

New Strategy to Eliminate Para Transit in the County?

The new service provider has been providing Para transit for almost a month now. I'm still hearing of people with disabilities not being picked up, not being notified that their trip has been cancelled for some reason, not being told of service delays due to broken equipment, being left stranded and vulnerable and what appears to be general chaos.

Is this the new strategy for eliminating Para transit in the County: implement an inefficient specialized transportation service that will fail within a few months while leaving us vulnerable and at risk as we wait for transportation that never comes?

Any transitional issues should have been worked out in the first week of taking over the contract.

We are coincidentally at that time of year when talks turn to budget issues which have been a red herring throughout the past year as we struggle to retain Para transit.

Sadly, members of The Accessibility Advisory Committee which is tasked by provincial law to assist the County toward an inclusive community were not included in the budget talks again this year.

Citing budget issues appears to be the perfect way to eliminate specialized transportation service in the County by the end of the year...or it would be if Council hadn't miraculously "found" \$100,000. To add to the meager and deficient \$100,000 Para transit budget for 2013 and \$75,000 for an Accessibility Coordinator position.

If Council can "find" \$175,000 within a few hours why can't they develop an affordable and sustainable specialized transportation service for those of us with disabilities? Where is the five and ten year strategic plan to continue providing this service? It appears from the "miraculous" finding of funds that providing Para transit is not a budget issue but an issue of discriminatory attitudes and the desire to exclude people with disabilities from participating in our community.

We need an affordable, accessible and sustainable solution for Para transit. The Para transit budget should be increased by at least 20 to 25 percent each year to include those who need the service to remain in their homes and be independent.