



# WESTPORT CONNECTICUT

DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

110 Myrtle Avenue  
Westport, CT 06880



April 22, 2021

To: Members of the RTM and Finance Committees

From: The Commission on People with Disabilities

SUBJECT: Westport Transit FY21-22 Budget Restoration

Westport's Commission on People with Disabilities (CPD) would like to voice support for the complete restoration of Westport Transit's Proposed FY 21-22 budget of \$157,500.

The Westport Transit District provides essential, safe, and affordable access to the Town's businesses and amenities that are of particular use to the population of individuals with disabilities whom we serve, in addition to countless others who benefit from public transportation. The availability of public transit opens up personal mobility to everyone, giving each person the freedom to participate in town offerings fully. Overall, individuals with disabilities are more likely to be non-drivers than their non-disabled peers, so this group is disproportionately affected by a lack of public transportation options.

The new Wheels2U Service offers an on-demand format that provides even greater flexibility for individuals who need transportation but may not qualify for the specialized Door to Door Service. COVID19 pandemic restrictions have limited our ability to measure the benefits of the newly implemented Wheels2U program. We implore you to consider the future possibilities of Wheels2U, which can only be realized if we continue to fund its growth.

Transportation is a crucial area of concern for individuals with disabilities in our community who require public transportation to live meaningful and productive lives. In 2015, First Selectman Jim Marpe created a steering committee assigned to assess the support, need, and viability of establishing the Westport Commission on People with Disabilities. The committee conducted a three-month town-wide survey asking respondents to rate and prioritize various quality of life factors in Town. Transportation was the top priority for respondents. The following three topic areas included recreation, employment, and education, all of which depend on reliable transportation options. Westport Transit provides affordable and ADA accessible transportation that individuals with disabilities require to enjoy full and equal access to lives of independence, productivity, inclusion, and self-determination.

Providing all residents with the freedom of mobility through public transit is paramount to the safe and equitable experiences we all strive to provide for our friends, families, neighbors, and colleagues.

A vote in favor of restoring Westport Transit's budget opens pathways to economic growth, including equal access to employment and enhanced opportunities for social connection, health, and wellness.

*The Commission on People with Disabilities' mission is to ensure that "Westport is a town where people with disabilities have the equal opportunity and the support to enjoy full and equal access to lives of independence, productivity, inclusion, and self-determination." The Commission's role is to look at all aspects of the Town and its resources, engaging in public dialogue and creating opportunities for understanding, advocacy, and community responses to the needs of all of its residents, including individuals with hearing, visual, intellectual, and physical challenges.*

DRAFT