To Whom It May Concern;

I am forwarding this letter for consideration at the May 5th City Council meeting, where I have come to understand there will be discussion about Hamilton’s para-transit system, D.A.R.T.S.

I am writing this letter on behalf of the community program the "Hamilton Sports Challengers" (HSC). This is a recreation/sport club for young adults and youth from 6 years of age and up. The program has been running in Hamilton for over 20 years, with the support of Children's Developmental Rehabilitation Program, the City of Hamilton’s Culture and Recreation Department and the organizations comprising Paralympics Ontario. Our role is to offer recreation, fitness and sport opportunities to young people, to allow them to achieve and succeed in physical activities, in a social, fun atmosphere for all.

Most of our participants over the years have used the services of DARTS as they have limitations which make public transit impossible. DARTS is their heart-line to participating in their community. Participants to the HSC pay a fee, to attend as most citizens do. They sign up in September and the program runs through till the end of May—beginning of June and has a break in Dec/January. This is a weekly program that runs from 7:00-8:30 pm on a Wednesday evening.

The drivers and staff we have dealt with at DARTS over the years have been very understanding, and knowledgeable of the limitations of some of our participants. But over the last few years with the booking procedures changing, the use of a “new” booking system, it has been very frustrating for our participants and their supports in the community to access the service they so essentially need.

Just this past year I have had participants return to the program in September, pay their registration but have missed 3-4 weeks because they could not get rides to the program but had attending regularly up until the program closed in June but now have to sit on waiting lists....hoping to be able to go their sports club once again. These individuals in some cases need the assistance of others to help fulfill these needs, to call and book the bus and to go with them as their attendant to the program. This becomes
such a burden on these care givers to have to phone a week in advance, many phoning first thing in the morning, exactly a week in advance, spending long waits on the phone to find out there are no bookings available anyway, and have to repeat the process again and again and again. The participants tend to feel devalued for what they want to do.

We understand medical appointments and work are the priority bookings but regular leisure pursuits for all, is a very well documented need of anyone in society. In most cases this is the only opportunity to access their community on a regular basis and it is made to be difficult, too frustrating for caregivers and participants alike.

We would like to see the “complete” service of DARTS to once again be run by DARTS, let those that truly know the needs of the their clients, understand their conditions and limitations do the job the way they did originally.

I truly believe....and I challenge a few city councilors, to spend a week to a month in a wheelchair, not change their regular schedules of life and just see the tribulations and challenge the lack of spontaniety that would be encountered. These services in our region would be very different.

I had hoped to attend the council meeting on the 5th but will be working taking a group of patients where I work on a DARTS charter to attend the Urban Fishing program. Please feel free to contact me if you wish to ask any further questions of me and the Hamilton Sports Challengers.

Sincerely

Kim Morgan

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905-296-0093

Coach of the Hamilton Sports Challengers

CC. Kevin Christenson, City Clerk., Bob Bratina , City Councillor., Fred Eisenberger, Mayor.