

My name is Melanie Cawthon, I am commenting as a concerned citizen and Executive Director of disABILITYsa, a disability service provider which is a partner organization in SALSA (Successfully Living in San Antonio), a collective of organizations serving older adults in our community.

The Community Recovery Resiliency Plan was presented during a B session to City Council on 5/20, at which time Councilwoman Adriana Rocha Garcia shared input about the importance of mobility/transportation options. To date, I believe that there has not been any follow-up in response to her concerns and I'd like to take this opportunity to highlight some of the reasons her concerns need to be addressed.

Traditionally, individuals living with disabilities are historically left behind as communities move forward. San Antonio Leaders can make the unprecedented decision to be at the forefront of how people with disabilities are equitably included by ensuring that all populations are considered in the conversations as we look at COVID recovery and resiliency of San Antonio.

Fundamental access to inclusion, engagement, healthcare, housing, food, education, socialization, employment and more depends entirely on a person's ability to get to the locations providing the service, amenity, or opportunity. That means transportation...yet it seems this topic was excluded from the workgroups that were focused on making recommendations for moving San Antonio from pandemic disaster to resiliency.

The Resiliency Plan for San Antonio focuses on important areas including workforce development, small business support, the digital divide, and housing security. However, it leaves one fundamental consideration off the table...transportation. While limited resources may be going to organizations or entities that will be providing essential services such as healthcare, workforce development, and food distribution; these services become useless to the people who will no longer be able to access them due to reduced transit services. This is not an equitable solution to sustaining our community.

We need to invest in our transportation system. We need to give people options to access all of the wonderful services and programs that will move our city forward. Equitable access for individuals with disabilities living in our community is at stake. Stand with us in moving our beloved community forward...acting as a community that upholds the value and considerations of our older adults and those living with a disability to a higher standard.