



Western Resources
for
dis-ABLED
Independence

NO. LF112403-03

November 13, 2003

Mayor Jim Shaw
300 6th Street
Rapid City, SD 57701

Dear Mayor Shaw:

The Western Resources for dis-ABLED Independence (WRDI) Consumer Transportation Committee, a committee of people with disabilities who regularly utilize public transportation, i.e., Dial-a-Ride, were recently informed that the City of Rapid City has cut \$5,850 from the 2004 annual budget by eliminating Saturday Dial-a Ride bus service as of December 27, 2003.

In opposition to the elimination of Saturday public transportation service, we are submitting the attached petitions. The petitions include the signatures of not only Rapid Transit System (RTS) passengers but also public supporters of the Saturday service. People with disabilities, including many elderly need accessible, affordable, safe public transportation to employment, medical services such as dialysis, social events, and other activities of daily living. The Dial-a-Ride service is essential to meeting our needs.

Rather than eliminating the service, RTS needs to seek ways to increase the number of passengers utilizing the Saturday Dial-a-Ride transportation by following the Accessibility Guidelines of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Recommended improvements include but are not limited to the following:

1. RTS should modify services to comply with ADA scheduling requirements that specify that a passenger shall not be required to schedule a trip to begin more than one hour before or after the passenger's desired departure time.
2. Passengers should be allowed to schedule more than one round-trip on Saturdays. People who are employed Monday through Friday have only Saturdays to complete all errands, such as going to lunch, the bank, the hardware store, and the grocery store, all in one day.
3. Saturday operating hours should be similar to weekday operating hours for those who rely on Rapid Transit for employment or other daily life activities.
4. RTS should permit Saturday reservations to be made up to 14 days in advance of a

passenger's desired trip. Saturday rides should be confirmed with passengers before 4:00 p.m. on Friday, the day before the scheduled trip to allow passengers to plan their weekend.

5. Advertising for Dial-a-Ride services should be more informative so that people with disabilities, including many elderly, know that this service is available to them.
6. We also request that the RTS Board of Directors include RTS passengers, including people with a variety of disabilities and the elderly, people who use the service on a regular basis.
7. Apply for Medicaid reimbursement funds from the State of South Dakota.

Public transportation is vital for providing independence to people with disabilities and many elderly. In 1995 the city made the decision to cut Saturday Rapid Ride service; now the decision has been made to eliminate Saturday Dial-a-Ride service, thus leaving no accessible weekend transportation available to people that must rely on this service. While other cities are making improvements to their transportation services, Rapid City is taking a step backwards by eliminating Saturday transportation service, a serious step that adversely affects the lives of people with disabilities and elderly in our community.

We are planning to bring this matter to the November 24th Legal and Finance committee meeting. We would also like to meet with you and enter into dialog to discuss the future of public transportation in Rapid City and how it can remain responsive to the citizens in our community. At this time, we respectfully request that this action be reconsidered and the Saturday Dial-a-Ride transportation service be reinstated.

Sincerely,



Advocacy Coordinator

Chairperson, WRDI Consumer Transportation Committee

Enc: Petitions, 268 signatures to date

cc: Rapid City Council
Rich Sagen, RTS
Senator Tom Daschle
Senator Tim Johnson
Representative William Janklow
Bruce Lindholm, DOT
South Dakota Senators-Rapid City
South Dakota Representatives-Rapid City