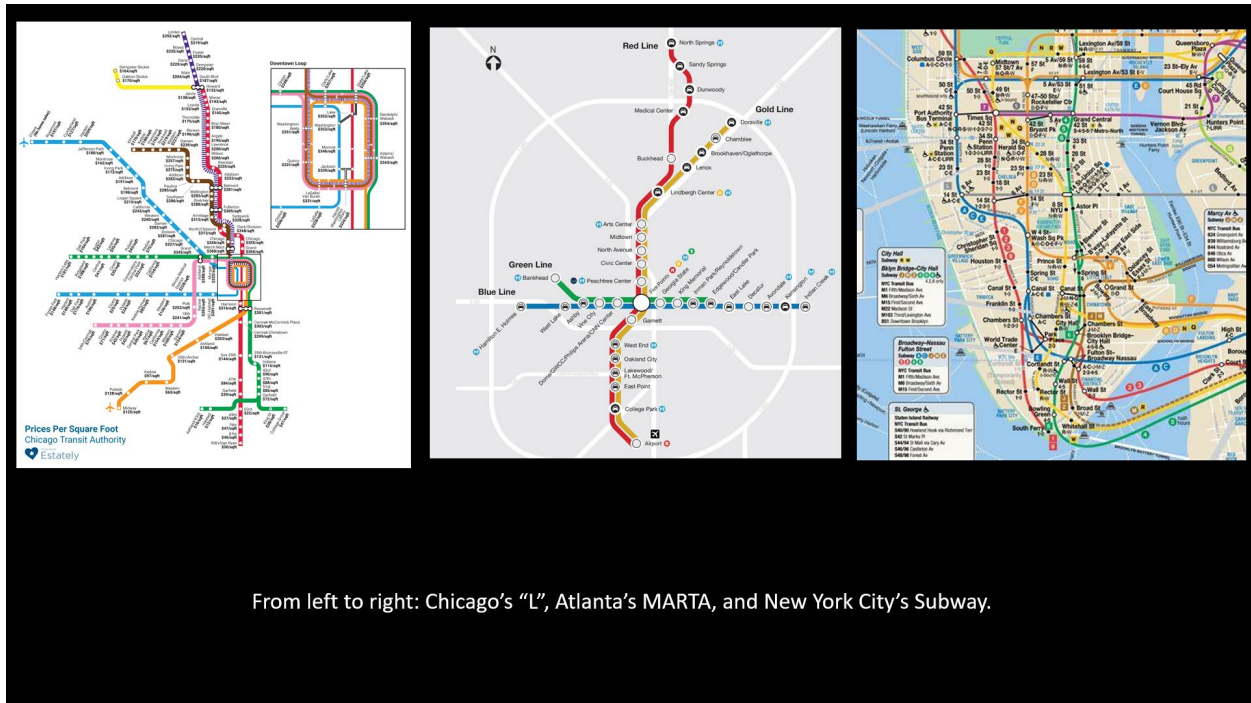


Public Transportation: An Additional Burden on Poor

By Karah Lindsey



From left to right: Chicago's "L", Atlanta's MARTA, and New York City's Subway.

Public transportation is horribly inconvenient because it often takes several stops to get to destinations that are only a few miles apart, if it even runs through the areas where someone needs it. This happens both on a national level and a local one.

Greyhound, America's main bus transportation system, makes several stops in between major cities. Driving from Atlanta, Georgia to Pensacola, Florida, would take about 5.5 hours with one stop in Montgomery. However, if you used Greyhound, the bus would make three stops and include a two hour and 55 minute layover in Mobile, Alabama. All told, the trip would take 11 hours and 10 minutes. For people who can't afford a car and needs to get out of state, the least expensive option would cost them 6.5 hours, which is not ideal, especially in a family emergency.

In America's cities, the efficiency does not improve. On New York City's subway, one of the best in the country, it takes an hour and 20 minutes to get from Bedford Park, the sixth poorest neighborhood in New York City, to Brighton Beach. Via car, the same trip would take half an hour. Public transport only gets worse. It sprawls in New York compared to Chicago and Atlanta. In Chicago, to get from Chicago Lawn, one of the poorest neighborhoods in the city, to Lincoln Park, takes an hour and three minutes on the "L" and 36 minute in a car. In Atlanta, GA, MARTA, Atlanta's public transportation system, runs in a straight line through a city that is shaped like a circle. To get from Bankhead to Georgia State University would take 37 minutes on MARTA, and 9 minutes via car. By contrast, RailEurope can get from Calais, France, to Paris in an hour and 49 minutes when it takes 3 hours to drive. It also takes 14 minutes to get from Paris to Versailles via train and 39 minutes via car.

Other than being a general waste of time, the lack of efficient public transportation can have devastating effects on the poor. Long wait times on public transport make it harder for people to get to work and run errands. On top of that, certain stops and stations are often out and delays are frequent. Delays combined with long commutes makes it hard to get to work on time and keep jobs. Childcare would also be more expensive because parents have to drop their kids off before they make hours-long treks to work.

The coronavirus pandemic has only made public transportation less efficient. Many cities have reduced service due to the lack of riders and for safety reasons. However, these cuts mean that it takes even longer for people who can't afford cars to get around. For example, cities such as San Francisco, New Orleans, and Atlanta have cut their bus routes in half. The ones that do run come much less frequently, wreaking havoc on people who can't afford a car or a ride share's schedules, which were already tight before the cuts due to how long the routes took to begin with.

Note: The author came up for times for Atlanta and Chicago by doing a Google Map search.

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