



Protection & Advocacy Project

400 E. Broadway, Suite 409

Bismarck, ND 58501

701-328-2950

1-800-472-2670

TTY: 711

www.ndpanda.org



Senate Transportation Committee

House Bill 1106 - March 20, 2025

Testimony of Micah Olson, P&A Position-In Support

My name is Micah Olson. I am attorney at Protection & Advocacy. I am speaking today in favor of House Bill 1106, a bill to provide an appropriation to the department of transportation for nonfixed route transit program grants.

In my work, I have frequently interacted with individuals who rely on both fixed route public transportation and paratransit. Prior to working at Protection & Advocacy, I worked as an Independent Living Advocate in Minot. Through my work, I have become familiar with fixed route transportation and paratransit in Bismarck, Mandan, and Minot.

I have interacted with many individuals who rely on public transportation, using fixed-route transit, paratransit, or sometimes both. While fixed route transportation works well for many people, it has limitations and may not be a viable option for many individuals, particularly those who require public transportation due to a disability. Disabled individuals often prefer paratransit because it provides door-to-door service. Paratransit may be the only option for some individuals, as they may not live on a fixed bus route or in a rural area that provides no other public transportation. Paratransit has longer hours of operation than fixed route transportation, including weekend hours. This gives individuals greater opportunity to get to and from work, run errands, and participate in evening and weekend activities. Paratransit makes it more possible for disabled individuals to participate in their communities.

Even if other forms of transportation are available, such as taxis or rideshare services, these options are often not viable for those who would qualify for paratransit. Although a taxi may be accessible, it is costly, and would not be affordable to many individuals, particularly those who regularly need public transportation. Rideshare services such as Uber and Lyft would not be feasible options for many people for several reasons. Individuals who do not have a phone may not be able to utilize the application, it may not be affordable, and it is unlikely the vehicle could accommodate a wheelchair or other mobility devices. Because alternatives to paratransit are not feasible, it is the only option for many people.

Although paratransit provides a valuable service, paratransit user report difficulties with scheduling. Sometimes work hours did not align with paratransit's schedule. Paratransit users might arrive to work very early or late. Sometimes they have to leave work early if paratransit arrives early. Individuals also report not being able to schedule rides on the weekends, even if they attempt to schedule far in advance. Paratransit also does not allow for sudden or spontaneous trips. This affects an individual's ability to socialize and participate in community activities.

Increased funding could assist in correcting some of paratransit's limitations. This would make our state more accessible and allow all individuals to fully participate in their communities.

P&A supports at Do Pass recommendation on House Bill 1106.