



Achieve with us.

September 18th, 2024

Pennsylvania House of Representatives, Transportation Committee

My name is Michael Anderson and I am the legislative advocate for The Arc of Philadelphia. I want to say thank you for inviting me to speak in front of you all this morning. I wanted to share a few stories and key points to emphasize the importance of transportation to me and my community.

1. Accessibility

For most, public transportation is a means to beat the city traffic, but for others, it is their livelihood. Nearly 3 Million, or 28%, of Pennsylvanians live with a disability, and having a disability restricts options for independent transportation, so much of the population relies on public transit. I applaud the improvements to the Ardmore train station finally making it an accessible one. Even though this is great news it's been long overdue and I wish that all Septa stations would become accessible. The closest train station to me which is within walking distance is not yet wheelchair accessible, so I still have to find transportation to get to the nearest accessible station which defeats the purpose of using public transportation. Accessibility must be a priority in all transit infrastructure.

2. Paratransit

I used to use Paratransit, or SEPTA's CCT, to a lot of my community outings but they have become way too unreliable to use. One time CCT arrived 5 hours after my scheduled pick up. I recognize the shortage of drivers and hope that the new mobile app will be able to cut these wait times down and be a more reliable service. But these systems won't be fixed with a mobile app, so implore the committee to explore ways to support accessible transit. The vehicles are accessible, but the logistics and coordination are not.

Part of the SpArc Philadelphia family of organizations

2350 West Westmoreland Street • Philadelphia, PA 19140
215.229.4550 • ArcPhiladelphia.org

3. My own vehicle

I am fortunate to have my own transportation but not everyone has this privilege. Even with my own accessible van, I must navigate an even more complex and underfunded system of disability services to maintain Direct Support Professionals that can drive me. Legislators are well aware of the DSP crisis, so here's another trickle-down effect of the DSP crisis on transportation for people with disabilities.

4. Costs

People with disabilities are more likely to live in poverty and to be un- or underemployed compared to their non-disabled peers. I do appreciate how ridesharing like Uber and Lyft have accessible vehicles for people who use wheelchairs. But these private services come with a financial burden, emphasizing the value and importance of public transportation for people with disabilities. Accessible transit translates to productive citizens.

5. Disability and Aging

The population is projected to keep aging and with that comes disabilities related to aging. If you're lucky enough, everyone in this room may live long enough to acquire a disability. Funding accessible transit builds the future we all need.

6. Airport Accessibility

I wanted to note that I also sit on committees advancing steps towards accessible air-travel, that address airport accessibility and to accessible planes as well.

Finally, as you explore these topics and considerations around accessible transit, I am happy to offer my time to consult as you make solutions a reality.

Please, do not let ableism persist in our transportation systems.

Thank you,
Michael Anderson
Legislative Advocate
MAnderson@ArcPhiladelphia.org

Part of the SpArc Philadelphia family of organizations