

Concerns and Confusion around Approved Transportation Scheme for People with Disabilities

The “approved guidelines” for the RFP (Request for Proposal) state that we have access to same day service, that there are no trip restrictions (other than the one hour radius from your starting point which can be excused upon request), and that we are supposed to take regular taxi service for trips of \$15.00 round trip.

The information package doesn’t include any of these “guidelines.” It is a “vague overview” of the specialized transportation service, but shouldn’t we have received a copy of the “guidelines” so we know what the details of the service is in order to provide feedback if any of the “guidelines” are missing? Shouldn’t we know what parts of the provincial law are included or missing from the “guidelines?”

The “guidelines” also include parts of the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulations (IASR) which are minimum standards under the provincial law not “guidelines.

Under the IASR there is the standard for same day service. This means we should be able to call the service provider within a few hours of a trip and book it for a specific time. This gives us the “freedom” to decide that we want to go to the show a few hours before the show starts instead of 24 hours before it starts. Likewise we can decide in the morning to go shopping or to visit friends in the afternoon. We can decide to go out for dinner in the afternoon and book our trip for the evening. If friends call in the morning to get together for lunch, we can book this under the IASR.

Even if the current service provider retained the contract, this is part of provincial law and would have to be worked into the service.

The “overview” for the approved transportation scheme does not say this. It does say that if we want on-demand service that we will need to use a regular taxi company. On-demand service is booking a trip to occur within the next half hour or as soon as possible. It is regular taxi service.

It is good to have this clarification in the information package, but why was the same day service standard which is part of the IASR and the RFP “guidelines” not included? Same day service gives us freedom to move about our community without planning days in advance.

There is also the issue of trip restrictions which is prohibited by the IASR and confirmed by the County Solicitor as being a violation of our human rights.

Yet the “overview” states that when we use the approved transportation scheme that we use it for “work, medical, school, etc.” This makes it sound like we can’t go to religious activities, social or recreational activities, out to dinner, out to Tim’s, to the show, Sanderson Centre or the casino.

We can!

There is a sentence stating that the new service provider will administer the program. Yet our eligibility forms are sent to the County of Brant Community Services Department. Does this mean coupons and photo ID? If our eligibility forms are with the County, how will the service provider know who is eligible? None of this type of detail was in the information package.

Coupons and photo ID have been an obsessive focal point of the transportation scheme since July 2012. If we require these items, why weren't we told? Why isn't there information about what happens to our eligibility forms once they are submitted? Given the Privacy Act in Canada and Ontario, we have the right to know.

There is no information in the information package about appealing a decision that someone is not eligible. This too is part of the IASR which is STILL law in the province. There are also standards in the IASR for the time taken to confirm eligibility once forms are submitted, the ability to apply for access to Para transit on compassionate grounds, standards for the length of the appeals process.

Shouldn't we know what the process is for appealing decisions about eligibility? Shouldn't we know what the appeals process is if we require travel outside of the 1 hour radius of our homes?

Once again even the minimum needs of those of us with disabilities have not been considered or met.

Most of the information package was about ODSP eligibility for transportation costs. Again, this is useful as many of us live well below the poverty level, but we also need the information about the service once we can access it.

We should have immediate publically available access to the "guidelines" approved by the Accessibility Advisory Committee that were part of the RFP requirements because these are part of the contract deliverables in providing a specialized transportation service or Para transit.

We need to know, and have the right to know, all of the details of this latest variant to the transportation scheme. We need to know what to expect and how to provide feedback when we have problems and to appeal decisions.

Additionally, this service must be advertised and promoted. Para transit is not for the few people who happen to hear about it through the grapevine. Specialized transportation service or Para transit is a public transit service open to all people with disabilities to apply.

All information about the specialized transportation service should be on the County website including the "guidelines," eligibility forms, clear identification of the eligibility process, cancellation procedures and a link to the County's strategic five and ten year plans for specialized transportation.

The County can't have a public transit service that no one knows about.