

Public transportation helps get people to work

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Not a day goes by that Barbara Salisbury doesn't think about transportation. When you're blind, figuring out how to get to work, to the grocery and to the library isn't as simple as climbing behind the wheel of a vehicle. Public transportation impacts where she lives and how she lives. It's a way of life.

Her daily challenges have helped her in her job, too. She is the mobility manager for Area 10 Agency on Aging in Bloomington, where she tries to figure out how to improve transportation options for people with disabilities and older adults in Monroe County.

What she has learned is that public transportation is just as much about the economic health of a community as it is about providing a necessary service.

When people don't have access to transportation, they can't get to work. They don't have earning power that enables them to spend. Transit often can be the difference between whether someone is independent or dependent.

Bloomington has viable public transit, including a rural transit program throughout Monroe County. Unfortunately, that's limited to weekdays only, so someone in the county relying on public transit couldn't take a job requiring weekend work. After all, not everyone can afford a car and insurance. Some residents need public transit for work.

"By supporting transit, you are decreasing people's reliance on social services," she said. "Getting people to work, and helping them make money, you help the economy and help end the dependency."

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