



Getting to Work: Why Transportation Is One of the Biggest Barriers Our Clients Face

By Kristin Schaub, CEO, Greenleaf Job Training Services

At Greenleaf Job Training Services, I am honored to work with some of the most determined, talented, and capable job seekers you will ever meet. They have skills and a drive to succeed. What many of them also have is a commute that feels impossible before the workday even begins.

Many people don't realize that transportation is one of the most underestimated barriers to employment for people with disabilities.

Consider what it takes to ride a city bus. For someone who is blind, the challenge starts before they even leave the house. How do they identify the correct stop; how do they know when the right bus has arrived; and how do they navigate an unfamiliar route without clear audio cues or reliable assistance? For a Deaf rider, a garbled PA announcement or a driver who communicates only by speaking can mean missing a stop or transfer entirely. For someone in a wheelchair, a bus with a broken lift (which is not entirely uncommon) isn't just an inconvenience; it's a wall. And for someone on the autism spectrum, the unpredictability of public transit — delays, route changes, the sensory overload of a packed bus — can be genuinely overwhelming in ways that are hard to explain to someone who hasn't experienced it.

Rideshare services like Uber and Lyft, while helpful in certain instances, can pose their own challenges for our clients. Drivers who aren't trained to interact with Deaf passengers, apps that assume a level of visual and cognitive capability, and vehicles that aren't equipped for mobility devices are all common frustrations. A driver who cancels upon realizing a passenger has a mobility device, or who doesn't understand why an autistic passenger might need an extra moment to get settled, can turn what should be a simple trip into a stressful and demoralizing experience.

The fact is that many of our transportation systems were not designed with disability in mind. And for someone already navigating the challenges of entering or re-entering the workforce, the challenges they face can be the difference between landing a job and giving up before the first interview.



At Greenleaf, we often work with participants to teach them how to use the local bus system and know their rights as riders. We also connect clients with paratransit services and disability-specific transportation programs to build a personal transportation plan.

No one should lose a job opportunity because they couldn't figure out how to get there. Together, we are working toward a future where reliable, accessible transportation creates pathways to greater independence and professional success.