

DISABILITY & AGING RIGHTS



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TRANSPORTATION

ADA Paratransit Service & People with Disabilities

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a civil rights law and does not require that public transportation be provided in every community where people live. However, if public bus or rapid rail service is provided, it must follow Title II of the ADA. These transit agencies must also provide ADA paratransit service, which is “origin-to-destination” demand-response transportation for people with disabilities who cannot use the bus or rail system all or some of the time. Some transit agencies, villages, towns and cities provide a non-ADA paratransit-like service, sometimes called “dial-a-ride” service. Typically, this service is provided to older adults and people with disabilities. However, requirements for dial-a-ride service are much more limited than for ADA paratransit service.

Service area

ADA paratransit service must be provided in the same area as fixed-route bus and rapid rail service. This means that pickups and drop-offs must be provided at least within three-quarters of a mile of a fixed bus route or in a three-quarter-mile radius (circle) around each rapid rail station. “Origin to destination” means eligible riders have a right to service between any two points within this service area.

Can I get ADA paratransit service if I live more than three-quarters of a mile from a bus route?

Generally, it is up to the transit agency to decide if it wants to provide ADA paratransit service outside the three-quarter-mile requirement. However, it must serve “core service areas” that are surrounded by bus routes. They must also serve any eligible passengers who can get into the service area, no matter where they live.

Response time

ADA paratransit rides must be provided on a “next-day” basis. Eligible customers should be able to call anytime during regular business hours to request a trip for any time that service is provided for the next day. A pickup must be scheduled and provided within one hour before or after the requested pickup time.

Must the transit agency provide “will call” pickups for doctor’s appointments?

No, but they can if they choose to.



ADA paratransit fares

Can the transit agency charge double the full fare for an ADA paratransit trip?

Yes. The fare may not be higher than double the fare that would be charged to someone paying full fare for a trip of similar length, at a similar time of day, on the fixed-route system. Fares for companions must be the same as for the ADA paratransit-eligible person. If a person needs a personal assistant because of a disability, the PA rides free of charge.

Trip purpose restriction

Can the transit agency require me to tell them where I am going when I schedule an ADA paratransit trip?

No. They also cannot limit or prioritize certain types of trips over others (for example, work trips over shopping trips).

Hours and days of service

ADA paratransit service must be provided during the same hours and days as fixed-route service. For example, if a bus starts its route at 5 a.m., ADA paratransit pickups in that same area must start at the same time.

Limitations on service

Transit agencies may not operate ADA paratransit service in any way that limits customers' ability to use it.

Can the transit agency limit the number of ADA paratransit reservations I can make on a particular day?

No, as long as the trips don't overlap with each other. They also cannot have waiting lists for service.

When I call to request an ADA paratransit trip for the next day, can they put me on a waiting list if there isn't space available?

No, the transit agency must make a reservation for every trip request, within one hour before or after the requested time.

Transit agencies also must not have large numbers of significantly untimely pickups or return trips, large numbers of trip denials or missed trips, or large numbers of trips with excessive trip lengths.

Sometimes, my ADA paratransit pickup is late to pick me up. Is this against the law?

It depends. If it happens once or twice a year, it may not be. If it happens once or twice a week, it may be a violation of the ADA. Transit agencies also must plan for things that will slow down travel, like rush hour traffic, large public events and expected bad weather, to avoid large numbers of late pickups, missed trips or excessively long trips.

My ADA paratransit service has changed. I used to be the only one in the vehicle and now there are often other people picked up during the trip and my trip takes twice as long. Is this legal?

It depends. Transit agencies may schedule shared trips but must make sure that it doesn't cause large numbers of excessively long trips.



When I call for ADA paratransit reservations, I am regularly placed on hold for 10 minutes or more. Is the transit agency allowed to do this?

No. Transit agencies should set up telephone reservation systems so they do not have busy signals or excessively long hold times.

Subscription service

Are transit agencies required to offer subscription service?

No, although they may choose to do so.

Other requirements

Service animals are permitted to accompany people with disabilities in vehicles and buildings.

Transit agencies must keep accessibility equipment working and fix it quickly if it breaks. If something does break, agencies must try to accommodate people with disabilities who need accessibility. It's not a violation of the ADA if something isn't working every once in a while, but if it happens regularly, then it might be.

Information about transportation service must be provided in accessible formats upon request (large print, Braille, accessible technology, etc.).

To learn more about eligibility for ADA paratransit service, read "ADA Paratransit Eligibility: How To Make Your Case," co-written by Equip for Equality and Marilyn Golden, Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund (DREDF). You can download a copy here: www.equipforequality.org/issues/discrimination-ada-rights/transportation/resources.

What can you do if you have a problem with ADA paratransit service?

First, and most important, let the transit agency know about any problems. If you can, make your complaint in writing (email or letter). Give them as much information as possible (vehicle/badge number, date, time, etc.). Keep a copy for your records.

You can also file a complaint with the Federal Transit Administration Office of Civil Rights. You can fill out the FTA's Complaint Form or send a letter to: **Director, FTA Office of Civil Rights, East Building – 5th Floor, TCR, 1200 New Jersey Ave. SE, Washington, DC 20590**. Include as many details as possible.

The Federal Transit Administration's ADA website is:
www.fta.dot.gov/civilrights/12325.html

The FTA ADA complaint form is at:
www.fta.dot.gov/civilrights/12875_14816.html

You may also leave a message at FTA's ADA Assistance Line, **1-888-446-4511**, through the Federal Information Relay Service, **1-800-877-8339**, or by email at:
FTA.ADAAssistance@dot.gov.

Complaints must be filed within 180 days of the incident of discrimination, although the deadline may be extended for good cause.

Another option is to file a complaint with the Illinois Attorney General's Disability Rights Bureau. Send a letter to: **Office of the Attorney General, Chicago Disability Rights Bureau, James R. Thompson Center, 11th Floor, 100 W. Randolph St., Chicago, IL 60601**. Include as many details as possible.

www.illinoisattorneygeneral.gov/rights/disabilityrights.html
1-312-814-5684 or **1-800-964-3013** (TTY)

For more information about this and other topics, contact Equip for Equality at **1-800-537-2632** or visit **www.EquipForEquality.org**.



Additional helpful resources and links

Easter Seals Project ACTION is funded by the U.S. Department of Transportation to promote access to transportation for people with disabilities by providing training, technical assistance, research, outreach and communication.

1-800-659-6428
www.projectaction.org

Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund provides advocacy for and training about accessible transportation.

1-510-644-2555
1-510-841-8645 (Fax/TTY)
info@dredf.org
dredf.org/public-policy/transportation

U.S. Access Board issues ADA standards for transportation facilities and vehicles:
www.access-board.gov/guidelines-and-standards/transportation

Community Transportation Association of America is a national association of organizations and people that provides programs and services to remove barriers and improve mobility for all people, particularly senior citizens and people with disabilities.

1341 G Street, NW, 10th Floor,
Washington, DC 20005
1-800-891-0590
www.ctaa.org

The National Center on Senior Transportation strives to increase transportation options for older adults to support their ability to live independently in their homes and communities throughout the United States.

1-866-528-6278
ncst@easterseals.com
www.seniortransportation.net ■

For more information:

Pace Paratransit Service Guidelines:

www.pacebus.com/sub/paratransit/ADA_policy.asp

ADA Paratransit Service Directory for Northeastern Illinois:

www.pacebus.com/sub/paratransit/ADA_policy.asp

Regional Transit Authority Travel Training Program:

www.rtachicago.org/rider-resources/accessible-transit/travel-training

Equip for Equality's Transportation Information and Resources:

www.equipforequality.org/issues/discrimination-ada-rights/transportation



Equip for Equality

20 North Michigan Avenue
Suite 300
Chicago, IL 60602

www.equipforequality.org
1-800-537-2632
1-800-610-2779 (TTY)

Illinois Department on Aging

One Natural Resources Way
Suite 100
Springfield, IL 62702-1271

Senior HelpLine:

1-800-252-8966
1-888-206-1327 (TTY)
www.illinois.gov/aging

The Illinois Department on Aging does not discriminate in admission to programs or treatment of employment in programs or activities in compliance with appropriate State and Federal statutes. If you feel like you have been discriminated against, call the Senior HelpLine at 1-800-252-8966, 1-888-206-1327 (TTY).