**Representative Butler Faces Opposition from County Board Members in Effort to Enhance Access Will County Ride Share Program Catering to Seniors and Developmentally Impaired**

Tensions rose sharply during a recent session of the Will County Board as Representative Butler proposed critical enhancements to the largely underutilized ride-sharing program known as Access Will County. Focused on improving transportation options specifically for seniors and developmentally impaired individuals, Butler's push to expand the program met intense opposition from fellow board members.

The Access Will County initiative, designed to provide reliable and convenient transportation for vulnerable populations, has struggled to meet the expectations of its intended beneficiaries. Butler's proposal seeks to allocate $288,000 in funding to foster partnerships with ride-sharing companies like Uber and Lyft, aiming to enhance accessibility for seniors and individuals with disabilities who often face transportation challenges in their daily lives.

One of the primary issues Butler aims to address is the problem of riders missing their return trips and waiting up to 3 hours for a ride. Additionally, many riders find themselves unable to make trips outside their townships, limiting their access to essential services and opportunities. At the same time being sensitive to the tax burden on the entire county

Butler emphasized the importance of providing a necessary program that ensures fair and responsible allocation of tax dollars. The proposed rideshare enhancements are designed based on a cost-sharing model: 1/3 of the costs would be covered by the county, 1/3 by the township, and 1/3 by the rider for services that exceed what is normally provided. This structure allows for the recovery of costs from those who use the service while lessening the financial burden on those who do not.

“I believe that our seniors and developmentally impaired residents deserve dependable transportation, and it's crucial that we implement changes to better serve their unique needs,” Butler declared during the meeting. He emphasized that the enhancements would aim to significantly reduce wait times and improve overall service quality, particularly for essential trips such as medical appointments or social engagements.

Board Member Jacqueline Traynere, representing District 11, expressed skepticism about the effectiveness of Butler's proposal, stating that it seemed to be “[a solution looking for a problem](https://youtube.com/clip/Ugkx0WzOv64kWRctvh0wb4NCvqPeKFL4b2Pc?si=CYai_I3SRBek7YdZ).” Additionally, Board Member Julie Berkowicz, representing District 10, highlighted the importance of including her township in the program, arguing that ensuring equitable access to transportation services is crucial for all constituencies. Meanwhile, Board Member Sherry Newquist from District 3 noted her [surprise at discovering that ride-sharing options were not currently available in the program](https://youtube.com/clip/Ugkx6CsTG7BNO9WwjS08EHTYSAi03qu2biKP?si=jv3EiKkkB-T-_175), revealing a gap in understanding about the existing services.

As the discussion progressed, strong sentiment emerged from Board Member Denise Winfrey, who suggested that the committee should be dissolved without making a recommendation. [“We should step back; I would suggest that we cancel this committee and our recommendation](https://youtube.com/clip/UgkxECXDVf5cTV-yBmVMdck9_sL1kHC2efk5?si=FIk09yIVSR3t51W9),” she stated, emphasizing the need to reassess the situation before proceeding further. District 6 Board Member Jacqueline Traynere reaffirmed her intent for the committee, clarifying, [“Today’s purpose was to make your recommendation to bring it to the executive board so that the committee could be dissolved.”](https://youtube.com/clip/UgkxxX84jH11RI0PIfL2X1HeuLRxD0Z2CIug?si=_lUPwiXTufFY1WPI)

The opposition from the board was not solely centered on budgetary concerns; members voiced broader apprehensions about Access Will County's overall structure and how it could inadvertently deepen disparities among communities within Will County. Ensuring that existing transportation programs effectively serve their constituencies remained a consistent theme throughout the discussion.

Chair Butler expressed outrage at the decision not to provide a recommendation, emphasizing that making recommendations is the committee's sole purpose.

While Butler remains steadfast in his advocacy, underscoring the urgent transportation needs of these vulnerable populations, he now faces the challenge of reshaping the conversation around Access Will County. He hopes to engage the community, particularly those directly affected, to rally support for his vision of an integrated and responsive transportation system for our most vulnerable citizens.

“I will continue fighting for improvements and for the voices of our seniors and developmentally impaired residents to be heard,” he asserted, emphasizing his commitment to ensuring that their needs are not overlooked in county planning.

As the next board meeting approaches, Butler is preparing to advocate for the proposed changes amid growing opposition. Whether he can sway his fellow board members or galvanize public opinion in favor of his initiatives focused on serving seniors and people with developmental disabilities remains to be seen. The path forward promises to engage deeper discussions about advocacy for the service of vulnerable people in Will County, as stakeholders and advocates continue to push for solutions that genuinely meet the needs of its most vulnerable residents while recognizing the autonomy of existing regional systems that want to choose their own path.