

There's an old saying, "You can't miss something you've never had." That's certainly true for us Alabamians who have not had robust public transportation for more than 70 years,

What's robust transit? It's bus/train service available throughout communities every 10-15 minutes, seven days a week, 24 hours a day giving everyone access to:

- Job opportunities
- Houses of worship
- Educational opportunities (libraries, schools, colleges)
- Doctors' appointments
- Entertainment (museums, theatres, movies, parks)
- Shopping centers
- Savings on car maintenance, parking fees and the environment
- And, if you are a senior citizen, enables you to live more independently

There was a time when Alabama did have good transit service in many areas. Here's a bit of history.

During the first half of the 20th century, public transportation consisted of streetcars. Gasoline powered buses didn't come along until the late 1940s – early 50s. Though segregated, buses were owned by the private company, Birmingham Electric which later transferred to Alabama Power.

Though still segregated, in the 1950s Alabama had a robust transit system in many areas. But, at that same time, in the early '50s, automobiles were becoming quite popular. Automakers, in an effort to increase sales, sought

access to larger areas. For them, more and better roads and bridges would do the trick.

So, in 1951, folks from the auto industry lobbied the Alabama legislature to get all gasoline tax dollars put into bridges and highways ONLY because it would greatly help their expansion.

Thus, in 1952, the Alabama legislature and the voters at that time, passed constitutional Amendment 93 putting all gasoline tax dollars into bridges and highways ONLY and that's still in effect today. The result was to draw down even more federal highway and bridge money.

However, when the legislature voted to put all of the gasoline tax dollars into bridges and highways only, it in essence, cut all state funding for public transit. Not visualizing the future and where we are today, that law has disenfranchised many citizens who don't own a vehicle and need transportation to work and other places.

So today, with no funds for public transit from the state, Alabama cannot get matching funds from the federal government to aid in the improvement of public transit. This is despite the fact that Alabamians pay federal taxes that go into the federal public transportation fund – a fund that supports states that do provide transit for its citizens. It's our loss because that money is divided among states that do provide matching funds.

Where does this leave us?

Each year, more than 2,000 students graduate from high School in this state. If their parents are not able to gift them with

automobiles, they are unable to get around to look for jobs, attend any of the local colleges, or do anything that will enhance their lives.

Older citizens, no longer able to drive, are also stuck. They are unable to do volunteer service, be assets to their communities or maintain their independence due to the lack of transportation. They are forced to become dependent on their adult children to get around. Those adults, while providing shuttle service, must take leave of their jobs to do so.

Robust transit service would be a boon to us all. Overall, we could have more inclusive and productive local and statewide economies that create more jobs for our communities.

Workforce development is the buzz word of the day, but the lack of access to public transportation is a huge barrier to workforce development.

In 2018, the Alabama legislature passed the Alabama Public Transportation Trust Fund bill, but it was not funded. With no matching funds from the state to get federal dollars, there is not enough local funding for public transit.

In the past two legislative sessions, Senator Linda Coleman-Madison sponsored bills that did not even pass out of committees. Had it passed, it would have collected \$5.00 on license plates purchased in the state – funds that would be used to fund the statewide transportation trust fund. There is normally a **four to one** match, so we cannot lose. It would provide funding for all counties that choose to participate. Remember, federal dollars which Alabama does

not match is now going to other states. It's time for Alabama to step up and improve our public transit system.

This message is an appeal to you to help ACT build an army of supporters statewide for public transportation.

Sprrrrrread the word. Sign up for the email list, call your elected officials, share on Facebook posts, invite ACT to speak at your church, club or business. We must make things change.

Thank you for your time and attention.