

56-R-23

A Resolution to Encourage The Ohio State University to Improve Paratransit Services

Alex Poling (for himself, and Echo Joyce) introduced the following resolution to the Student Affairs Committee where it passed. Then, to the Steering Committee where it passed, and to the floor where it passed/failed.

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Whereas the Undergraduate Student Government represents all undergraduate students at The Ohio State University; and

Whereas The Ohio State University Traffic and Transportation Management provides free paratransit services on and off campus to faculty, staff, and students with permanent and temporary disabilities;¹ and

Whereas approximately 150 people regularly use OSU's paratransit services, and around 90% of them are students;² and

Whereas Ohio State paratransit services were created following protests by Students for Disability Awareness, now known as Buckeyes for Accessibility (B4A), in response to the university making a deal with the Central Ohio Transit Authority (COTA) to provide free transportation to students before COTA had paratransit options available;³ and

Whereas paratransit services are often the only or best way for many people to navigate campus and the off-campus area; and

Whereas many students, including those in B4A, have complained about issues with paratransit and provided suggestions for improvements to the service; and

Whereas some paratransit drivers have also offered suggestions for improvement, especially regarding their training; and

Whereas there are often not enough paratransit drivers during the busiest times of day, making rides at least 45-60 minutes long and causing students to be late for classes or work; and

¹ <https://ttm.osu.edu/paratransit>

² From correspondance with Traffic and Transportation Management

³ <https://www.thelantern.com/1999/01/university-concedes-van-to-disability-group/>

Whereas the paratransit rider portal does not allow riders to schedule rides less than an hour in advance, even though riders can call to schedule rides sooner; and

Whereas similar non-paratransit services like CABS On-Demand allows riders to schedule rides much sooner than paratransit from the Tripshot app; and

Whereas the paratransit rider portal often has technical difficulties that can make it impossible to schedule or cancel a ride without calling; and

Whereas Ohio State's paratransit policies allow vans to arrive anytime within a 15-minute window, but riders are required to be available during the entire pick-up window with only five minutes of time that drivers will wait for them;¹ and

Whereas many paratransit riders have disabilities that affect their ability to arrive on time for rides; and

Whereas missing three or more rides can result in suspensions from paratransit services, which may make it impossible for some people to get to classes or work; and

Whereas there is no official way to dispute suspensions despite the significant difficulties it could cause many paratransit riders; and

Whereas paratransit vans frequently arrive significantly after the pick-up window, usually due to traffic or other issues, with no explanation or warning; and

Whereas paratransit drivers receive little extra training for their specific role outside of general Campus Area Bus Service (CABS) training; and

Whereas many paratransit drivers, especially new drivers, are not familiar enough with different types of mobility aids to be able to secure them properly, which can become a safety issue; and

Whereas the paratransit GPS system often does not properly navigate drivers to designated pick-up areas, which can make it difficult for drivers to find riders; and

Whereas paratransit drivers are supposed to ask riders if they need to use the lift and what kind of securements they want, but this frequently doesn't happen, especially when riders are not wheelchair users; and

Whereas paratransit riders have complained about drivers asking inappropriate questions, especially about their disabilities, as well as touching them inappropriately, making rude comments, and complaining about safety measures that may take more time; and

Whereas some drivers encourage or push riders to use little or no securements (transit tie-downs, seatbelts, etc.), possibly in order to save time or energy; and

Whereas paratransit drivers occasionally block paths and ramps, potentially due to a lack of quality training, which can cause accessibility issues for those not using the service; and

Whereas the lifts on paratransit vans often malfunction, causing delays and loud/obnoxious noises that could easily cause sensory issues; and

Whereas paratransit services go to off-campus areas, but they are limited and do not go to places frequented by many students, including downtown Columbus, North Market, the OSU airport, the Ohio Statehouse, and more; and

Whereas these boundaries often limit many students' ability to participate in social activities, acquire employment, and participate in some classes; and

Whereas COTA's paratransit services are significantly harder to qualify for than Ohio State's, leaving some people with no other options; and

Whereas the university has not made any significant improvements based on this feedback; and

Whereas all students, staff, and faculty have a right to equal access to quality transportation services regardless of temporary or permanent disabilities.

Therefore, Let it Be Resolved that the Undergraduate Student Government encourages The Ohio State University to significantly improve its paratransit service based on feedback from riders and drivers; and

Let it Further Be Resolved that the Undergraduate Student Government calls on the university to implement more comprehensive training for paratransit drivers regarding disability etiquette, securing different types of mobility aids, and overall safety for paratransit riders; and

Let it Further Be Resolved that the Undergraduate Student Government encourages the university to include more areas that are frequently visited by students within paratransit's boundaries; and

Let it Further Be Resolved that the Undergraduate Student Government calls on the university to improve the paratransit rider portal to make it more user friendly, allow more flexibility, and prevent technical difficulties; and

Let it Further Be Resolved that the Undergraduate Student Government calls on the university to make a plan to receive more feedback from paratransit drivers and riders to ensure access; and

Let it Finally Be Resolved that the Undergraduate Student Government calls on the university to support the Department of Traffic and Transportation Management when necessary to ensure equal access to transportation services.

Floor Vote: Aye: ____ Nay: ____ Abstain: ____ Present: ____

Bobby McAlpine
President

Alex Poling
Speaker of the 56th General Assembly

Date Adopted: _____

Date Terminated: _____