August 23, 2018

Dear Mayor Treece & Members of the City Council:

We, officers and members of MoDE [Missouri Disability Empowerment, a 501c4], are writing in regard to the potential 50% fare hike you are considering for Paratransit, as well as the elimination of some bus routes. We want you to know that we are firmly against both of these measures and stand in support of other people and groups who are also opposed to these measures.

While we understand that there are economic necessities driving some to propose fare hikes and route deletions, we believe this will punish the populations who rely on public transportation and Paratransit to traverse Columbia. While an increase for Paratransit from $2 to $3 might not seem like much to many of our citizens, that is a staggering increase to people with disabilities, many of whom live on extremely tight incomes. A move like that might potentially drive more who are able to utilize public buses. Of course, if there are less bus routes, this leaves some people with significantly less options to get around. This could lead to less participation in civic organizations, retail shopping, and more. We believe this could have detrimental effects on the local economy.

We also believe it is morally wrong to essentially make parts of Columbia—either by fare increase or limited bus routes—inaccessible to people with disabilities who already have to fight for inclusion in our community in so many ways.

At a recent Public Transit Advisory Commission (PTAC) meeting we heard a possible plan to shift some money in the transit budget around—essentially charging for parking at the regional airport to cover the airport’s needs. Then the City could use some of that money in the budget originally designated for the airport toward the public transit system like Paratransit and buses. We would endorse this measure or one like it; we appreciate the creative thinking of PTAC members who understand the problems we have discussed.

Columbia has a reputation for doing the right thing, and we hope that you will keep that in mind before making decisions on these matters. We also hope you value those among your city with disabilities and their right and desire to participate in our community.

Sincerely,

Elyse Burks

Tina DeClue

Lisa Hand

Christina Ingoglia

Heather Marriott

Molly Myers

Michelle Ribaudo

Robyn Schelp

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