

From: [Patty Zallar](#)
To: [Transportation Commission](#)
Subject: Public Comments for Item 2 Madison Metro Accessibility Update for the 7/29/26 Transportation Meeting
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Dear Transportation Commission Members,

These public comments are for Item #2 *"Madison Metro Accessibility Update for the 7/29/26 Transportation Meeting"*.

I have been a user of the Metro system for several decades. I appreciate that the City of Madison provides mass transportation to the public, including those of us who are unable to drive. This allows all residents to survive and thrive in our community. However, I have personally experienced several persistent *Americans with Disability Act (ADA)* problems with Madison's paratransit service.

I am requesting that Madison Metro review the issues outlined below and take action in a timely manner to resolve them.

Issue 1: The lack of concern for the safety and health of paratransit riders.

On Thursday, January 8, 2026, I scheduled a door-to-door paratransit ride from my home to a Mexican restaurant on State Street. The driver arrived a few minutes before my pickup time. I heard the backup alarm at the end of my driveway so headed to my front door.

- When the driver knocked, I used my intercom system and asked who was there. There was no answer.
- My service dog and I headed to the end of my driveway. Since the van door was open we got in. It was an electronic door so I asked the driver if I should close the door or if they would. There was no answer so I closed the door.
- I gave the driver my money and he remained silent. I asked what transit provider they worked for, and he quietly said *"Quality Transit"*.
- After several minutes, the van stopped and my door opened. I asked if the door to the restaurant was straight ahead. There was no response. My service dog and I exited the van. A pole was directly in my path as I exited the van and I immediately hit my head.
- The driver finally got out of the van and I explained that I hit my head on the pole and needed assistance. There was no response. Finally, the driver said that I would have to walk quite a way to get to the restaurant. I informed him that I was blind and needed more instruction about which way to go. Again, no response.
- My service dog followed him and he said "this way." When we got to the business, he said the door was "over here". I asked which way. There

was no response and I found the door on my own. The driver left.

- I immediately called Madison Metro to file a complaint. Later that evening, I began feeling sick. I was able to see my doctor on January 12th, and was diagnosed with a concussion. This negatively impacted my life for several weeks. I was housebound and could not participate in my normal routine. I had terrible headaches and was very sensitive to lights, smells and sounds.
- I called Madison Metro several times after my original complaint. I did explain the full extent of my injuries. I spoke with a Madison Metro Customer Service Supervisor who agreed to escalate my concerns. The Paratransit Supervisor eventually left a message explaining that they would call me after the MLK holiday. To date, I have never been contacted. Additionally, no one from Quality Transit has ever contacted me.
- I have contacted Madison Metro to determine if any aspect of my complaint was resolved. It's frustrating to say that it appears my experience was completely disregarded.
- I am also aware of other individuals who have had negative experiences using paratransit. Some examples include: (1) the backup alarm is being used as notification to riders, instead of the driver getting out of vehicle to assist (2) an individual fell while the driver left the scene, (3) individuals are being dropped off at the wrong destination and (4) individuals missing or arriving late to critical medical appointments.

As you can see, I am passionate about these issues. I would like to take this opportunity to make the following recommendations:

1. Madison Metro should review, update and enforce all pertinent paratransit contract terms and conditions. While some drivers/vendors provide excellent service, there are others that need additional training and/or consequences for continued violations.
2. Metro employees involved with the paratransit system should be required to use the system themselves. This would provide firsthand experience to better understand how they can make necessary improvements going forward.
3. Madison Metro should improve its paratransit complaint procedure, to include follow-up with complainants explaining action taken and outcomes. This needs to be done in a timely manner.

I am currently on several boards focusing on the needs of blind and low vision individuals. I would welcome the opportunity to serve on a Madison Metro paratransit user advisory council. This would ensure that the user needs are considered when decisions are made.

Issue 2: The paratransit driver may have limited communication and training.

- Drivers need to read and follow directions provided to them from Madison Metro.
- Drivers are not communicating with riders to meet their needs.
- Drivers often speak softly or are hard to understand.
- Drivers use backup alarms instead of getting out of the vehicle to assist

disabled riders.

- Drivers have limited or no training in how to interact and assist individuals with various disabilities.
- Drivers should be required to have training on how to interact and assist individuals with various disabilities.

Issue 3: ADA Discrimination of service dogs.

- On April 30, 2026, I scheduled a door-to-door paratransit ride from Dexter's Pub to home. The Transit Solutions driver said she wouldn't take me because of my service dog, and she then ran to her vehicle in the parking lot. It is important to note that my Madison Metro records indicate that I travel with a service dog. I called Metro and filed a complaint informing them that this is ADA discrimination.
- On May 9, 2026, I scheduled a door-to-door paratransit ride from Dexter's Pub to home. Five minutes before my pickup time, my service dog and I went outside to wait. There was no place to sit, so we stood against the building next to the front door. I waited the required 20-minute window before I called Madison Metro, when I was informed that I was "no showed". I explained that I was waiting outside and no one approached me. Metro instructed me to call back while they search for a way to get me home. The original Quality Transit driver returned and explained that he was reluctant to approach me because of my service dog. I did eventually get home.

It is important that Madison Metro ensures that their vendors are not discriminating riders with a service dog. This needs to stop.

Issue 4: Premature implementation of new ride scheduling system that has bugs.

On July 18, 2026, I scheduled a door-to-door paratransit ride from my home to the Madison Central Library. The pick-up time was 9:45 am, but no one came. I waited the required 20 minutes before I contacted Madison Metro to check on my ride. The rep informed me that my pick-up time was at 10:10 am. I reiterated that I scheduled a pickup at 9:45 am. She informed me that this problem is something they are trying to resolve due to the new scheduling system. Other issues include:

- Drivers are not receiving the same instructions that they did in the past.
- Riders are getting picked up extremely late causing missed or late arrivals to critical medical appointments, negatively impacting their health and safety.

Madison Metro should be proactive and not reactive. These issues need to be

resolved ASAP.

Issue 5: Riders treated with little or no dignity and respect.

On June 27, 2026, I scheduled a door-to-door ride from my home to my friend's house. The driver never came. After waiting the required 20 minutes before I called Madison Metro, I was told that I was "no showed" by Quality Transit. This seems to be the recurring explanation used when the driver simply does not come.

I was very upset and asked to speak with a Metro manager, but was told that managers don't work on the weekend. Seemingly, no matter what a rider reports, it is assumed the driver's statements are always truthful while riders are ultimately penalized.

Madison Metro needs to be impartial to both sides. Remember that anyone can become disabled and might need to use the system in the future. Treat everyone with dignity and respect.

Conclusion:

Thank you in advance for your thoughtful consideration of these issues and recommendations. As I mentioned above, I am happy to assist in resolving these issues to improve the Madison Metro paratransit service. Please reach out at your earliest convenience.

Thank you.

Patty Zallar

2011 Field St

Madison, WI 53713

Email: Patty.zallar@gmail.com

Cell: 608.630.1985