

Stranded by Transit Cuts: Cincinnati

As the coronavirus batters public finances, transit agencies are implementing or proposing the deepest service cuts in a generation. While public transportation received relief funding in the federal CARES Act, this aid has been nearly exhausted in major cities as the crisis stretches on.

Agencies across the U.S. are warning of service cuts as deep as 40%. What would the impact of those cuts be in a region like Cincinnati? An analysis using the Center for Neighborhood Technology's AllTransit tool suggests they would be deep and profound.

Patrick Jones, 31, rides two buses to get from his home in Cincinnati to reach his job as a forklift operator at the Coca-Cola distribution center across the river in Covington, KY. An essential worker, Jones relied on transit throughout the depths of the pandemic. Already, his typical commute has slowed by 10-20 minutes, as service changes lengthen the wait to transfer between buses in downtown Cincinnati. His trip to work now takes up to an hour and a half. If the lack of emergency aid leads to more cuts, "it would be bad for me, and I'm young," he said. "It's pretty much irreplaceable if you're an elderly person in the city and need transit to get to the grocery store or doctors appointments. Everything is more challenging when you're on the bus."

The Impact on the Cincinnati Region

Public transportation that runs frequently is key to economic mobility. But in the Cincinnati region, frequent full-day service would cease to exist. All 16,599 people who have access to frequent full-day transit today would lose it. So would the 65,422 jobs currently near frequent full-day transit.

- The impact would fall heavily on Black residents and people of color. Nearly half of those losing access to frequent full-transit would be Black residents; slightly more than half would be non-white or Hispanic.
- 3,644 households without access to a private vehicle would lose access to frequent transit, imperiling their ability to meet essential needs. Overall, 8,868 households would lose access to frequent full-day transit.

DISCLAIMER: This analysis is based on the potential impact of budget shortfalls without further emergency aid, not specific transit agency proposals.

How Many Will Lose Access to Frequent Full-Day Transit: Cincinnati

	How Many Will Lose Access to Frequent Full-Day Transit	Currently Within 1/2-Mile of Frequent Transit	Near Frequent Transit After 50% Peak and 30% Off-Peak Cut	% Change
People	16,599	16,599	0	-100%
<i>Black</i>	7,222	7,222	0	-100%
<i>Total Black, Hispanic, Asian, Native American, Pacific Islander, other and multiple races</i>	8,699	8,699	0	-100%
Households	8,868	8,868	0	-100%
<i>With incomes under \$25,000</i>	3,644	3,644	0	-100%
<i>Without access to a private vehicle</i>	2,659	2,659	0	-100%
Jobs	65,422	65,422	0	-100%
<p>Notes: Figures are for the Cincinnati, OH-KY-IN Metropolitan Statistical Area using Census figures from 2017 and transit service data from 2018.</p> <p>“Frequent full-day transit” is defined as transit that runs at least every 15 minutes between 7 am and 10 pm.</p>				

Methods and Background

For this analysis, the Center for Neighborhood Technology ran an analysis using the AllTransit tool, which combines publicly available transit schedule information (GTFS feeds) and new data created by CNT for more than 300 regions where it did not previously exist.

The analysis is focused on frequent full-day service, defined as transit that runs at least every 15 minutes between 7 am and 10 pm. CNT modelled a schedule where peak service (service between 7-9 am and 4-6 pm) was reduced by 50% while off-peak service was reduced by 30%. This reflects that many transit agencies are likely to tailor service cuts to attempt to preserve full-day service.