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## Fact Sheet: Paratransit Services

### **What Is Paratransit?**

Paratransit is a specialized, door-to-door transport service for people with disabilities who are not able to ride fixed-route public transportation. This may be due to an inability to:

- board, ride or disembark independently from any readily accessible vehicle on the regular fixed-route system;
- access existing accessible fixed-route transportation because that transportation is not available at the needed time on that route; and/or
- get to boarding/alighting locations of regular public transportation.

Paratransit has a specialized meaning in the context of transportation regulations. The term refers to the complementary paratransit service, comparable to public fixed-route systems, which must be provided. Typically, paratransit is provided in a demand-responsive mode (i.e., the person with a disability must make a telephone call to arrange service).

The goal of the paratransit program is to ensure that all Americans have access to transit to meet basic mobility needs. The passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in 1990 recognized that people with disabilities have the same rights as other citizens to access services and facilities that are available to the public, including transportation. The U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) is responsible for the enforcement of ADA's transportation requirements.

### **Eligibility Requirements**

Since most true paratransit services are subsidized by federal, state or county governments, or other municipal agencies, users must be able to meet one of the following three eligibility requirements. (Note: Individuals may be eligible for paratransit on the basis of a permanent or temporary disability. The individual must

meet one of the three eligibility criteria, whether permanently or for a limited period of time.)

**Category 1:** Individuals who are unable, because of a physical or mental impairment, to board, ride or disembark independently from any readily accessible vehicle on the regular fixed-route system. Among others, this category includes people with mental or visual impairments who, as a result of their disability, cannot navigate the system. This means that, if an individual needs an attendant to board, ride or disembark from an accessible fixed-route vehicle (including navigating the system), the individual is eligible for paratransit.

**Category 2:** Also eligible are those people with a physical or mental impairment who could use accessible fixed-route transportation, but the accessible fixed-route transportation is not available at the needed time on a particular route (the accessible vehicle is down for maintenance, the lift cannot be deployed, etc.).

**Category 3:** Any individual with a specific impairment-related condition that prevents that person from traveling to a boarding location or from a disembarking location on the system. In this case, the impairment must prevent travel to or from a fixed-route stop. Significant inconvenience or difficulty does not form a basis for eligibility under this section. Further, barriers not under control of the public entity providing the fixed-route service (such as distance or weather) do not by themselves form a basis for eligibility under this section. These situations are resolved on a case-by-case basis, determined by evaluating the interaction between the impairment-related condition and the barrier in question.

## **Costs**

Again, since most true paratransit services are subsidized, the cost to the rider can be very low, as opposed, for example, to the cost of an accessible commercial taxi or limousine service, which provides door-to-door service but does not qualify as a true paratransit service. It should be noted that Medicare does not pay for transportation services except in the case of emergency.

When you contact a paratransit service through one of the methods outlined below, you should specifically request information about such things as cost per trip, advance notice requirements, scheduling of return transportation, etc.

## **To Find Local Public Transportation and Paratransit Services**

**Consult your local telephone book.** Most telephone books have a special section in the front of the book containing contact information for community service organizations. Look under "Disabled" and "Transportation" for the names of agencies that provide transportation for special needs. If necessary, look under the same headings in the yellow pages. If this proves unsuccessful, contact your local transit authority or municipal bus service operator for referral to the complimentary service they are required by the ADA to provide.

**Contact the Area Agency on Aging's Eldercare Locator.** Call their toll-free number at 800-677-1116. Locator information is available Monday through Friday, from 9:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. (ET). For calls made after normal hours of operation, a message recorder is available for the caller to leave a name and a telephone number. These calls will be returned the next business day. The locator staff may provide the phone number of the actual paratransit service or may provide the phone numbers for your local and/or state Area Agency on Aging or "HelpLine," which, in turn, can provide the needed paratransit contact information.

**Contact the National Transit Hotline.** This organization can provide the names of local transit providers who receive federal money to provide transportation to seniors and people with disabilities. Call toll-free at 800-527-8279.

**Contact Easter Seals Project ACTION** . If you have Internet access, you can go to the [Easter Seals Project Action](#) homepage and access the Accessible Transportation Links.

### **Other Sources of Information:**

#### **American Public Transit Association (APTA)**

Website: [www.apta.com](http://www.apta.com)

1666 K Street NW, Suite 1100

Washington, DC 20006

Phone: 202-496-4800

- APTA members serve the public interest by providing safe, efficient and economical transit services, and by improving those services to meet national energy, environmental and financial concerns. Over 90 percent of passengers using transit in the U.S. and Canada are carried by APTA members. APTA members include bus, rapid transit and commuter rail systems, and the organizations responsible for planning, designing, constructing, financing and operating transit systems.

### **Association of Programs for Rural Independent Living (APRIL)**

Website: [www.april-rural.org](http://www.april-rural.org)

2001 Pershing Circle, Suite 200

North Little Rock, AR 72114

Phone: 501-753-3400

- The Association of Programs for Rural Independent Living (APRIL) is a national network comprised of rural centers for independent living and other organizations/individuals that are concerned with the unique aspects of rural independent living. APRIL is organized for the promotion of independence, and they advocate for the rights and benefits of people with disabilities who are living in rural environments.

### **Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA)**

Website: [www.ctaa.org](http://www.ctaa.org)

1341 G Street NW, 10th Floor

Washington, DC 20005

Toll-Free Phone: 800-891-0590

- CTAA is a national, professional membership association of organizations and individuals committed to removing barriers to isolation and to improving mobility for all people. CTAA conducts research, provides technical assistance, offers educational programs, and serves as an advocate in order to make coordinated community transportation available, affordable and accessible.

## **Federal Transit Administration (FTA)**

Website: [www.fta.dot.gov](http://www.fta.dot.gov)

East Building, 1200 New Jersey Ave, S.E.

Washington, DC 20590

Phone: 202-366-4000

TTY: 800-877-8339

- The Federal Transit Administration is an activity of the U.S. Department of Transportation. Its mission is to provide leadership, technical assistance, and financial resources for safe, technologically advanced public transportation that enhances all citizens' mobility and accessibility, improves America's communities and natural environment and strengthens the national economy.
- Through the FTA's **National Aging and Disability Transportation Center (NADTC)** find information on **ADA & Paratransit** at [www.nadtc.org/about/transportation-aging-disability/ada-and-paratransit](http://www.nadtc.org/about/transportation-aging-disability/ada-and-paratransit)

## **National Transit Institute (NTI)**

Website: [www.ntionline.com](http://www.ntionline.com)

120 Albany Street, Tower Two, Suite 250

New Brunswick, NJ 08901-2163

Phone: 732-932-1700

- The National Transit Institute's mission is to provide training, education and clearinghouse services in support of public transportation and quality of life in the United States. It identifies needs, promotes, develops and delivers high-quality programs and materials through cooperative partnerships with industry, government, institutions and associations; and it serves as a catalyst for enhancing skills and performance in public transportation.

## **National Rural Transit Assistance Program (RTAP)**

Website: [www.nationalrtap.org](http://www.nationalrtap.org)

5 Wheeling Avenue

Woburn, MA 01801

Phone: 888-589-6821

- The Rural Transit Assistance Program (RTAP) is authorized by a federal law that establishes a rural transportation assistance program in nonurbanized areas implemented by grants and contracts for transportation research, technical assistance, training and related support services in nonurbanized areas. The goals of RTAP are to provide training and technical assistance for rural public transportation operators, improve professionalism and safety of rural public transit services, and promote efficiency and effectiveness of rural transit services and support coordination with human service transportation.

### **Taxicab, Limousine & Paratransit Association (TLPA)**

Website: [www.tsnn.com/organizers/taxicab-limousine-paratransit-association](http://www.tsnn.com/organizers/taxicab-limousine-paratransit-association)

3200 Tower Oaks Boulevard, Suite 220

Rockville, MD 20852

Phone: 301-984-5700

- The Taxicab, Limousine & Paratransit Association (TLPA) is a nonprofit trade association for the private passenger transportation industry. TLPA membership includes 1,100 taxicab companies, executive sedan and limousine services, airport shuttle fleets, nonemergency medical transportation companies, and paratransit services. Contact information is available for TLPA members nationwide.

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