

Magical Misdirection of Para Transit Issues

We now have what appears to be two parts of the same transportation scheme for those of us with disabilities in the County. The first is what I'll call the original scheme which restricts our access to Para transit and is unaffordable and unsustainable. The second part of this is the draft RFP text (Request for Proposals) that was put out for comment but the deadline for comments was actually the day before the draft was released. (Yes, the draft was in the agenda on April 19 for the April 23 meeting of the Accessibility Advisory Committee but in order to have comments considered at the April 23 meeting, they had to be submitted by April 18 which was the day before the draft was released for comment.)

So while some of us have been combing through the draft document for the RFP and providing thoughtful and legally supported comments, it appears that the original budget related part of the transportation scheme has been slowly moving forward as part of this RFP process. We know that the draft RFP text has moved forward because it was approved by the Accessibility Advisory Committee and Community Services by May 8 (the date I submitted my comments on the draft and was told I was too late.)

The fact that there was no budget for the current specialized transportation service (it was paid through a line item not a budget item in the monthly expenses) and there was no management or oversight of the original contract are the issues at the very core of this entire mess.

However, from the start, we've encountered the "magical misdirection" blaming people with disabilities for using the specialized transportation service (Para transit) to be independent and participate in their own community when the real issue was lack of budget and management by the County.

We now have further misdirection with the 19 page document called a draft RFP that does not mention budget, fares, how the County will administer the contract, or any other budgetary details for a potential service provider. If you were bidding for a contract, wouldn't one of the first items you look at be the total budget and financial criteria? Wouldn't you look at how much funding there was, what the boundaries and conditions of the funding were and what the process was for submitting invoices for funding before you looked at the 19 pages of rules, codes of conduct and other elements of the contract?

Why was this important piece of the contract left out of the draft RFP?

Could it be that the original unaffordable and unsustainable transportation scheme approved and rejected over and over again by various committees and Council is simply going ahead?

Could it be that while we thought there was some small measure of progress and a place to start in terms of working together on an affordable and sustainable specialized transportation service for the County our attention has now been divided between the original transportation scheme and the "details of the original transportation scheme?"

As what amounts to a new variation of the original transportation scheme is set to be approved by Council May 21, we still have a "public transit" system that violates provincial law, human rights law and appears to have no budget or funding plans past December 31, 2013.