

Outcry over cuts to Cape Town's Dial-a-Ride service

- The City of Cape Town has announced that from next month, the Dial-a-Ride service will only be available for wheelchair users and people with severe walking impairments.
- This means many elderly people, as well as some people with disabilities, will no longer be able to use the service.
- The City says these changes are being implemented due to budget constraints.
- The Western Cape Network on Disability has written to Mayor Geordin Hill-Lewis and started an online petition urging the City to maintain its current service offerings.
- Rob Quintas, Mayco member for urban mobility, has said that the ad-hoc unscheduled visits currently offered are not sustainable.

By [Mary-Anne Gontsana](#) 13 Aug 2025



The Western Cape Network on Disability has written to Mayor Geordin Hill-Lewis urging the City of Cape Town to reconsider its decision to reduce Dial-a-Ride services. Archive photo: Will Yoder

From next month, the City of Cape Town's Dial-a-Ride service will only be available for wheelchair users and people with severe walking impairments.

Those with visual and cognitive impairments, elderly people, and organisations using the service to transport people with disabilities will no longer be accommodated from 8 September. The city says these changes are being implemented due to budget constraints.

This decision has come as a devastating blow to many who have relied on the service to get to clinics, meetings and other appointments for years.

The Western Cape Network on Disability has written to Cape Town Mayor Geordin Hill-Lewis and started a [online petition](#) urging the City to maintain its current service offerings.

The city's decision, the organisation states, denies the constitutional right to equality, dignity, and full participation in society. "For many disabled people, Dial-a-Ride is the only form of accessible transport available."

The organisation is urging the city to stop the planned restrictions, talk to organisations representing people with disabilities to find sustainable solutions, and to commit to implementing a fully accessible, integrated public transport system for Cape Town for all people with disabilities.

Dial-a-Ride user and awareness officer at the Cape Town Society for the Blind, Sergil January, told *GroundUp* that the changes to the services were "deeply upsetting" for him and many other blind users.

January had been on the Dial-a-Ride waiting list for 16 years before finally becoming a user three years ago.

"This news broke on social media platforms on 7 August. We did not receive any formal notification," he said.

The next day, a representative of Dial-a-Ride "rocked up at the Cape Town Society for the Blind to deliver more than 20 letters for the users of the service, which we did not accept because it was in an inaccessible format. The letters were sprung on us with no formal indication and no consultation with the sector".

"I am upset about this whole thing. I am completely blind, and I feel that I will not be able to do my job in Silver River (should these changes happen), not because I can't, but because I won't be able to get here from Retreat," said January.

He said public transport and e-hailing services were not safe or affordable options for him.

"This is a nightmare," he said. January said they have been dealing with calls from people complaining since the news broke. "People are afraid that they will have to give up their jobs because they will not be able to get there anymore."

January said Cape Town Society for the Blind, Blind SA and the South African National Council for the Blind Western Cape, want to urgently meet the city and Dial-a-Ride "to work out a better solution instead of cancelling the service for the blind and visually impaired".

Meanwhile, in a statement last week, the City said the annual budget for Dial-a-Ride is over R28m, while the annual operating costs run up to R40m. "The current budget deficit amounts to nearly R1m a month, and the operational costs will continue to increase."

The city added that the service was implemented in 2002 "to support those who, due to the nature of their physical impairments, are unable to access conventional public transport services for their daily commute between home and work".

"Over the past two decades, however, the service has expanded to include commuter trips to educational,

medical, recreational facilities, shopping centres, and private home visits, and the user base grew to include users with other special needs,” the city stated.

“Unfortunately, due to budget constraints, the Dial-a-Ride service needs to be realigned with its core mandate, to transport eligible wheelchair users and those with severe walking impairments, and to limit the trips between the users’ homes and places of work,” said the statement.

During a CapeTalk radio interview on Tuesday, Rob Quintas, Mayco member for urban mobility, said this was the “most difficult decision” to make. “The reality is that we have a 3% cost recovery with Dial-a-Ride. That means 97% of the service is completely subsidised, largely from the city’s rates base, with an annual contribution as a grant from the provincial department of mobility.”

Quintas said the service has about 200 to 300 core users with an additional 2,000 users outside of the eligibility criteria. “If we are able to receive more assistance, we would be willing to revise the decision as it stands, but the reality is that the ad-hoc unscheduled visits are not sustainable. So what we are working on is a back-to-basics principle of those people who are outside of our MyCiti footprint, who require scheduled assistance to and from work,” said Quintas.

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