

PARATRANSIT LONDON ONTARIO

Please keep the buses on London roads Keep regulations and safety codes With so many riders this is a big ask But I know your employees are up for the task

To call for your service three days in advance Sometimes doesn't work for each circumstance The buses come early or late or on time To keep one's appointments; it boggles the mind

The drivers must follow a full manifest No use in complaining, they're already stressed The dispatchers handle huge numbers of calls They try very hard to accommodate all

There must be a way to fix Paratransit The service is vital; the public demands it

E. Jane Morely

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Dear City of London Councillors,

With the upcoming strategic plan meetings, we are writing to strongly request that City Council include a plan to improve the city's Paratransit system.

For over 35 years, PHSS Medical and Complex Care in Community has supported individuals with complex medical needs within London, providing 24-hour residential supports, day and overnight respite, specialized complex medical care, intensive behavioural supports, recreational programs, and support for individuals living at home with their families. This in-community support is provided to allow individuals to live in the community versus institutional settings. We are committed to creating an inclusive community where individuals with disabilities have access to all the community has to offer. The COVID-19 pandemic has shone a spotlight on many weaknesses within the services available to those with disabilities, and at its pinnacle, is Paratransit. The overloaded transportation system has left many of its users without transportation to everyday necessities such as medical appointments, grocery trips, and social inclusion.

This leaves London residents with disabilities, their family members, and the staff who work with them spending countless hours on the phone trying to book rides, struggling to find solutions, and with concerns about safety and the training drivers receive.

An efficient Paratransit system is absolutely imperative to the 300+ people we support to allow them to participate and be valued within their community. Despite extensive requests for improvements to be made by advocates and community partners over many decades, the system has gotten progressively worse, with the pandemic pushing the issue to a critical breaking point. The London Transit Commission has said more time is needed to address the issues, but for those using the vital service, there simply is no time left to wait.

The bottom line of all the concerns is that there needs to be a commitment made to improving the efficiency of the present system, and implementing innovative solutions such as newer technologies to streamline booking.

All Canadians have the right to fully participate in society. Advancing equality and accessibility is about creating barrier-free communities and services for all Canadians. London cannot wait another 4 years for action in a sector that affects so many on a daily basis, which is why it is imperative that this issue be addressed in the upcoming strategic plan.

We are entrusting you with our family, our friends; and your actions will impact our community for generations to come. We encourage the city of London to join us as we seek to build a more inclusive future for Paratransit users in the city of London.

Thank you,

Power to the People,  
Advocacy Group  
PHSS Medical & Complex Care in Community

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3 years ago I was volunteering had a hard time getting bookings for my shifts called three days in advanced usually didn't have rides or had to call to fight for rides to help a non for profit. Three years later after pandemic and Philip Squire to me personally in meetings he was going to "change the system" here we are. Fast forward to today tried to make rides for Monday as it's Friday called before 9 and no rides available to go a block away from Cherryhill to Wonderland and Oxford; call the next two days after 4 to see if there are any spots. Disabled people pay taxes on things we buy; and contribute to Society we're not third world citizens why are we treated as Such by ltc and London City Council?

Regards

Stuart Rexworthy

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My father is a senior who goes to dialysis at University Hospital 3 times per week. Up until August of 2022, my father was using paratransit to get him too and from his regularly scheduled medical appointments. He was using the service for about 3 years and I finally had to take matters into my own hands to get him reliable transportation. Initially I had to call every morning and hope I was able to get a bus to pick him up at an appropriate times to get him to his appointments. Eventually they had him on a set schedule where I would not longer have to wait on the phone for over an hour, 3 times per week to schedule his rides. I thought the pre-set schedules would make my life and my fathers life easier regarding his transportation. Unfortunately that was not the case. There would be many times the bus just didn't show up to pick him up or they were so late he would be late for dialysis. When this would happen I would have to spend almost \$40.00 for a taxi to get him to the hospital. During holidays the pre-set appointments are dropped out of the system, so I would have to remember to call in to schedule a ride. Many times the bus would pick my dad up from the hospital 30 minutes to a hour late and then it might take them another 45 minutes to get him home because they were dropping off so many other people. My dad's pick up time was schedule for 4:30 pm and there would be many times he would not get home until after 6:00 pm. It was getting to be too much for me and my father and the frustration of wondering if he was even picked up was nerve racking. Being left stranded at the hospital after 3 hours of dialysis was just too much for my dad.

Fortunately for me I was able to afford a wheelchair accessible van with the assistance of \$15,000 from the March of Dimes. I realize I am lucky that I am able to afford the remainder of the car payments every month, but most people cannot and only rely on paratransit. The 3 times per week when I drop off and pick up my dad I see another dialysis patient sitting in front of the hospital waiting for paratransit to pick her up. I've asked her how long she generally waits and she said at least 30 minutes. Again her times are set in the schedule and still she has to wait.

The service they provide is life changing and necessary, but there is a lot of room for improvement. Thanks for championing this cause,

Ann Sebastiao

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I can share several stories as relayed to me from my Mom, who has used Paratransit for years. My Mother-in-law, who died 2019, was also a regular passenger, and complained of the poor service and treatment too.

So many frustrating experiences over the years involving my Mom which include: repeatedly dialing-in over 80 times in the morning to book a pickup and drop off time; being treated poorly by drivers because my elderly mother wasn't waiting outside in the cold and the driver had to wait for her to walk slowly with her walker down my driveway and then had to request the lowering ramp, which the driver could clearly see would require the lifting ramp making the driver more angry because it takes even more time; being questioned by various drivers if the lift ramp is really necessary; having erratic drivers who speed in the city and then slam on the breaks, which is difficult for my Mom who doesn't have the strength to brace herself as a passenger; being denied help to carry on two bags of groceries; waiting an hour for a walk-on in cold weather; calling to book a pickup and drop off three days in advance and told that the buses were full, yet when she calls for a walk-on instead, the bus is empty.

These are several stories as told to me by my Mom, 70, who uses this service regularly. She has also claimed to feel uncomfortable with the comments and behaviour of some of the drivers. She says she puts up with it because it's her only option.

Pamela Reid, Linda's daughter.

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I've been fortunate enough to have a van but it cost me 60 000 for an accessible van. I broke my leg in 2018 and I learned quickly that para transit was a terrible service due to having to set an alarm and spam call at 7 in the morning sometimes for ½ tp hour over and like trying to win a prize on the radio only to find out i couldnt make my scheduled appointment. Furthermore because the ortho clinic is over booked i wasnt able to make my ride home and had to wait at the hospital almost all day for a ride home causing a pressure sore on my heel from the leg extender i was using for my outing. Now that my van is getting older and i cannot afford to replace it i returned to paratransit for my weekly outing to play hockey and everyone on the bus has similar stories and has greatly effected their life and health negatively to the point where i now am experiencing alot of anxiety for the day my van fails and i become dependent on paratransit.

Chris Oswald

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I work in Employment Services, helping people on OW or ODSP find work as a path out of poverty. A number of open roles that we help fill exist in areas with little transit service, no transit service, or a multi transfer ride of up to 90 minutes each way, while trying to work a 4-6 hour shift due to either physical limitations or childcare needs. When we can get them approved for paratransit, there is still NO guarantee that they can get anywhere on a set schedule, and can arrive up to two hours later than booking times. With housing up 33-40%, and no guaranteed way to get to work or appointments or supports, there is really no clear paths to get ahead in life.

Jeremy McCall

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I had to cancel a medical appointment scheduled for Jan. 23, 2023 because I couldn't get the ride time that I needed on Paratransit. In December 2022, I had to take a cab home from a medical appointment because I couldn't get a ride on Paratransit. It cost me \$29 for a one-way trip. It's too expensive to take a cab every time I can't get a ride on Paratransit.

Lisa Havens

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I find the process of calling in at 7am and waiting for the dispatch to be free to take my call, after pressing redial for more than 30 min, so full of anxiety .

Gay Cook

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My son used to use a monthly pass on Paratransit to get to work before covid which he would buy online having it automatically renew each month. After Covid, he now only goes into the office 3 days a week so it no longer makes sense to use a monthly pass. He wanted to continue to use a smart card like you have been able to use on conventional transit since 2016 but we learned that option is not available yet to Paratransit. Due to the nature of his disability, handling a smart-card as opposed to handling tickets is much easier. Also, he now has to go out to a transit hub to buy tickets which requires and extra trip (that is hard to get!) or having someone else do it for him. According to the AODA, Paratransit riders are supposed to have the same options for paying as conventional bus riders. London has been in violation of the AODA since their introduction in 2016.

Jacqueline Madden

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Here are some of my experiences I have had with Paratransit since 2018. That's when I left the residence at Fanshawe and moved downtown to an apartment. I needed to get to Fanshawe for classes and work placements every week.

This past term I was supposed to meet my tutor on campus so I called three days before. But my tutor cancelled the next day which means two days before I needed it. So I tried to cancel Paratransit and I got suspended. I can't help it if someone else cancels our appointment!

Another time I got suspended for two weeks until my dad called to help me get the service back. I had a booking made to go to Fanshawe. But I was playing sledge hockey and got a concussion and was really sick. I tried to tell them I couldn't go. I didn't know three days ahead that I would get a concussion!

And finally, one time I went out to dinner with a friend. I was supposed to have a ride home but they said there were no rides available. They said they would call me when a ride was free but they never did. I had to take a taxi and the restaurant staff helped me to get home safely!

Nicole Duffin

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I would like to write you, my paragraph, about my worst Para Transit trip. I spoke to a dispatcher named Kathy, she booked my outgoing trip for 1230 I thought to go to Home Depot where I wanted to go then she told me that she had booked my return trip at 1:30 to go from Home Depot to home. What she had really done was booked me from 1230 to go to Burger King in the same waters Home Depot the driver was supposed to get off the bus get me food get back on the bus and drive me home. That left me at Home Depot with my dog. Who is coming with me to Home Depot to train in a snowstorm with no way home. So I called my husband to pick up the dog and he gave me \$40 which we really couldn't afford to take a cab home and it took every penny of it.

Melanie Priddle

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If I need to book a Paratransit ride I have to spend an hour trying to get through on the phone between 7 and 8am. During that time, I am supposed to be getting ready for VON who arrives at various times around 8 to help me finish getting ready so I can go to work. I can't both book a ride and get ready for work so it is a huge problem. I usually have to get someone else (my Mom) to do the booking for me. Also, one time my 2 friends and I took Paratransit to go to a movie. They took us all there from my place on the bus but when they came to pick us up, they would only take 2 of us (the bus was empty except for us) and they made my other friend wait for another bus. She is a girl and had to wait outside in the cold, by herself, for another 30 minutes until the bus came to get her to bring her to my place. This made for a very stressful evening for all of us.

Chris Madden

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For my weekly dr appts for injection treatments on average it takes 200 redials to get thru starting at 658 and about sometimes 1hr by that time cant get booking so I have to take taxi or cancel this has been since 2019. I talk to drivers and they say yes they are training more but after training they leave for better pay and benefits. There are only 3-5 buses in the evenings and weekends not 10-15 as said in article this Sunday I wanted pickup from church at 12 cant get one until 2

I am willing to go in front of council like I did for taxi if anyone wants me to keeping record of redial and denial of transport

Penny Moore

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I am writing to you to request that the City Council include Paratransit in the upcoming Strategic Plan .

The booking system as you are probably aware , is next to impossible to book a ride. The lines open up at 7 A.M. week days, 8 A.M. weekends to book a ride 3 days in advance.It is next to impossible to get through on the phone lines. On most occasions it takes me up to 600 times of constantly redialing to get through on the phone lines. I can prove it on my call logs. Getting ready in the morning to do my daily routine gets taken away by just trying to reserve a ride

It is to my understanding that approximately 7,000 eligible riders are on the system, with only 5 call takers to make bookings. The bookings system has caused me a great deal of stress and anxiety as I am not sure if I am able to get rides to important medical appointments, leisure activities, or just a night out. As a disabled person just trying to enjoy the qualities of life , this system needs to be greatly improved.

There are times when i have been left stranded at night because the system is down by a few driver, or buses are not available . This is totally unacceptable

I would also like to address the quality of the equipment and the rough rides those buses have. It is unacceptable as a disabled person to be shaken and bounced around on vehicles that are meant to herd cattle instead of human beings.

I am also shocked at the lack of training these drivers receive, to deal with customer service issues, sensitivity training to deal with different types of people , not knowing important destinations such as hospitals, shopping centers , etc.

Also, as a transgender person, I can't count the times i've been dealt with in an inappropriate manner with drivers from Voyago.

I am of strong opinion that this service should NOT be run by a sub contracted service, and that we consider having this run by the City Of London.

I hope in the future we get a transit service that gives disabled London equality that we all deserve

Natalie Judges ( she/her/Ms.)

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Hi I am a transit rider and find that trying to get a booking to go somewhere is at the best of times impossible. I don't know if they have enough drivers or not but it is not easy to get a bus for when you need it. There are a few times I can get the bus but most of the time not. Most of the time the drivers are vey good to deal with. There has only been once that I had to report a driver for being rude. That situation was very quickly taken care of. I thank the staff for handling this for me. Thank you

Sharon Foster

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In the 90's and early 2000's when I was at Brescia College finishing my Nutrition Degree, and later Teaching Degree at the Faculty of Education, I often had trouble booking rides for 7:00 a.m. as this is the time phones would begin being answered, and not having a cell phone, meant I couldn't even call in to make a booking until later that day. Thankfully, 7:00 was a less popular time back then, and I could sometimes get rides by later in the day. Frequently though, I'd have to call multiple times over the following 3 days to see whether any cancellations opened up an opportunity. I would often call and work with the dispatcher to see if they could squeeze me onto a bus, knowing people I would often ride with, were on their way to dialysis at UH at the same time as I was on my way to class. But it was not something that would automatically come up for them on their computer system.

Around 2005, I began tutoring math at Western (King's University College), and depended on Paratransit to take me there and back. I worked part-time, usually 2-3 days a week. Over time, my chronic fatigue increased, to the point where it was harder and harder to deal with the long waits I would often have for the Paratransit busses - often 1-2 hours later or than I actually needed, because this was the closest booking I could get to the time I needed.

In 2015, I had to stop working on campus, and took students only from home. My fatigue was so severe, I couldn't handle the trips to and from, and definitely couldn't manage the long wait times on hold, trying to book rides, as well as the long wait times for the rides that I was actually able to book.

I rarely ever booked Paratransit for social events, instead getting wherever I could with my mobility scooter, or depending only on friends and family to get me to social gatherings, because bookings were so hard to get, and so inconsistent in timing.

In December 2015, I was diagnosed with stage 3 breast cancer, and had completely given up on depending on Paratransit for any rides, including anything medical. My fatigue was much too great to deal with early morning phone calls, 1-2 hours of calling repeatedly until I got through, only to have no or little choice left in bookings.

If I would try booking a ride with less than 3 days notice, starting at 7:00 in the morning, the odd time I could arrange a ride to a destination, but none could be arranged back - which made the whole trip impossible.

Since 2015, the year of treatments, and the 5 years of side-effect-inducing medication after that, my fatigue only increased, leaving me bed-bound 75% of many days. I arranged with my doctor and ODSP to have medical transportation support through taxi's approved because I couldn't handle sitting up and waiting for rides, or again, the long wait times on the phone, and repeated phone calls over multiple days, that still didn't guarantee a ride.

The "London Morning" piece that was aired by CBC was encouraging to hear - someone speaking out for many of us who don't have the strength and stamina to advocate for badly needed improvements in a very broken Paratransit system.

LTC mentioned they were in need of drivers, and they mentioned wanting to give an online option for bookings. But there was NO mention of the need for an increased number of Paratransit busses on the road. 11000 riders, and only 32 busses on the road on week days. Less on week-ends and holidays.

Online booking options may solve the long wait times on hold, but I suspect it will very quickly lead to full busses in an even quicker time period, and just as many of us will be without the services that would otherwise get us to our daily destinations. Work, school, volunteer positions that allow us to give back to our own communities, medical appointments, which those of us with disabilities often have an even more urgent need for, and to social outings, which the Pandemic has made us all even more aware, is also so important to our mental, physical, and emotional well-being.

To the city of London, and anyone else who has a voice which can influence the decisions made considering the funding given to the Paratransit system, first, thank-you for hearing our concerns. And secondly, please take action. Make funds available to put more vans on the road - enough vans, dispatchers, and drivers to keep up with the needs (not just the preferences) of the Paratransit riders of our city.

With much gratitude,

Julie Idsinga  
Lifetime London, Ontario Resident  
Registered Paratransit Rider  
B.Sc, B.Ed

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I'm a 24 year old Female who has a rare metabolic disorder called CDG. I work at Goodlife Fitness on Oxford/Adelaide street and live in Byron. I work very hard at my job at Goodlife and work about 20-25 hours a week. My only method of safe transportation is to take the London Paratransit bus, which as you might know is a very overworked and inaccessible system.

I usually work 4 shifts a week and my schedule can vary depending on what amount of coverage they need at the gym. When someone calls in sick then some shifts come up last minute and I'm not able to book Paratransit to get to work because it's not 3 days in advance. This leaves me working less then I would want. Also, sometimes my boss asks us to work late, to cover someone that called in sick, but I'm not able to because I cannot change my ride that was already booked 3 days ago.

I have also had troubles when a bus being late, and then try to call the hotline and sometimes you are on hold for over 15 minutes. This leaves me stranded at Work without knowing what I should do. Is the bus still coming, should I call a taxi, or call my Mom to get home?

I try to be an independent member of our community, and really love my job at Goodlife. Transportation is a key piece for me to live independently in London.

Sincerely,

Madeline Goldhawk

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"I take the bus to the mall and to my physio appointments. It's never on time. Sometimes it can only get me one way, then I'm stuck..I have to call for a cab to take me back ...it's hard to find a cab that can fit my wheelchair".

David Withers

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I'm a mother/caregiver to a 24 year old Female who has a rare metabolic disorder called CDG. My daughter Madeline was diagnosed at the age of 1 and has a lifelong disability with mobility and cognitive impairments. Madeline has been a member of our London West community for 23 years and has gone to school, graduated high school and is now working as a Club associate/greeter at Goodlife Fitness. Madeline is a vibrant young woman and loves to work for a living, she does not want to stay home and just collect ODSP. She has worked very hard at her job at Goodlife and works about 20-25 hours a week. Her only method of safe transportation is to take the London Paratransit bus, which as you might know is a very overworked and inaccessible system.

Because Madeline works usually 4 shifts a week that vary month to month, I have to call Paratransit 4 days a week at 7 am (weekdays) and 8 am on weekends. The system requires you to call into a phone line that also has hundreds of others calling at the same time. Some days I get lucky and get through within the first 30 minutes, but some days I call hundreds of times with a busy signal. I have had days that I call for 45 minutes straight, which is about 1200 calls. I have even overheated my phone and it stopped working. I have resorted to also having my husband call at the same time and we will both call consistently until we get through on the line. This can take 10 minutes some days, and others it takes over 30 minutes. Once you get through there is usually a queue of 17 people and then you have another 15 minutes on hold. If you don't get through within the first hour, you will not get the ride you are looking for.

Therefore I spend from 2-4 hours a week trying to book rides for my daughter. Madeline has physical and cognitive disabilities, which includes having ataxia and poor fine motor skills. So, she would never be able to make these 200-600 calls 4 times a week, and for sure would not get through on the line. As I work to try to help my daughter be an independent member of our community, I'm faced with so many roadblocks. We want Madeline to continue to have a job in our community but transportation is a key piece to this and it's something she should be able to do independently and humanely.

Sincerely,

Jody Goldhawk

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I live in an apartment building in North London and I have neighbours and friends who rely on Paratransit services. I hear all about their experiences, including that they have to awaken before 7am to reserve a bus pickup three days in advance of when they need it; if they don't, they may not get a seat. If something important comes up suddenly and they need to travel at minimal notice, they can't get these buses. Many people who are disabled often have difficulty sleeping and asking them to wake up so early and be on hold for long periods of time is adding to their burden. Another stipulation probably due to funding is that Paratransit riders can't bring groceries home with them on the buses, and have to arrange for a cab at added expense and wait time. Buying groceries is an essential part of life and there should be allowances made for that. One solution would be to have more buses to serve a growing population of elderly and disabled people. Since many elderly and disabled people have pets, and London Transit will soon allow small pets on their buses, it would be nice if Paratransit buses would allow them also; this way, these people can take their pet companions to vet appointments without having to make the agonizing decision to take their chances at home because they can't afford a cab. These are basic needs that the average able-bodied person can fill quickly; disabled folks should be allowed to do the same.

Please feel free to use these experiences.

Marg Szabo

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My name is Karli Steen, and I have been a paratransit rider since I was eight years old. In my time using the service I have learned the optimal times to call for what I need. In recent years, everything I have learned has appeared to turn upside down. Currently, it is next to impossible to get a spot on the line within the first hour, which causes all the available times to be spoken for. I have taken to booking rides obscenely early so I am not late for any engagements, which doesn't always help.

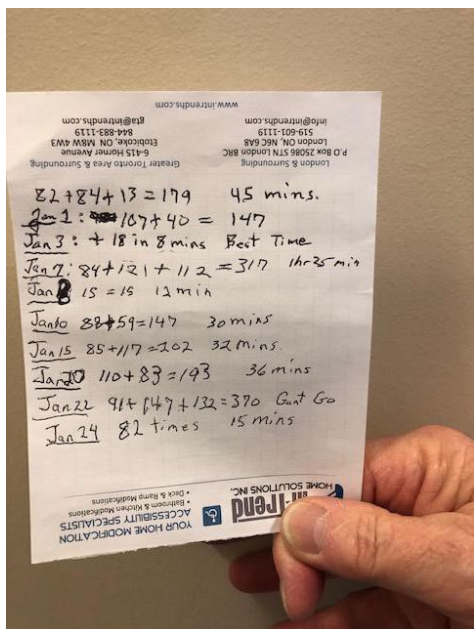
As a long-time user, I have enjoyed getting to know all the different drivers. I have noticed that that current situation of cuts has them visibly stressed out and booked solid. Due to the recent changes, I have been very selective in the trips that I take as I cannot guarantee I will get there in a timely fashion. My wish for paratransit is that there will be some sort of online functionality in the future that allows us to independently book trips. I would also like to see the drivers better compensated for their time and dedication. I have always been grateful for the independence that paratransit provides, but I am saddened to see the company in its current state.

Thank you,

Karli Steen

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"I take the bus to go to the YMCA to swim in the morning. I plan my mornings around calling for the bus. It can take 30 minutes to over 2 hours to get through when I call! I track how long it takes for me to get through on a sheet of paper. When I do get someone to talk to, sometimes I can't get it at all, or I can only get it to go one way. I have to call my brother, who drives 45 minutes from the South end to drive me, or I have a pay for a cab, which I don't like to do because it is expensive. Sometimes the bus is on time, but most of the time I have to wait around half an hour"



Donald Orr

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Imagine going to your son's hockey tournament and missing the game because you were out in the lobby at 8:00am Saturday morning, the same time the game was to start because you had to call to try to arrange a bus for him so he could get to and from college in three days time. And then only to have the call cut off after finally getting through and have to start calling all over again and then when finally getting through again only to be told they couldn't accommodate that ride.

Started calling at 8 and finally complete my disappointing call at 8:50 to find out the game is over and he is already off the ice. I think that morning I had called a ridiculous amount of times, 50 mins of hell and unfortunately not the first time and sad to say not the last time.

I am a PSW, I remember when I worked in a group home it was someone job to sit on the phone starting at 7 on weekdays, 8 on weekends just to call paratransit for our residents.

I just pray that Paratransit improves or as my son gets older he doesn't decide he wants to spontaneously go out for dinner because I'm sorry that is not going to happen unless he decides 3 days in advance to be spontaneous. Paratransit is literally hell!!!

Jennifer Pozeg

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Sadly I do not have good news regarding Paratransit. It has been especially difficult the last 8 months. I just happened to keep some stats on my calls. Starting from the time they open in the morning, it has taken 146 calls before the line was not busy. Yes, I had to dial 146 times, another occasion it was 113, and often over 90. Once through, I am usually on hold for 10 minutes or more. On several occasions I have been on hold for more than 30 minutes. Most of these calls resulted in no ride being available to me.

This year (2023), I have only been able to get a ride a few times. This means that I have to pay for a taxi to and from medical appointments, which is an average of \$23 EACH WAY, or \$46 round trip. As a disabled senior my limited income cannot support this, so it has to come out of money I would spend on food or dental care.

Late last year I was diagnosed with cancer, I had surgery January 26, 2023. I am going to be receiving radiation therapy soon. This will mean daily visits to the hospital for 6 weeks. I do not have any family in Ontario. I may have to refuse treatment as I cannot afford taxis every day for 6 weeks.

I have always tried to book Paratransit during their less busy hours & the medical community have been very supportive in trying to help me.

I do have a couple of good friends who help me out, but both take care of their grandchildren and would not be able to take me on a daily basis.

This stress has impacted my health, and my permanent disability has become worse due to the stress. In speaking with the drivers they have shared with me that they are very short of drivers. I always let them know how grateful I am for them. All of them treat me very well. Hope this helps.

Regards,  
Maria Markiton

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"My name is maria. I am a disabled Londoner and I use the London paratransit system. I have found it extremely difficult to use, for three reasons. First of all, the booking system appears to be severely understaffed. Just this morning, at the very beginning of the booking times , I had to call 352 times—I do not exaggerate, 352 times—in order to get through to the booking line. Even then, it was too late for me to get one of the ride times that I needed. We can solve this problem by adding more staff to the booking line, **but most importantly, by making online booking an option.** An online booking system should be the top priority. The second difficulty with paratransit is that it does not provide transfers for bus tickets. Given that many disabled folks, myself included, have lower incomes, having to use two bus tickets regularly when you could use one is a financial impediment. We ask for buses where we are treated the same as regular transit users, who can get transfers. The final issue I have with paratransit is the setup of the seating. I have chronic neck and shoulder pain, and it would be very helpful if the seats could come up higher, so that my head could be supported. I have had intense bouts of neck and shoulder pain from using paratransit because there is not a high enough neck rest. This problem could be solved either by retrofitting current buses, or by redesigning new buses. I hope that you will take my concerns, and the concerns of others, into consideration as you make decisions about paratransit."

Kind regards,  
Maria McCann

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I could share SO many stories to demonstrate the many flaws of this service, but I don't think I need to as this article captures them well (with the exception of harassment, condescending interactions, and other safety hazards I have experienced). I would encourage everyone to read this article prior to the one below: <https://www.cbc.ca/.../this-london-senior-is-trapped-at...>

Now, I have a few ideas on how we can improve the system of accessible transportation in London. I thought I would present them to anyone who is interested, as solutions are what is needed at this point in time:

1. Paratransit drivers should receive the same compensation/benefits as any LTC driver. The job is just as challenging, has inherent safety risks, and often follows a very nonstrategic manifest that leads drivers to travel across the city multiple times on a very tight timeline during a shift.
2. Though this should apply to all LTC drivers, Paratransit drivers require access to enhanced training to ensure they feel comfortable supporting their customers who live with a wide variety of abilities. This should involve practical sessions on inclusive communication, recognition of behaviour as a form of communication, verbal de-escalation techniques and basic ways of protecting oneself in case a customer becomes physically "aggressive" (intentionally or otherwise), understanding there is no correlation between physical abilities and intelligence, and ensuring they truly know how to safely transport customers using a variety of mobility devices/experiencing different levels of chronic pain. This would lead to less stress for everyone involved, improve safety for all, enhance the customer experience, and likely improve employee retention rates.
3. Though I'm not sure how this works logistically, there needs to be a way to book rides over the phone AND online. This aligns with the AODA Customer Service Standard, best practices for inclusive customer service, and empowers people of all abilities to be as independent as possible (e.g. though not everyone has internet access, it can be argued many customers cannot use a telephone, thereby making the equity argument moot).
4. Some cities, such as K-W, have a policy by which customers can book a ride for medical/work/school-related reasons much further ahead than for recreational activities. I support this not because I feel recreation is unimportant, but rather because it ensures folks requiring transportation for absolute necessities are more likely to obtain one AND staff can plan to have more drivers/vehicles available on days when they know there is going to be a surge in customers requiring rides. Assuming driver retention rates have improved, being able to plan ahead would be a significant asset. This being said, spaces should be saved to accommodate same-day requests.
5. Enhance customer service for riders living with disabilities who are able and wish to take general public transit. For example, I would certainly fall in this category, however, I have been made to feel uncomfortable/unsafe on the city bus to the point in which I have to be VERY desperate to take it anywhere. NOTE: This option is not nearly as feasible during the winter, so specialized transit would need to consider this (though enhanced snow removal services could help mitigate this). This could significantly decrease pressures on Paratransit.

I could continue, but I think a top-five list is enough for now. I sincerely hope changes are made in a timely manner, as everyone has a right to autonomy, dignity, and self-determination."

Nicole Horton

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Leads is a skills and employment service for people aged 15 and up who have disabilities and/or barriers. Approximately 6% of the 2500 people Leads served annually depend on Paratransit to come to Leads for skills development and employment support. Their goal is to upskill, secure and retain gainful employment.

They depend on Paratransit to attend skills development sessions and employment workshops when virtual learning is not the best venue for them to learn. They have and are experiencing the hardships of reserving for Paratransit as many have experienced. The hours of trying to access to reserve and often the unavailability of the transit have caused them to send regrets or absences from their sessions. They depend on the Paratransit to get to and back from work. It is very discouraging when so many barriers exist to gaining access to life needs and supporting our labour force and economy. We need to remove barriers!

London needs to plan and build a better system to support those who require Paratransit to "live, work and play", fulfill compliance with the Transportation Standards, Accessibility for Ontarians Disability Act (AODA) and uphold the City's Diversity and Inclusion Policy. Please have Paratransit be part of the City's Strategic Plan. Support a vibrant community that walks the talk of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.

Thank you  
Wendy Lau

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To Whom This May Concern,

My name is Cathy Baker and I live in London Ontario and I am supported by PHSS Medical and Complex Care in Community. I love living in London and I am very engaged in my community. The London Knights are my favourite hockey team and I go see them at least weekly. I am writing to you today to not only advocate for myself but for all people with different abilities that we need more support and access to accessible transit in London Ontario. To access all the amazing things that London has to offer it is essential for me to have access to services such as Paratransit.

I have enjoyed getting back into the London community now that things are opening back up from spending time with family and friends to going out shopping and hockey games. I have however encountered some barriers in this process that make it much more difficult or impossible for me to access what I need. The largest being access to accessible transit. I have many amazing things that I want and need to do in the London area but I require access to accessible transit to make this happen.

Recently, I was unable to book accessible transit to visit at my sisters' home so I took an accessible taxi. It is hard fi not impossible to book an accessible taxi ahead of time so you just have to hope that they can get you when you require it as there are limited accessible cabs that can take a wheelchair. I was able to get a ride however the taxi driver dropped me off at the wrong location and did not listen to me when I said it was not correct. When I did not arrive at my sisters my family and staff team were able to track down where I was and the Taxi company required me to pay for another ride to arrive at the correct location even though they had the correct address to start. I am concerned about taking a taxi now in the future independently which has created a barrier for me.

Another barrier to transit is the financial cost. Paratransit is an affordable transit option for me to get to medical appointments, shopping, visits with family and friends and community activities. I am unfortunately just unable to afford the cab prices as it costs about \$50 one way for me to get from my home in Pond Mills to downtown London. I live on a tight budget with ODSP and I cannot afford this type of expense regularly.

Since the pandemic it has been harder to access paratransit in London. It usually takes about an hour to get through to a dispatcher to make a booking. Therefor at 7am myself with the assistance of a staff need to begin calling and hitting redial until we are able to get through. Transit can only be booked 3 days in advance. I often have to save up to purchase tickets to special events and it is scary not knowing until 3 days before if I will even have a ride to attend. Often by the time you do get to book times, the timing you need is unavailable and with a lack of drivers on the road I typically have to either arrive late or leave early from what I want to do fi I am lucky enough to get a booking.

1am writing this letter to let you know that these barriers have made it very difficult if not impossible at times for me to get out into my community. I am struggling to keep my independence when I am requiring so much assistance to even access transit. I would like to see London work on a plan to make booking paratransit more accessible and having more buses on the road so we are able to get to the place that we need. I would be happy to answer anymore questions that you may have and you can reach me at 519-686-9982.

Thank you for your time,

Catherine Baker

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My Mom uses paratransit and these are her thoughts:

I would like to thank you for allowing me to contribute. I hope my experiences will assist you in your goals. I have been using the service since 2019. I have a regular pick ups on Saturday and Sunday every week. And I usually go out shopping once a week. I use a walker.

I have called many times to complain to the LTC over the years. It has always fallen on deaf ears. I know the bus service is being run by 3 different entities. I know the service is suffering due to miss management on all levels. It is obvious. I know we have lost all seasoned drivers for many reasons and right now the drivers have little experience driving large vehicles as well as little to no experience dealing with the disabled. I find the lack of compassion disheartening in this profession where compassion is very important. There used to be a level of caring from the drivers, it just honestly feels like we are being loaded and transported. I have talked to sweet older ladies on the bus and they feel the differences. I know from many conversations with many drivers that they are paid poorly and treated like they know they are "Disposable", I was told. I have yet to talk to a new driver with experience with the older or the disabled.

I have witnessed drivers being given two different pick - ups at the same time and being told by dispatch, which ever is closer. This makes everybody late. The drivers feel the pressure. This puts pressure on the people that are to keep us safe. Some do not care where others speed to get to their next destination. The buses are more often late than on time. We are never called if known our buses are going to be late. The fact that the dispatch pushes the already full daily schedule around to allow for people to call in, causes so much stress to an already weak system.

I book my bus 3 days in advance. Yet I do not take priority. Over the years 5 or 6 times I have had to wait for over 30 minutes. More like 40 minutes before my bus would arrive. And honestly dispatch lied so often. I have had drivers be verbally aggressive . He is no longer there. I am blessed to have my wits about me right now. If I was more vulnerable I would be fearful.

I honestly fear the way the system is set up, someone is going to get hurt, then we may see change. Like communities begging for a stop sign at a busy corner, and no one pays attention until someone gets hurt, I feel like a young inexperienced driver with little training will accidentally hurt someone. It bothers me the government is the third partner with, from what I can see little to no oversight as to the way the companies are managed.

It is the management. I have been an entrepreneur for most of my life. I know where all problems begin and end, at the head.

Thank you again.  
Theresa Lynn Tomkinson Artist\Entrepreneur Break N Records

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I would like to tell you a few things about Paratransit. They say they are a door to service but that is not always true.

A few years ago I made a mistake of walking down to the circle to meet my Paratransit bus because it was a nice day. I live on a dead end street that leads out to a circle. I just thought it would be a casual thing and was doing it to get some fresh air. I never thought it would amount to all of the trouble that we've had!! I am so sorry I did that!!! For about year or so, Paratransit started to refuse to pick me up at my house and wanted me, my roommates, and staff to meet them at the circle. They said it was to hard for them to back up. This is a 2-5 min walk from my home. I live with people who are medically fragile and can not wait out the rain or cold weather and I don't deserve to either. Paratransit can be very late some days (20 plus mins) and I would never know because I don't have a cellphone to call and see what's going on. Sometimes they arrive and leave early too and I would miss my ride completely because I would not know they were there. Paratransit always want the people riding the bus to be 10 mins early, but it doesn't seem to matter when they show up. Anyways, it was a big deal a bunch of people came to my house and gave us a list of things to do so it would be safe for the drivers to start picking us up at our home. We have done all the required adaptations to our driveway and all of the areas of concern like cutting down trees and adding lighting. However even this year depending on the driver they sometimes refuse to drop me off at home and I end up having to get off at the circle and walk down!! This is especially hard in the winter months because of all the snow!! I am in a wheelchair you know. I don't get around as good in snow!!!! I don't understand why it was and sometimes still is hard for them to Pick us up at our house, the Garbage trucks and recycling trucks don't have a problem!!!!

The newer drivers have also been struggling to learn the job as well, one time they did not know how to strap me in and my staff had to show them. What if I didn't have a staff that day!!! I Can go out alone!!!!This driver was also very careless when driving and would hit the corners really fast and I could feel my chair tip slightly.

Some of the drivers aren't patient either or they are rude to me!!! like I cant understand what they are saying so I ask them to keep their comments to their self's

But at the end of the day there are not as many options for Transportation as you may think so I have use Paratransit

Denise McDonald

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I think 300+ redials starting at 7 in the morning and still not getting a trip to a Dr appt is ridiculous. Yet this happens. I will not book a trip anywhere unless I can get a return trip booked too.

I think appointments should be able to be booked ahead of time, especially specialists. 7 am is the time psws are usually busy with client and they can't wait while we redial!

I love the drivers and the booking agents. I just dread dialing and having to change my plans due to no availability.

Thank you for your help with this matter.

Sharlene Kapp

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I am writing this letter in concern with the current situation of the City of London's Para transit system. My son is a resident of a housing unit on Southdale Road operated by Participation House. (PHSS) The last several years have been a constant battle of try to get any kind of acceptable service from Para transit in London, there is little to no management of the entire system!

The call in system at most times is none existent, from not getting an answer at all, to waiting in a "Q" for several hours!! If by chance someone does take you call the answer is "we have an opening in three days" It appears to me that in this day and age Para transit is far far behind other cities in technology and efforts to make the system work at all!

The safety aspect for the customers is another major concern of mine and my sons, from sitting in wheel chairs out in winter weather to waiting in the pouring rain for a Para transit bus that may or may not show up at all!!

It's time the city puts some time, effort and money into getting this problem resolved!! It's long over due

Thank You  
Bob Kittmer

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Para Transit, my views and Para Transit are not good ones. I'm going to break it up in two categories: pros service at door. Most drivers are helpful, fair is reasonable .

Cons: not really door-to-door service the drivers do not come to the door to pick up or drop off,their wait. Time is five minutes and then they will leave after five minutes Drivers time and your time for pick up is never the same. Drivers time is always five minutes ahead. Some of the dispatch people that work for Para Transit are very ignorant and rude, I feel this to be very disturbing for someone with a disability that could cause a lot of stress and anxiety trying to talk to dispatch they need to re-train their dispatch and realize they are working with people with disabilities as well as the elderly and should treat them with the respect they deserve, their booking line is ridiculous. They need to hire more dispatchers. They shouldn't leave people on hold for an hour. By the time they answer the phone sometimes you just can't get a ride because it's already booked because you've had to wait too long. You have to do guesswork for appointments they can hold you on the bus for one hour so it makes you either extremely early or you would be just on time , they are not a very organized company. I was seriously hurt a few years ago, Para transit driver put the seatbelt across my shoulders and locked me down. I did not have staff at that time, and I ended up in the emergency room. My shoulder was welted, and my back was damaged. I was in extreme pain. My mother confronted Para Transit and they did not acknowledge what was done nor did they take responsibility or apologize for their mistakes. one time my mom and I were on the bus the driver had the wrong person, we knew the person, my mom got into an argument and found the right person this was a huge mistake but again they have nothing in place to make sure they have the proper person.

As you can see the pros and the cons, the pros do not outweigh the cons. Para Transit definitely needs to change things for the people that rely on them, safety should come first and a lot of drivers drive carelessly I have had whiplash several times do to careless driving

Thank you Amber

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Please take time to read this letter.

I am writing specifically for Tom Mahoney and the residents of Participation house on Southdale Road. Tom is my brother and has grown up with cerebral palsy he is generally a happy man. Recently he was hit by a van crossing Southdale Road at the lights. He had the right of way as other drivers came to his aid. They walked him home and explained to the staff what had happened . The van that hit him left. This shook him up pretty bad. He is now concerned with his safety using PT as they will not come to his home. It is hard enough for those of us who can stomp through the snowdrifts and carrying umbrella in the rain. He cannot do these things. So he is stuck at home.

Tom cannot go to his job or join in any community activities outside of his residence. This is so unfair!

An Amazon driver is always pulled on the side of the road to deliver packages. Ups, Purolator as well! Somehow we have to get more safety features on the Paratransit. Bright flashing lights, a sign a pylon the driver could put up several feet away. Paint the bus orange! Allow the bus to back into driveways??

Having seven or eight adults physically disabled routinely having to cross Southdale road to get a ride is ridiculous.

Now we can talk booking these rides. They have to book 3 days in advance. What if they would like to go visit a friend or get a doctor's appointment short notice? Nope sorry you didn't call us 3 days ago. Well 3 days ago when I waited on the phone to book, for an hour they said nothing was available! More drivers would equal more rides. And a booking system where you answer the phone would be helpful.

Please considered all that I have written as if you had a loved one needing this service.

Thank you Judy Sweetland

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Booking three days in advance gives no room for last minute activities or invitations. The staff spend at least 45minutes every morning trying to get through to try to make bookings. Its like trying to win a contest on a radio station, calling calling calling. And once you are through, you don't necessarily win the contest as they cant usually accommodate and get you the ride you are needing. And that's three days in advance. You can try to get a booking 2 days a head of time but you are pretty much guaranteed that they can't help you.

The ladies that live at XXX Belgrave ave used to have subscription bookings (a weekly booking to their respective churches) but when Covid happen all of that was obviously cancelled. Since everything has been open again and getting back to normal they have been struggling to get a booking on Sundays to their churches. They are not accepting subscription bookings at this time. Regena goes up to St. Ansgar at Sarnia and Lawson, and Sandra goes to St. John the Divine on Baseline rd. Kellie is a member of St. Patricks on Dundas. We can usually get a ride home for Kellie but not a ride there, resulting in the need to take a taxi (or try to take a taxi as they aren't always available either) Practicing our faith is a right that we all have in Canada. If we can't even get to the building isn't that a violation of our human rights!

If Sandra wants to visit her boyfriend at [REDACTED] Southdale Rd, she has to ensure that the staff are watching for her as Paratransit wont drop her off at his house but across the road at No Frills on the busy four lane road of Southdale rd.. As they refuse to use the driveway at Southdale.

If you are booking for a doctor's appointment, depending on where in the city it is and where you live, you need to book a minimum of 1 hour to 45 minutes in advance (if less then 10kms away) to be able to get there on time and many times we are late.

Yes the city has accessible city buses but the ladies need to have staff with them for safety as the sidewalks to get to the bus stops are not safe for them to be on their own.

And to be honest we try to avoid using the system as much as we can as it is so terrible. This is costing the agency money in taxi fares when we don't have a driver for our vans and we cant get a ride on pt.

Tracey Carvell  
Care Coordinator

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Three more stories I can share:

#1 – My dad, while on a disability pension and in a power wheelchair, had to book Voyageur Patient Transfer Service from Bluebell and Sunningdale to University Hospital, which is 4.5 km one way, in order to ensure that he made appointments with specialists on time. The rides were \$93 each direction, as opposed to paratransit is the cost of a bus ticket but cannot offer any sort of accurate or set schedule.

#2 – I found someone who lives near Adelaide and Hamilton a job near London Airport. They qualify for Paratransit but can't be scheduled for shifts using Paratransit because they can't guarantee a ride or a pickup or drop off time. The employer is very accommodating of all physical and emotional needs, but public transit for a 9 am start time and a 6 pm end time on a Saturday has one pickup on public transit, which is 9:47 am in his neighbourhood for an intercommunity transit bus originating in Sarnia, getting them to work for 11:05 am. Getting home? 5:14 am the following morning that Intercommunity Bus will pick him up and take him. The employer wants them to work there long term, but can't rely on Paratransit or Public transit to get there, and an Uber or Cab is outside of their budget. I ended up helping the employer write a grant to help buy the participant an e-bike that we are waiting for a response on.

#3 – I spoke to a current Paratransit driver who shared with me under the condition of anonymity that they feel grossly undervalued compared to the drivers of regular LTC buses, whether it be in the areas of compensation, benefits, or scheduling. They shared that they actually make significantly more money driving their own personal vehicle and delivering food through apps, and that a sense of loyalty to the regular clients is all that keeps them coming back. They fear that if they put their own financial needs first, then their regular clients would be even more isolated from participation in their community than they already are.

Thanks!  
Jeremy McCall  
Employment Specialist

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Dear City of London Councillors,

I am writing to you to request that City Council include improvements to Paratransit in the upcoming strategic plan.

The Paratransit system is vital to people with physical disabilities to allow them to access their community for the necessities of life including medical appointments, groceries, employment and social inclusion. The current system has become almost inaccessible to the majority of people and has significant repercussions on their health, welfare and safety.

The bottom line of all the concerns is that there needs to be a commitment of more money into the system to mirror the ever-increasing user numbers. There also has to be a commitment to improving the efficiency of the present system and looking for innovative solutions including the use of newer technologies. Many communities are struggling with similar issues and many have found solutions that our city could imitate and improve upon.

I have attached a link describing the experience (see below) to a CBC news story about from Jody Goldhawk that explain some of the difficulties with the system.

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/london/this-london-senior-is-trapped-at-home-relying-on-ltc-s-impossible-paratransit-service-1.6703581>

From your Diversity and Inclusion Policy for the City of London it states that :  
“The City of London and its citizen’s consider London as a diverse and inclusive community that honours, welcomes, and accepts all people; where people have the power to eliminate systemic oppressions. The citizens deeply value diversity and the personal, cultural, social, and economic benefits it brings to the community. As such, the London community enables all people to have equal rights, opportunities, and access for their benefit and well-being including, but not limited to, the domains of employment, education, health, accommodation, and leisure.”

Many of the individuals Hutton House provides serves to access Paratransit to attend our programs and to go about their day to day lives. If the City of London truly wants London to be an inclusive community then reliable transportation is a key element to making this a reality. One of our staff uses paratransit to attend work and spends a significant amount of time either trying to book a ride or waiting for a ride. Getting to work enables her to be financially independent and not rely on social services to support herself. More Londoners also want this for themselves but the ability to get to where one needs to go is a barrier in London.

London’s ACCAC conducted a series of community open houses in the fall of 2017 and that report was presented to Council in December of 2017. The key findings were grouped into 3 sections: transportation, employment and infrastructure barriers. Transportation was, by far, the biggest concern and was raised by almost every single person that attended the open houses or gave feedback in other ways. It is disappointing that nothing has changed as a result of this report.

While the City of London has an Accessibility Community Advisory Committee to be in compliance with the AODA, many on that committee are frustrated about the lack of interest in improving Paratransit services. They would like to see some actions taken on their recommendations otherwise the members leave in frustration.

We would appreciate the opportunity to meet with you, at your convenience, to discuss this issue. We have a long history of working with the City and understand the issues from both the user and the provider’s points of view. We sincerely hope the city will take action to improve this vital service for so many Londoners and the only way to get started is to get this put into the upcoming strategic plan. I can make myself available at most anytime and look forward to hearing from you. Sincerely,

Jeanette Dutot Hutton House Executive Director

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Good Morning  
My son is at Fanshawe taking the CICE program. Since he has been studying, we used to call para-transit for the service, it has been 2 years and we only got a few rides.  
Our question: why we never have an opportunity to get the service?  
The dispatcher says first because we did not call early in the morning (as the lines are busy for about two hours) second because the ride is to long from where you live to Fanshawe College. It is a long distance between the two place.

Finally we sent a request as my son has a fixed schedule every week. They answer only one day. It is very difficult for our family to help my son with the transportation, I am (mother) in charge of this role, but it is very complicated for me to work.

Hope this will help at some point. Good luck to all of us.

**Natalia Rodriguez**  
RECE, ABS

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Two weeks ago, my daughter who has Down's Syndrome was left outside unattended at her destination. They arrived earlier than usual and the driver dropped her off despite the very cold temperatures and despite knowing she shouldn't be left without staff greeting her off the bus!!! This is a very serious safety and welfare concern!!!

In another instance, she was left at childreach in a similar situation!! My daughter walked around the parking lot waiting to enter .... which again is not safe especially in this area of town!

Ilda Teixeira

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Hi, my name is Liza Worsfold. Both my husband and are wheelchair users, and I also have a service dog. Paratransit is our only means of transportation. I do not know where to begin with the problems and concerns I have with paratransit. I guess I will begin with the fact that calling in for a ride at 7 am is impossible, by the time I get in to talk to someone after spending upwards of 2 hours there is no ride time that I need. I can not tell how many times I've been late for medical appointments. I have had to spend money on a cab to get to my appointments. I am a working person in the community, and I have been late for work due to how Paratransit is run.

I remember recently I spend three hours waiting for the bus to get back home. There was even a time they have forgotten to pick me up.

Recently my service dog got really unwell I had to get him to the vet and called for transportation, but the operator told me they could not take me because they did not have enough buses on the road. I had to get my mother-in-law to help me, but what I am saying is I should not be asking other people for help when there is a way to be independent with our own transportation. there have been times when my husband has been in the hospital and I have had to again spend a lot of money on a wheelchair cab daily

The other issue is training for these drivers is not long enough or detailed enough. It is a total of three days I've been told. I can not tell you how many times I called in to complain about a driver because they did not belt me in right or they were not operating the lift safely. to some drivers not allowing my licensed trained service dog.

Recently I had a concern about a driver who started lowering the lift as I was trying to get on and because I could not see the lift very well I almost drove my chair onto a lift that wasn't there. I quickly backed up but this driver got distracted and he started to lower the lift as I was getting on it. Part of my disability is I have some vision issues so seeing the lift is a little hard sometimes

These buses are very uncomfortable too. We need more buses on the road and I could go on all day about how disappointed I am with the only transportation I can use to get around the city to lead an independent life.

In my opinion, I think we need 1) a better phone system, and/or online booking and 2) more buses in service or another bus company to help with the high demand of the disabled community with better-trained drivers. I think having the drivers treated and paid more like the LTC bus drivers would keep better drivers on staff longer. Tendering this out to the lowest bidder every few years DOES NOT WORK.

Sincerely concerned long-term Paratransit users

Liza and Steve Worsfold

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I'm a bit afraid to email as I work in a group home and can't risk losing my job for sharing but I feel this issue is important.

Our group home and many others are using Paratransit more than ever even though we have a van and staffing to drive people places. It is done for the good reason of helping people become more independent but it bothers me that it is taking available spots for people who don't have any other means of transportation. Perhaps this will apply more pressure for better service, I don't know. Anyway, just thought I should share this with you perhaps as a talking point. I would be happy to answer any questions or become involved in advocating for better service.

Requested anonymity as she was worried about her job.

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Paratransit can sometimes be hard to get. I have to call 3 days in advance to get a ride on Para Transit early in the morning at 8am on Sunday to get a ride for Hutton House on Wednesday. It takes an hour of my time to get through on the booking phone line. Sometimes I have to arrive early or late to a program. Sometimes I might have to leave a program early. It isn't always the most reliable to get a ride with Para Transit. I don't always get the time that I want for a ride with Para Transit. It can be unpredictable whether or not I can go to Hutton House weekly to my program. If I can't get a ride with Para Transit I would have stay home and miss my program. With so people going to Hutton House for the same program why can't I get a permanent booking? Hopefully the city of London can make riding Para Transit more reliable and predictable.

Jennifer Buis, Para Transit rider, weekly to Hutton House

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Here are 2 paragraphs about my experience with Paratransit.

1. I have been a rider of Paratransit for about 25 years and have found the last year to be the worst as far as getting bookings. First issue is just getting through to a person. I start callin right when they open at 7 or 8 and most days can not even get through for 2 - 3 hours and then are on hold for another half hour. By then times are gone. I have lost medical appointments and Drs because of not being able to get rides. This is a big issue and is affecting much more than just fun leisure outings and appointments, but it is also causing problems for rides to a job.

2. I am concerned that not everyone who uses this service has a legitimate reason to. I have been told that there are about 3000 riders and I have a feeling a lot of them really do not need the service and are taking advantage. I am not assuming anything, however I have been on when some riders do not at all look like they have any type of a need to be riding, especially when it seems they are able enough to be using public transit. I think the number of current riders has made it challenging for those who really do need the service. I do use a wheelchair and really do need the service. I am frustrated sometimes when I am not able to get important rides and wonder if they are all being taken by those who are taking advantage.

Julia Ferguson  
Motivational / Inspirational Speaker

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My son or I call three days in advance at the prescribed time as requested by Paratransit. Approximately half the time he is able to get a ride at least one way, some weeks it is more successful than others. The issues are:

1. Having to call 3 days in advance to secure a ride then not being able to get one anyway
2. Trying to call back on the day of need to see if there had been a cancellation and them telling you you have to call when you need the ride then you are stuck someplace with no way to get home
3. Having to drop out of programs because you can't get a ride
4. Having to wait for hours after a doctor appt because you don't know how long it will take
5. Having the drivers come into your workplace an hour before your pick up time to tell you they will leave if you are not out in 10 minutes
6. Not receiving calls back from Para when there is an issue despite the call person telling you they will have someone reach out to you
7. Calling between 100 to 210 time before getting through to be put on hold for 20 minutes.. start calling at 7 and sometimes not getting through until 9:30

I also work in the not for profit sector and have a number of clients who utilize paratransit and they also struggle with the same issues.

Thank you

Janet Auckland

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Today had to call a complaint about a driver today. When I call was transferred to consumer service but it went to voice mail. The complaint was the driver was going to refuse to take me saying that I had too many bags but I had one plus my purse which doesn't count then he ask about bag between my feet it was my catheter bag he told me that it counts as a bag. He say we are only aloud one bag purse or other which means I have no right to get groceries or necessities. Some drivers will not allow a package of toilet paper or case of water that you are able to carry or hold today when he told me that my catheter bag counts as a bag I cried when I got home felt degraded and worthless the catheter bag is a part of my body by no choice and my purse carries meds and hand santizer masks there needs better complaint system and training paratransit not using same ccomplaint system I have better response against ltc than paratransit

Penny Moore

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A new low for Paratransit...I got through to the line at 8:17 Sunday morning and they had already run out of rides. I couldn't get Madeline's ride home at 3:45pm.

Jody Goldhawk

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