



SARTAC

Self Advocacy and Beyond

About the Author:

Hello. I am Melissa Southall and my fellowship focuses on overcoming transportation barriers for people living with physical and developmental disabilities in the state of West Virginia. This focus has led me to create the CIT group which is made up of local nonprofit leaders who have also recognized this gap in our community. Together we are working to expand transportation resources throughout the state using local and state and federal influences including Congressman David McKinley (R), the WV Department of Transportation, Wood County Senior Citizens Association, Mid Ohio Valley Transit Authority and many others.

The Reasons Behind The Project:

The reasons are simple to identify, but the solutions are more complicated. West Virginia is a beautiful state comprised of mountains, ski resorts, rivers, and tourist attractions. However, despite some major cities, it is still very rural with a rather small population. This creates issues for transportation for people with disabilities, as well as their families, friends, and coworkers. First, rural terrain and high cost to construct highways creates a barrier to transportation. Since highway funding is based on tax revenue and federal dollars are based on population to bring the greatest return on investment, there are many areas that do not have adequate roads. Second, even in more densely populated areas, there is inadequate public transportation or ridership is too low to sustain existing public transportation systems. Furthermore, many counties do not have any public transportation.

One example of the issues of transportation our state faces is the KRT Bus system. The KRT used to have a route between the state's two largest cities, Charleston and Huntington. Unfortunately, funding was cut for the daily route and the only alternative is riding the AMTRAK train at 7:20 a.m. from Huntington to Charleston on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays with the return trip after 9:00 p.m., which is impractical for most people let alone those with disabilities. In an effort to get feedback from individuals with disabilities throughout the state the state, I developed a survey that was distributed statewide to gather information from people with disabilities and the families, staff, and other caregivers who assist them. The results of the survey are included on the following pages along with comments from many who answered the survey.

How I Approached The Challenges:

Despite the challenges I faced, I did not give up. Originally, I planned to sit down with state officials involved in West Virginia's transportation department. The goal being to change the bus routes throughout the state to be more accommodating for individuals with disabilities in rural counties. However, I quickly learned that change on a state level comes very slowly and that I would need to focus on starting a regional transportation plan and expand to other counties as funding and support becomes available. Being successful in one area would hopefully lead to duplicating the program to other parts of the state. After the survey results, you can see what the future plans are.

On the following pages are the results of a survey conducted across West Virginia in 2019 by Melissa Southall as part of her SARTAC Fellowship to determine the transportation needs of people with disabilities along with their families and staff.

Survey Name: West Virginia Transportation Needs Survey

The information being collected is for statistical purposes only. Your name is not being requested, however, it is important that your age be marked which will help the data collected to be more useful.

The survey was anonymous. Of the 165 responses, 55 different cities in West Virginia representing all parts of the state responded. There were also two responses from Ohio and one from Kentucky. Out of state responses were welcome due to some people living along the borders may have had access to transportation in another state or they came to West Virginia from out of state to work.

Do you have a cognitive, intellectual, and/or developmental disability?

Answer	0%	100%	Number of Response(s)	Response Ratio
Yes			110	66.6 %
No			53	32.1 %
No Response(s)			2	1.2 %
Totals			165	100%

Please indicate with best describes you:

Answer	0%	100%	Number of Response(s)	Response Ratio
Self-Advocate			100	61.7 %
Family Member			24	14.8 %
Staff			30	18.5 %
Community Member			16	9.8 %
Other			1	<1 %
Totals			162	100%

I am

Answer	0%	100%	Number of Response(s)	Response Ratio
Male			72	43.6 %
Female			89	53.9 %
Other			1	<1 %
No Response(s)			3	1.8 %
Totals			165	100%

I am:

Answer	0%	100%	Number of Response(s)	Response Ratio
White			148	89.6 %
Black			6	3.6 %
Asian			2	1.2 %
Hispanic			0	0.0 %
2 or More			4	2.4 %
Other			2	1.2 %
No Response(s)			3	1.8 %
Totals			165	100%

Age Group:

Answer	0%	100%	Number of Response(s)	Response Ratio
16-18			10	6.0 %
18-25			22	13.3 %
26-35			26	15.7 %
36-45			31	18.7 %
46-55			39	23.6 %
56-65			24	14.5 %
66-75+			10	6.0 %
No Response(s)			3	1.8 %
Totals			165	100%

Do you own or have access to a car or other personal vehicle?

Answer	0%	100%	Number of Response(s)	Response Ratio
Yes			94	56.9 %
No			66	40.0 %
No Response(s)			5	3.0 %
Totals			165	100%

Is public transportation available in your community?

Answer	0%	100%	Number of Response(s)	Response Ratio
Yes			115	69.6 %
No			38	23.0 %
Other			7	4.2 %
No Response(s)			5	3.0 %
Totals			165	100%

If public transportation is available in your community, are you able to use it? (Your home or and places you need to get to are on the bus route, etc.)

Answer	0%	100%	Number of Response(s)	Response Ratio
Yes			87	52.7 %
No			61	36.9 %
Other			6	3.6 %
No Response(s)			11	6.6 %
Totals			165	100%

Comments:

"Dial a ride services for disabled."

"Not without assistance."

"Sometimes."

"Not without assistance."

"Not accessible for others with disabilities all the time."

"Yes and no. The public bus is unsafe for anyone not able to protect themselves."

What forms of transportation are needed to provide you better access in your community?

104 Response(s)

This is a selection of the 104 responses:

"Like to have a bus in Wetzel County."

"More buses, special vans for wheelchairs, affordable buses between cities and towns."

"Bus that will go from Huntington,Charleston,Parkersburg,Weston,Morgantown."

"I must take days off to transport my in-laws to appointments. They are both disabled and it is nearly impossible for me to do alone."

"Would like them to come up to my house."

"Better accessible wheelchair ramps/lifts."

"Need more public transportation for out of city limits."

"Bus come out on bigger variety of routes."

"Very limited Tri River Transit you must Pre-arrange."

"Better Wheelchair accessibility. Dial-A-Ride is always late."

"Expanded bus stops to increase access."

"Increased participation of Lyft and Uber type or Ride sharing services."

"Ones that get there on time and I'm able to catch it."

"It would be good for Huntington and Charleston to be connected with public transportation."

"Smaller buses or vans because big buses can't get to my home. I would need to go down a very steep hill in my wheelchair to get to the bus stop."

"More bus stops or bus stop at my home so I can get to work on time."

"Transportation after 5 pm and on weekends."

"I love the public transit authority in Marion County however they only run certain routes and hours and are not accessible in some communities. I would like to see them extend their routes and run longer hours."

"I have called the buses in Morgantown WV. Didn't get any help to get to medical appt."

"Buses that connect with different county's."

"Need Door to Door Service."

"I think participants who live outside of city limits are struggling with transportation. The city bus does not go two miles past the bus stop."

"Transportation to and from work. I am not able to keep regular employment because i have to rely on family to get there."

"Taxi services. Physician appointment services for those without Medicaid."

"Access to more locations. Cost is a major issue. Cost of available transportation is over \$200 a year."

"Not enough transportation that has accessible vans. Roads are also narrow here so limits areas to be driven. It would also be nice for cost to be lower for the medical van with MountainLine."

"24/7 taxis. Medicare paid private transportation."

"24/7 Bus transportation through rural areas. Medicaid paid transportation that is not for medical purposes."Mingo County has no public transport. The hospital frequently discharges patients knowing they can't access follow-up care in Huntington or Charleston"

"It would be helpful to use public transportation for all my trips. I have a wheel chair."

"Bus pass free/ companies get a pass for help utilize other forms of transportation car pools."

"Buses would be ideal as there are none in my area."

"Route change to areas of public housing."

"Need help to get on off need to be closer to my apartment can't walk without help."

"Van or buses to go to rural areas."

"More frequent bus stops."

"Buses needed in rural areas."

"Vans with wheelchair accessibility. Why are there not programs that help families with this? It is very expensive and until my home is paid for in 10 yrs I can't purchase one. I'm a single mom of 3, I work full time but \$10 an hour doesn't go far. I'm sure many other families are in this situation."

Do you feel that the lack of transportation in your community is a barrier to inclusion?

Answer	0%	100%	Number of Response(s)	Response Ratio
Strongly Agree			60	36.3 %
Agree			47	28.4 %
Somewhat Agree			24	14.5 %
Neither Agree or Disagree			14	8.4 %
Somewhat Disagree			0	0.0 %
Disagree			6	3.6 %
Strongly Disagree			2	1.2 %
Other			2	1.2 %
No Response(s)			10	6.0 %
Totals			165	100%

How does reduced or no public transportation service affect your daily activities (work, shopping, socialization, advocacy, medical appointments, etc.)?

92 Response(s)

- "Individuals I serve can not get to appointments, work, shopping, any advocacy which leads to struggling in their day to day lives."
- "I can't get a lot of jobs that I would otherwise be qualified for."
- "If there isn't available transportation you can't go any where."
- "I must take days off to transport my in laws to appointments. They are both disabled and it is nearly impossible for me to do alone."
- "Hard to visit family and friends."
- "Not able to go as many places."
- "If the bus ran on more days I could work more days."
- "I would miss out on appointments, social gatherings and other community activities."
- "If staff don't have a vehicle I wouldn't be able to go to work at Little Ceasar's."
- "Every activity in my life but home activities."
- "Not being able to do things that I want and need to do."
- "I'm not able to go to friends and other activity's I enjoy doing."
- "I'm at the mercy of others availability to help me!"
- "Makes it hard to take power chair on trips!"
- "Shopping, Socialization."
- "I have to pay people to transport me and it is costly."
- "My student's independence is very limited as are their opportunities as a result."
- "Extremely when I am sick and can not drive."
- "Have to wait for someone to take me on my next adventure."
- "It would make me late for work or I couldn't get food or clothes."
- "I have to stay at home unless staff takes me."
- "I can only go places if my personal attendant takes me. But not everyone has a PCA and they might not be able to do as much as I do. I have a van but it is very costly to keep it running. Without it I can't go anywhere even with my PCA."
- "I CAN only go to the store or visit friends when my PCA is working. She can't always work every day I want to go somewhere."
- "I don't like being late for work."
- "We have staff but if they don't drive it allows me to go to different places."
- "I have to rely on others can only go somewhere when they are not at work."
- "Can't go anywhere Staff takes me when they can, sometimes they don't take so I don't get to go."
- "There are times I do need public transportation but on weekends there are nine and I have to set at home."
- "When I am without a vehicle and public transportation is not available, I am stuck at home."
- "I don't live on a bus route. Going to Charleston is very hard when no one can't or won't take me."
- "The transportation for Morgantown is not working."
- "Have to stay home."
- "Getting to work."

Comments continued:

"Can't go to medical appt."

"Only means of transportation is by staff."

"Companions."

"This affects the participants who live outside of city limits with no other means of transportation."

"I'm not able to get out in community. Not able to go to meetings."

"I am not able to keep regular employment. I am not able to visit my one and only friend who lives 12 miles away. I can't go shopping by myself and for myself. I have difficulty keeping doctor's appointments because of lack of transportation. I do not get to go to church."

"It makes it hard for some people to find a ride."

"There is a problem because there is not a lot of transportation. I am unable to get out in the community because of the lack of transportation."

"It would be hard to get to places if you don't have public transportation."

"Feels like no fun, no appointment to see the doctor or dentist, no shopping, absolutely nothing. And that makes me feel depressed 100 %."

"It previous did a year ago before owning a car due to the proximity of where I live in Shepherdstown. Shepherds town has a lack of transportation. Shepherd University contracts Epta public transportation to come from Martinsburg. I own a bike. Shopping not much ask mom and dad help when that happened Use LogisticCare when I got my way and person."

"Cannot get a job without transportation to get there."

"Prevents members that I work with from getting to events outside of the local hospital and walmart as the route is limited and the cost is extreme."

"Increases poverty, increase mental illness, increases isolation, increase disability, increases physical and medical harm."

"Have to wait for someone to take me."

"Medical appointments, work."

"It makes it difficult when having to get rides from staff and having to transfer from chair to car."

"Not enough information to use who is available."

"Whenever I want to go I have to rely on my staff and family and they are not always available to take me when I want or need to go."

"I need to rely on others when they have time if they have time."

"Can't work or go anywhere until someone can take me."

"To get my son out in the community I have to lift him into my car and he has to be in a push chair. He's 18 and weighs 185lbs. It kills my back."


"A few times a month I hire an accessible van service. For a local ride round trip is \$40! I worry once he's out of school he will get depressed from lack of social interaction."

"Have to depend on friends, family, to get around to the stores, Medical appointments, and daily activities, work, socialization. if you do not have friends or family around it is hard to do daily activities."

Do you need access to other areas of West Virginia?

Answer	0%	100%	Number of Response(s)	Response Ratio
Yes			103	62.4 %
No			52	31.5 %
No Response(s)			10	6.0 %
Totals			165	100%

Are you able to use public transportation to access these areas?

Answer	0%	100%	Number of Response(s)	Response Ratio
Yes			53	32.1 %
No			99	60.0 %
No Response(s)			13	7.8 %
Totals			165	100%

Are there any other comments you would like to make concerning the availability of transportation either in your own community or across West Virginia and how it could be improved?

63 Response(s)

"In the upper parts of the state the transportation not there people with disabilities need accessible transportation to work and live in Community it is important to have it available so people with disability can be part of our city."

"Needs major improvements not enough. We need bus service around the state."

"If the bus didn't cost much I could visit my family and it went more places."

"Buses need to go to other places in WV."

"Need more buses that go to different county's that don't cost a lot "

"Better pick up and drop off spot. Need better advertisement."

"People need to about the transportation barriers!"

"Out of town transportation."

"To have more variety of transportation for people live out in rural areas."

"Restore Buses to Charleston."

"Very much needed to keep my freedom."

"I think the bus drivers are doing a great job."

"I would like every community to have accessible van form of public transportation,like KRT"

"The area I live in only has bus I think every 2 hours. The bus driver drives really fast around these curves."

"Getting to the major hospitals in Morgantown, Charleston, and the VA hospital in Clarksburg can be a challenge. A couple of organizations help with volunteer transportation in town but the barriers are if people qualify. Example, American Cancer Society Road to Recovery program is for cancer patients only. Faithlink is for older people."

"I like the train. I think the train is a good thing to include in transportation."

"More insurance paid for transportation services."

"We need something like the Eastern Panhandle Transit Authority to service a wider region and make prescheduled pick ups for the disabled. Washington DC area has an agreement with WMATA for a program that is designated as transportation to the disabled. here is more information on a good working model to plan from <https://www.wmata.com/service/acces> "

"I feel like there should be more resources available to people because when it comes down to it we don't have access to our community or our state."

"Lack of transportation in Shepherdstown pushed me to work on becoming a licensed driver. I like adventure and don't like to stay stuck in a town. Wv taught me how to navigate on a bike Shepherdstown is perfect for bike transportation(Charles Town, Martinsburg, harpers Ferry on C&O and other town s) but needs improvement for public transportation."

"It would be reasonable to determine those that are able to work but do not have transportation in collaboration with potential employers."

"Cost is most important. Our members also can not get transportation to outlining areas. Living in the Panhandle the route is limited. There is virtually no way for a member to catch the bus and get to any local events or to an area where they can access broader transportation. There again are few buses that run to other counties or Pittsburgh and vans that are wheelchair accessible are few and far between."

"Southwest WV is a ghost town, many counties have few red lights, much less public transport. People get sicker because transportation is just not available. Specialists are in Huntington or Charleston, which is several hours away. We just don't have healthcare in effect."

"Many adults need transportation for their daily lives."

"Buses that offer free rides."

"Need a bus that can to groups on trips."

"It would be super great if there was a supervised transportation that could take me from my residence to my guardians home as I'm not allowed to travel alone."

It would be helpful to be able to go to other places in WV to attend a conference."

"We have a bus now but it works very limited hours and is expensive. You go somewhere and have to stay 4-5 hours at least before pickup. Stops running at 4pm. Unable to go to doctor appts .in Parkersburg/ Charleston area due to time constraints and cost."

"If you do not live in area of the state where their is Public Transportation then you have to depend on friends and family are pay people to do every day activities."

Where do we go from here?

As you can see, the data collected from my survey showed the uneven balance of available transportation across our counties in West Virginia and gave my team of collaborators which has included several agencies serving people with disabilities as well as transportation experts from the WV Department of Transportation, Wood, Wirt, Washington Interstate Planning Committee, Mid Ohio Valley Transit Authority, Ohio State Mobility Manager and the Athens County (Ohio) Mobility Manager, the insight to start tackling the issue at a local level and expand to other counties in West Virginia from there. Using local resources has already helped us to gain a better understanding of the incredible need for improved coordinated transportation within Wood County, which consists of both urban and rural community members. Through my collaboration with the Wood County Senior Citizens Center and SW Resources in Wood County, we have begun pursuing a 5310 grant that will allow the vehicles that the Senior Center has on-hand to be used for our personal transportation purposes with staff provided by SW Resources. Obtaining this grant could potentially allow us to hire our own mobility manager as well, who could devote their time to organizing and coordinating transportation for anyone in need in Wood County. A mobility manager for our county would also work closely with the state to eventually expand available transportation across county lines.

You can find more resources on my webpage:
<https://melissasouthall.wixsite.com/cit2019>



This publication is supported in part by a cooperative agreement from the Administration on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, Administration for Community Living, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Grantees undertaking projects under government sponsorship are encouraged to express freely their findings and conclusions. Points of view or opinions do not, therefore, necessarily represent official Administration on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities policy.

The Self-Advocacy Resource and Technical Assistance Center (SARTAC) seeks to strengthen the self-advocacy movement by supporting self-advocacy organizations to grow in diversity and leadership. The resource center is a project of Self Advocates Becoming Empowered (SABE), the oldest national self-advocacy organization in the country. SARTAC is a Developmental Disabilities Project of National Significance, funded by the Administration For Community Living – Administration on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AIDD). The information in this manual was written to provide guidance for self-advocates and their allies to assist in understanding policy issues affecting their lives. It is not to be used to determine a person's legal rights or an organization's legal responsibilities under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended; the Americans with Disability Act of 1990, as amended or any other federal, state or local laws written to protect the rights of people with disabilities.