



Delaware Developmental Disabilities Council 2017 Position on Transportation

Position Statement

The people of Delaware require “the highest quality public transportation service that satisfies the needs of all of the people and the community. The transportation system must have accessible facilities and interconnected services incorporating state-of-the-art technologies. A well-trained workforce, using clear communications and beneficial working partnerships, must connect people to their destinations in an affordable, safe, and efficient manner” (portions of the Mission statement DART First State and the Delaware Transit Corporation). Transportation services must include:

- A reliable statewide system of transportation including in rural areas and at times of emergency management and recovery for all citizens.
- A mechanism in place to help riders with disabilities who have an urgent need arise and who can't give 24 hours notice because of an emergency situation.
- Weekend hours statewide for those riders who require transportation services.
- A scheduling system for reserved rides that communicates immediately with drivers so that they do not arrive for a canceled trip and do arrive on time for active trips.
- A process to maximize opportunities for personal vehicle ownership and use for people with disabilities. This would include an education program for people with disabilities that include the use of a modified vehicle.
- A single source for information concerning transportation options.
- Qualified, appropriately compensated, well-trained, and reliable drivers to fulfill the mission of the transportation system.
- Accessible destinations and bus stops for all riders.
- Accessible refueling opportunities for everyone who utilizes their own vehicles.
- An emergency roadside assistance system for drivers who use wheelchairs whose vehicles break down on the road.
- An accessible, affordable taxi service as enabled by SAFTE-LU.
- An impartial, independent review panel that includes people with disabilities to regularly review the quality of the transportation system and to review complaints that customers may submit.
- An appeals process when disagreements exist.



Discussion

The Delaware Developmental Disabilities Council fully supports a transportation system that is accessible, affordable, and dependable for all of the riders in Delaware. The progression of movement into the State of Delaware and across the State has created a demand for a more diverse and expanded transportation system. The movement has been away from urban areas and into the suburban and rural areas of the state and the population has been growing quickly as more and more people from other states have moved into the state to live and retire.

At the same time, people with disabilities are choosing to live in their own homes and in their own communities rather than in institutions or in congregate living situations. People with disabilities have an expectation of being active, contributing members of their communities which requires them to utilize the public transportation system more and more. In addition, people have their own vehicles that may be accessible. In effect, ridership for public transportation increases annually.

People with disabilities as well as the general public expect that the transportation system that they utilize including the transfer stations will be safe, dependable, reliable, accessible, and affordable. The system at all times needs to be responsive and accountable to its customers; i.e. the riders, the tax payers, and the citizens of Delaware.

Recommendations

The State of Delaware must:

- 1) Legislate an impartial, independent review panel that includes people with disabilities to regularly review the quality of the transportation system and to review complaints that customers may submit.
- 2) Institute an emergency roadside assistance program for drivers who use wheelchairs whose vehicles break down on the road.
- 3) Expand service to include weekend hours statewide.
- 4) Require accessibility for all public bus stops in Delaware.
- 5) Incorporate universal design in all new residential and commercial development.
- 6) The training that drivers receive must be enhanced to better serve people with disabilities. Current training needs to be evaluated by both DART and riders to evaluate the enhancement needs.
- 7) In order to make transportation for families easier, more people need to have access to portable chairs for their children with disabilities.
- 8) Delaware must build a system of accessible, affordable taxis.
- 9) Stop raising the rates for paratransit rides.