families, immigrants, people with disabilities, and people who choose not to drive. Nondriving status often means that people must use transit to get where they need to go, including to work, medical appointments, and other social engagements.^{7,8} A study commissioned by the Washington State Legislature Joint Transportation Committee (JTC) identified transit service deficits, including long bus rides, low frequency, and limited hours, as barriers to using public transit.⁹ In addition, the study noted that the lack of sidewalks and street crossings could make getting to the bus stop dangerous.¹⁰ These barriers are even greater for disabled nondrivers living in rural communities where transportation options end early evening, and other transportation services are limited and expensive.

1. <https://data.bts.gov/stories/s/Transportation-Economic-Trends-Transportation-Spen/ida7-k95k/>

2. <https://usa.streetsblog.org/2011/08/05/cnt-busts-drive-till-you-qualify-myth-in-the-d-c-region>

3. <https://www.aaa.com/autorepair/articles/breaking-down-the-cost-of-car-ownership>

4. <https://www.vox.com/23753949/cars-cost-ownership-economy-repossession>

5. <https://www.vox.com/23753949/cars-cost-ownership-economy-repossession>

6. <https://leg.wa.gov/media/0uxjhzng/nondrivers-12-15-22.pdf#page=8>

7. <https://leg.wa.gov/media/0uxjhzng/nondrivers-12-15-22.pdf#page=29>

8. <https://leg.wa.gov/media/0uxjhzng/nondrivers-12-15-22.pdf#page=28>

9. <https://leg.wa.gov/media/0uxjhzng/nondrivers-12-15-22.pdf#page=31>

10. <https://apawa.memberclicks.net/2023-july-newsletter---who-doesn-t-drive--where-are-they--and-why-does-it-matter->



INTRODUCTION

Public transportation is crucial for more than those with no other option. Every day, people take hundreds of thousands of trips on buses, trains, streetcars or paratransit vehicles, and that number is growing every year. In Washington state, *the DOT reports* that **“In 2023, public transportation passengers grew ... 164.9 million, from 137.7 million in 2022. Fixed route service made up about 76.6% of total public transportation passenger trips statewide, up 0.3% from 76.4% in 2022. Additionally, light rail passenger trips increased ... to 28.7 million in 2023.”**¹¹ These trips get people to work and school, to the doctor’s office, to visits with family and friends, and to buy the food and goods that keep them and their households running. Without public transportation, many of these trips simply wouldn’t happen, and the needs of the people who take them would go unmet, and every other trip would become much more difficult. Public transportation keeps streets clearer so that the many trips people currently need to take by car aren’t mired in congestion. Whether someone is a bus rider or only sees the bus through their windshield, they benefit from its presence.

In the following pages, we share stories of people from Washington who experience the benefits and limitations of public transit every day. They are workers, seniors, people with disabilities, and students who use existing public transportation to live their lives. They are public transportation riders whose everyday lives would improve if public transportation received more operations funding to increase frequency, improve dependability, and expand access.

11. <https://wsdot.wa.gov/about/data/multimodal-mobility-dashboard/dashboard/publictransportation/passengertrips.htm#dashboard-info>



Emma Nuckles Everett, WA

"I love transit because it's convenient when I travel."

"Then, for a while after I had back surgery, I was handicapped and used a walker and then a stick to get around. I relied almost completely on paratransit and transit to get where I needed to go."

My name is Emma Nuckles. I came to Spokane, WA in 1961 from Louisiana when my husband was just out of the military looking for work. I've lived in Everett for about 27 years and have 3 children, 6 grandchildren and 9 great grandchildren.

I still drive but also use public transit. I have been using public transit since 2008. I love it because it's convenient for me when I travel. I travel by train, so the bus takes me right down to the train station and right back to my front door when I return. Occasionally I just pop on and take transit for a joy ride!!

When my husband was at the VA hospital, I took transit a lot. Many times the bus would get caught in traffic, but it got us there.

Then, for a while after I had back surgery, I was handicapped and used a walker and then a stick to get around. I relied almost completely on paratransit and transit to get where I needed to go. The lifts were great getting me up and down.

But, we really need transit into the neighborhoods. It's a short walk for me in front of my building but there are a lot of people, especially in my black Elder group that have to walk 2, 3 and 4 blocks to the bus stop. We really don't have buses that go into the neighborhood - at least not into most neighborhoods. They mostly just travel on the main street like Broadway.

Reliable public transit is so important here in Everett. Though I still drive, I know how critical it has been for me at various times in my life.



Farhana Loonat, Ph.D. Mount Vernon, WA

“Paratransit has been a lifeline.”

“Paratransit has been a lifeline. Since my cancer diagnosis, it’s driven me everywhere from doctor’s appointments to grocery runs.”

My name is Farhana Loonat. I'm a South African of Indian origin and came to the U.S. in 2006 as a student. I now teach political science and philosophy as tenured faculty at Skagit Valley College. I’m also an author and TEDx speaker, and I care deeply about improving our communities.

I live in Mount Vernon, in Skagit County, and I rely on public transit every day. It’s cost-effective, environmentally responsible, and a wonderful way to connect with neighbors.

Paratransit has been a lifeline. Since my cancer diagnosis, it’s driven me everywhere from doctor’s appointments to grocery runs. The local Paratransit staff are just superb. One time I was down in Seattle, and King County Paratransit picked me up late, so I missed the last bus home from Everett. One of the Everett supervisors drove me up to Mount Vernon. The people who work on the ground are very understanding of the vulnerabilities of the people that they're serving, and I am so grateful for them. In my experience, there's even good coordination across the different counties. I’ve also discovered an unexpected community on the bus. Without transit, I’d be stuck in the academic bubble, interacting only with students and colleagues. Instead, my daily rides let me see the lives of people from all walks of life.

With additional operations funding, my transit agency could extend Paratransit’s evening hours. This would allow me, and others who rely on it, to join friends and coworkers for dinner without worrying about how to get home. In addition, shortening wait times and optimizing fixed route buses can make public transit more convenient so that even those who can drive will choose shared rides over gas-guzzling cars, benefiting our climate.



Robert Jacoby Everett, WA

"A late bus can cause someone to lose their job and affect their whole family."

"As a bus operator, I hear the stories of riders who have no other choice but to take public transit and the challenges they face. Single mothers getting on the bus, trying to get their child to school and then going to work, don't have much time at home with their children at the end of the day."

My name is Robert Jacoby. I was born in Seattle and raised in

Bothell. I bought a house in Everett four years ago and moved in with my wife, two kids, and two extra family members. My wife and I just celebrated our 16th wedding anniversary!

I am always working either staging vacant homes or driving for Community Transit. I also take transit sometimes, but I would take it a lot more if it were more convenient and ran at more times. For example, it takes 12-20 minutes at most to drive to work. If I take transit, it takes over an hour because it involves transferring, and making the connection is an ordeal. And, if I don't bring a bike or a jogging carrier to take everything I need for the day, it's impossible for me to do errands.

As a bus operator, I hear the stories of riders who have no other choice but to take public transit and the challenges they face. Single mothers getting on the bus, trying to get their child to school and then going to work, don't have much time at home with their children at the end of the day.

For a while I picked up where the light rail ends in Lynnwood. The light rail into Seattle runs every 10 minutes, but the bus to the light rail only runs once an hour and is often completely packed.

One day I was assigned a new route and made a wrong turn through no fault of my own. Every single person on the bus erupted. They feared losing their jobs. That made me realize just how critical frequent, reliable bus service is and the impact it has when there is no immediate operator replacement when a driver has to call out at the last minute. A late bus could cause someone to lose their job and affect their whole family.

Robert Jacoby Everett, WA (continued)

"Busier buses are safer buses, and investing in transit staff helps keep buses busy."

Investing in transit staff helps ensure that doesn't happen. It helps pay the operators who drive the vehicles, the mechanics who maintain them, and support staff who are critical for the safety and effectiveness of operators and the riding public. Busier buses are safer buses, and investing in transit staff helps keep buses busy.

Investing in transit is investing in economic progress and our own productivity. The ability for everyone to move around freely and safely allows people to take on a second job and frees up income to meet their needs. Transit affects the nature of our whole country and makes all of our lives better if we can get where we need to go fast, efficiently, and safely.

It is essential to support more efficient, dependable transit service by increasing operations funding.



Hannah Moss Seattle, WA

“I’m able to participate in my community, get to work every day, and do whatever I need with transportation.”

"I'm excited to see it continue to grow in the future, and excited to hear continued growth planned heading both north and south of Seattle. To continue improving our system, we need to allocate funding to enhance transit service."

I didn't plan on learning to drive until after college. I grew up in Spokane, which has a pretty good public transportation system, and I assumed that after that I would be on a college campus.

Before then, in high school, I moved to Indiana and immediately realized how important it was to be able to drive, since I couldn't get around without it. Since then, I've lived in Florida, and it was kind of the same situation, where it felt like I really needed to be able to drive to get anywhere through a car-dependent environment.

Moving back to the Pacific Northwest, to Seattle, has been a complete game changer. I've considered several times whether I can just sell my car outright. I don't really like driving, and it's given me the freedom not to have to, which I like for the environment and because of the general anxiety I have around driving. I'm able to participate in my community, get to work every day, and do whatever I need with transportation. I have a bus stop about a three-minute walk from my apartment, and every single time I'm going to work, I take the bus. It's made it easier to connect with my community and is a crucial component of my quality of life.

However, even with how good transportation is in Seattle compared to other places I've lived, I can see that there are still shortcomings. Where we live now is more in central Seattle, but when we first moved here, it was a little bit outside of the city, and I felt totally differently about the transportation there. The route from the edge of the city to downtown would have been a lot more difficult, taking at least two hours, so there's definitely still room for improvement.

I'm excited to see it continue to grow in the future, and excited to hear continued growth planned heading both north and south of Seattle. To continue improving our system, we need to allocate funding to enhance transit service.



Willie McNeal Everett, WA

“I’m a Vietnam Veteran and paratransit is what I use to get around Everett.”

"If public transportation could be better, it would be better for me"

My name is Willie McNeal. I’m a Vietnam Veteran and a member of the Black Elders Group at Homage Senior Services. I’m single right now and have one daughter, though I have been married before. When I was in Vietnam, there was a chemical that they sprayed called Agent Orange. It really messed up the cartilage in my back, so I have serious back problems and have to use a scooter to get around.

When I was in Vietnam, I got a letter from my uncle with a birthday card in it. It made such an impact on me, being halfway across the world. Since then, I decided to start giving out birthday cards to friends and family. Now, that is my job at the Black Elders Group and I really enjoy it.

I used to like to get myself around, but in 2024 I had a stroke and ended up in the VA hospital. When I came out, the VA decided that I shouldn’t drive anymore. I decided that I didn’t want to hit anyone and I didn’t want to get hit, so I went along with the program.

If public transportation could be better, it would be better for me. Paratransit is what I use to get around in Everett. I would have to use Community Transit to get to other communities. I wish I could use my ORCA card for Paratransit, but I have to pay instead. It’s only \$2 but I use it often so it adds up.

Sometimes I have to schedule my rides 2 days in advance but I prefer 1 day because I can’t always call 2 days ahead of time. Sometimes I can make a change for the return part of my trip on the same day if I call and explain that my appointment ended early. Usually they can accommodate me.

Paratransit requires a half hour lead time. So, if I schedule a pick up at 10:30, the actual time is from 10:30 to 11. I try to be comfortable with that but it would be better if it was more punctual.

Willie McNeal

Everett, WA (continued)

"An investment in transit would make things more accessible for veterans like me, especially if it was more hands on. Congress should invest in transit. It would make life easier and better."

I hope to use Community transit more but when I go to my medical appointment at the VA Center in Seattle my daughter takes me. I prefer it but it would be even better if I had an opportunity to do it on my own. There are going to be times when my daughter isn't going to be available and my doctors appointments are important.

An investment in transit would make things more accessible for veterans like me, especially if it was more hands on. Congress should invest in transit. It would make life easier and better.

Sam Redmond, WA

“Good transit services have dramatically improved my quality of life.”

"Living in a city with rapid transit lines that run every 10 minutes has increased my usage."

My name is Sam, and I'm a community member and animal lover.

I use transit daily to get to work, and it saves me so much time since the bus uses HOV lanes and I can work while I ride. Good transit services have dramatically improved my quality of life.

Previously, I lived in an area with limited transit services and had to spend about 2 stressful hours in stop-and-go traffic every day. I needed to get from Renton into South Lake Union. The fastest transit option I could manage was a 20-minute drive to the Tukwila light rail station and then a one mile walk from the light rail drop to my office. I did that some too, but it took so long—I was spending hours commuting every day.

Living in a city with rapid transit lines that run every 10 minutes has increased my usage. I've noticed it's much more compelling to hop on a bus knowing I can get back easily if buses run at frequent intervals and run long into the evening. Often bus intervals slow down dramatically in the evening, and if I need to take two different bus lines for the trip, it rapidly becomes a prohibitively long trip when bus schedules are spread to long service intervals.

When I travel, I enjoy using transit services to get around—it makes the experience in a new city so much more relaxed. When I visited Zion National Park, I enjoyed using the bus system instead of spending my vacation navigating crowded parking lots.

All those benefits are why I use transit, but it's pretty incredible that it is a net positive for reducing climate impacts. It's one of the few things that I do selfishly that also has a tiny positive impact in the world—good public transit helps everyone. Funding public transit so that it is readily available and dependable is critical to supporting this essential infrastructure.

We need dedicated funding for transit operations so service can be frequent and efficient even at night and in areas like where I used to live.



Alana Seattle, WA

“An investment in more dependable, frequent buses with expanded hours and more direct routes would make a huge difference in my life.”

"My workplace gives me a transit card, so I'm privileged in that it's very affordable for me to take the bus."

My name is Alana and I'm a young professional who's also a dog lover, foodie, and avid concert-goer. Public transit makes a huge

difference in my life because I don't have a car. Thanks to transit, I'm generally able to get to the places I need to go: work, appointments, shopping, health care, or other daily activities. My workplace gives me a transit card, so I'm privileged in that it's very affordable for me to take the bus.

Generally, the bus system meets my needs, but it could also be massively improved. I do like that I get a lot of steps in going to and from the bus stops, but sometimes the extra walk is inconvenient. The buses don't always go where I need to go, and timeliness isn't consistent. I've learned that different bus lines are different in when they actually arrive: some buses run late, others tend to be early. Unreliable bus service has made me late for work and leave earlier than I need to for appointments because I'm too anxious about the bus being late. In the suburbs, infrequent service is super annoying when I miss a bus or the bus is late because then I have to wait for a long time.

Another challenge I face with transit is the lack of closer bus options to where I live. The stop that more buses service is one that I tend to avoid because it can be unsafe at times. Instead of finding a straight route to work and to many other locations, I find myself having to create my own plan of what works best for me. For example, to commute to work, I walk down the hill for 7-9 blocks and then take the bus to work. Going back home, since I don't want to walk the crazy uphill, I transfer between 2 buses, and sometimes I have to wait more than 15 minutes if the bus is late. While I always say that safety is subjective, I feel safe at the bus stops I use, but don't feel safe at the bus stops closer to my home.

Alana Seattle, WA (continued)

"In Seattle, we especially need more direct bus routes. Seattle does a good job compared to many other cities, but a lot of improvements can still be made."

An investment in more dependable, frequent buses with expanded hours and more direct routes would make a huge difference in my life.

My dream is to live in a city with public transport like that. In Seattle, we especially need more direct bus routes.

Seattle does a good job compared to many other cities, but a lot of improvements can still be made. For example, I have friends who live in Seattle neighborhoods that take 45 minutes to an hour to reach and are served by an infrequent bus. But if you drive, it's 10-15 minutes without traffic. The time it takes to get places by bus is frustrating and impacts my social life. If I were to get a car today, it would solely be for groceries and leisure activities like my social life.

We need to invest in transit because accessible transit expands the possibility for residents to get around without being worried about the bus stops being too far, the bus taking too long, etc. I think better transit would allow for happier residents and better community. People should be able to see their friends and family easily without a car.



Oakley Markovich Everett, WA

“My main source of transportation is taking the bus.”

“Currently commuting takes up half of my day and this can make it challenging to find work and what time my classes are. This forces me into less stable work situations, which makes it harder to build financial stability.”

My name is Oakley Markovich, I am 17 years old, and currently residing in Everett.

I am a trade school student, and am working on starting a sheet metal apprenticeship this summer! I am an emancipated minor taking on many adult responsibilities as a teenager. I have been living on my own for almost 2 years now. My main source of transportation is taking the bus.

I don't have access to rides or the support network to get me around so I am reliant on public transportation. Northern Everett has good access to transportation but venturing further south the access starts to dwindle. I am a big fan of public transportation and hope to never have to own a car if I can help it.

In the area where I work in Snohomish there is only one bus every hour. So, in the winter, I am waiting over an hour in the cold to make it home and to work. My work apprenticeship is located in South Everett and takes over an hour via the bus, whereas by car both would only take 20 minutes.

Everett Transit also hosts town halls when they make large changes to the routes, and after showing up to talk about my need for the specific bus route, they still limited the transportation access to south Everett. Part of this is the inefficiency of the route, and part was a lack of ridership. However, ridership to these areas can increase if public transit did not take over double the amount of time to commute that a car does. Funding these programs would help to get me to work, my apprenticeship, and trade school in a timely manner. Currently I have to arrive 30 minutes early, or else I will be over twenty minutes late.

Again, I do enjoy public transportation and the mobility it has granted me, however I believe these programs can be built out to allow me and others like me greater access to opportunities without losing as much time due to commuting. Currently commuting takes up half of my day and this can make it challenging to find work and what time my classes are. This forces me into less stable work situations, which makes it harder to build financial stability.



Cekai Carr Seattle, WA

“I heavily rely on public transportation.”

"Federal operations funding could improve bus frequency and expand the light rail's hours of service."

My name is Cekai Carr. I have lived in Seattle for around 10 years, and I don't have a car. I heavily rely on public transportation. It is accessible and reliable to me on a daily basis, and there is not another easy way for me to get around. Uber adds up quickly, and while I can occasionally ask family members for rides, being able to get around independently is important to me.

I work at a national nonprofit that helps the community with health, housing, and employment. We give people opportunities to grow and succeed in life. I take the bus or the train to and from work every day. It takes me an hour to an hour and a half to get to work depending on where I'm coming from. I come from Rainier Beach to the Central District or sometimes to the SeaTac area. The buses I take arrive every ten to twenty minutes, and the light rail is even more frequent.

Federal operations funding could improve bus frequency and expand the light rail's hours of service. A few times, I've been ghosted by a bus. It was listed on the schedule, but never showed up. I also wish the light rail ran later because there are times when me and my friends want to hit the town at nighttime, but the last Link light rail will leave around 11:45pm. Having service later would allow us to get home safely without splurging on rideshare or feeling uncomfortable on the bus at this hour.

I honestly don't mind riding the bus. It gets me to where I need to be. But if the service quality decreased due to funding cuts, it would be stressful and unpleasant. I don't want to wait longer for the bus, and I cannot arrive late to work.



Mike Gantala Monroe, WA

“I don’t know what I would do without the Transportation Assistance Program.”

"We all deserve to get to our doctors appointments, to work, to community meetings efficiently and contribute in our communities."

My name is Mike Gantala and I live in Monroe, WA and I am the chair of Self Advocates in Leadership.

I was born with Cerebral Palsy and have been dependent on a wheelchair my whole life. I work at the Food Bank and local library.

It's not easy. I depend on the Transportation Assistance Program (the TAP bus) and don't know what I would do without it. It means a lot because I can get where I need to go ... by myself.

In 2024, we almost ran out of funding for the TAP service. If my TAP ride had been cut, I would have lost my livelihood and my independence. Instead, I got involved and spoke out about the need for better transit service. Now I'm active on several committees including People First of Snohomish at The Arc of Snohomish County and SNOTRAC Snohomish Transportation Coalition, a non profit working to develop a coordinated transportation system for persons with special transportation needs.

But even though we managed to keep TAP services, there are places that I can't go. For example, I can't get transportation to the Seattle-Tacoma International Airport because I would have to take 3 different buses and it would take 3 hours with no bathrooms. That's not possible for me.

Another problem is that whenever I go from Snohomish County to Kings County, I have to change vehicles. The driver has to wait for the other driver to make the exchange.

We all deserve to get to our doctors appointments, to work, to community meetings efficiently and contribute in our communities. But, for efficient, frequent and reliable public transit service, we need stable funding year after year. This year, transportation is running out of money, and I am in danger of losing my transportation again.

Sweetie Tacoma, WA

“My husband is a veteran and often misses doctors appointments if I can’t drive him. He’ll look at the bus schedules but if the buses don’t connect, he won’t go.”

**"Our roads are fixed.
Now our transit needs
to get fixed. We deserve
efficient, reliable,
frequent transit service."**

I grew up in a military family, speaking fluent German as well as English. Now I live in Tacoma, WA and though I have a car now, I use transit whenever I can't drive or my car is broken.

Many times I've had long waits at a bus stop.

When my 3 kids were young, I missed a bus to take 2 of my kids to their doctors appointments. The next bus was an hour later. Can you imagine waiting at a bus stop on the side of a road for an hour with a 4 year old, 5 year old and 6 year old?

Now, it's worse. Before, all the buses connected. Now you have to wait at least a half hour to make a connection.

My husband is a veteran and often misses doctors appointments if I can't drive him. He'll look at the bus schedules but if the buses don't connect, he won't go. It's just not worth the long waits and the chance the other bus doesn't even come. It's too much aggravation.

Only a few buses run 15 minutes apart. The rest run every 30 minutes or an hour. And buses stop at 9:30 or 10 pm.

Our roads are fixed. Now our transit needs to get fixed. We deserve efficient, reliable, frequent transit service.



Monette Partin Sedro-Woolley, WA

“Bus service cuts leave people stranded.”

"You can't live somewhere that prohibits your ability to work. People do not want to pay an exorbitant amount of money to park their car somewhere in order to go to work. They need another option."

My name is Monette Partin. I have lived in Sedro Woolley with my husband for eighteen years, where I have been totally transit dependent. I have a car, but I don't drive on the freeway, and I don't like parking downtown. I lived most my life in Mountlake Terrace, and took Community Transit to work in Seattle. I fought against bus cuts in Mountlake Terrace in the early 90s and I'm ready to do the same up here if needed.

Sometimes I just wish I could get places on my own. I can't get to Snohomish or King County very easily. I rely on my husband to visit relatives. I would like to be able to go to Kenmore and see my sister, but I can't because there aren't easy connections between the different transit agencies.

I'd like to see improved convenience when riding transit within the county and expanded service between the nearby counties. For example, Walmart is one mile from Burlington Boulevard. It's a five minute drive, but it's at least a thirty minute ride on public transit. It's ridiculous for the many people who work and shop there!

Bus service cuts leave people stranded. There are lots of people who are totally transit dependent. They don't have the money for one car, let alone two.

You can't live somewhere that prohibits your ability to work. People do not want to pay an exorbitant amount of money to park their car somewhere in order to go to work. They need another option. There are also people who are disabled and use Paratransit. I know somebody who was struggling to get to work because paratransit wouldn't accommodate their work schedule. Some people don't have a car and they work on the weekend. Increased operations funding would really help them out. I used to have to work on the weekend and thank god I could take the bus or I would have been stuck. It's wrong to limit the ability of people in poverty, who have no other way to get to work besides transit, to get to their jobs.



Prem Subedi Kent, WA

“Everything I am able to do is because of public transportation.”

"When planners and elected officials talk about transit funding, they mean capital funding. But, in much the same way that you need operating funds to maintain roads and bridges in our highway system, our public transit systems need operating funds to be reliable."

My name is Prem Subedi. I moved to Kent in 2016, but lived in Tukwila before that.

As a student pursuing Politics, Philosophy, and Economics (PP&E) with a minor in Urban Studies, I am deeply passionate about advocating for equity in transportation systems. I use public transportation to go everywhere - commute to school, go to work, to do my community work, go to parties. Everything I am able to do is because of public transportation.

Tukwila has every kind of public transportation - buses, BRT, light rail, even Amtrak - but when I moved to Kent, the bus only ran during am and pm peak hours. I would have to roll my motorized wheelchair a mile along the shoulder of the road, without a sidewalk, to get to a bus stop with all-day buses.

As a student working part-time, my last bus was at 5:00 pm. It really affected my college life and my civic engagement. Because of the challenges I had getting around, I got involved in lots of committees to advocate for local transportation. If lots of people did that, we could really improve mobility. Now it is much better, and in a year from now we will have buses running every 15 minutes.

If I go to my brother's house in another part of Kent, there is no bus service at all. Fortunately, I can take the Metro Flex, but that has limited hours and isn't always available when I want to go. I know there are people like me who live in that area and have a very difficult life there with such limited transportation options.

When planners and elected officials talk about transit funding, they mean capital funding. But, in much the same way that you need operating funds to maintain roads and bridges in our highway system, our public transit systems need operating funds to be reliable. The only time there was funding for operations was during COVID. Because of that money, Transit Agencies survived, and many didn't have to reduce service. We need additional operations funding so that we can keep improving the transit system in Kent and throughout Washington state.

Laura Little Seattle, WA

“Transit is the best way to help our environment.”

“..it’s also stressful when I can’t rely on a bus showing up when I think it’ll show up.”

My name is Laura Little, and I live in Roosevelt, Seattle. I’m a teacher and an avid hiker. I feel very positive about public transit here, especially compared to where I’ve previously lived in New Mexico and in Texas. Public transit was nonexistent there, whereas here in Seattle, we have a decent transit system. I take the bus and the light rail to get to social events, the airport, and work during the school year.

When the weather is good, I often walk directly to my office, which takes about 35 minutes. When it’s raining, I generally take the bus. My commute to work is generally about 40-50 minutes one way. I check the bus app, walk 10 minutes to the bus stop, wait 5-10 minutes, sit on the bus for 15-20 minutes, and then walk 5 minutes to my office. I’m also a 15-minute walk from a light rail station.

I like to take transit because it gives me a few minutes to read or listen to music, and it’s much less stressful than driving. I come in contact with different types of people, and I’ll chat every now and then on the bus. Most importantly, I don’t have to think about where to leave a car. I can’t imagine driving to campus – on a few occasions, I absolutely had to drive to campus, and it was very stressful.

That being said, it’s also stressful when I can’t rely on a bus showing up when I think it’ll show up. If the weather is bad and I don’t want to hang out at a bus stop, I’ll check the app, see it arriving in 12 minutes, and walk the 10 minutes to the bus stop. If the bus is more than 2 minutes early, I’ll be standing in inclement weather for maybe 15 minutes. Sure, the bus has a shelter, but there’s often not room, especially if the wind is blowing like it often does. So, the reliability and frequency of the bus interact to create stress.

Occasionally, the bus will be too crowded. I can’t reach the straps to hold onto, and I don’t feel safe standing without support. So, I’ve turned into the little old lady who needs to sit. Younger people recognize that I’m old, but I’ve been glared at by middle-aged and older people if I take a seat on a crowded bus.

Laura Little Seattle, WA (continued)

"Transit is one of the best ways to help our environment, resulting in less pollution and less traffic congestion."

Infrequent and unreliable bus service has made me late to work meetings.

I don't like to inconvenience others. There was a time in my life when buses running all night might have helped me. Now, more frequent buses would make it less likely that I stand at a stop in the rain and more likely for me to find a seat on the bus! I live a charmed life. If it takes me 40 minutes to get somewhere on the bus, it won't kill me. Even if it would take 10 minutes to drive. But more frequent buses could benefit others who can't afford to spend that much time commuting. The main transit improvement I'd like to see here in greater Seattle is more East-West routes. Our transit is currently predominantly North-South, which isn't always where I need to go. Additionally, it sure would be nice for the light rail to run all night, even if only once an hour. Otherwise, airport trips departing or arriving early in the morning are tricky.

There are all sorts of environmental reasons why removing internal combustion engines from roadways is important. Transit is one of the best ways to help our environment, resulting in less pollution and less traffic congestion.

Investing in robust operations funding for public transit is essential.

Nimi Oladosu

Bothell, WA

“Transit opens up a lot more possibilities for jobs.”

"Investing in funding transit so the bus comes frequently and is dependable is important to youth who do not have cars."

My name is Nimi Oladosu, and I am a Junior at Bothell High School.

I've lived here since I was kind of young. I'm active in several after-school clubs. I just finished cross country, am in winter conditioning for track and field, volunteer with the Debate Club, and visit the elderly with another club.

I'm also in the Running Start program to get ahead. The program allows me to take college courses and get college credits faster and for free. I go to Cascadia College in the morning and then take the bus from there to Bothell High School. It is much more convenient that way and saves me a lot of money because the parking permits at Cascadia are really expensive.

This fall, my class got out at 10:50, and so I took the 11:05 bus. The ride is only about 5 minutes, but my school is on the top of a hill, and the bus stop is at the bottom of the hill. It's cold out now, and the long walk up the hill really hurts my knees. (I'm in physical therapy for my knees.)

The first couple of times I took the bus, I didn't know I had to pull the yellow cord for my stop, and I missed my stop. I got off at the next stop and had to call my mom to pick me up - it was really traumatizing.

I also use transit to take the light rail to go to a Storms game or Seahawks football game with my family. It is an easier and faster option than dealing with the horrendous drive and parking, and it's more sustainable.

Especially with the high price of gas and maintaining a car, having more accessible bus service would make it easier for kids like me to get around, especially younger kids. Transit that is convenient and reliable gives us a chance to get around more and be out in the community, talk to friends and transit opens up a lot more possibilities for jobs.

Investing in funding transit so the bus comes frequently and is dependable is important to youth who do not have cars.



Jesse Gilpatrick Snohomish, WA

"I wish there was a way to expand transit for people living in rural areas."

"I like the fixed route bus much better and use it whenever I can because it's faster than paratransit."

My name is Jesse Gilpatrick. I live in Marysville now, which is in Snohomish County, but I have lived in King and Pierce Counties, Sedro-Woolley, and Spokane - a little bit of urban and rural. My mom chose Snohomish because it was a balance between good schools and medical facilities and she thought it would be a good place to raise a family.

I've been in a wheelchair my whole life after I was diagnosed with cancer at 18 months old. I started using paratransit in my late teens, when my mom encouraged me to be independent. She even motivated me by telling me she'd take me to Taco Bell (my favorite at the time!) if I learned how to ride the D.A.R.T. bus from Granite Falls to Marysville. One problem I have had with the D.A.R.T. paratransit was that 9 out of 10 times they didn't get me wherever I was going on time because there just wasn't enough service to meet the demand.

For example, when I went to Edmonds Community College, the D.A.R.T. bus would get me to my class an hour earlier. That wouldn't have been so bad, but my class didn't get out until 8 pm when Community Transit only ran once an hour. I'd have to wait until 9 pm for the paratransit and wouldn't get home until 11 pm.

Then I went on a date with a classmate who showed me how to take the fixed route bus to an authentic Mexican restaurant. I like the fixed route bus much better and use it whenever I can because it's faster than paratransit.

Now I live too far north to push myself to the nearest bus stop. I've been hit by cars twice, and both times while using my wheelchair-bike attachment. One accident had completely destroyed a part of my mobility device. Last month, a wheelchair user with a bright orange flag attached and wearing a bright yellow vest was hit by a truck.

Jesse Gilpatrick

Snohomish, WA (continued)

"Frequency and reliability make all the difference between an efficient, pleasant trip and a really miserable one."

I wish there was a way to expand transit for people in rural areas, but when I advocate for it, I feel like I'm talking to a wall. People with disabilities are not trying to disrupt. We just need to be heard and seen.

The nearest Link stop is in Lynnwood, which requires multiple stops and transfers and can be really tiring. Last year, I hosted an emergency preparedness class at the Marysville Sno-Isle Library. I took the bus there in the early afternoon. At the end of the activity, it started to downpour. I had to wait almost 45 minutes at the bus stop, which offered no cover, in the rain for a fixed-route bus. My heavy coat and pants got completely soaked, and the castors on my wheelchair got rusted.

Frequency and reliability make all the difference between an efficient, pleasant trip and a really miserable one. Our transit systems need reliable, consistent operational funding to expand hours of operation and run buses with sufficient frequency to make transit a true mobility option.



Kisaya Canada Seattle, WA

“Most of all, I’m thankful for King County’s decision to make youth transit free. environments around major bus stops.”

"A lot of people say there isn't enough demand for the buses, but the buses will skip my coworkers because they're too full! If there's no demand for the buses, why are you skipping people?"

My name is Kisaya Canada. I just graduated from high school and will start at Western Washington University this fall.

I'm a Black woman raised by a single mother in a low-income household. From a young age, I've had to take care of myself and help out at home. I hope to become a lawyer one day, and I care deeply about social justice.

Transit has always been a part of my life. When I was a toddler, my mom was in school at Seattle Central and didn't have a car. The Light Rail didn't exist yet, so my mom had to take two buses to get to class, and sometimes she had to bring my twin sister and me. But when we were around three years old, my mom got my grandfather's forty-year-old car. She uses the car every day to get to her job all the way in Puyallup. I started taking public transit on my own in sixth grade, and it's how I've gotten to school, work, and community programs ever since. My younger brother will soon be doing the same.

I am grateful for the OneBusAway app because it's pretty accurate and helps me plan my day. Most of all, I'm thankful for King County's decision to make youth transit free. As someone with limited income, I don't know what I would have done if I had to pay for every ride. Even \$3 per trip adds up quickly when you're riding every day.

But not every part of the region gets the same quality of service. I work near Southcenter Mall, where the RapidRide bus system is unreliable and limited. A lot of my coworkers are from Kent and other cities south of Seattle. They've texted me many times that they're going to be an hour late to work because the bus skipped them. A lot of people say there isn't enough demand for the buses, but the buses will skip my coworkers because they're too full! If there's no demand for the buses, why are you skipping people?

Kisaya Canada Seattle, WA (continued)

"While I'm grateful for the transit options in King County, a lot needs improvement. We need more frequent service south of Seattle, a more reliable Metro Flex, and safer walking environments around major bus stops."

Another service, the MetroFlex, also has ups and downs. Before MetroFlex existed, I felt so isolated where I lived. But being able to schedule a ride and get to the Light Rail connected me with my friends and activities at school. At one point, this service was a necessity for my commute, which is why I'm so upset about its unreliability, long wait times, and inattentive drivers. I've waited 30 or 40 minutes for a ride, only to have it canceled. Two weeks ago, my mom sent me to the store to get some groceries in Rainier Beach. On the way home, I called 3 different Vias, and they all canceled. The app's arrival estimates are often wrong, and drivers sometimes drive off without closing the passenger door. It's stressful for me, but I'd imagine it's even worse for someone with a disability or small children.

While I'm grateful for the transit options in King County, a lot needs improvement. We need more frequent service south of Seattle, a more reliable Metro Flex, and safer walking environments around major bus stops. We also need to expand the Light Rail to West Seattle. Currently, it takes a ridiculous amount of time to get to West Seattle from other parts of the city. I managed school, work, and extracurriculars these past four years because transit made it possible to get where I needed to be. I'm asking leaders to listen to riders like me and build the reliable and frequent transit system we all deserve.



Laura Akers Everett, WA

“I use a mobility scooter and rely on public transit daily.”

"We should also consider the sports and music fans who visit Seattle. We are hosting the World Cup in 2026, and if we don't have strong transit options to get people in and out of Seattle for that event, we will look bad."

My name is Laura Akers. I live in South Everett in Snohomish

County. I use a mobility scooter and rely on public transit daily. I work in Seattle at Climate Pledge Arena and Lumen Field, assisting fans at Seahawks, Sounders, Storm, and Kraken games and any concerts at these venues. I'm blessed to have an employer that pays for my transit. On a good day, my travel time is about an hour and a half. To get to work, I take Community Transit buses from my home near Paine Field to the Lynwood City Center light rail station. I then take the light rail to Downtown Seattle. I also enjoy going to sporting events and concerts outside of work. I use a combination of light rail, community transit, DART, and Access depending on where I'm going.

Since I don't have a traditional 9-5 job, transit hours in the region don't always work for me. From my point of view, we need to add more bus service hours and frequency. This would make it easier to coordinate with the light rail schedule, cutting down long wait times at the bus stop on my way home. Right now, the light rail runs until midnight, but the bus stops at 10 pm, leaving a gap that makes getting home difficult. Ideally, the bus would run later than the light rail so people can complete their trips. Increased federal funding could improve security at the light rail stations, which would make me feel safer.

There have been times when my ability to get to work or home was impacted by light rail service disruptions. These shutdowns are happening what feels like once a week. With increased funding, these disruptions could be reduced. We should also consider the sports and music fans who visit Seattle. We are hosting the World Cup in 2026, and if we don't have strong transit options to get people in and out of Seattle for that event, we will look bad.



Gloria Garfield Shoreline, WA

“Public transportation allows me to get to the places I need to. It definitely costs less to take transit than it would to pay for the insane gas prices that would come with having a second car.”

"It would be great if buses ran through the night. I was considering an overnight job at Seattle Children's, but my biggest concern was getting home in those odd hours. Getting to work was fine, but getting home wouldn't have been possible. So I couldn't accept that."

My name is Gloria Garfield, and I've lived in Shoreline, WA, for about a year.

I'm a Master of Public Health student at the University of Washington. I'm married and have a dog named Maya and two cats: Patrick and Oliver. I previously lived in southwest Washington, and before that, in the state of Georgia. I definitely have had a different experience with public transit in each place, which was interesting.

My husband and I have one car. He needs it for work because no buses run early enough for him to arrive on time (4 or 5 am). So, I need public transit to get to school, work, internships, shopping, doctor's appointments, and to see family. I like to explore, go out, and see new things. Any way to make that easier or more accessible is great. And I sometimes take transit just because! I have a goal of taking all the routes of public transportation in greater Seattle. Currently, I'm just missing the Sounder, water taxi, and streetcar.

Public transportation allows me to get to the places I need to. It definitely costs less to take transit than it would to pay for the insane gas prices that would come with having a second car. And I like where I live; I'm right next to a transit center, so I don't have to worry about missing buses because there are lots of options and routes I can take. Greater Seattle has so many routes, I feel like I can go wherever I need to (with enough transfers). I don't feel like I'm limited in where I can go. Previously, there was only one bus line, and that was hard. So when my husband and I were looking at apartments to move here, transit accessibility was a big factor. It would be great if buses ran through the night. I was considering an overnight job at Seattle Children's, but my biggest concern was getting home in those odd hours. Getting to work was fine, but getting home wouldn't have been possible. So I couldn't accept that job.

Also, I wish the light rail started earlier in the morning. The cheapest flights depart at 5am, but the light rail doesn't run that early. So I have to pay a lot to park at the airport, get an Uber to the airport, or hope to get a ride from a friend.

Gloria Garfield

Shoreline, WA (continued)

"Every day, I see many types of people taking transit for various reasons. As a public health student, we see disparities in communities who struggle to get basic services and basic needs met. Transit is one way to reduce those disparities."

So, public transit definitely affects which plane tickets we buy. We end up buying more expensive plane tickets that leave later in the day so we can take the light rail to the airport. Public transportation here is accessible, but it does the bare minimum required by ADA Title V. It could be better. For example, some bus drivers will wait until everyone sits down to start moving. Some gun it; you get practically thrown down the aisle, and you have to monkey-bar your way to a seat. I can handle it, but someone with mobility issues (which might be invisible) wouldn't. And there are some bus stops in the city where I won't stand near due to the lack of cleanliness or the people there. I prefer bus stops with shelter; it sucks to stand in the rain for 10 minutes, or longer if the bus is delayed.

Transit here is good, but it could be more reliable. The digital real-time screens at the bus stops will say that the bus will arrive in 3 minutes, and then you're sitting there for 30 minutes before 4 buses arrive back-to-back. I do prefer Snohomish County transit over King County Metro – the buses are cleaner and more reliably on time.

Overall, I've just learned to leave earlier. I've been late to class before, because of transit. I once missed my ferry because the bus to get to the ferry terminal was late. That sucked – it added 30 or 40 minutes. For doctor's appointments, I'll show up an hour early just in case of delays. Otherwise, any time I think I've left early enough, I'm still late. I would love it if our transit system got more funding. Expanded hours of operation would be great for airport runs. My husband could get to work on transit and I could have the car if I ever needed it. Better reliability would be great too – I wouldn't have to plan for being gone for so long each day. When I am gone for so much of the days, I have to hire a dog walker and otherwise make sure that my pets are taken care of.

Congress should invest in expanding transit service. Seattle is fortunate for its vast transit service, and it has high ridership because it's there and available. Every day, I see many types of people taking transit for various reasons. As a public health student, we see disparities in communities who struggle to get basic services and basic needs met. Transit is one way to reduce those disparities. And, transit is better for the environment. To me, it's a no-brainer. Why not make it easier for people and communities to go where they need to go? Public transit is a wonderful system that allows communities to connect and be together.



Chris Jones Sedro-Woolley, WA

**“I use Paratransit to go everywhere,
every day.”**

"It would be good for sighted people, especially local politicians, to take some time during the Week Without Driving to experience how public transit impacts their access."

My name is Chris Jones. When people ask if I've been blind all my life, I say “not yet!”

I believe that being sighted or not isn't the important thing. What's important is how much access you have. Living in communities with strong transit has contributed to me having an exceptionally positive life. Music, ministry, and family make me who I am. I've been performing Black gospel music for 54 years. My wife Judy and I celebrated our 45th anniversary on July 26th. We have two daughters.

I retired from working at Clover Park Technical College in 2007. I was an advisor and worked for disability support services for 17 years. We moved to Sedro-Woolley in 2017 to be closer to our daughters. I have been a chair, and am now a member of the Skagit Transit Community Advisory Committee. I use Paratransit to go everywhere, every day, and also occasionally use County Connector express buses to get to my doctors in Bellingham.

To use Paratransit, I have to schedule rides beforehand. I think a lot of people who are not blind don't think ahead in the way we have to. Life can still be flexible, but it's better to have rides and events scheduled ahead of time. It would be good for sighted people, especially local politicians, to take some time during the Week Without Driving to experience how public transit impacts their access. Even a single day without driving can show people what it's like to be in my shoes. The more we understand each others' experiences, the more we realize we're really all the same. We all want the same opportunity to do what we love, whether that's by car for those who can drive, or by public transportation for many who cannot or choose not to drive. I don't drive because I am blind. Others don't drive because of the financial burden of car ownership and maintenance. How much less would you have to pay if you consistently use transit?

Chris Jones

Sedro-Woolley, WA (continued)

"One change I'd like to see is later opportunities to take transit. Our buses and Paratransit stop running around 8pm which limits activities people can do."

We need more funding for Skagit Transit improvements. One change I'd like to see is later opportunities to take transit. Our buses and Paratransit stop running around 8pm which limits activities people can do. I'd also like to see the agency use increased operations funds to improve marketing. There are people who really don't understand what the agency is or does. Lastly, I'd like to see the money used to recruit more drivers. The drivers are fabulous, whether fixed route or "Para," but there are just not enough of them to support the needs of the community. There are times when bus routes have to be restricted, and schedule changes happen in the middle of the day. That leaves people stranded.



Andrew Johnson Seattle, WA

“It is important to invest in more frequent transit and improve access and service on public transit.”

"I actively despise sitting in traffic, and having an option for myself and others to commute has been a massive improvement to my mental health and gives me multiple ways to get where I need to go."

Access to public transportation was one of the biggest reasons I chose to move from Florida to Washington State, and specifically Seattle.

It has been life changing to reduce the amount of time I need to drive a car. I actively despise sitting in traffic, and having an option for myself and others to commute has been a massive improvement to my mental health and gives me multiple ways to get where I need to go.

Having the light rail has been an amazing addition to my life. I am able to quickly access large portions of the Seattle metropolitan area with the light rail and bus routes, and oftentimes they take the same amount of time, if not less time, than driving due to traffic heading in and out of the city.

The ferry system is an absolute dream. Being able to explore the beautiful Pacific Northwest without driving around the Sound gives me more time to be outside and sightsee (and maybe see a few whales).

With all these positive changes, I do struggle at times with late night options to commute home because of reduced bus frequency and the light rail ending service early in the night. I am optimistic about some of the proposed expansions and hope to see other projects approved in the near future.

It is important to invest in more frequent transit and improve access and service on public transit.



Ellie Bellingham, WA

“A trip to the grocery store, the nearest place selling fresh produce, could take 2 hours round trip.”

"My anxiety made the discomfort of crowds on the bus worse for me than it did for other people. I get overstimulated easily, and the bus was a consistent trigger. I seemed to be the only one who knew exactly where the bus would stop so I would be at the front of the line and sometimes snag a seat."

I'm Ellie, a Master's student who likes dogs and reading. I used public transit most when I was in college and didn't have a car. I

took the bus to get to the college campus or the grocery store. Generally, the bus went where I needed to go and was physically accessible.

Since I had a free student bus pass, it was affordable as well. If I needed to get somewhere quickly, I'd often take the bus, even if it was just a 4 minute ride. But, if I had time, I'd walk the 20 minutes because the buses were almost always crowded, hot, and loud. Many students lived in the downtown area, so the buses were always full despite there being multiple lines going in that direction.

My anxiety made the discomfort of crowds on the bus worse for me than it did for other people. I get overstimulated easily, and the bus was a consistent trigger. I seemed to be the only one who knew exactly where the bus would stop so I would be at the front of the line and sometimes snag a seat. While other people didn't seem to mind the crowded bus as much, it really affected me.

Another challenge with the buses was that frequent service was only available for downtown areas. A trip to the grocery store, the nearest place selling fresh produce, could take 2 hours round trip. I often waited 30-45 minutes after buying groceries to catch the bus home. The buses were so infrequent that I'd plan my day around the grocery trip. There were convenience stores downtown, but they didn't sell produce. Generally, I'll also take transit if I need to get somewhere and I'm scared of parking. Street parking or parallel parking is terrifying! When I lived in the Greater Seattle Eastside, I would take the light rail into Seattle proper. Riding the light rail across the lake is fun. My whole family took the light rail to Seattle to see my younger sibling graduate from high school.

Invest in transit because it opens up options for a lot of people. Many people rely on transit to get to doctor appointments, school, work, and so on. More frequent service would have made my life easier, decreased crowding on the bus, and reduced the time it took to get from one place to another.



Amanda Sutherland Marysville, WA

“More reliable service, faster service, and more frequent service eliminates a lot of stress.”

"Sometimes last minute shifts become available when someone gets sick. I often can't take those positions either because I don't have enough time to get to work in order to make that happen."

My name is Amanda Sutherland. I live in Marysville, Washington.

I am Legally Blind and rely on public transit daily. I am a per diem chaplain at Harborview Medical Center, a level one trauma care center. I serve patients, their families, and our staff, helping everyone in the hospital feel heard and less alone. While I'm in a hired position, I am underemployed, and my shifts are very sporadic. I work a variety of day, midday, night, and weekend shifts. I love the work, and I love working with people, but I do not love my 2-hour commute from Marysville to Seattle.

There is a bus that runs within walking distance of my house, but it only comes once an hour, and if I miss it, I'm screwed. Most days, my mom gives me a ride to State Avenue to get the Community Transit route 201 or 202, or if it's a weekday, I get dropped off at the Cedar and Grove Park and Ride to take the CT 904. If I'm really lucky, I can sweet-talk my mom into taking me to the Everett Transit Center, where I can get on the Sound Transit 512.

Getting a ride from my mom to the bus isn't always possible, since she has a work schedule as well. Very occasionally, I will take an Uber to the Everett Transit Station, which costs \$30+. After getting to the Lynwood City Center light rail station, I take the light rail to a Metro bus, and then walk the rest of the way to Harborview. Sometimes there are commuter buses that are available if I'm working a day shift, but if I'm working a midday shift that doesn't start till 10 am, or a night shift that doesn't start till 4:30 pm, this isn't an option.

Oftentimes there are Sunday shifts that I'm not able to take because the buses don't start running early enough on Sundays. There are half day shifts that are available that are only 2-4 hours. It's not worth my time and effort to commute 2 hours, work 2-4 hours, and then turn around and come back for 2 hours. Sometimes last minute shifts become available when someone gets sick. I often can't take those positions either because I don't have enough time to get to work in order to make that happen.

Amanda Sutherland

Marysville, WA (continued)

"Public transit reliability is also important for my mom, who is 72 and will not be driving forever. My mom is trying to buy a smaller house to downsize, so I'm trying to convince her to choose a place that has easy access to a bus."

Public transportation limits the work that I'm able to take.

Transit to social events is also time-consuming and exhausting, especially since weekend service is limited. My sister lives in Lynwood, and while it's only a 25-minute ride to her house, it takes an hour and a half on the local buses.

On my way home from Harborview, I get on the light rail, and then I don't know which bus I'm going to take until I get to Lynwood. Expanding the 512 and/or expediting the development of the Gold Line would drastically improve my commute. I would have much more frequent and reliable options. I wouldn't have to play this guessing game, and I wouldn't have to coordinate a different pickup spot with my mom each day.

Long-term, having the light rail come up through Everett and having it serve more of Snohomish County would be a huge deal for me. I love living in Snohomish County. This is where my family and friends are. And I would love it even more if I could get around efficiently.

Public transit reliability is also important for my mom, who is 72 and will not be driving forever. My mom is trying to buy a smaller house to downsize, so I'm trying to convince her to choose a place that has easy access to a bus. It's both about her ability to drive and my ability to visit her when I eventually move out.

More funding to expand access to frequent, dependable public transit would significantly improve my commute. I spend so much physical and mental energy planning my transportation every day. It takes even more energy to ask people for rides when public transit is unreliable. More reliable service, faster service, and more frequent service eliminates a lot of stress, and it gives me a lot more freedom and independence. I would love to walk out the door and show up at the bus stop knowing that there's going to be a bus coming every 10 to 15 minutes. Without a burdensome commute, I'd have more mental space for my patients. If I come into work with a clear mind, I can be more present and more energized with vulnerable people who need my support.



Alice Xing Shoreline, WA

“Taking the light rail and bus saves me money in addition to keeping me safe while getting where I need to go.”

“If Congress were to fund public transportation and expand service, I believe that many urban areas could move toward a less car-centric infrastructure that would improve people’s health and well-being.”

I’m Alice Xing, a Master’s student at the University of Washington and longtime resident of Greater Seattle.

I’ve relied on public transit to get to work, school, volunteer events, and social events since 2019. Although I have a car, I often feel unsafe driving due to my slow reaction speed and lack of depth perception. Taking the light rail and bus saves me money in addition to keeping me safe while getting where I need to go.

While public transit in Greater Seattle has been relatively robust, it still has some issues that limit its accessibility for me. Many bus stops lack clean, sheltered seating. When I’m experiencing a chronic pain flare-up, I either sit painfully on the curb or am altogether unable to take transit. Additionally, understaffing and underfunding means that buses may sometimes be canceled without warning, making me late to class, an interview, or work. During rush hours on busy bus lines, I may not be able to get on a bus for over 45 minutes or over 3 consecutive buses, especially if I’m unable to stand in awkward positions for the ride.

Although service disruptions are rare in my area, more funding to increase the frequency, redundancy, and reliability of transit would make public transportation less stressful. If Congress were to fund public transportation and expand service, I believe that many urban areas could move toward a less car-centric infrastructure that would improve people’s health and well-being.



Leigh Spruce Mill Creek, Snohomish County, WA

“With the cost of living rising like it does, people have to move farther and farther out to a place they can afford, but then paratransit doesn’t even go there.”

“If Congress were to fund public transportation and expand service. I believe that many urban areas could move toward a less car-centric infrastructure that would improve people’s health and well-being.”

My name is Leigh Spruce. I moved from Texas to Snohomish County in 2013 for better opportunities.

I work as a Self Advocate at the ARC of Snohomish County - training people in Self Advocacy and offering support when they can’t advocate for themselves. My job is so fulfilling, and I’ve had amazing opportunities. I was on a committee for Community Transit when they asked me to talk about DART and Community Transit. They interviewed me, took my photo and then put my face on the side of buses for 6 months!!

I was born with Spina Bifida which has caused me to walk with crutches, and more recently, a mobility device. In High School, someone taught me how to use the paratransit system after I discovered that I couldn’t drive. It was great, and I later realized I could go to Community College on my own, without my mom having to drive me every day. Autonomy and independence are so important. But Paratransit is not a perfect system. Every ride costs almost double what everyone else pays on the fixed bus. That adds up quickly.

Then there is Uber and LYFT. They rarely have vehicles that accommodate a wheelchair and it can be expensive. Travelling from Seattle to Snohomish County can be over \$100. With the cost of living rising like it does, people have to move farther and farther out to a place they can afford, but then paratransit doesn’t even go there. Another problem is that I can’t do anything spontaneously. Paratransit runs 7 days a week from about 5am to 9pm. I can use it to go anywhere the bus goes but I have to make a reservation by 4pm the day before. If I need to go someplace today, I’d have to find someone to drive me who has a wheelchair accessible vehicle.

No trips are short. I can’t go to the store nearby and pick up a few things in less than two hours and often get left waiting in the cold. I might be in my doctor’s appointment for 1 hour but then spend hours on the bus or waiting for it.

Leigh Spruce Mill Creek, Snohomish County, WA (continued)

"A few years ago I went to Seattle for a concert but missed the main artist because though King County service goes until 12 midnight, the Snohomish service ends between 9 and 10. That meant missing out - missing out on life."

In addition, each paratransit system can have a rider on the bus for 2 hours.

If you go from Snohomish County to King County, that could be 4 hours each way. When I first moved here I thought I'd want to get a job in downtown Seattle, but that's a very long day. It is extremely frustrating.

A few years ago I went to Seattle for a concert but missed the main artist because though King County service goes until 12 midnight, the Snohomish service ends between 9 and 10. That meant missing out - missing out on life. When I can't get places, I am isolated, from work and social activities but also from participation in the community. Lack of access to community is a lack of independence. It would be amazing if riders could get to more places efficiently.



Burney Redmond, WA

“With more funding for public transportation, I would have more options.”

"Also, buses aren't consistent in when they arrive at stops, so it was hard to know if I could make a transfer. It would be a gamble on whether my first bus would arrive before my second bus left."

My name is Burney. I'm married with 3 cats, and I appreciate investment in public transit because I like being about to rely on transit and not need a car. I really prefer to bike or take the bus instead of driving. When I lived in Redmond, Washington, I took public transit often to commute to work. Taking the bus was way less stressful than driving, especially during rush hour traffic. Instead of sitting in stressful congestion, I could do other things like listen to audiobooks or review my flashcards to learn Japanese. And, I didn't have to worry about parking.

I didn't have a car for my first 3 years living in Greater Seattle, and I could have gone car-free for much longer. It was very convenient to live close to a transit hub, and I did really like park & rides. Public transit was especially nice to visit a big city, like Seattle. I'd much rather take a bus or the light rail into the city as opposed to dealing with narrow one-way roads and trying to find parking.

That being said, I had some challenges with public transportation too. The buses weren't always reliable. I used an app called One Bus Away, which sometimes would say the bus was coming soon. The bus never showed up, and 15 minutes later, the app said the next bus would arrive in half an hour. Also, buses aren't consistent in when they arrive at stops, so it was hard to know if I could make a transfer. It would be a gamble on whether my first bus would arrive before my second bus left.

If I was taking transit to an important appointment, I'd have to get up much earlier in order to catch an earlier bus and have a back-up in case one bus didn't show up. More routinely, if I was meeting a friend and we'd set a time and place, my friend Brian often said he could either be 50 minutes early or 10 minutes late. So infrequent service made scheduling hard.

Burney Redmond, WA (continued)

"Frequent service means that I don't have to plan ahead of time – even if I just missed a bus, the next one is in 10 minutes."

More transit funding to make buses more reliable and run more frequently would be really nice. Frequent service means that I don't have to plan ahead of time – even if I just missed a bus, the next one is in 10 minutes. Whereas when I needed to take a bus at night, it would only come once an hour. Then I'd need to plan my schedule more carefully – otherwise I'd be waiting a really long time. And, infrequent service makes it really hard when there's surge traffic. When I was in Seattle for conventions and the bus only came every hour or every 30 minutes, I would be stuck for a long time when the bus was full and passed by without stopping.

More transit funding would also make it easier for me to take public transit here in Ohio. The closest bus stop to my house is now 1.3 miles away, and only 1 bus serves it. The suburban infrastructure expects everyone to have a car, especially since there's nothing nearby other than single family houses. I usually bike to the gym, but in the winter, I have to drive.

With more funding for public transportation, I would have more options.



Cassidy Austin-Merlino Bellingham, WA

“There is just such a high demand for the buses, but not enough frequency.”

"Public transportation has been life-changing. There have been several times when I haven't had access to a vehicle, and I've relied on public transportation. One of my favorite places is Boulevard Park, and thanks to public transit, I was able to get there even when my car broke down."

My name is Cassidy Austin-Merlino. I am a caregiver, therapeutic recreation professional, and really passionate disability rights advocate.

Originally from Alaska, I've been living in Bellingham for about 5 years. I moved down here for a river-guiding job on the Skagit River and later attended Western Washington University. I was really lucky to study therapeutic recreation to learn how to make leisure activities more accessible to everyone. Therapeutic recreation combined everything I was really passionate about.

Throughout college, I used the bus system. It was what made it possible for me to attend classes and for people to access the various recreational activities and programs we planned. Now, working as a caregiver, I see how paratransit is a core part of people's day-to-day and how they get things done.

Public transportation has been life-changing. There have been several times when I haven't had access to a vehicle, and I've relied on public transportation. One of my favorite places is Boulevard Park, and thanks to public transit, I was able to get there even when my car broke down. After all, not everybody can afford a car, and not everybody can drive one, and that shouldn't limit people's access to green spaces.

During my last quarter in school, I got a herniated disc in my back, and I lived a mile and a half from where my classes were. At the time, I was having a hard time even walking short distances. When I was in recovery, being able to go to the bus stop that was pretty close, hop on the bus, and take it to my classes made the difference between deciding to go or not. It was a really accessible option since paying for parking on campus was really expensive.

Cassidy Austin-Merlino

Bellingham, WA (continued)

"I'd prefer to take the bus everywhere instead of driving. But the reality is that I get dropped off, run the errand, and wait there for quite a while before getting home. Other times I've waited for a bus, but it's so full it just keeps driving past the stop. "

When I run Therapeutic Recreation programs - adaptive road cycling, trail biking, kayaking, blind soccer, wheelchair lacrosse, and just playing games at a park - a lot of participants rely on buses and paratransit to attend. Recreation and leisure are human rights, but they can get taken for granted by people who have always had immediate access to them. These activities recharge us, promote autonomy, foster community, and are often the highlight of people's weeks. But we can only provide therapeutic recreation programs if people can get to them. That means our transit agency has to be well staffed, and that requires funding for transit operations.

I still own a car because it has been essential for my jobs. I use it when I run errands because of the bus routes and how infrequently they run. I'd prefer to take the bus everywhere instead of driving. But the reality is that I get dropped off, run the errand, and wait there for quite a while before getting home. Other times I've waited for a bus, but it's so full it just keeps driving past the stop. This has made me late to work and school. It's hard because I see the same drivers over and over, and I know that they're trying their very best. There is just such a high demand for the buses, but not enough frequency. Public transportation shouldn't take significantly longer than driving.

When it comes to going places in the evening, using the bus can be trickier because buses stop running too early. I had a job working nights. My coworker would be able to take the bus to work but getting home, they'd have to ask everyone working if they could get a ride with them, and it was never guaranteed.

I hear people talk all the time about how important the bus system is to them and how they wouldn't be able to get to certain things if the buses didn't exist. I really want to stress how, for me personally, and also for the community, having reliable, frequent, and affordable public transportation is crucial, but that means our transit systems have to have Operations Funding.



Judy Jones Sedro-Woolley, WA

“Think about it this way: I depend on transit. You depend on your car. Your car is convenient for you, but transit is a must for me.”

"Now that my kids are grown up and I've retired, I take mostly paratransit. I am the chair of the Skagit Transit Community Advisory Committee. I'm impassioned about transit because this is how I get around. This is what helps me do life."

My name is Judy Jones, and I live in Sedro-Woolley in Skagit

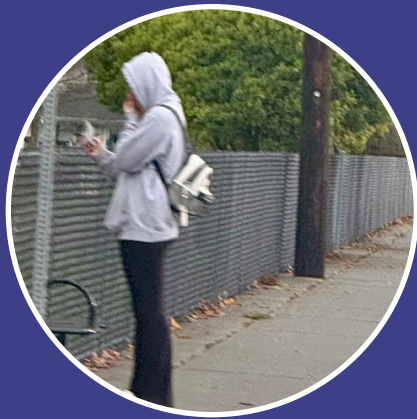
County. I am blind, due to retinopathy of prematurity. I am currently a white cane user, but I have also been a guide dog user. As blind people, my husband and I have been very independent.

I've been riding transit since 1979. Transit has allowed me to have a working career, to raise my kids, and to get where I need to and want to go. I've used combinations of paratransit and fixed route my whole life. Now that my kids are grown up and I've retired, I take mostly paratransit. I am the chair of the Skagit Transit Community Advisory Committee. I'm impassioned about transit because this is how I get around. This is what helps me do life.

I take paratransit to church, to go shopping, and to meet up with friends for coffee. I was in a "Gals Pals Group" for a while, which was 8 friends trying different cafes in the area, and I'd take paratransit there. Most of where I go is just for leisure activities.

Think about it this way: I depend on transit. You depend on your car. Your car is convenient for you, but transit is a must for me.

Our agency could definitely use funding. They were not able to get all the grant funding that they were hoping for, and we do unfortunately have several fixed route cancellations or decreased frequency several times a week simply because of a lack of drivers. Instead of a bus coming every hour, it'll come every two hours, which just isn't reliable. People need assurance that they can get to work and other scheduled activities. Skagit Transit is putting the effort into trying to bring drivers in through training, but we just frankly need more money.



Blanca Everett, WA

**“I am totally dependent on
Community Transit.”**

"Even on the way to school, I have to leave very early. Even if the App says that a bus will be there at 11:30 the bus could come 10 minutes early, late or not at all. Then I have to wait for the next bus and miss my class."

My name is Blanca. I've lived in Everett for about 3 years. I love to spend time with my family camping or hiking in the mountains or trying new places to eat. I'm also a student at Everett Community College working on my Associates Degree in Sociology. I don't have a driver's license, so I am totally dependent on Community Transit. I use it for everything from getting to school and hanging out with friends, and have had many great experiences on transit.

The first time I went to Seattle, I took the bus to the Everett station and went from there to Northgate, where I took the Light Rail. The Light Rail was very fast and comfortable, but when I first got to the station, I was confused and had to ask one of the people with yellow jackets how to get to the right track. I was so happy when they gave me great directions.

But there are also challenges with the bus, especially after 5 pm. If you are lucky, you can get a bus. My last class is from 5-7 pm. I have no problem getting there, but after 5, the bus runs every hour instead of every 30 minutes. There have been times when I had to call my uncle for a ride or spend almost \$15 for an Uber to get home.

There is another bus that could take me home, but I would have to walk 30 minutes from the bus stop, and it is very dark and a little scary. School is only 5-10 minutes away by car, but the bus can take me over an hour. Even on the way to school, I have to leave very early. Even if the App says that a bus will be there at 11:30 the bus could come 10 minutes early, late or not at all. Then I have to wait for the next bus and miss my class.

There should be a strategy for students to figure out what routes and what times would work best, and those buses should run frequently. I know that there are many students like me who take the 29 route. We all need frequent, reliable, efficient transit, and that means more funds for operations.



Sanika Kabbur Bothell, WA

**“Public transport is a lifesaver,
letting me get around Washington.”**

"While there is a bus route from Bothell to the Lynnwood station, it takes twice as long to get there."

My name is Sanika Kabbur. I'm a rising senior at Bothell High School, and I hope to pursue political science and economics in college. I am interested in and involved with organizations that focus on equity and accessibility, like Communities for our Colleges (C4C), the Snohomish County Children's Commission, and the Alliance for Gun Responsibility (AGR).

For the majority of my life, I have dealt with having myoclonic seizures, which are daily uncontrollable hand/body jerks. These everyday seizures increased in intensity and frequency as I entered high school, to the point where I felt it would be unsafe for me to drive. I didn't realize I have a form of epilepsy until my junior year, which all delayed me from getting my driver's license. Public transport is a lifesaver, letting me get around Washington. For example, I take the light rail to work in Seattle, or sometimes I'll go down to Seattle for something fun, like the U District Cherry Blossom Festival at the UW campus.

Last year, from October to March, I had an internship with the Alliance for Gun Responsibility, so I took the light rail down to the Westlake station to get to their office in Seattle. To get the light rail, I needed my parents to drive me to Lynnwood City Station, and it is only from there that I can ride the light rail. One issue I run into is that so many people take the light rail that there aren't enough parking spaces, especially during peak hours. We often have to circle around and around to find a spot, making public transport feel even more inaccessible and inefficient.

While there is a bus route from Bothell to the Lynnwood Light Rail station, it takes twice as long to get there. I also run into the issue of the bus not always arriving on time or being early. If I miss the bus, I have to wait another half hour for the next one.

Sanika Kabbur

Bothell, WA (continued)

"I really love using public transport, and I know it can be done well, as in how cities like Washington, DC, have built their public transport system. "

Another way I use the bus is to go to the Bothell Library. Including the walking time to the bus stop and then from the bus stop to the library, it takes way longer than it should to get there. Another issue I see in Bothell is that there isn't a bus stop right at the Bothell Library, even though it's a communal space. Instead, the nearest bus stop is 10 minutes away on foot.

I really love using public transport, and I know it can be done well, as in how cities like Washington, DC, have built their public transport system. Since I rely on public transport and can't drive yet, I wish there were a better bus system to get to Lynnwood, as well as expanded light rail service to more suburban areas like Bothell and Redmond. It would make transportation a lot easier.

More dedicated funding would improve transit service and increase ridership.



Jill Reasoner Everett, WA

“Being reliant on public transit means I have to do a lot of extra planning.”

"Imagine that every time you wanted to go for a drive, your keys wouldn't work for half an hour. It was out of your hands, and you had no other way to get where you were going. That's what it feels like to be reliant on infrequent public transit."

My name is Jill Reasoner, and I am a 58-year-old woman who has been legally blind since college. I raised my kids in Monroe because we could get a bigger, more affordable house out there. In Monroe, I lived one mile from the closest bus stop, which meant that I was outside of the paratransit service area. I lived there for 20 years raising my five kids, and I was really isolated. Friends helped, and when my kids grew up and got licenses, it was still a real drag to always rely on them to get around.

Just last year I moved to downtown Everett, so I have access to Everett Transit buses and Paratransit, and they pick me up right in front of my condo building. It's just so freeing to be independent. I feel like I can go anywhere in Snohomish and King Counties on the Dart and Access buses. And yes, it does take some time, but I'm just thankful to be able to have the opportunity to be able to go out on my own and not have to depend on family or friends. The difference in my sense of independence is night and day.

I am so grateful for this freedom of movement, and at the same time, being reliant on public transit means I have to do a lot of extra planning. I have to schedule my Paratransit rides days ahead of time, and be prepared for them to come late, or take longer once I'm on board to drop others off. Sometimes Dart will change my pickup time to significantly earlier. If I'm at the doctor's office, I can't leave early, and have to figure out another way home.

Imagine that every time you wanted to go for a drive, your keys wouldn't work for half an hour. It was out of your hands, and you had no other way to get where you were going. That's what it feels like to be reliant on infrequent public transit. As you can imagine, if the bus came twice as frequently, it would be like you only had to wait for your keys to work for just a few minutes rather than a half an hour. It would make such a difference in so many lives, to have the ability to go where we want to, when we want to! **Thank you for serving our community and listening to our stories.**



CONCLUSION

Every day, all across Washington state, hundreds of thousands of people choose the benefits of traveling by buses, trains, streetcars, paratransit vehicles, biking, and walking. A quarter of the population relies on transit because car ownership is so expensive or because they have a condition that doesn't allow them to get behind a wheel. The people in the stories above, whether they are a veteran accessing food and other necessities, a highschooler working to get a better education, a senior citizen looking to socialize and connect with their grandchildren, a caretaker getting to work, or a young person searching for their first job, all face formidable challenges getting where they need to go without wasting hours walking to the nearest transit station or waiting for the next bus or train. In some cases, they have to spend an exorbitant amount of money to accomplish their daily tasks. In other cases, they just can't get where they need to go at all.

More-frequent service allows more people to rely on taking public transit for more trips, relieving pressure on family budgets while making public transit systems more stable with their larger ridership bases. Running additional public transit service has immediate benefits for communities: more freedom for existing riders and options for drivers, fewer injuries and deaths from car crashes, and more customers for local businesses.

However, for agencies in metropolitan areas with more than 200,000 people, federal funding can be used only for capital projects, such as building new infrastructure, renovating existing facilities, and purchasing new vehicles. In order to help agencies run more service by hiring more operators or staff who maintain vehicles and other public transit infrastructure, we need a more balanced approach that includes local, state, and federal funding sources. Congress must provide transit agencies with funds they can use to operate frequent, reliable service.

If transit is not improved, Washingtonians will continue to have restricted access to everything, from health care to the ability to work at a job that can support a family to civic participation. By expanding federal funding to increase transit agencies' operating budgets, riders will experience life-changing benefits in the service hours, geographic extent, frequency, and reliability of their transit trips.

The stories above have demonstrated why public transportation is essential to the lives of Washington families, and limited operational capacity limits how much this core service can improve people's lives. With increasing gas prices making driving less affordable for working families, investing in public transit creates a necessary and affordable option for them to get around.



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ABOUT ALLIANCE FOR A JUST SOCIETY

Alliance for a Just Society (AJS) is a national center for innovative organizing and strategy based in Seattle, Washington. We build powerful organizations and communities. We fight for racial, social, and economic justice.

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