

September 13, 2022

Honorable Emily McFarland  
Mayor, City of Watertown  
P.O. Box 477  
Watertown, WI 53094

Tony Arnett  
President, Watertown Unified School District  
111 Dodge Street  
Watertown, WI 53094

Greetings:

I am writing to alert you to a potential problem regarding the transportation of students to the Watertown schools, especially for those students who are from households with limited incomes and rely on the Watertown taxi service for transportation. Since the school year has just started, the depth of the problem cannot be fully assessed but from input we have received from parents, community resources and a school, we foresee a potential problem that may expand as we enter late fall and winter.

There are some potentially critical issues that will need to be addressed with the Watertown taxi service.

- Due to a procedural change this year, parents may not be able to make an appointment for a taxi the night prior. This creates a problem with parents whose workdays start earlier the start of the school day and when the taxi service starts receiving calls. Their caregivers may be unable to make a reservation. This change to the taxi service policy for this school year places an added burden on families preparing students for school in the morning.
- The cost of taxi service is cost prohibitive for families who are not provided with bus service and have limited resources. The cost can be up to \$30/week/student even if the family pre-purchases vouchers if the children need a ride to and from school for five days. It is even more costly to pay an individual fare per child, per trip. It has been reported that free vouchers may be available through some schools, but the information concerning them and availability does not appear to be consistent across the community.
- The reliability of the taxi service is spotty. It has been reported that like most industries, hiring enough qualified drivers is an issue at this time.
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It is important for all children to arrive at school on time and ready for the school day including the opportunity to access free and reduced school breakfast services.

Since the Watertown taxi service is a part of the system that provides transportation to students, especially those who have limited resources, we ask that the City and the School District investigate the issues raised and work to provide a solution or solutions that meet the needs of our students before it intensifies as a problem.

Thank you for your kind consideration in this matter.

Respectfully,

  
Carleen Schloemer

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