



May 7, 2024

The Honorable D. Scott Dibble
Chair, Transportation Committee
Minnesota Senate
3107 Minnesota Senate Bldg.
St. Paul, MN 55155

The Honorable John R. Jasinski
Ranking Minority Member, Transportation Committee
Minnesota Senate
2227 Minnesota Senate Bldg.
St. Paul, MN 55155

Re: Metro Mobility Report from the Office of the Legislative Auditor

Dear Chair Dibble, Ranking Minority Member Jasinski, and Committee Members:

Legal Aid and the Minnesota Disability Law Center (MDLC) thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony regarding the Office of the Legislative Auditor's (OLA) report on Metro Mobility. MDLC serves as the Protection and Advocacy (P&A) agency for Minnesota, one of 57 other P&As designed under federal law. MDLC provides free legal services to children and adults with disabilities in Minnesota. LSAP is the advocacy arm of Legal Aid and has provided legislative and administrative advocacy on behalf of Legal Aid's clients and all low-income Minnesotans since 1977.

Metro Mobility is a vitally important service for people with disabilities in the Twin Cities metro area. People with disabilities rely on Metro Mobility for activities such as getting to and from work, traveling to medical appointments, and otherwise participating in their communities. Despite its importance, Metro Mobility continues to offer services that fall well short of a standard that should be expected for Minnesotans with disabilities.

Legal Aid and MDLC have received numerous complaints from clients about Metro Mobility and share the concerns identified in the OLA report. The majority of the complaints that we have received relate to untimely pickup and dropoff, long wait times for rides, and limited service hours. We have also received complaints about the length of rides, eligibility determinations, erroneous applications of the Customer Conduct, Suspensions and Appeals policy, and a grievance system that is not responsive to customer complaints. Attorneys with DLC have witnessed Metro Mobility's deficiencies firsthand, having to wait hours with clients for their rides to arrive after court hearings and other legal proceedings have concluded.

The issues raised in the OLA report regarding Metro Mobility's deficiencies raise significant legal concerns. The Department of Justice (DOJ) has found that paratransit services with deficiencies similar to those identified in the OLA report to be in violation of federal antidiscrimination laws. For example, last year the DOJ found that the Maryland Transit Administration's paratransit system violated the Americans with Disabilities Act by illegally subjecting customers to untimely pickups and dropoffs and lengthy waits for telephone reservation services.¹ Similarly, the DOJ and the New Jersey Transit Corporation entered into a settlement agreement in 2022 to remedy legal violations identified in New Jersey Transit's paratransit service related to telephone hold times, timeliness of trip pickups and dropoffs, trip lengths, trip denials, and missed trips.² Metro Mobility must take immediate and substantive action to remedy the issues identified in the OLA report to ensure that its services comply with federal law.

The issues identified in the OLA report have real consequences for Minnesotans with disabilities. Already an underemployed group, people with disabilities face employment termination like any other employee when they cannot consistently get to work on time. Patients who cannot get to medical appointments on time need to reschedule or, in the worst-case scenario, are dropped from their doctors after missing or arriving late to too many appointments. Metro Mobility must improve its services to ensure that Minnesotans with disabilities are equal members of their communities.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony on Metro Mobility. We urge both transportation committees to take action to ensure that Minnesotans with disabilities have reliable transportation in the Twin Cities metropolitan area.

Sincerely,



Jennifer Purrington
Legal Director/Deputy Director
Minnesota Disability Law Center



Ellen Smart
Staff Attorney
Mid-Minnesota Legal Aid

This document has been formatted for accessibility. Please call Ellen Smart at 612/746-3761 if you need this document in an alternative format.

¹ Letter of Findings (<https://www.justice.gov/crt/file/1305776/dl>)

² U.S. Attorney's Office Reaches Settlement with New Jersey Transit to Ensure New Jersey Transit's Paratransit System Complies with Americans with Disabilities Act (<https://www.justice.gov/usao-nj/pr/us-attorney-s-office-reaches-settlement-new-jersey-transit-ensure-new-jersey-transit-s>)