

Successful transit means more funding and changing attitudes

Teresa Torres
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Founder and Executive Director, Everybody Counts Center for Independent Living



Teresa Torres is tired of hearing that public transit is important so seniors and those with disabilities can get to doctor's appointments. It's downright maddening, she says, because it's only a part of the story.

Sure, people may need to take public transit to get to the doctor, but they also need to go to the grocery, movies, shopping and attend community events. In short, they need it to live.

Torres, founder and executive director of Everybody Counts Center for Independent Living in Merrillville, has spent much of her career understanding the needs of her community. And what she has learned is that the community needs a reliable, efficient transit system for everyone.

"It's essential for economic growth and to be a vibrant, growing, working community," she said.

It's frustrating, Torres added, because when she travels to other cities, she sees how transit can work. She was in San Diego for a conference recently. Her group used wheelchairs to get from one end of the city to the other, taking public transportation. They had no difficulties.

In San Diego, like so many other cities, public transportation is part of the culture. In Lake County – and many other counties in Indiana – not only is public transportation not part of the culture, it's an abstract idea. Many people – even elected officials – have not experienced what it's like to use frequent, reliable public transportation in other states or countries.

Torres knows what it means because she sees the impact transit can have. Every day she sees the struggles people have getting to the places they need to go. That's why she not only believes that culture can change, but she's working to make it happen in Lake County.

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