



**FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY**

August 27, 2020

Two Rivers YMCA
2040 53rd Street
Moline, IL 61265

Dear Hearing For Transportation:

I am a product of Quad Cities MetroLink. When my mother and maternal grandmother immigrated to Moline, Illinois in the 1990's they were homeless and relayed on public transportation to take them to important appointments including healthcare, legal assistance, & community resources. Looking back on my youth, I can recall the feeling of belonging when MetroLink drivers were bilingual or identified as Latino – this contributed to my family's positive experience because they felt heard and validated when needing assistance with route information. If IDOT programs were not accessible to my family, we would have missed important meetings such as, to obtain U.S. citizenship, non-profits assisting us to find a permeant residence to no longer sleep on the streets. My grandmother would not have been able to pick up her life-saving medication, my mother would not have been able to attend community college, & my family would have missed the opportunity to establish a stable life in Illinois.

According to data collected in 2019 by MetroLink's customer survey, 67% out of 570 surveys reported using MetroLink to access work. MetroLink serves a diverse population in the Quad Cities with 34% of riders identifying as African American, 9% Latino, 9% other, 2% Native American, & 1% Asian. The majority of residents MetroLink serves is low-income with 61% of riders reporting their household income below \$20,000 & 21% reporting \$30,000. The company serves approximately 3.4 million rides per year or 10,000 riders every weekday. This number will continue to grow as the Quad Cities immigrant and refugee population grows. In addition, due to the economic impact of COVID19, more community members are expected to rely on public transportation.

Although IDOT programs, such as MetroLink, have contributed to assisting my family breaks generational cycles there are still existing barriers in serving underserved communities. First, there needs to be a priority in increase bilingual staff & translating materials in the most spoken languages in Illinois including Spanish, French, Arabic, Hindi, & Swahili to name a few. When residents feel welcome and represented their experiences are being validated therefore increasing interactions with IDOT. Second, an increase in priority for diverse abilities to include the visually and hearing impaired. By being, accessible to all residents in the state IDOT is increasing its riders and services. Third, training for all IDOT staff over dimensions of diversities, how to be an ally to underserved communities, and

awareness of implicit biases to riders. When all levels of staff are committed to developing an equity lens, reexamine barriers and areas of opportunity services will be able to accurately meet the needs of the communities. Advocate putting more qualified people of color who come from underserved communities in positions of power. Look around and see if there are qualified people of color who are being overlooked for leadership positions. Do you have the power to change this? Use it! It is critical IDOT leadership come from underserved communities to properly examine programs, services, and barriers to riders. Finally, the quality of existing roadways in rural areas is also of concern for safe and accurate travel times. For these reasons, it is critically important to prioritize the funding and expansion of programs in IDOT to ensure Illinois residents, businesses, and visitors are provided with a transportation system that is safe, accessible, sustainable, environmentally conscious, and makes connections for upward mobility.

I reflect on how MetroLink connected me to opportunities, I otherwise would not be able to access. If MetroLink were not in the Quad Cities, my immigrant family along with thousands of similar families in Illinois would not be able to achieve upward mobility because public transportation is the only affordable transits that connect individuals to various community resources to increase their survival.

Sincerely,



Daisy Moran
[She/Her/Ella]

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