

For many in the City of Columbia, the challenge of breaking the cycle of poverty begins with reliable transportation.

Generations of individuals and families seek out jobs to gain financial support for by way of accepting a job they can easily get to each day. And, oftentimes, this means accepting a lower wage job within walking or biking distance of their home, or if they are fortunate enough, along a bus route. Each day, the question of how to get to and from work is present. What if there is inclement weather? What if the bus is running late? Reliable transportation translates to job security for many, which, given the right conditions, can lead to economic mobility.

This is not a scenario unique to Columbia. It is one that plays out in communities like ours across the country, where poverty leads to:

1. Living in less affluent neighborhoods, which means
2. The ability to access fewer resources, which may mean
3. Not being able to own your own vehicle, or
4. Having to rely on friends, family, walking, or public transportation, which means
5. You are limited to where you can accept jobs, which means
6. You are limited to employers you can easily, and reliably get to each day; therefore
7. You are potentially limiting your income, causing a much greater opportunity cost, and
8. Further limiting economic mobility for yourself and the generations to follow, because
9. Transportation - or lack thereof - limits economic mobility,
10. And limiting economic mobility by whatever means, or even being complacent in addressing the causes, is a human rights issue.

It is with this that the Commission on Human Rights urges the Council to further explore ways to better offer public transportation, to seek out innovative ways to leverage funding sources and multi-sector collaboratives in the name of equity for our community. We ask that the Council expand the thought process beyond the standard dollars and cents, of increased fares and decreased routes, and to further consider bridging the needs of Columbia residents with the available business resources and potential community partnerships. **We encourage the Council to partner with community organizations that are currently pursuing solutions-based thinking to a persistent and wicked problem in this era of Columbia public policy.**

Thank you,
Andrea Waner
Chair, Commission on Human Rights