

PARLIAMENT OF THE PROVINCE OF THE WESTERN CAPE

INTERPELLATION

THURSDAY, 25 SEPTEMBER 2025

2. Mr B N Herron to ask Mr I M Sileku, Minister of Mobility:

Given that the Dial-a-Ride transport service was jointly established and funded by the Western Cape Government and City of Cape Town, and that the City of Cape Town has announced significant reductions to the service:

(a) When did he become aware of the proposed reductions to the service and (b) what interventions, if any, have been made by him and his Department to ensure that residents living with disabilities who are reliant on Dial-a-Ride continue to be able to access work, school and leisure following this decision?

Response:

Part A:

The plight of persons with disabilities is indeed an important discussion, and I want to thank Member Herron for raising this interpellation.

The mainstreaming of people with disabilities is not merely a programme, but a cornerstone of our government's values of inclusivity and dignity for all.

When the Dial-A -Ride service was first rolled out in 2002, it was not only about providing transport, but rather government affirming the rights of those who too often do not have the loudest voices in society.

Dial-A-Ride remains one of the most tangible demonstrations of our government's commitment to persons with disabilities.

Speaker, before addressing the specific questions posed by the Honourable Member, it is important that I briefly outline the history, context, and responsibilities associated with the service, so that this discussion is located within its proper framework.

Since the 2009/2010 financial year, the province has contributed approximately R162, 4 million to the Dial-A-Ride service.

Currently, we contribute R10 million annually towards the service, under the framework of a three-year Transfer Payment Agreement with the City.

This contribution is a deliberate intervention to promote universal access, social inclusion, and improved mobility for persons with disabilities.

Speaker, I need to emphasise that the City's decision to implement service reductions was not taken lightly but was driven purely by financial and operational constraints.

Speaker, this is no way a reflection of a lack of care or commitment toward those who rely on this vital service.

Speaker, now to respond to the specific questions posed by Member Herron, I was first made aware of the financial constraints of the service and need for additional funding in August 2024.

We acted immediately by advising the City to submit a funding request to mitigate the projected shortfall. This request was duly tabled during the 2024/25 budget adjustment process, however, it was unsuccessful.

We were also unfortunately unable to reprioritize our own budget envelope due to existing financial constraints and competing demands across services.

As a result, the City signalled its intention to reduce the Dial-A-Ride service in early October 2024, when it began drafting proposals to revise their qualification criteria.

At that stage, the reductions were not final, as they remained subject to Council approval and contingent upon the securing of additional funding.

Speaker, while these constraints are real, our commitment to the Dial-A-Ride service is unwavering. Hence, we will continue to engage with our partners, advocate for the resources required, and ensure that persons with disabilities are not sidelined when it comes to their fundamental right to mobility and dignity.

Speaker, as the Honourable Member might be aware, currently there are no reductions to the service, as the matter was set aside by the Western Cape High Court on 5 September 2025.

Therefore, the proposed service reductions have been halted until 10 October 2025.

Part 2

We are actively in dialogue with the City to find a workable solution to limit the service reductions. Speaker, all of this is dependent on securing the funding shortfall.

The City has indicated that its revised criteria is intended to prioritise residents with the highest level of need, particularly those who are wheelchair-bound or reliant on mobility devices, while remaining within the constraints of its budget.

Speaker, in an effort to secure additional funds and limit the impact on the service, the City also approached the National Department for support, but this request was not approved.

With a user profile that reflects 2,226 registered individuals, of whom 382 are active beneficiaries, we are cognizant of the far-reaching implications and we will continue to do everything within our limits to support the service.

Speaker, it is for this very reason that we will once again submit an additional funding request during the upcoming 2025/26 budget adjustment process.

These efforts demonstrate our unwavering support to protecting the rights, dignity, and mobility of persons with disabilities.

Speaker, we do not dwell on the challenges, we face them head-on and find solutions.

Sweep:

Speaker, let us be clear - accessible transport for persons with disabilities is not a privilege, it is a fundamental human right.

It is not a "nice to have" - it is a service that people rely on every day to get to work, go to school, access opportunities, and live with dignity.

When budgets are constrained and services need to be adjusted, it is the most vulnerable in our society who are affected the most.

Yet, despite these structural constraints, this government continues to act responsibly, prioritising essential services and protecting the most vulnerable, even in the face of financial pressure that others have created.

Speaker, this government approaches these challenges with fairness, accountability, and a focus on delivery.

From the moment the City first indicated its intention to revise the Dial-A-Ride service, the Department acted promptly.

We raised concerns, sought funding, explored interim measures, and continue to work tirelessly toward a sustainable solution.

We remain committed to engaging constructively with all stakeholders, to raising the alarm early, and to finding solutions that safeguard dignity, mobility, and opportunity for every resident.

For someone who relies on the Dial-A-Ride service - there is no alternative.

Without the service, their world shrinks.

And that is something we cannot accept.