

Madalyn Letellier

From: [REDACTED] Elyse [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, June 4, 2024 2:57 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: My comments for tonight's meeting
Attachments: My name is Elyse B.docx

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Elyse [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
Somerville, Ma
02145

Thank you for allowing me to have my opinions and concerns addressed. Please do not refer to my full last name when making the comments. I specifically state Elyse B. I don't want any other personal information exposed on here other than what I've included in my comment, below. Thank you so much for everything. I appreciate you.

Start of comments:

My name is Elyse B., and I am a long-time resident of Somerville.

As a member of our community who has personally benefited from the Taxi to Health Program as an under-60 user, funded by the American Rescue Plan Act, a pandemic-era funding source. I want to emphasize the critical role of accessible transportation, especially for individuals with disabilities and mental health conditions.

The Taxi to Health Program has been a lifeline for many of us who face challenges navigating reliable public transportation systems due to lack of consideration for our experiences using them. As the program ends, we face the same hardships we experienced before and now, with an absence of a suitable replacement.

It's important to recognize that according to the data, many of the rides provided through this program were for grocery trips. For individuals with disabilities, such as myself, having physical access to many affordable and healthier options via accessible transportation is critical for maintaining our health and well-being. It helps me, as a woman with mental health disabilities, to navigate an unreliable and sometimes arduous and unsafe public transportation system I don't always feel safe using.

Access to affordable and reliable transportation to grocery stores with healthier options and affordability is not a matter of convenience; it is a matter of equity and human rights.

We are also faced with the challenge of finding alternative solutions to meet our medical transportation needs. While services like MassHealth PT1, the Ride, reduced MBTA fares, etc., exist, they often do not accommodate same-day urgent care visits that aren't emergencies, leaving many of us without viable options for accessing essential services in a timely manner. This creates a lot of anxiety and worry that doesn't need to happen if there is a replacement for the old program that is more equitable.

Access to transportation is not just a matter of convenience; it is a matter of equity and human rights.

Prioritizing transportation equity for under 60 and low-income families in budget allocations and policy decisions is not just addressing immediate needs; you're investing in the long-term prosperity and enrichment of our community. When everyone has the means to access essential services and opportunities, we create a more vibrant and inclusive society where everyone can thrive.

Having a solid and realistic budget are critical to the survival of our city. However, we can't call it progress when we leave people behind. The return on investment that comes from ensuring equitable access to transportation helps families and individuals stay healthy and show other cities we care about our community. I mean, REALLY care. The benefits of providing essential needs far outweigh the costs, both in terms of individual well-being and community enrichment.

Community involvement and input are essential in addressing transportation concerns and ensuring that the needs of all residents are heard and addressed. Accessible opportunities for community members to voice their concerns, share their experiences, and contribute to the decision-making process are crucial for creating inclusive and effective transportation solutions among other community-based infrastructure. I'm not certain where this fits into the budget.

I realize this may be a bit late, in the process. What is happening is happening to real people. I wish we were seriously considered.

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