

ACCESS-A-RIDE SERVICES IN NEW YORK CITY



What is Access-A-Ride?

- New York City's **paratransit service** providing shared-ride transportation for people with disabilities.
- Access-A-Ride is administered by the New York City Transit Authority.



Access-A-Ride Basics

- Fare: same as a subway or bus trip
 - No additional cost for feeder service
- Hours of Operation: 24 hours a day, 7 days per week
- Service Area: New York City and parts of Nassau and Westchester
- Baggage: Two bags totaling 40 lbs or less
- AAR ID/MetroCard
 - Four free trips per day using subway, local bus, and Staten Island Railroad

Who is Eligible for Access-A-Ride?

- Person with a disability that **substantially prevents** her from independently using the subway or bus.
- AAR eligibility does not require a physical disability.
- People with temporary disabilities may be eligible.

Source: Americans with Disabilities Act, 49 C.F.R § 37.3.

Eligibility Example 1

- Sally has arthritis and joint disorders that prevent her from walking more than 2 blocks and standing for more than a few minutes without experiencing pain and needing to rest.
- Sally's disabilities substantially prevent her from using the subway or bus.
- Sally is eligible for Access-A-Ride.

Eligibility Example 2

- John has an anxiety disorder that is triggered by crowds or the potential for crowds. John cannot ride the subway for more than one stop without having to exit because of a panic attack.
- John's disability substantially prevents him from using the subway or a bus.
- John is eligible for Access-A-Ride.

What are the Different Types of Eligibility?

- Full Eligibility
- Conditional Eligibility
 - Can request AAR services when any one of the specified conditions are present
- Temporary versus Continual
 - Temporary (either full or conditional for less than 5 years)
 - Continual (your condition is permanent and will not improve, so you will not need to re-apply)

What is Conditional Eligibility?

- If approved for any condition(s), customer may travel by AAR when any one condition is met
- Customer might be approved for more than one conditional eligibility category
- Conditional eligibility categories:
 - Stairs
 - Extreme Cold
 - Extreme Heat
 - Unfamiliar Places
 - Distance
- NYCT will check www.weather.gov/nyc to determine when weather conditions apply

Access-A-Ride ID Card: Eligibility Conditions



Your ID Number:
You need to provide your ID number to make a reservation, or to request information about a trip, your eligibility, or any other service.

Expiration Date:
This is the date when your AAR service ends. Please re-apply for AAR at least six weeks before the expiration date to maintain uninterrupted service.

Personal Care Attendant (PCA):
The word "YES" will appear next to the words Personal Care Attendant on your card if AAR has approved you to travel with a PCA. The PCA travels free of charge to assist you.

Eligibility Conditions:
The eligibility conditions listed on your ID card are explained in documents you received with your card. If you have questions, please contact the Eligibility Unit.

Conditional Eligibility Example

- NYCTA determines that Sarah's disability prevents her from walking more than 4 blocks and grants her service, conditional on 3-4 blocks distance.
- If Sarah has a trip that requires walking more than 4 blocks to a bus or subway station, she can get AAR services.
- For example, if Sarah needs to take the subway to reach her destination and the closest subway station from her destination is 7 blocks away, she can request an AAR trip.

How Do I Apply for Access-A-Ride?

Step 1: Call Eligibility Office at 877-337-2017 (toll-free from area codes 212, 347, 516, 631,646, 718, 845, 914, and 929) or 718-393-4999 to schedule an appointment at an assessment center and request an application packet. The application packet will arrive by mail in approximately 5 days.

Step 2: Call AAR to schedule transportation to the assessment (instructions in the application packet)

Step 3: Complete the application.

Step 4: Gather documentation to support the application (include doctor's letters if possible).

Step 5: Complete the in-person assessment (functional assessment and interview). Bring the completed application and documentation to the in-person appointment at the assessment center.

What Documents Do I Need?

- If possible, you should include letters from your doctors with your application.
- The letters should:
 - Explain the doctor's treatment of you
 - Explain your limitations
 - Provide detailed examples
 - Explain that because of your limitations you are unable to use public transportation

The In-Person Assessment

- You should be provided with round-trip transportation to the assessment.
- You will be required to complete simulated tasks related to riding public transportation.
- For example, you might be asked to walk up and down steps.

The Interview

- At the interview, you will have the chance to explain why you need Access-A-Ride.
- You should provide specific examples during the interview.
 - For example: The last time I tried to ride the subway, the crowds of people triggered my panic disorder. I suffered a panic attack and had to get off of the train before I reached my stop.
- The interview is especially important for people with non-physical disabilities.

The Eligibility Determination

- A decision about your eligibility will be made within 21 days after you visit the assessment center.
- You will receive written notification.
- If you are denied, notice should include a Denial Form that lists the reasons you were denied, an Appeal Form to request an appeal, information about submitting the appeal, and information about how to request your assessment records.

Do I Need to Be a Citizen to Use AAR?

- No! It is not a requirement to be a United States citizen to be eligible for AAR.
- You do not need to provide any information about your immigration status to apply for or use AAR.

What if English is Not My Primary Language?

If your primary language is Spanish, Chinese, Russian, French Creole, or Korean:

- Whenever you call AAR, you are entitled to speak with an operator who speaks your primary language.
- You can obtain an AAR application in your primary language.
- You can submit all forms to AAR in your primary language.
- You are entitled to an interpreter for the functional assessment.
- AAR is required to translate your eligibility letter, denial letter and appeals form into your primary language.

How Do I Appeal an Eligibility Determination?

- Submit appeal form
- Time limit of **60 days** from date on determination letter.
- Two options:
 - In-person hearing (scheduled in Long Island City)
 - Written appeal (mail appeal form with supporting documents)
- Prepare for your appeal
 - Assessment records
 - Up-to-date doctors' letters
 - Personal journal
 - List of barriers

Access-A-Ride Eligibility Appeal Form

Please choose one of the following:

I choose to appeal in person. (Persons choosing to appeal in person will be contacted by MTA – New York City Transit to schedule an appeal hearing.)

I choose to appeal in writing. I understand that the final determination on the appeal will be based solely on written materials submitted. (Persons choosing to appeal in writing should enclose a statement stating **specifically** why they disagree with the eligibility determination along with any supporting documentation.)

Please note the basis for your appeal: _____

What Is Service Continuing?

- If you receive AAR and your service is reduced or denied after recertifying, you have the right to continuing service.
 - Service continuing for 60-day appeal period
 - If you appeal, until the appeal is decided.

The Appeal Determination

- Should receive by mail within 30 days.
- If you do not receive within 30 days, you still have the right to receive service continuing until the appeal is decided.

What Happens If Your Appeal is Denied?

- Two options:
 - Start application process over.
 - File an Article 78 proceeding in New York State Supreme Court.
- Article 78 proceeding
 - Asks the court to reverse NYCTA's decision.
 - Must be filed within four months from the appeal determination date.
 - You should meet with an attorney for more information about bringing an Article 78 proceeding.

What Is Recertification?

- Recertification = new application
- When to recertify?
 - AAR ID Card has Expiration Date
 - Notification by mail
 - Recertify 6 weeks before Expiration Date

Access-A-Ride ID Card: Expiration Date

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Using Access-A-Ride

- Reservations
 - Call between 7am and 5pm daily
 - Call no earlier than 14 days before your trip and at least 24 hours in advance
 - “Pick-up time” versus “appointment time”
- Conditional Eligibility
 - Can only use AAR when conditions are present
- Subscription Service
 - For consumers making the same trip at least once per week
- Guests
 - You may travel with one guest, and additional guests on a space-available basis
 - Guests pay full fare
 - PCAs travel free

Access-A-Ride ID Card: PCA

The diagram shows a sample Access-A-Ride ID card with the following fields:

- Photo**: A blue rectangular area on the left side of the card.
- MTA New York City Transit Access-A-Ride**: The logo and title at the top of the card.
- Name**: Frost, Jack
- I.D. #**: 999999
- Date Issued**: 7/18/06
- Expiration Date**: 4/30/07
- Personal Care Attendant**: A field with a line for text.
- Eligibility Conditions**: A field at the bottom of the card.

Callouts provide the following information:

- Your ID Number:** You need to provide your ID number to make a reservation, or to request information about a trip, your eligibility, or any other service.
- Expiration Date:** This is the date when your AAR service ends. Please re-apply for AAR at least six weeks before the expiration date to maintain uninterrupted service.
- Personal Care Attendant (PCA):** The word "YES" will appear next to the words Personal Care Attendant on your card if AAR has approved you to travel with a PCA. The PCA travels free of charge to assist you.
- Eligibility Conditions:** The eligibility conditions listed on your ID card are explained in documents you received with your card. If you have questions, please contact the Eligibility Unit.

What is Feeder Service?

- Feeder Service
 - Trip made partly by AAR and partly by the bus or subway.
- Example:
 - Sarah has conditional service based on 3-4 blocks distance.
 - If Sarah's starting location is within 3 blocks of bus station A, but her destination is more than 4 blocks from bus station B, AAR may provide feeder service from bus station B to Sarah's destination.
 - Sarah will take the bus from bus station A to bus station B, and then take AAR from bus station B to her destination.

Your Access-A-Ride Rights

- Cancellations
 - You can cancel at least 3 hours before a trip
- Taxi reimbursements
 - You can request if a vehicle is 30 minutes late
 - AAR must authorize taxi/car service for you
- “No-shows”
 - If you do not board vehicle within five minutes
- Suspensions
 - Notice
 - Right to appeal
- Complaints about service

What Is a Reasonable Accommodation?

- Required under federal, state, and city law.
- If you need a change in the regular AAR policies or practices because of your disability, you can request a reasonable accommodation.
- Example:
 - Your disability requires you to travel with a service animal. You should be allowed to bring your service animal onto the AAR vehicle.

Service Problem Examples

- Problems reserving a trip or changing a reservation.
- Consistently late vehicles or vehicles that never show up.
- Vehicles leaving without waiting 5 minutes from the pick-up time.
- Rude drivers.
- Drivers who can't navigate the trip.
- Rides with inefficient routes.
- Refusal to authorize a taxi when your vehicle is late.
- Other examples?

Service Complaints

- Call (877) 337-2017 and press “8”. Mon-Fri from 9:00am to 5:00pm to submit a complaint about service.
- Deaf/hard of hearing customers: use your preferred relay service provider or the free 711 relay service to reach 877-337-2017.
- Or mail your complaint to:
MTA NYCTA
Paratransit Division, Customer Relations
130 Livingston Street, Brooklyn, NY 11201
- Or email your complaint by going to www.mta.gov and clicking Contact Us

Who Can I Call For Help?

- **AARRG! Campaign:** for information on how to join the AARRG! Campaign, help applying for Access-A-Ride or filing a complaint, or to request a training.
 - Valerie Joseph, Brooklyn Center for Independence (BCID): (718) 998-3000 x309 or vjoseph@bcid.org
 - Shain Anderson, Center for Independence of the Disabled, New York (CIDNY): (646) 368-8031
 - Eman Rimawi, New York Lawyers for the Public Interest (NYLPI): (212) 244-4664
- Spanish callers: call Yesenia Torres at BCID at 718-998-3000, x313
- Creole callers: call Valerie Joseph at BCID at (718) 998-3000 x309
- For Legal Advice or Assistance:
 - **Mobilization for Justice** (open M-F, 10am-5pm): (877) 417-2427
 - Advice on applications.
 - Advice or representation on eligibility denials.
 - Advice or assistance with reasonable accommodation requests.
 - **NYLPI:** M, W, F: (212) 244-4664 (voice); (212) 244-3692 (TTY)
 - Advice and assistance with language access.

Thank you!

