

Say "NO" to MATP Changes

A policy paper developed by the Warren County Commissioner's Office, in conjunction with the Transit Authority of Warren County (TAWC) and other regional transit authorities, to address the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's Plan to Privatize the Medical Assistance Transportation Program will Hurt Counties and (Most Important) Their Most Vulnerable Citizens

What is MATP?

The ***Americans with Disabilities Act*** of 1990 mandates that in any area where fixed-bus route service is offered, door-to-door service to the elderly, the disabled and other people who cannot use or access the regular bus service must also be offered. All counties in Pennsylvania are responsible for the coordination of these paratransit services, which they either provide directly, as the ***TAWC (Transit Authority of Warren County)*** does, or through a subcontractor.

Individuals involved in the MATP system are some of the most vulnerable in the community and include persons with disabilities, and seniors and other citizens with severe medical conditions. The MATP service includes medical transportation to important (but non-emergency) medical appointments. This is a vital service and for many involved, there is no alternative, especially in rural communities. Funding for these services includes appropriations by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and Federal Medical Assistance (Title XIX) funds.



What is changing and why?

On June 22, 2018, the state legislature adopted language into the Human Services Fiscal Code (HB 1677) as part of a ***last-minute amendment to the state budget*** directing the Department of Human Services (DHS) to provide the Medical Assistance Transportation Program (MATP) through ***a statewide or regional full-risk brokerage system.*** The Governor approved the measure the same day.

This essentially takes away County control on how MATP services are provided and hands that control to regional, statewide, or even international for-profit companies thereby "privatizing" service management and delivery. Currently, Counties have the "right of first refusal" to administer non-emergency medical transportation.



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Despite the short time the legislature had to review this measure, it was passed with the understanding that Pennsylvania would have seen a savings of \$15 million in the current year budget. There has been no comprehensive explanation of the impacts this will have on other State subsidized transportation programs that serve the most vulnerable citizens.

Why do so many individuals and organizations oppose this change?

Shifting to a brokerage system of MATP is opposed by Commissioner Jeff Eggleston, the Transit Authority of Warren County (TAWC), the County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania (CCAP), and the Pennsylvania Public Transit Association (PPTA), among others. This change, despite its lack of public coverage, would represent a major change in service delivery to constituents, especially in rural districts. Below is a list of items which illustrate the negative impacts of this legislation which have been taken from policy papers and news stories:

Loss of Local Management

Under the current model, local agencies manage MATP calls and how the service is provided. They know their riders and they know the terrain and can make adjustments accordingly. This makes for an efficient system with few "dropped calls" and customized service for vulnerable constituents.

With the proposed change, management is taken away from local authorities and given to a regional, statewide, or even multi-national for-profit corporations. Individuals calling to schedule service end up going through automated phone menus or call-centers outside their County which have little or no understanding of their geography or needs. This will lead to poor service and multiple "dropped calls" as vulnerable individuals, who need more attention instead receive another layer of bureaucracy to receive service.

The "broker" would also negotiate contracts with local providers for service. In this model, they are not necessarily interested in the best service but the cheapest. The more money they save, the more they make. Again, rather than receiving high quality, customized local service, individuals would receive the cheapest, least customized service.

Finally, **a community would no longer be in control of how its services are provided.** This represents another opportunity for large companies to siphon off resources from local providers and dictate what services are provided to vulnerable, resource-starved communities.

Organizations that have opposed the changes to MATP:



Lack of Research or Planning in Roll-out

This change was proposed hours before the budget was passed in 2018. Once the measure was signed, ***the Department of Human Services had six months to develop an RFA to solicit proposals from potential brokerage agencies.*** Neither the Legislature, nor the Department of Human Services, or the County Commissioners were prepared to review or implement this change. For a change of this magnitude, there should have been greater research and deliberation so that it could be implemented in an orderly fashion. This was done quietly (from a certain perspective "secretly") and without much thought to the overall ramifications statewide and to vulnerable constituents. The change to MATP has been poorly executed from start-to-finish. The Department of Human Services did release a Request for Information (RFI) in 2015 seeking input to improve the MATP program. Only 17 responses were received with no listening sessions or public meetings scheduled. Most of the themes that were stated in the analysis of the RFI have gone unimplemented.

Savings Not Realized

One of the main selling points for this change is a "savings" of \$15 million which was baked into the 2018-2019 state budget. That \$15 million is estimated additional Federal funding which comes from moving to a brokerage model. The Pennsylvania Public Transportation Association (PPTA) projects these savings will never be realized and in fact, this move will cost the state more in the long run.

"Additional analysis now shows the ultimate cost to the Commonwealth will be significantly higher, resulting in zero savings realized, and significant additional financial burden placed on PA taxpayers through other funding mechanisms that are already oversubscribed. Moreover, adding another layer to the delivery of MATP will likely increase costs as well."

"Across the state, MATP exceeds 30% of the shared ride/paratransit programs. Removing the MATP from the Commonwealth's coordinated system will result in the need to increase revenue from the remaining funding sources, including the MATP program, by INCREASING THE COST TO THE COMMONWEALTH BY 23% OR \$31.5 MILLION*. Under the worst-case scenario where local transit providers would lose all MATP trips, the Commonwealth would experience a \$63.8 million increase." - From PPTA Policy Paper

It's important to understand that ***Pennsylvania's coordinated system is a model of efficiency.*** A recent Transportation Research Board report notes our state's shared ride model has the third-lowest MATP cost nationally, so this is a "solution in search of a problem".

It's also important to remember that brokerage has occurred in other states; however, no known example demonstrates success nor maintains local control of services, especially in rural areas.

Reduction of Services, Layoffs and Rate Increases

Brokering MATP service will result in many MATP trips being removed from that coordinated system. To address this change, the transit providers will need to reduce the geographic service area and hours of service, meaning Seniors and Persons with Disabilities will see a reduction in available service.

The reduction in coordination will also result in a significant loss in service productivity. This will result in increased state and local program funding and customer co-pays. Across the Commonwealth, the most fragile populations will face paying more for less service as a result of this fragmentation to the coordinated system.

Erie Metropolitan Transit Authority (EMTA) officials and advocates for Lift riders (which manages Erie's MATP program) say the change **will cost the local transit agency an estimated \$2.1 million annually and eventually lead to rate increases** not only for all Lift riders but also those who use EMTA's fixed-route bus service. It also could lead to layoffs of drivers, mechanics, and other EMTA employees.

Transit Authority of Warren County (TAWC) is projecting the loss of several part-time positions and a dramatic reduction of MATP revenue which represents 10% of the Authority's overall budget.

Conclusion

Shared ride in PA is a fully coordinated transportation system which provides cost-effective and efficient service delivery, with a one-stop shop for all human service transportation. A change to a private broker, whether statewide or regionally, will dramatically alter all human service transportation, including MATP. **The loss of coordinated efficiency, reduced levels of service, lack of local input and control, and increased cost to PA consumers is UNACCEPTABLE.**

Right now, the Department of Human Services has put out an RFA to solicit proposals from potential brokers as a part of the change to state law. Some leaders in the State Legislature have proposed putting a hold on moving this change forward so that it can be reviewed further and (if approved) implemented in an orderly fashion. You have a chance to affect change on this entire process.

Please contact Governor Tom Wolf's Administration and the Department of Human Services, your State Representative and State Senator, your local County Commissioners and other officials involved in public transit and respectfully request they suspend the award of the RFA for a MATP brokerage model and consider taking action to study this issue further.

Tell our leaders to "SAY NO" to the privatization of MATP and protect a vital program for future generations.

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