

# Barriers to Transportation for Pennsylvanians with Disabilities

Transportation is a pivotal part of everyday life – necessary for getting to and from work, going to appointments, getting groceries, and spending time with friends and family. For Pennsylvanians with disabilities, inadequate and inferior access to transportation can mean less and lower paying employment opportunities, logistical challenges, and increased isolation.

## Public Transportation

- 7.4% of Pennsylvanians with disabilities commute via public transportation
- As public transportation budgets are decreased and stops are eliminated, people with disabilities are forced to navigate further distances between stops, which can be physically challenging and dangerous.
- Bumped out bus stops, which allow for easier boarding and disembarking of wheelchair users, are infrequent, and passengers are instead often let out on the street, leading to unsafe situations.

## Accessible Taxis and Ride Shares

- Taxis and ride shares allow Pennsylvanians greater flexibility and autonomy with transportation.
- Accessible taxis are available in some urban centers, but not widespread throughout the suburbs, much less rural areas, restricting Pennsylvanians with disabilities who do not live in a major city.
- Wheelchair accessible Ubers and Lyfts are non-existent in the vast majority of Pennsylvania, depriving people with disabilities of a convenient, on-demand way of getting around.

## Struggles with Paratransit

- Paratransit is the shared ride service available to Pennsylvanians with disabilities that requires one day notice for scheduling.
- Drivers can be 10 minutes early or 20 minutes late; riders may be no more than 5 minutes late.
- Inflexible and challenging to use for riders whose lives are not strictly scheduled in advance.



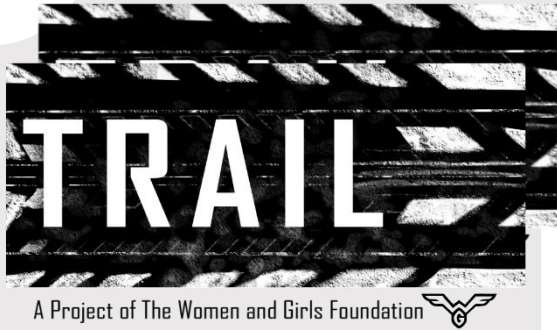
The Women and Girls Foundation launched the Training Regional Advocates to Influence Leadership (TRAIL) program in 2020, in collaboration with Dr. Josie Badger. The goal of the program is to develop a statewide legislative advocacy training program for people with disabilities. TRAIL supports advocates with disabilities in learning strategies to make systemic change.

Recommendations represent the ideas of TRAIL members and do not represent those of the Women and Girls Foundation or any partners. For additional information please contact Dr Josie Badger at [Josie@JBadgerConsultingInc.org](mailto:Josie@JBadgerConsultingInc.org)

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## *Policy Recommendations*

### **Incentivize Uber, taxis, rideshares, and other transportation programs to offer expanded accessible transit**

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- The general population has greatly benefited from private transportation companies including taxis and Uber. However, the majority of the services are not disability friendly or accessible.
- Create low costs loans for buying or modifying vehicles that will be used in transportation programs.
- Increase milage reimbursement rates for ride share

### **Expand free transit program for citizens to include accessible transit [LINK](#)**

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- There is a free transit program for senior citizens in Pennsylvania which has greatly increased the availability and utilization of public transportation were used by individuals over the age of 65.
- Expand this program to include individuals with disabilities.

### **Introduce rating programs to improve access and accountability to paratransit**

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- Accessible transportation is often not held accountable for unreliable, unsafe, or overall inadequate transportation.
- A feedback loop should be developed that is available to the public and officials where individuals can easily rate their services and report issues.

### **Support development of competition**

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- If there is an accessible transportation entity in a region, it is often the only accessible transportation available. This allows many of these businesses to provide low quality services with the lack of availability or flexibility in fares.
- Encourage local county and city governments to create a policy where accessible vehicles are allowed to be closer to an entrance than other public transportation options. This will increase the number of businesses who are interested in purchasing accessible vehicles. Chicago allows accessible vehicles to take the first set of parking spots at the airport, in turn causing companies to increase capacity for accessible vehicles

### **Paid Family and Medical Leave**

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- A majority of people with disabilities (even those who are employed), live below poverty. Urgent medical or care needs can prevent individuals from working and thus a loss of income. Paid leave would allow individuals to pay for accessible transportation for medical care, independent living, and employment.