

Transit Access Stories: The State of Transportation Equity in Seven Cities



Most of us want to live in communities where everyone can easily access plentiful opportunities. Public transit has the potential to provide us all with affordable, clean, and convenient access to home, work, school, health care, and other essentials of daily life.

Yet, public transit service hasn't been a genuine lever of mobility for most Americans because it's been underfunded. Our elected officials—influenced by the auto and road-building industry—have chosen to invest in car-oriented infrastructure like highways and parking lots over transit. Typically, 80% of federal transportation dollars go to cars and 20% goes to public transit.

Within transit itself, decision-makers disproportionately spend transit funding on service that better serves affluent white commuters than Black and brown people, people with limited means, people with disabilities, and others.

As a result of both of these forces, most transit riders have dramatically lower access to opportunities than car riders. And transit riders of varying identities—like race, income, gender, and physical ability—have levels of access that don't necessarily match their needs.

To create transit systems that work for everyone, transit agencies and advocates must first understand how well all transit riders can or can't access what they need to thrive.

The Transit Access Stories combine transportation access to opportunity data, quotes from riders, and other data sources to demonstrate how decisions from transportation leaders on service planning, policy, and funding impact how people can access their daily needs in seven U.S. cities.

Advocates can use this information to demand change from transportation decision-makers, and transit decision-makers can apply our data to implement solutions within their systems.