

The Sun

**Md. rehires van service for disabled for 3 years
\$20 million pack OK'd despite user complaints**

by ASSOCIATED PRESS

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The state will pay Yellow Van Services \$20 million to transport disabled people for the next three years despite complaints about poor service since the company took over a month ago.

The Maryland Board of Public Works, made up of the governor, comptroller and state treasurer, approved the contract yesterday after hearing from transit officials and advocates for the disabled.

Ronald L. Freeland, head of the Mass Transit Administration, acknowledged problems since Yellow Van Services stepped in last month to replace the prior contractor, which dropped the contract because of financial woes.

"We only gave them about 30 days to start the service up," Freeland told the board. Even with the quick start-up time, service has improved since Yellow Van Services took over, he said.

But Michelle Leasure, who works with about 40 disabled people, said she has not seen any improvement. She said her clients have missed work, appointments with doctors and dialysis treatments because the van service did not show up as scheduled.

She did not object to the contract, but asked the state officials to ensure that Yellow Van Services provides reliable service.

Gov. Parris N. Glendening said he has received complaints from disabled people and directed Freeland to make sure Yellow Van Services lives up to the contract.

Freeland said the contract requires the company to maintain a 95 percent on-time performance and provide service 24 hours a day. He said the company has a \$1 million performance bond to guarantee that it fulfills the contract.

Graphics:
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Caption:
Testimony: Barbara Harris (foreground) of Baltimore and other disabled people listen to testimony at a Board of Public Works meeting.

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