

January 10, 2010

Mayor Gary Grasso  
Village of Burr Ridge  
7600 County Line Road  
Burr Ridge, IL 60527

Dear Mr. Mayor,

I am writing about the government subsidized Paratransit program and the discussion scheduled for the Village Board Meeting on January 11, 2010 regarding that program. I have a very serious concern about the proposed change in the program to disallow its use based on specific destinations.

Public transportation for the disabled community living in the suburbs ranges from poor to sometimes non-existent and taxi service may be the only option for the disabled. In part this is caused by the failure of public planning. The disabled community's need for public transportation is increasing because economical and accessible automobiles usable by the wheelchair-bound or others with disabilities have not been produced for more than a decade. The only desirable remaining private option that is known to me is a very expensive customized van. These customized vans come with their own set of problems which range far beyond the high initial cost, leaving them unavailable for many.

As I understand the pending revision, it will limit the Paratransit vouchers based upon destination and would exclude users from traveling to airports. Determining need based upon destination is unwise since it is apparently based on the assumption that airline travel is a luxury. It is not. In many cases it is a real need and to discriminate against the user of the Paratransit program that wishes to or needs to travel by air in my view is wrong. Instead the program should be based on establishing a real economic need for both the seniors and the disabled that would have access to Paratransit. I suggest discussion and action along those lines of making Paratransit a NEEDS-BASED program rather than a destination-based one.

I have been disabled since 1977, long before the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and the Illinois Accessibility Code. Sadly in 2010 many barriers, both pre-existing and new, still exist with some provisions ignored or others frequently abused. This sad testament is made more understandable in part by the recent discussion at the December 2009 board meeting where the disabled were frequently referred to as "handicapped." While I am sure no offense was intended that word is offensive and non-descriptive. I would argue that while I am indeed crippled or disabled I am not handicapped! I am sure many others afflicted with a wide range of disabilities might feel the same way.

Very Truly Yours,



Richard G. Morton

CC: Burr Ridge Trustees

PS. You should be aware I am not a user of the Paratransit program or for that matter any government (local, state or federal) financial assistance program benefiting the disabled and as such I write this from the perspective of one not receiving any benefit or having any other stake in the outcome of this program.