

**Transportation Issue with Regard to Disabled, Low Income Residents**

Kyle Poorman to: MayorCouncil

05/03/2019 06:30 PM

Cc: cyride

Dear Mayor Haila and Ames City Council Members,

This communication is in regard to accessible transportation for disabled, low income residents of Ames.

Background

During a previous Ames City Council meeting, a disabled Ames resident spoke passionately about the need to quickly infill a sidewalk so that the resident was able to make it safely to the closest Cy-Ride bus stop. I am an advocate for completed sidewalks and bike paths throughout Ames and empathize with the problems this lack of sidewalk caused the resident. I am also aware of the need for the City of Ames to work strategically to deal with sidewalk infill in a way that is mindful and is budget cognizant.

I was actually struck by the fact that the real issue at the heart of this problem was that without a safe way to get to Cy-Ride, the resident was essentially cut off from work or leisure activities. The issue for him was really safe access to transportation. I thought about the issue and did some research about options that could offer a general solution for Ames residents who are struggling in a similar manner.

My research brought me to a place where I began thinking about Cyride and the Dial-a-Ride service. For a disabled person, a trip on Dial-a-Ride costs about \$2 per ride. That means that typically it would cost a disabled person \$4 per outing to use the Dial-a-Ride service. I am not sure how long that fee structure has been in place, but when looking at CyRide's fare data, it looks like relatively few people pay this fare for Dial-a-Ride. I am guessing then that most trips on Dial-a-Ride are those disabled people who are affiliated with Iowa State University and do not pay their fare upfront. It looks like most of the costs of Dial-a-Ride are recouped through other means other than the payment of fares. Even though the \$2 per ride figure must be significantly subsidized, I believe it is still quite high for low-income, disabled riders.

The City of Ames does have a low-income transportation program, which I think is admirable. But the program's offering is limited. It provides \$100 in HIRT bucks or 3 months of a CyRide pass in two calendar years. That means that a go and return trip on Dial-A-Ride would be worth 8% of a yearly budget for a low-income disabled resident. That means that in a year, a low income, disabled resident could only use Dial-A-Ride 12.5 times. Basically they could take a trip once per month for two years.

The Ask

I was hoping that the City of Ames, CyRide, and Iowa State University could come together to develop a program where the full cost or nearly full cost of a yearly CyRide pass was available for disabled low-income Ames residents with safe access to a bus stop or provide free or nearly free Dial-A-Ride trips. I think that the first step would be figuring out the projected cost of providing this to low-income, disabled Ames residents and then move on from there accordingly.

Thank you very much for your time and effort.

Sincerely,
Kyle Poorman