2023 SENATE TRANSPORTATION

SCR 4004

2023 SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

Transportation Committee
Fort Totten Room, State Capitol

SCR 4004
1/20/2023

A concurrent resolution directing the Legislative Management to consider studying accessible transportation in the state for older adults and individuals with disabilities.

9:30 AM Chairman Clemens opens hearing.

Senators Present: **Paulson, Rummel, Larsen, Conley, Clemens.**

Discussion Topics:

- Transit Opportunity
- Disability needs
- Ride shares
- Uber transit
- Transit funding
- Valley City Taxi

9:31 AM Senator Cleary introduced bill.

9:34 AM Kristen Dvorak - Executive Director of The Arc of North Dakota, in favor. #14651

9:37 AM Micah Olsen - attorney at Protection and Advocacy, in favor. #13917

9:44 AM Carry Varner, in favor.

9:45 AM Darcy Andahl, in favor. #14576

9:50 AM Roxane Romanick – Executive Director - Designer Genes of ND, in favor. #14590

10:01 AM Sargianna Wutzke – Lead Operations Officer for Community options, in favor. #13495

10:06 AM Susan Dingle, in favor. #14793

10:11 AM Julianne Horntvedt - Executive Director of the North Dakota State Council on Developmental Disabilities, in favor. #14583 #14584

10:12 AM Nathan Leier, in favor. #14333

10:17 AM Pat Hanson - Director of South Central Adult Services, in Opposition. #14650

10:27 AM Chairman Clemens adjourns hearing.

Additional written testimony:

Trevor Vannett #13616

Sheryl Beard #14412

Kyle Erickson #14524

Margret Parslow #14589

Royce Schultze #14616

Rachel Hafner #14742

Senator Cleary #14815 #14816

Nathan Liesen, Committee Clerk

2023 SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

Transportation Committee
Fort Totten Room, State Capitol

SCR 4004
1/26/2023

A concurrent resolution directing the Legislative Management to consider studying accessible transportation in the state for older adults and individuals with disabilities.

10:56 AM Chairman Clemens opens meeting.

Senator Present: **Clemens, Conley, Larsen, Rummel, Paulson**.

Discussion Topics:

- Amendment consideration

11:06 AM Senator Larsen motioned a Do Pass.

11:07 AM Senator Paulson seconded.

Senators	Vote
Senator David A. Clemens	Y
Senator Cole Conley	Y
Senator Doug Larsen	Y
Senator Bob Paulson	Y
Senator Dean Rummel	Y

Motion passed 5-0-0

11:07 AM Senator Larsen will carry.

Nathan Liesen, Committee Clerk

REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEE

SCR 4004: Transportation Committee (Sen. Clemens, Chairman) recommends **DO PASS** (5 YEAS, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSENT AND NOT VOTING). SCR 4004 was placed on the Eleventh order on the calendar. This resolution affects workforce development.

2023 HOUSE TRANSPORTATION

SCR 4004

2023 HOUSE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

Transportation Committee
Room JW327E, State Capitol

SCR 4004
3/16/2023

A concurrent resolution directing the Legislative Management to consider studying accessible transportation in the state for older adults and individuals with disabilities.

Chairman D. Ruby opened the hearing at 9:01AM.

Members present: Chairman Ruby, Vice Chairman Grueneich, Representatives Anderson, Christensen, Dyk, Frelich, Hauck, Koppelman, Murphy, Timmons, Wagner, Weisz, and Dakane. Members absent: Representative Dobervich.

Discussion Topics:

- System services challenges and barriers
- Transportation needs for the elderly, physically disabled and mentally disabled
- Fiscal impact of accessible transportation
- Long-term modifications of funding formulas
- Public responsibilities
- Paratransit systems in North Dakota

Senator Cleary introduced the bill in support (#25357).

Kirsten Dvorak, Executive Director of The Arc of North Dakota, testified in support (#25467).

Micah Olson, Attorney at North Dakota Protection and Advocacy, testified in support (#23646).

Roxane Romanick, Executive Director for Designer Genes of North Dakota, Inc., testified in support (#25486).

Sargianna Wutzke, Lead Operations Officer for Community Options, testified in support (#24496).

Bill Kalanek, representing Dakota Transit Association, verbally testified in support.

Chairman D. Ruby closed the hearing at 9:44AM.

Representative Dakane moved a Do Pass and Placed on the Consent Calendar.

Representative Christensen seconded the motion.

Roll call vote:

Representatives	Vote
Representative Dan Ruby	Y
Representative Jim Grueneich	AB
Representative Karen A. Anderson	Y
Representative Cole Christensen	Y
Representative Hamida Dakane	Y
Representative Gretchen Dobervich	AB
Representative Scott Dyk	Y
Representative Kathy Frelich	Y
Representative Dori Hauck	Y
Representative Ben Koppelman	Y
Representative Eric James Murphy	Y
Representative Kelby Timmons	Y
Representative Scott Wagner	Y
Representative Robin Weisz	Y

Motion carried 12-0-2

Representative Dakane is the bill carrier.

Chairman D. Ruby adjourned at 9:47AM.

Mary Brucker, Committee Clerk

REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEE

SCR 4004: Transportation Committee (Rep. D. Ruby, Chairman) recommends **DO PASS** and **BE PLACED ON THE CONSENT CALENDAR** (12 YEAS, 0 NAYS, 2 ABSENT AND NOT VOTING). SCR 4004 was placed on the Tenth order on the calendar.

TESTIMONY

SCR 4004

My name is Sargianna Wutzke and I am writing in support of SCR 4004. As a Lead Operations Officer for Community Options, an agency that provides services to individuals with developmental disabilities, I see how much of a struggle public transportation specifically para transit can be for individuals that we serve at our agency.

Community Options serves individuals throughout the state of North Dakota. No matter what part of North Dakota an individual lives in one of their biggest concerns is public transportation. I have heard many stories from individuals throughout the state with a number of concerns with paratransit in particular. I think that North Dakota should welcome a study where the different aspects of transportation are examined and see what needs to be done to better serve the elderly and individuals with developmental disabilities who utilize this service.

Some of the concerns that are a theme throughout the state include wait/pick up times, hours of operation on normal days, hours of operations on holidays and how far in advance rides need to be scheduled.

At least weekly, I hear stories of people and their concerns with wait times. Last week there was a legislative working group in Bismarck and the individual was supposed to be picked up at 11:30am. His paratransit ride arrived at 1:15pm. The meeting ended at 11:30am that day and thankfully there was someone who had access to the building that could wait with him until his paratransit could arrive. This individual utilizes an electric wheelchair, and this was his only option for transportation. There is another individual who utilizes an electric wheelchair whoco works a job in the community and has had to wait up to an hour and a half after his ride is scheduled for his pickup after work on at least a weekly basis. These are just two examples of the struggle with wait times. I have many more of the same stories from individuals throughout the state.

On weekends like many others, I do most of my shopping and activities with friends and family. I couldn't imagine not having any access to get somewhere but that is a reality for many of the individuals that we have that access paratransit. On Sundays in the cities of Grand Forks, Wahpeton, and Williston there is no paratransit. In Jamestown, individuals need to be picked up by noon for their last ride, Valley City runs until 2pm and in Bismarck paratransit runs until 2:30pm. None of the paratransit systems in North Dakota run past 6pm on Sundays. There are many activities that individuals can not participate in due to the limited hours of paratransit particularly on weekends. I think these hours need to be examined because everyone regardless of mobility concerns should be able to attend activities such as concerts, plays, comedy shows and even supper with friends and family. Many of these activities happen in the evenings on weekends and thus individuals who would need to use paratransit likely would not be able to participate.

Holidays are a time where many people spend time with their family. Para transits across the state either have no access on many holidays or very limited hours that are accessible on these days. For example, Fargo and Jamestown para transit do not run on most holidays including Thanksgiving, Easter and Christmas Day and only run until 5pm on Christmas Eve. Valley City is closed on all holidays. The paratransit in Bismarck runs from 10am-2pm on holidays. These hours are very limited at best and many times individuals we serve are not able to spend the time they want with their family during these important times.

All the paratransit systems in North Dakota require at least a 24-hour advance scheduling of rides some needing as much as 48 hours in advance. This limits any type of last-minute plans with friends to go out for coffee, supper or to a movie. I could not even imagine a friend calling me to meet up for supper and I am free and would love to meet with them, but I could not due to them wanting to meet that day and I need to set up a ride at least 24 hours in advance.

I believe a study that will evaluate statewide challenges to system services and barriers to expanding the state's accessible transportation infrastructure is something that is very needed in our state and thus I am in support of SCR 4004.

Sargianna Wutzke, Bismarck

Senate Transportation Testimony

Trevor Vannett

420 East Main Ave., Apt. 403, Bismarck, ND 58501

District 32

I am testifying in support of Bill No. 4004. I use transit services every day. The service is unreliable, pickup and drop off can be late, it's hard to plan my life around rides. When I ride transit, for example, I just tried to schedule a ride for January 23, 2023 at 5 p.m. Transit cannot come get me until 6:50-7:20 p.m. when I need to be picked up at 5 p.m. In the past, when I've been places past 5 p.m. I have had to wait outside alone or someone has had to wait with me. In the cold, this can be very dangerous.

I think this study should be mandatory so we can figure out a better way to provide public transportation services to people all over North Dakota. This isn't just a Bismarck need, this is a need for individuals with disabilities who need to use public transportation. To make this study mandatory, I think the committee should consider an amendment to make sure this study occurs.

Thank you for your time serving our state and for listening/reading my testimony. I urge you to vote yes on Bill No. 4004 and make this study mandatory. People with disabilities are in crisis, we need help now.

Trevor Vannett

trevorstwins@icloud.com

701-955-0000

Testimony Talking Points – Individuals Who Support, But Don't Have Direct Lived Experience

Name

Where you live

Voting district

I am testifying in support of Bill No. _____ for an Act to create and enact a new section to chapter 50-24.1 of the North Dakota Century Code, relating to legally responsible individuals providing Medicaid waiver services.

Your story

- Why are you in support of this bill?
- Who do you know that could benefit?

How a lack of service providers has impacted those who you know are experiencing hardship

- Lack of daycare
- Workforce issues/staff availability
- Quality of available workforce

The positive effects that families as paid service providers would have on those experiencing hardship

- Keep family unit intact
- Close the workforce gap
- Consistency and quality of care
- Are siblings in the home providing care?

Thank you for your time serving our state and for listening/reading my testimony. I urge you to vote yes on Bill No. _____ and for it to go into effect July 1, 2023. Families are in crisis, they need help now.

Name

Email

Phone number

Micah Olson

Protection and Advocacy

Attorney ID #09206

Testimony for SCR 4004

My name is Micah Olson. I am attorney at Protection and Advocacy. I recently moved to Bismarck from Minot, where I worked as an Independent Living Advocate at Independence, Inc., the Center for Independent Living in Minot. I drive my own vehicle using a hand control, so I do not rely on public transportation myself, but I took the Minot City Bus twice as part of my work. I also worked with several consumers who took public transportation. I am in favor of SCR 4004.

In Minot, I found that public transportation works well for some things, but there are many limitations. In Minot, there are two choices for public transportation: The Minot City Bus, which runs on fixed routes, and Souris Basin Transportation, which provides paratransit in the Minot area. The Minot city bus operates from 7 am to 7 pm Monday through Friday. It does not operate on the weekends. Souris Basin Transportation has longer hours than the city bus, but has limited hours on the weekend. Souris Basin also requires consumers to schedule a ride at least 24 hours in advance. Consumers have reported to me that 24 hours in advance is often not soon enough to guarantee that a ride will be available.

When I took the Minot city bus, I found that it was convenient and easy to use for wheelchair users. The drivers were professional and knew how to use the lift and secure my wheelchair on the bus. It would be a good option for a wheelchair user who did not drive.

Even though the Minot city bus was useful, several consumers reported significant limitations. The bus did not go to all areas of Minot, including to many new apartment buildings. Newer apartment buildings are often more accessible than older apartments and they are often better options for Disabled people. Recently in my job at Independence Inc., I worked with a wheelchair user to find an apartment. He does not drive. We found an apartment that worked for him, but it was not on the bus route. He would need to rely on Souris Basin Transportation for transportation. Another consumer who uses a wheelchair chose a less accessible apartment that was on the bus route over a more accessible apartment that was not on the bus route. She had concerns about being able to access Souris Basin when she needed it and wanted to have access to the city bus, which has a reliable schedule.

Although the Minot city bus has a reliable schedule, its hours limit its usefulness. Someone who has a typical daytime work schedule could use it to get to and from work, but it would not be useful for someone who works past 7 pm or on weekends. It is also not useful for people who

run errands on weekends. A person who relies on the city bus would have to plan to do errands during the week, which could be difficult for someone who works full-time.

Consumers who relied on Souris Basin Transportation also reported some difficulties. Sometimes their work hours did not align with Souris Basin's schedule. They might arrive to work very early or late. Sometimes they would have to leave work early if Souris Basin came early. Consumers also reported not being able to schedule rides on the weekends, even if they attempted to schedule far in advance.

Souris Basin also does not allow for sudden or spontaneous trips. This became a more significant problem in August when Central Cab, the only taxi service in Minot, closed. This left the city bus and Souris Basin as the only public transportation services in Minot.

Unlike the Minot City bus, BisMan Transit does operate from 8 am to 7 pm on Saturday, which is helpful for working people who need to run errands on the weekend. It has several fixed routes. I reviewed the routes on the BisMan Transit website and found that the bus routes go to many places throughout the city, but there are gaps. For example, my apartment building, which I chose because it was new and accessible, is approximately 1 mile from the nearest bus route. If I did not drive or had car trouble my only transportation option would be paratransit, which might not be available when I need it.

Public transportation should be studied to determine the best ways to make it effective and efficient for those who use it. Increasing hours, days of service, and adding more bus routes would make a big difference for people who rely on public transportation. Adding more paratransit vehicles and drivers may also increase the paratransit system's effectiveness.

Mr. Chairman, and other members of the committee, my name is Nathan Leier and I'm from a family farm near Strasburg. I vote and live in District 8.

I am testifying in support of Bill No. 4004. Transportation, in my opinion is a major obstacle for everyone with a disability who relies on this service to get to and from destinations. Being involved with groups such as North Dakota State Council on Developmental Disabilities (NDSCDD) & Advocates Leading their Lives (ALL), I've heard over and over how this is a huge problem.

A little information before I get started. When the term "paratransit" is used, this is a door-to-door service. An example would be getting picked up at the front door of my house and taken to the front door of my doctor's office. When I say "public transit", I'm referring to a service on fixed routes. An example of this would be, getting on at a bus stop and getting off at the public square bus stop. Both services have their pros and cons.

The biggest challenge faced by the paratransit services is the wait time and the ride time. I am employed and rely on transit to get me to and from work. My job starts at 8:00 a.m. I get up at 5:30 a.m. just to get ready and get on the bus at 6:45 a.m. to hopefully get to work at my start time. Now let's reverse that, with an unpredictable time of arrival at home. For this example, I'll just say that I was on the paratransit for an hour to get to work and an hour to get home. That adds 2 hours to my day and it gets exhausting to worry about.

The public transit is much more efficient when it comes to travel time but with North Dakota weather, it's always a challenge to get to and from a bus stop. For instance, this public transit service isn't even an option for me simply because the nearest bus stop is too far away from my both my residence and my work.

As you observed, some sort of a combination of the services needs to be realized.

Let's make an impact together and get this bill passed for everyone who relies on these services!

Thank you for your time listening to my testimony today and thank you for serving the GREAT State of North Dakota!

I would be happy to answer any questions that you have for me.

701-321-3060

nathanleier@hotmail.com

Sheryl Beard

505 12th St west

Williston North Dakota

58801 Ditrist 1

Support Tran

My name is Sheryl Beard. I live in Williston. Our bus system is door to door. I take bus every day to work. My pick time is 8:30 am to take me work and pick-up at 4:00 pm to take me home, also they call me every evening just to remind me. Before they come they will call 30 min ahead they are on the way. They run five days week. Their no bus services on weekend. Our bus system did run weekend but they had few people riding bus. The bus drivers, I got know them. I really do not have a problem with our bus system. In Spring Summer and fall I take my scooter to work. North West Transit, I call them every morning if they need to give me a ride or not. I would recommend you look at the way they are operating here and set the same or similar guidelines for the others.

I did support on Bill No.4004 I really think that door to door is best way to go.

Senate Transportation Testimony

Kyle Erickson

1425 31st Ave. SW Minot ND 58701

District 5

My name is Kyle Erickson. I am testifying in support of SCR 4004. I use transit every day as I work full time as a Research Associate at the North Dakota Center for Persons with Disabilities and am unable to drive. I represent a significant population in my district that rely on these services to be contributing members of society. While these services are a godsend, for people in my situation, they are extremely limiting

Currently, Minot has two options for transportation if you are a wheelchair user, the City Bus and Souris Basin Transportation. The City Bus has extremely limited routes and doesn't run on weekends. Souris Basin fills up quickly and requires a 24-hour notice to schedule. This means spontaneous trips are out of the question and that trips in town as a wheelchair user is a logistical nightmare.

That's why I feel like a study would be crucial to provide transportation to this vulnerable population. While there are options for wheelchair users like myself, they are extremely limiting (hours of service, long ride times, scheduling). I have full confidence that if a study took place, transportation options for the disabled could only improve.

Thank you so much for serving our state and taking time to review to my testimony. Please vote yes on SCR 4004

Kyle Erickson

kyleerickson90@gmail.com

701-730-3130

Senate Transportation Testimony SB 4004

My name is Darcy Andahl and I am testifying in support of Bill No. 4004 to study the transportation needs for individuals with disabilities and the elderly in our state.

I am a person living in Bismarck (in District 35) and I have a disability. The biggest problem I have with para transit services is the waiting time. I end up waiting a long time for rides and being picked up to return home, it makes me feel that I am not important. Paratransit will only wait for me for five minutes to get to my ride. I have missed my rides. Also, waiting to be picked up can be several hours. I have finished medical appointments at 2:30 p.m. and I didn't get picked up until 6 p.m. Because of this, I am now avoiding taking transit services because it is not reliable. Since I won't take the service, I am now stuck at home. It's too cold for me to be stuck outside.

To apply for paratransit services, you must fill out a long application which is difficult for people with disabilities. I have been to transit meetings and expressed my concerns in the past. I don't feel like I'm being heard. We also don't have a reliable taxi service in our town. It's not just paratransit, but it's taxis, and the bus routes change so I can't get a ride close to home. Our transportation system needs to be looked at; I am in support of this bill to help all people using public transportation.

Please contact me with any questions.

Darcy Andahl

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Andahldarcy34@gmail.com

701-805-5924

Testimony Talking Points – Individuals Who Support, But Don't Have Direct Lived Experience

Name

Where you live

Voting district

I am testifying in support of Bill No. _____ for an Act to create and enact a new section to chapter 50-24.1 of the North Dakota Century Code, relating to legally responsible individuals providing Medicaid waiver services.

Your story

- Why are you in support of this bill?
- Who do you know that could benefit?

How a lack of service providers has impacted those who you know are experiencing hardship

- Lack of daycare
- Workforce issues/staff availability
- Quality of available workforce

The positive effects that families as paid service providers would have on those experiencing hardship

- Keep family unit intact
- Close the workforce gap
- Consistency and quality of care
- Are siblings in the home providing care?

Thank you for your time serving our state and for listening/reading my testimony. I urge you to vote yes on Bill No. _____ and for it to go into effect July 1, 2023. Families are in crisis, they need help now.

Name

Email

Phone number

My name is Julie Horntvedt and I am the Executive Director of the North Dakota State Council on Developmental Disabilities (DD Council).

The DD Council supports a statewide self-advocacy group called Advocates Leading their Lives (ALL). Members are from all around the state. Members come to Bismarck quarterly for training and education to learn about public policy, services, and systems and to grow their voices. Many members come from all over the state, and the DD council contracts with different taxi vendors in Bismarck to provide rides (with accessible and regular vans) for our members across the state as needed so they can participate, as many don't drive. One roundtrip is $440.

Thankfully, the Council can cover the cost because, without it, Members would not be able to attend. People want to come, but not having reliable, accessible, and affordable transportation is a significant barrier to attending ALL meetings.

The ALL-group's number one priority is transportation, as you can see on the attached document for this legislative session. "All supports improved public and private options for accessible, affordable transportation. Transportation remains the #1 priority." As you can see, studying is essential to the group and their work.

If you have any further questions, I would be happy to answer them.

Julie Horntvedt

701-328-4847

jhorntvedt@nd.gov

ADVOCATES LEADING THEIR LIVES

The purpose of the Advocates Leading their Lives (ALL) Self-Advocacy Network is to ensure people with disabilities are treated as equals, and they are given the same decisions, choices, rights, responsibilities, and chance to speak up to empower themselves to live, learn, create, and work. The network is a state-wide initiative inclusive of "all" people.

Margaret Parslow

400 18th Ave. SE Apt. 95

Minot, ND 58701

January 17, 2023

In support of SCR 4004, I would like to submit my personal testimony of public transportation in Minot, North Dakota and the necessity of improvements across this great state. I am an adult that needs assistance of rides for work, appointments, recreation, church, and to run errands. I have help with rides through my friends, family, and the non-profit Souris Basin Transportation. Yes, a transportation study is needed.

Souris Basin Transportation (SBT) employees have many variables to consider when trying to meet the needs of transportation for this community of Minot. I advocate for their efforts, safety, and well-being of their drivers, as they are getting up early and are pulling double-shifts. The office employees are driving, as well. There are circulation and other health problems from driving that can occur. We need one another for employment to impact our area because without customers SBT will not operate. One non-profit is not enough to meet the needs of transportation for this area.

Minot has limited options, in addition to Souris Basin Transportation. The NDAD wheelchair van loan program only has one van. There are no taxis companies. The city bus routes are limited. Their schedule is confusing. Lyft gives you more room for purchased items; but not everyone can afford it or can easily make an appointment.

Using Souris Basin Transportation, I have had many experiences. I cannot confirm my appointment time and correct errors because they have no system besides an inconsistent voicemail left the afternoon before your scheduled appointment. I try to make appointments a week in advance just to get on the schedule. I am on a reoccurring schedule for work that gets canceled without my permission. It is degrading having to wait outside in the elements. Rarely, I will get a courtesy call to communicate. Respect and etiquette and customer service needs to increase in these areas because I am human too.

When I had Rhinoplasty and Septoplasty surgery done last year, I could not wear my glasses for a month or more. I needed a ride to my follow-up appointments and work. I am glad that I had Souris Basin Transportation and my friends as possibilities.

The winter causes challenges. I do not have a plug-in for the future vehicle I can afford now. The snow filled and icy sidewalks make it dangerous to walk.

I have the stress of not getting to work on time. Currently, my employer is allowing me to be flexible with my arrival times, using Souris Basin Transportation. I finally get to use my Bachelor of Arts degree in Sociology at my new full-time career! As a part-time care provider of

eleven years, I used SBT to run errands for my clients and travel from one client's home to the next with my arrival time being flexible too. Also, my former wonderful bosses, friends, clients, and coworkers have driven me for my care providing work. Another employer required me to be prompt for my shift, so I scheduled my arrival time half hour to an hour earlier. I did not want to be fired. Because Souris Basin Transportation schedules their pickup times about a half hour to an hour before your actual appointment time, I must ride according to my appointment time and destination area. I cannot be spontaneous, like other people. I cannot leave when I want to leave either.

After doing an independent feasibility study in 2017, I approached my pastor about buying a wheelchair lift bus. We were able to purchase one in 2020. Souris Basin Transportation's last Sunday appointment is 2:00 PM. Our services start at 1:30 PM and ends around 6:00 PM. The congregation wants to be able to make it possible for us to come to church.

I was born 3 months premature with a depth perception problem and night blindness. Also, I am directionally challenged and have anxiety sometimes. This North Dakotan, God-fearing, farm girl wants the opportunity to contribute to my community and country. I want to earn a living, have a quality of life, and help others do so. Please vote yes for the study.

Respectfully Submitted,

Margaret A. Parslow

Customer

SCR 4004
Senate Transportation
Friday, January 20, 2023
Senator David Clemens, Chair

Chairman Clemens and Members of the Senate Transportation Committee:

My name is Roxane Romanick and I'm writing as the representative for Designer Genes of ND, Inc., as their Executive Director. Designer Genes' membership represents 230 individuals with Down syndrome that either live in our state or are represented by family members in North Dakota. Designer Genes' mission is to strengthen opportunities for individuals with Down syndrome and those who support them to earn, learn, and belong. I am also the parent to an adult daughter with Down syndrome, who desires as much independence as any other youth adult and who is working and trying hard to be a contributing North Dakota citizen.

Designer Genes is in support of SCR 4004 and asks for your consideration of a "yes" vote. Ask any non-driving individual with a disability and/or who is aging about how they access their community and you will need to be prepared to hear about how difficult and limiting it is to not be able to drive. North Dakota is not a state that is friendly to non-drivers due to our rural nature and vast spaces. The community of individuals with Down syndrome that I represent, especially our adults, are greatly impacted by not having more independent means of travel as most of them are not drivers. We have heard that more and more activities are limited for our individuals with Down syndrome that live in a group or apartment setting as public transportation options decline and there are decreasing staff available to provide transportation through our providers.

Presently, my husband and I are working out a weekly schedule with our daughter to decide how to make sure she can get to and from her job. She does have a para-transit pass for the Bismarck Transit system; however the rides are not dependable for getting to work on time and long wait times, no subscription services, and difficulty with scheduling make return trips also impossible to count on. While her work is only about a 7- minute ride from her home, in order to use the fixed route bus, she could have

an hour wait in an unheated bus shelter. She is very adept at using a Ride Share app like Uber or Lyft, but a ride to work for her is roughly $8.00 one way and this would total to around $250.00 a month. She has also found that Uber and Lyft drivers are not always available. Bismarck no longer has an active taxi service. Right now transportation is probably her greatest barrier to living as independent as possible.

Lack of transportation options has its costs. The Automated Vehicle Services for People with Disabilities—Involved Responsive Engineering (ASPIRE) Center at the University of Pittsburgh (UTC Spotlight Newsletter - January 2022 (transportation.gov)) in their most recent publication that "mitigating transportation-related barriers for people with disabilities would enable new employment opportunities for approximately two million people with disabilities and save $19 billion annually in healthcare expenditures from missed medical appointments alone." While Medicaid has the ability to cover non-emergency medical costs, there are no options available for individuals to use outside of the onerous demands of the para-transit system.

I believe that a study of the transportation options for people with disabilities would shine a light on the impact that this has for them to be fully contributing members through employment, shopping, and engaging in their communities. I also believe that understanding this better could leave to more creative solutions than what we have available to use right now.

Please consider the passage of SB 4004. I'm available for any questions.

Roxane Romanick
Executive Director
Designer Genes of ND, Inc.
701-391-7421
info@designergenesnd.com

Mr. Chairman and members of the Senate Transportation Committee. My name is Royce Schultze, Executive Director of the Dakota Center for Independent Living in Bismarck, and I am writing in support of SCR 4004.

My testimony will be brief because I would be repeating the information other letters of support are talking about. Accessible transportation has been an issue for the consumers we work with for a few years. With limited hours on holidays and Sundays, it is difficult for anyone using paratransit to attend family functions, shop or socialize during those days. Our fixed-route buses do not run on holidays or Sundays, making it impossible for these riders to do anything unless they walk or are lucky enough to catch a ride. Our transit system is the only option we have in Bismarck/Mandan/Lincoln since we do not have a taxi service. Unfortunately, these issues are due to a lack of funding for transit services and the shortage of drivers for the buses. In closing, it would be my hope that you pass SCR 4004 to study accessible transportation in the state for older adults and individuals with disabilities, so all North Dakotans have access to transportation.

Thank you

Pat Hansen

South Central Adult Services

PO Box 298

Valley City, ND 58072

January 19, 2023

I would like to testify on concerning SCR 4004. I am the director of South Central Adult Services based in Valley City. My agency serves individuals in eight rural counties including Barnes, LaMoure, Foster, Logan, McIntosh, Emmons, Griggs and Nelson. We provide door-to-door transportation in all of our counties. I know that UGPTI has done some very good studies on mobility and other transit issues. The problem I see is that most of them recommend funding to support the implementation of expanded or new services. This does not seem to happen and the studies do not result in new or expanded programs that are beneficial to the populations we serve. I do not like to see valuable resources used without results. It would be much more valuable, in my opinion, if resources were provided to assist in funding programs through the NDDOT. The transit section is very knowledgeable about the transit agencies around the State and are very qualified to provide funding and assistance in developing programs.

I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

Pat Hansen

Director

The Arc
North Dakota

Senate Transportation
SCR 4004
January 20, 2023

Senator Clemens and committee members. I am Kirsten Dvorak, Executive Director of The Arc of North Dakota.

On behalf of our organizations representing people with disabilities across the state, we support SCR 4004.

People with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities (IDD) lack sufficient access to reliable, accessible, safe public and private transportation modes within North Dakota. These barriers prevent people with IDD from meaningful participation in everyday activities that promote high-quality community living experiences. In the U.S., millions of individuals with disabilities use public transit to maintain their autonomy and participate fully in society. For many, it is their only transit option. However, even where accessible public transportation exists, adults with IDD consider transportation options inadequate.

Federal and state legislation encourages economic self-sufficiency for people with all types of disabilities requiring transportation. Inadequate transportation inhibits community involvement, including successful employment. There is insufficient funding for those providing the transportation to meet their customer's needs. Those living in rural areas often face the most significant challenge due to the lack of public transportation, limited private transportation options, and long distances between destinations.

Access to accessible transportation services is an increasingly important issue in North Dakota. Local transportation businesses and cities must balance the costs of providing these services with the benefits of providing them. This includes the costs of purchasing, operating, and maintaining accessible vehicles and the costs associated with training employees and acquiring the necessary technology. A key challenge is finding the resources to fund these services, particularly in times of economic uncertainty.

Areas that the study could be included but not limited to:

- Fiscal impact of providing accessible transportation services
- Modify existing funding formulas to support accessible transportation services
- States must take into account the unique needs of those with disabilities and specialized transportation services
- Ensure that individuals with disabilities can access the necessary services

In conclusion, states face several challenges and barriers to expanding and improving accessible transportation services, including the fiscal impact of providing such services, the need to modify existing funding formulas to support the expansion of accessible transportation, and the modifications required to anticipate the responsibilities of public entities under the American Disabilities Act. (ADA)

Kristen Dvorak
701-22-1854

Transportation Committee

SCR 4004

January 20, 2023

Chairman Clemens and members of the committee, my name is Rachel Hafner. I am the Executive Director for The Arc, Upper Valley in Grand Forks. I am providing your committee with written testimony and asking that you vote "do pass" on SCR 4004.

In my previous place of employment, I provided life skills training to adults with serious mental illness. This included transportation training in the city of Grand Forks. I helped people apply for and access the city bus, Dial-A-Ride paratransit, and senior rider services. It was important for them to know how to use the transportation system so that they could access places in the community, including but not limited to, essential services, housing, healthcare, education, and employment.

The City of Grand Forks does a good job of providing quality transportation services, which includes very courteous and helpful drivers and staff. There are, however, many gaps in the services that are available that should be addressed to make transportation more equitable, affordable, safe, and accessible. In my current role as Executive Director of an organization that advocates for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), it is my responsibility to advocate for better transportation services in Grand Forks and the surrounding region, which includes rural areas.

Transportation services in Grand Forks could improve if there were additional routes that covered more areas of the city, including rides to the west side of town in the industrial park area, where many people work, and more rides to the south side of town as the city continues to grow in that direction. Accessibility is also limited in some areas, forcing people to walk significant distances, sometimes having to cross major roadways, to access bus stops. In the wintertime this becomes more burdensome and unsafe because walkways and curb cutouts are not cleared of snow

and ice, and many bus stops do not have shelters to protect people from the extreme weather that we experience in North Dakota.

Another problem that needs to be addressed in Grand Forks is the limited hours of service. There is only one night bus in Grand Forks to cover the entire city, and there are limited hours on the weekend and holidays. This prevents people from being able to access the community when they need or want to. These limited hours of service extend to the senior rider service and paratransit.

Access to transportation is further limited by the fact that you must schedule rides with senior rider and paratransit at least 24 hours in advance, thus limiting people's opportunity to access the community when they need or want to. Rural communities have even more limited access to public transportation, preventing access to essential services, housing, healthcare, education, employment, and other resources that are not available in rural communities.

Cost is another prohibitive barrier to equitable transportation. People with disabilities who meet certain criteria, may qualify for reduced bus fare or may be able to access paratransit, which costs less than taking a regular taxicab. But many people do not quality for reduced rates because they do not have a disability that qualifies. People who do not have disabilities but have lower or no income, do quality for any discount programs, which again creates barriers to accessing the community.

Equity in transportation is a fundamental right and should be available to anyone regardless of disabilities, income, or where they live. Access to transportation creates social and financial equity, it promotes positive mental health, and a sense of belonging to the community. It increases physical activity and mobility, and it combats social exclusion.

Our organization believes that we should study transportation in our state because everyone should have access to equitable and affordable transportation options. Please vote "do pass" on SCR 4004. I am available by phone or email to answer any questions you may have. Thank you.

Rachel A. Hafner,
Executive Director

Phone: (701) 772-6191, ext. 11
Email: rhafner@arcuv.com

Senators Clemens, Conley, Larsen, Paulson, and Rummel:

My name is Susan Dingle, and I am writing in support of SCR 4004, "directing the Legislative Management to consider studying accessible transportation in the state for older adults and individuals with disabilities." My only reservation on this resolution as it currently stands is that it only says "to consider studying accessible transportation." In my opinion, it should state that it "**directs the Legislative Management to study accessible transportation** for older adults and individuals with disabilities." [emphasis added]

Accessible transportation for older adults and individuals with disabilities is not some favor or perk that cities, local governments, and states may opt to offer if they're feeling flush or in a good mood. It is a necessity. As the language of the resolution makes clear, much progress has been made in providing accessible transportation, but additional improvements and expansion are necessary in order to offer full access and mobility.

Currently, mass transit and paratransit services across the nation are suffering setbacks. Hiring enough qualified drivers and retaining them is a major difficulty, as is hiring and retaining workers in many business and service segments of the economy. Maintaining up-to-date vehicles in good working order and following an established rotation to replace vehicles as they age out in terms of miles driven and overall mechanical condition is another. These are ongoing issues, and they were issues before the pandemic that have only increased in urgency since.

Additional issues have arisen that directly impact the ability of transportation agencies to offer accessible transportation in the state for older adults and individuals with disabilities. Some of the most important of these are:

- Need for adequate local, state, and federal government financial support. Higher mill levies, greater state subsidy, higher federal grants all may be needed to help raise driver pay and benefits to attract and retain drivers, to keep equipment in proper working order, and to provide rider access services relating to tracking their bus, paying via mobile devices, and scheduling pick-ups and drop-offs.

- Need for transportation authorities to designate and reserve pick-up and drop-off spots at fixed stops, timing points, and large-use spots (e.g., senior and disabled living facilities, medical centers, hospitals, shopping centers). Need, too, for bus shelters, sidewalks, and streets up to the curb to be fully plowed and accessible to persons using canes, walkers, and wheelchairs or who have stability issues.

- Need for traffic signals especially at intersections next to transit stops to be timed to allow safe pedestrian crossing to get to and from the pick-up and drop-off spot. Need for stops to be provided at high-use buildings and businesses even if the street features high-speed levels. Examples in Bismarck, for example, are the Social Security Building and the strip mall at 43rd street, Job Service ND (on Century Avenue), CashWise on south 12th Street and Bismarck Expressway, and all of the Dan's SuperValu grocery stores, all of which are off high-traffic streets.

- Need for public policy and transportation planning and philosophy to support accessible transportation for older adults and individuals with disabilities as a right and an established part of infrastructure and all discussions of territorial expansion, annexation, and redevelopment.

Thank you for the time you have given to reading this and other testimony and in preparing for discussion on SCR 4004. **Please vote in favor of it, but with the proviso that the Legislative Management be directed to study accessible transportation**—not just to consider studying it.

Sincerely,
Susan Dingle, District 35; homeowner, taxpayer, voter

23.3040.01001

Sixty-eighth
Legislative Assembly
of North Dakota

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 4004

Introduced by

Senators Cleary, Barta, Lee

Representatives Nathe, Nelson

A concurrent resolution directing the Legislative Management to ~~consider studying~~study accessible transportation in the state for older adults and individuals with disabilities.

WHEREAS, older adults and individuals with disabilities can achieve greater freedom when those individuals have full access to a variety of transit modes; and

WHEREAS, expanded access allows mobility and independence in the daily lives of an older adult or an individual with disabilities, but this only can be achieved when the pathways to transit, the infrastructure, and conditions in the built environment, allow full access to transit stops, stations, and vehicles; and

WHEREAS, since passage of the federal Americans with Disabilities Act in1990, many transit agencies and governmental jurisdictions throughout the nation have made significant progress in providing accessible transportation, but making additional improvements and expanding accessible transportation is imperative to achieve full access and the mobility afforded by that access;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF NORTH DAKOTA, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING THEREIN:

That the Legislative Management ~~consider studying~~shall study accessible transportation for older adults and individuals with disabilities in the state; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the study include evaluating statewide challenges to system services and barriers to expanding the state's accessible transportation infrastructure, examining the fiscal impact of providing accessible transportation, assessing the effective long-term modification of funding formulas to support accessible transportation, and evaluating modifications to anticipate the responsibilities of public entities under the federal Americans with Disabilities Act; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Legislative Management report its findings and recommendations, together with any legislation required to implement the recommendations, to the Sixty-ninth Legislative Assembly.

23.3040.01001
Title.

Prepared by the Legislative Council staff for
Senator Cleary
January 19, 2023

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 4004

Page 1, line 1, replace "consider studying" with "study"

Page 1, line 16, replace "consider studying" with "shall study"

Renumber accordingly

PROTECTION & ADVOCACY PROJECT
400 EAST BROADWAY, SUITE 409
BISMARCK, ND 58501-4071
701.328.2950

House Transportation Committee
Senate Bill SCR 4004– March 16, 2023
Testimony of Micah Olson, P&A Position-In Favor

My name is Micah Olson. I am attorney at Protection and Advocacy. I recently moved to Bismarck from Minot, where I worked as an Independent Living Advocate at Independence, Inc., the Center for Independent Living in Minot. I drive my own vehicle using a hand control, so I do not rely on public transportation myself, but I took the Minot City Bus twice as part of my work. I also worked with several consumers who took public transportation. I am in favor of SCR 4004.

In Minot, I found that public transportation works well for some things, but there are many limitations. In Minot, there are two choices for public transportation: The Minot City Bus, which runs on fixed routes, and Souris Basin Transportation, which provides paratransit in the Minot area. The Minot city bus operates from 7 am to 7 pm Monday through Friday. It does not operate on the weekends. Souris Basin Transportation has longer hours than the city bus, but has limited hours on the weekend. Souris Basin also requires consumers to schedule a ride at least 24 hours in advance. Consumers have reported to me that 24 hours in advance is often not soon enough to guarantee that a ride will be available.

When I took the Minot city bus, I found that it was convenient and easy to use for wheelchair users. The drivers were professional and knew how to use the lift and secure my wheelchair on the bus. It would be a good option for a wheelchair user who did not drive.

Even though the Minot city bus was useful, several consumers reported significant limitations. The bus did not go to all areas of Minot, including to many new apartment buildings. Newer apartment buildings are often more accessible than older apartments and they are often better options for Disabled people. Recently in my job at Independence Inc., I worked with a wheelchair user to find an apartment. He does not drive. We found an apartment that worked for him, but it was not on the bus route. He would need to rely on Souris Basin Transportation for transportation. Another consumer who uses a wheelchair chose a less accessible apartment that was on the bus route over a more accessible apartment that was not on the bus route. She had concerns about being able to access Souris Basin when she needed it and wanted to have access to the city bus, which has a reliable schedule.

Although the Minot city bus has a reliable schedule, its hours limit its usefulness. Someone who has a typical daytime work schedule could use it to get to and from work, but it would not be useful for someone who works past 7 pm or on weekends. It is also not useful for people who run errands on weekends. A person who relies on the city bus would have to plan to do errands during the week, which could be difficult for someone who works full-time.

Consumers who relied on Souris Basin Transportation also reported some difficulties. Sometimes their work hours did not align with Souris Basin's schedule. They might arrive to work very early or late. Sometimes they would have to leave work early if Souris Basin came early. Consumers also reported not being able to schedule rides on the weekends, even if they attempted to schedule far in advance.

Souris Basin also does not allow for sudden or spontaneous trips. This became a more significant problem in August when Central Cab, the only taxi service in Minot, closed. This left the city bus and Souris Basin as the only public transportation services in Minot.

Unlike the Minot City bus, BisMan Transit does operate from 8 am to 7 pm on Saturday, which is helpful for working people who need to run errands on the weekend. It has several fixed routes. I reviewed the routes on the BisMan Transit website and found that the bus routes go to many places throughout the city, but there are gaps. For example, my apartment building, which I chose because it was new and accessible, is approximately 1 mile from the nearest bus route. If I did not drive or had car trouble my only transportation option would be paratransit, which might not be available when I need it.

Public transportation should be studied to determine the best ways to make it effective and efficient for those who use it. Increasing hours, days of service, and adding more bus routes would make a big difference for people who rely on public transportation. Adding more paratransit vehicles and drivers may also increase the paratransit system's effectiveness.

Chairman Ruby and Members of the House Transportation Committee-

My name is Sargianna Wutzke and I am writing in support of SCR 4004. As a Lead Operations Officer for Community Options, an agency that provides services to individuals with developmental disabilities, I see how much of a struggle public transportation specifically para transit can be for individuals that we serve at our agency.

Community Options serves individuals throughout the state of North Dakota. No matter what part of North Dakota an individual lives in one of their biggest concerns is public transportation. I have heard many stories from individuals throughout the state with a number of concerns with paratransit in particular. I think that North Dakota should welcome a study where the different aspects of transportation are examined and see what needs to be done to better serve the elderly and individuals with developmental disabilities who utilize this service.

Some of the concerns that are a theme throughout the state include wait/pick up times, hours of operation on normal days, hours of operations on holidays and how far in advance rides need to be scheduled.

At least weekly, I hear stories of people and their concerns with wait times. About a month ago, there was an individual who utilized transit to attend a legislative working group in Bismarck and the individual was supposed to be picked up at 11:30am. His paratransit ride arrived at 1:15pm. The meeting ended at 11:30am that day and thankfully there was someone who had access to the building that could wait with him until his paratransit could arrive. This individual utilizes an electric wheelchair, and this was his only option for transportation. There is another individual who utilizes an electric wheelchair who works a job in the community and has had to wait up to an hour and a half after his ride is scheduled for his pickup after work on at least a weekly basis. These are just two examples of the struggle with wait times. I have many more of the same stories from individuals throughout the state.

On weekends like many others, I do most of my shopping and activities with friends and family. I couldn't imagine not having any access to get somewhere but that is a reality for many of the individuals that we have that access paratransit. On Sundays in the cities of Grand Forks, Wahpeton, Devil's Lake, and Williston there is no paratransit. In Jamestown, individuals need to be picked up by noon for their last ride, Bismarck paratransit runs until 2:30pm and in Minot it runs until 3pm. None of the paratransit systems in North Dakota run past 6pm on Sundays. There are many activities that individuals cannot participate in due to the limited hours of paratransit particularly on weekends. I think these hours need to be examined because everyone regardless of mobility concerns should be able to attend activities such as concerts, plays, comedy shows and even supper with friends and family. Many of these activities happen in the evenings on weekends and thus individuals who would need to use paratransit likely would not be able to participate.

Holidays are a time where many people spend time with their family. Para transits across the state either have no access on many holidays or very limited hours that are accessible on these days. For example, Fargo and Jamestown para transit do not run on most holidays including Thanksgiving, Easter and Christmas Day and only run until 5pm on Christmas Eve. The paratransit in Bismarck runs from 10am-2pm on holidays. These hours are very limited at best and many times individuals we serve are not able to spend the time they want with their family during these important times.

All the paratransit systems in North Dakota require at least a 24-hour advance scheduling of rides some needing as much as 48 hours in advance. This limits any type of last-minute plans with friends to go out for coffee, supper or to a movie. I could not even imagine a friend calling me to meet up for supper and I am free and would love to meet with them, but I could not due to them wanting to meet that day and I need to set up a ride at least 24 hours in advance.

I believe a study that will evaluate statewide challenges to system services and barriers to expanding the state's accessible transportation infrastructure is something that is very needed in our state and thus I am in support of SCR 4004.

Sargianna Wutzke, Bismarck

Testimony in Support of SCR 4004 — Transportation Study
House Transportation Committee
Sean Cleary, District 35 — Bismarck, North Dakota Senate

Chairman and Members of the Transportation Committee,

I am here to introduce Senate Concurrent Resolution 4004. The resolution directs Legislative Management to consider studying accessible transportation for older adults and individuals with disabilities in the state.

Accessibility to transportation is essential for the independence and mobility of older adults and individuals with disabilities. Although progress has been made in providing accessible transportation since the Americans with Disabilities Act in 1990, more improvements are necessary. The resolution seeks to evaluate challenges, assess fiscal impact, modify funding formulas, and review public systems.

Improving transportation options helps people living with disabilities to access work, healthcare, and other important parts of their daily lives. This is a complicated issue and warrants further study so we can address it the right way.

Thank you for your consideration. I am happy to answer any questions. Please reach out anytime.

Sincerely,

Sean Cleary
Senator, District 35 — Bismarck
North Dakota Senate

The Arc
North Dakota

House Transportation
SCR 4004
March 16, 2023

Representative Ruby and committee members. I am Kirsten Dvorak, Executive Director of The Arc of North Dakota. We have six chapters throughout North Dakota that advocate for individuals with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities (IDD) for full inclusion in their community of choice.

On behalf of our organizations representing people with disabilities across the state, we support SCR 4004.

People with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities (IDD) lack sufficient access to reliable, accessible, safe public and private transportation modes within North Dakota. These barriers prevent people with IDD from meaningful participation in everyday activities that promote high-quality community living experiences. In the U.S., millions of individuals with disabilities use public transit to maintain their autonomy and participate fully in society, and for many, it's the only option. However, even where accessible public transportation exists, adults with IDD consider transportation options inadequate.

Federal and state legislation encourages economic self-sufficiency for people with all types of disabilities requiring transportation. Inadequate transportation inhibits community involvement, including successful employment. There is insufficient funding for those providing the transportation to meet their customer's needs. Rural residents often face the most significant challenge due to the lack of public transportation, limited private transportation options, and long distances between destinations.

Access to accessible transportation services is an increasingly important issue in North Dakota. Local transportation businesses and cities must balance the costs of providing these services with the benefits of providing them. This includes the costs of purchasing, operating, and maintaining accessible vehicles and the costs associated with training employees and acquiring the necessary technology. A key challenge is finding the resources to fund these services, particularly during economic uncertainty.

Areas that the study could be included but not limited to:

- Fiscal impact of providing accessible transportation services.
- Modify existing funding formulas to support accessible transportation services.
- States must consider the unique needs of those with disabilities and specialized transportation services.
- Ensure that individuals with disabilities can access the necessary services.

In conclusion, states face several challenges and barriers to expanding and improving accessible transportation services, including the fiscal impact of providing such services, the need to modify existing funding formulas to support the expansion of accessible transportation, and the modifications required to anticipate the responsibilities of public entities under the American Disabilities Act. (ADA)

Kristen Dvorak
701-22-1854

SCR 4004
House Transportation
Thursday, March 16, 2023
Representative Dan Ruby, Chair

Chairman Ruby and Members of the House Transportation Committee:

My name is Roxane Romanick and I'm writing as the representative for Designer Genes of ND, Inc., as their Executive Director. Designer Genes' membership represents 230 individuals with Down syndrome that either live in our state or are represented by family members in North Dakota. Designer Genes' mission is to strengthen opportunities for individuals with Down syndrome and those who support them to earn, learn, and belong. I am also the parent to an adult daughter with Down syndrome, who desires as much independence as any other youth adult and who is working and trying hard to be a contributing North Dakota citizen.

Designer Genes is in support of SCR 4004 and asks for your consideration of a "yes" vote. Ask any non-driving individual with a disability and/or who is aging about how they access their community and you will need to be prepared to hear about how difficult and limiting it is to not be able to drive. North Dakota is not a state that is friendly to non-drivers due to our rural nature and vast spaces. The community of individuals with Down syndrome that I represent, especially our adults, are greatly impacted by not having more independent means of travel as most of them are not drivers. We have heard that more and more activities are limited for our individuals with Down syndrome that live in a group or apartment setting as public transportation options decline and there are decreasing staff available to provide transportation through our providers.

Presently, my husband and I are working out a weekly schedule with our daughter to decide how to make sure she can get to and from her job. She does have a para-transit pass for the Bismarck Transit system; however, the rides are not dependable for getting to work on time and long wait times, no subscription services, and difficulty with scheduling make return trips also impossible to count on. While her work is only about a seven minute ride from her home, in order to use the fixed route bus, she could

have an hour wait in an unheated bus shelter. She is very adept at using a Ride Share app like Uber or Lyft, but a ride to work for her is roughly $8.00 one way and this would total to around $250.00 a month. She has also found that Uber and Lyft drivers are not always available. Bismarck no longer has an active taxi service. Right now, transportation is probably her greatest barrier to living as independent as possible.

Lack of transportation options has its costs. The Automated Vehicle Services for People with Disabilities—Involved Responsive Engineering (ASPIRE) Center at the University of Pittsburgh (UTC Spotlight Newsletter - January 2022 (transportation.gov)) in their most recent publication that "mitigating transportation-related barriers for people with disabilities would enable new employment opportunities for approximately two million people with disabilities and save $19 billion annually in healthcare expenditures from missed medical appointments alone." While Medicaid has the ability to cover non-emergency medical costs, there are no options available for individuals to use outside of the onerous demands of the para-transit system.

I believe that a study of the transportation options for people with disabilities would shine a light on the impact that this has for them to be fully contributing members through employment, shopping, and engaging in their communities. I also believe that understanding this better could leave to more creative solutions than what we have available to use right now.

Please consider the passage of SB 4004. I'm available for any questions.

Roxane Romanick
Executive Director
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