

DISABILITY & AGING RIGHTS



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TRANSPORTATION

Fixed Route Bus Service & People with Disabilities

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a civil rights law. The ADA does not require that public transportation be provided in every community where people live. However, if public bus service is provided, it must follow Title II of the ADA. The ADA covers buses, transportation facilities (transfer stations, bus stops, etc.), and bus service. Providers of public fixed-route bus service must also provide ADA paratransit service for people with disabilities who cannot use the bus system all or some of the time.

Fixed route service operates with a set route and schedule, compared to “demand response” service, where a bus, car or van is sent in response to a potential rider’s request.

Accessible buses

Accessible buses must have:

- A ramp or a lift (lift platform must be at least 30 inches by 48 inches)
- Priority seating identified for people with disabilities
- At least two mobility device (wheelchair) securement areas (buses shorter than 22 feet can have one securement space)
- Seatbelts and shoulder harnesses for wheelchair users (use of them is optional if it isn't required for all passengers)

Boarding

I use a cane, not a wheelchair. Can I ask to use the lift or ramp to get on and off the bus?

Anyone who asks may use a bus' lift, ramp or kneeling feature, whether they have an obvious disability or not.

A transit agency must allow a passenger who uses a lift, ramp or kneeling feature to get on or off at any designated stop, unless:

- The accessibility feature cannot be used at that stop
- It will be damaged if it is used at that stop.
- All passengers are prevented from using the stop due to temporary conditions at the stop, which are not under the control of the transit agency

Bus drivers are not required to help with transfers, lifting, or carrying packages or bags. However, they must help with getting on and off the bus, including pushing a manual wheelchair up an extra steep ramp, when needed.

I have a hard time getting my transit card up to the machine to pay my fare. Does the bus driver have to help me with that?

Bus drivers must provide help with paying the fare, if needed (putting cash in the slot, swiping or tapping a transit card).



Securement

A transit agency is not required to allow wheelchair users in places other than designated securement areas and may require that a person who uses a wheelchair allow it to be secured. But, if a particular wheelchair can't be secured, that person must still be allowed to ride. Passengers may not be required to use the seatbelt unless all passengers are required to use one. Transit agencies may not require a wheelchair user to transfer to a regular seat.

Priority seating

I can't stand for very long on the bus and need to sit in priority seating. What if all the spots are taken?

Bus drivers must ask others to move from designated priority seats or securement locations, upon the request of the customer with the disability. However, bus drivers are not required to remove passengers from these locations if the passengers refuse to move.

A transit agency may not require that people with disabilities use designated priority seats.

Stop announcements

On fixed-route buses, stops must be announced:

- At transfer points with other fixed routes
- At major intersections and destination points
- Regularly enough along a route so people with disabilities can be oriented to their location
- At any requested stop
- Clearly and loudly enough to be heard throughout the bus

Training

Each transit agency must ensure that its workers are trained appropriately. This means they must be trained in:

- How to use and maintain accessibility features and equipment
- Boarding assistance
- Securement of mobility devices
- Sensitive and appropriate interaction with passengers with disabilities
- Handling and storage of mobility devices (if necessary)
- Understanding the requirements of the ADA



Other requirements

I have low vision. When I'm waiting for a bus at a stop that has more than one route, how will I know which bus is the one I need?

Where vehicles for more than one route serve the same stop, the transit agency must provide a way for a person who is blind or has low vision to identify the right vehicle to enter (or be identified to the bus driver as a person seeking a ride on a particular route).

Service animals are permitted to accompany individuals with disabilities in vehicles and facilities.

I was waiting for a bus once, and when it showed up, the lift was broken. I can't climb any stairs and had to wait for the next bus. Is that against the law?

Transit agencies must keep accessibility equipment working and fix it quickly if it breaks. If something does break, they must try to accommodate people with disabilities who need accessibility. For example, if a bus lift breaks and the next vehicle won't arrive for more than 30 minutes, the transit agency must provide alternative transportation. 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.

All new fixed-route bus vehicles must be accessible to and usable by people with disabilities. Most used buses must be accessible, too.

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

What can you do if you have a disability-related problem with bus 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 (bus/badge number, route, 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 FTA's ADA website is www.fta.dot.gov/civilrights/12325.html and 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 ■



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).