Outlook

Our Open Letter to the Mayor of Lincoln

From Public Relations <pr@prontocorporation.com>
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To Aaron Bonderson, Nebraska Public Media
Cc Kumar Shah, Pronto Corporation

Dear Aaron,

Thank you for covering Pronto's open letter and proposed public–private Husker shuttle pilot:

https://nebraskapublicmedia.org/en/news/news-articles/husker-football-shuttle-service-says-lincoln-denied-request-to-lease-equipment-drivers/

LTU's response

We appreciate LTU's response and recognize its responsibility to protect regular transit operations, workforce availability and public resources. However, the response addresses the matter primarily from the perspective of LTU's existing operations and regulatory discretion. It does not address the broader question raised in our open letter: how should Lincoln meet the substantial unmet demand for special-event transportation?

The approximately 83% utilization cited in the article represents bookings against the limited available capacity. It was mistakenly represented by LTU as representative of the demand, which it is not. Our capacity was constrained before reservations opened.

What Pronto has introduced in Lincoln is among the country's first demand-responsive last-mile shuttle services for major events. Reservations allow us to identify where and when demand exists, but the number of seats we can offer remains capped by the buses and qualified operators available to us.

By contrast, LTU operated the Big Red Express for more than 45 years using its own transit fleet. Its service was not constrained by the limited regional supply of private buses and motorcoaches. Its historical ridership demonstrates that community demand is substantially greater—by at least two times—than the private available capacity during this transition season.

Open Letter addressed to the Mayor

Our open letter is directed to the Mayor and the City because this issue extends beyond an internal transit-agency decision. The central question is how best to meet the unmet demand for special-event transportation—not only for Husker football, but also for Nebraska volleyball, basketball and the many other events that bring large crowds to Lincoln. Nebraska's No. 1-ranked volleyball program is one prominent example of the events in which the City and its residents are justifiably proud.

The means of addressing the immediate constraint is within our collective reach: supplement exhausted private capacity with available local transit equipment and qualified operators. Federal law expressly permits that option and leaves the decision to the discretion of the City and LTU. If there has ever been a

clear case for exercising that discretion for the benefit of Lincoln residents and Husker fans, we believe this is it.

Bringing private buses and operators to Lincoln from markets hundreds of miles away adds substantial expense, which ultimately contributes to higher passenger fares. Meanwhile, using school buses has allowed Pronto to preserve continuity of service, but it has also affected demand because school buses are not the most comfortable or accessible option for many adults, older passengers and riders with mobility needs.

If we are not able to deploy the locally available transit buses to meet the unmet demand for special event shuttle services, the natural question is why would the equipment funded by taxpayers not be available to meet the needs of the residents and the taxpayers for whose benefit the federal government provided the funding?

The Mayor has been very proactive in addressing the needs for transportation services and options for the residents and for taking the lead on the multi-modal transportation hub for the City. She also carries a much larger voice nationwide as the Vice President of the US Conference of Mayors. We are looking forward to working with the Mayor's office to implement our proposed model for the residents of Lincoln and offer it as a showcase for all other cities nationwide. We are working on several other projects across the country employing our demand-responsive last-mile shuttle services where we keep running into the same supply constraint issue.

We look forward to engaging with the Mayor’s office on both the immediate pilot and the longer-term need to build Lincoln’s local supply of buses and motorcoaches for major events.

For this matter and future media inquiries, please contact us at PR@ProntoCorporation.com so we can respond promptly.

Best regards,

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