

Thank you for this opportunity to speak tonight

"Transition Services" is a current buzz phrase to describe the years when youth with a disability leave high school and attempt higher education, jobs, transportation, and housing. In Austin, people give lip service to this term; it is a goal with no funding behind it. I am about to tell you of my encounter with transition, hoping you will increase funding in a few areas.

I graduated from Westwood High School with a distinguished diploma and eight AP courses, planning to attend undergraduate and graduate school, locally. Born with quadriplegia and a startle reflex that will keep me from driving a car, I am dependent on public transportation; as my friends do not own a vehicle that holds a power wheelchair, I live in NW Austin off of 183, near the Spicewood Branch library and Tanglewood Park. My backyard is on Spicewood Springs Road, about one mile from 183. I have attendant care for part of my day and my parents do the evenings for free.

When my parents built our very accessible house, I was in second grade, and we made sure it was in the STS serving area. I became a "regular" rider on STS. Since then, STS has changed the boundaries and I am now $\frac{1}{4}$ of a mile too far away from a bus line to be allowed "regular" status. I must ride "standby" instead. Each morning, I must call and see if my request from the day before will be honored. Who can live this way? Who can maintain a job or a spot in college, not knowing until the morning if you have a ride that day? STS should have said that they'll charge me two tickets instead of one, to encourage people to eventually move closer to a bus; but instead they are just refusing to give you a ride.

Let's discuss the curb cuts to my nearest bus line. As I navigate up Spicewood Springs Road, they are set at a diagonal so that as I descend each ramp I find myself in moving traffic because one street or the other is always moving. Cars are cresting the hills going 45 MPH, their drivers suddenly realizing that I am in front of them in their lane. To travel this road to my bus stop is a "death march" and it will continue to be, until they change the curb cuts from diagonal, to the slower street. Additionally, my bus stop has no ramp up onto it.

To sum up transportation: I can't get an STS ride, I can't get to my bus stop or up onto it, my parents can't find a new lot that is within $\frac{3}{4}$ mile of a bus line for me to be a regular STS rider, nor can they afford to build another accessible house because they can't recoup the extras they spent on our current one.

So I attempted to get onto subsidized housing waiting lists to move nearer to a bus line and to satisfy the $\frac{3}{4}$ mile STS rule, and I was told that these lists are so long they are frozen, that I should keep calling back each week. How can they freeze a list? Freezing a list prevents a governmental body from accurately quantifying and qualifying the need.

In a recent visit to my spasticity clinic at Children's Hospital, they said I need to find adult physicians and move on up to adult medicine. I asked for a list of physicians who take Medicaid, because I am soon getting a pump in my spinal cord to deliver pain meds. Even if Children's installs my pump, I will need continual care as an adult to maintain it. Children's Hospital responded that no Austin physicians

take adult Medicaid, especially the specialists I'll need. City of Austin, please subsidize local physicians so that a block of them will migrate to adult Medicaid!

Because I can't get anywhere on any front, here are my 'band-aid' solutions. After high school, St. Edwards University offered me a full scholarship. The director of STS, Jan, told me he would make me a 'regular' rider for college. When it became time to accept my scholarship at St. Eds, I found that he had retired and the interim STS director said he couldn't grandfather me in. That is still their position and I have this in writing that I can only be on 'stand-by'. I try to use standby status for my rides to the Wheelchair Fitness Center and to my internship, and I rarely get a ride. Capitol Metro wouldn't work with me to let me pay a little extra for the extra 1/4 mile, I am stuck on standby, with no ability to keep a job or a spot in school. So I turned down the scholarship to St. Eds and instead I attend an expensive college in Georgetown, TX. In the daytime I travel to classes by wheelchair and have attendant care, and at night I have free services from my family who take turns coming up there to sleep with me, something that Southwestern allows but St. Eds didn't. In a couple of years, I will be in graduate school at UT, with absolutely no way to get there from my house, back to square one in trying to find solutions.

Here is what I am asking this committee for:

For Housing Keep the waiting lists open so that officials have good data necessary to proving in greater funding. Increase the funding to serve more people.

Medicaid Subsidize local physicians so that they will treat young adults with disability.

For Special Transit Increase STS funding. Consider young adults at their parents' addresses (any distance from a bus line) to be regular riders until age 30, so that they can have the years necessary to obtain subsidized housing near a bus line. Charge them two tickets instead of one, if need be, but don't assume 'stand-by' is adequate for maintaining a job or a college GPA. Provide 'regular' status or nothing, even if you must charge for it. Also, 'grandfather in' the addresses like mine, where we intentionally built where there was STS and then we became disenfranchised. Bottom line: Make every effort to keep people out of institutions via adequate transportation, which is capital to personal earnings.

For Curb Cuts Fund curb cuts for all intersections. Cease building diagonal cuts (death traps) and begin building them towards the quieter side-streets. Correct the ones on Spicewood Springs so that I can navigate to local services.

Transition in General Acknowledge that teens don't graduate from high school to immediately move out. Many who graduate at age 21 or 22 live at home and slowly build skills for living away from home. Many are still waiting for CLASS/HCS attendant care services or subsidized housing. Many don't have 24/7 attendant care and need relatives to fill in the extra hours. Stretch transportation rules, for young adults in these situations. Definitely find a way for students with mobility disabilities to get to college classes.

Thank you for your time today. May I answer any questions?

Sincerely, *Amy Lutzinger*