

To the Editor:

The Carroll County Veterans Assistance Commission (CCVAC) is deeply concerned about the possibility of Carroll County eliminating Carroll County Transit and transitioning transportation services to Reagan Mass Transit.

For many people, public transportation is a convenience. For some of the veterans we serve, it is a necessity. Our veterans do not receive all of their medical care within Carroll County. Depending on the care they need and where an appointment is available, they may have to travel to Iowa City, Davenport, Sterling, Dubuque, Freeport, Rockford, Madison, or other communities outside our county. These are not optional trips. They can be appointments with specialists, follow-up care, testing, procedures, mental health services, and other necessary medical treatment.

CCVAC is concerned about what a change in transportation providers could mean for these veterans. Will they still be able to travel to these locations? Will transportation be available on the days and at the times their medical providers schedule them? Will they have the same ability to schedule rides in advance? Will they be able to depend on transportation to get them to an appointment on time and bring them home afterward?

These questions need clear answers before Carroll County makes a decision that could fundamentally change transportation services for our residents. Carroll County Transit provides a local service that people have come to know and rely upon. Eliminating that service should not be treated simply as an administrative or financial decision. The County must consider the people whose independence, health care, and quality of life depend upon reliable transportation.

For CCVAC, our primary concern is our veterans. Many veterans are older, disabled, unable to drive, or do not have family members who can take a full day away from work to transport them to medical appointments that may be hours away. Missing an appointment can mean waiting weeks or even months for another opportunity to receive needed care.

We are also concerned about reduced scheduling availability and the potential loss of dependable local service. A transportation system may cover a geographic area on paper, but that does not necessarily mean it can provide the same service, flexibility, scheduling, and accessibility that residents currently receive.

Before Carroll County eliminates Carroll County Transit, county officials should demonstrate publicly that any replacement service will meet or exceed the transportation currently available to Carroll County residents—including transportation outside the county when necessary. We should not make this change first and discover the problems afterward. Once a local transportation system is dismantled, rebuilding it may not be easy.

CCVAC strongly urges Carroll County officials to listen to the veterans, seniors, people with disabilities, families, and other residents who depend upon Carroll County Transit before making a final decision. Cost matters. Efficiency matters. But so do accessibility, reliability, independence, and the ability of a veteran to get to a medical appointment when that veteran needs care. The men and women who served our country should not have to wonder whether they will have a ride to their next medical appointment because of a decision made here at home.

Carroll County Veterans Assistance Commission (CCVAC)

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