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Press Release

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NYC Transit

IMMEDIATE

MTA Announces Enhanced Program to Expand Taxi Use for Entire Paratransit System – And Extension of “On-Demand E-Hail” Pilot

In addition to extending “E-Hail on Demand” pilot, MTA announces expanded taxi usage initiative for paratransit system, allowing the majority of trips system-wide to be completed in taxis or for-hire vehicles (FHV) in future years, up from 33% in 2017 – goal is to further grow share of trips in taxis

This new ‘enhanced broker’ service was developed in close consultation with riders and accessibility advocates

The new program will expand use of online & app booking option, improved driver training for more drivers across the city, more door-to-door service, GPS vehicle tracking and an overall better service for customers

The MTA today made two announcements in its continued pursuit of improved paratransit service:

- An expansion of its paratransit service that will allow NYC Transit's Access-a-Ride (AAR) program to provide more of its trips in taxis and for-hire vehicles (FHV) in coming years, improving the customer experience and reducing journey time. This new initiative, called “enhanced broker service,” improves upon a pilot program called “advance reservation e-hail,” as well as the current broker program by making taxi and FHV service an increasingly integral part of paratransit service.
- An eight-month extension of its popular “on-demand e-hail” pilot program, allowing 1,200 participating customers to electronically hail yellow or green taxicabs on demand, similar to popular publicly available on-demand ride services. The pilot project period lasts through the end of next month, but the MTA today announced that it will be extended at least through the end of the year, while the authority continues to establish how and if it can be made more sustainably permanent and even expandable. In addition to presenting this extension to the MTA board, the authority will release additional details and any modifications of the extended pilot in the coming weeks, but the \$2.75 price will remain constant.

The new program announced today, known as “enhanced broker service” applies to all paratransit users and will mean the continuation of thousands of AAR trips in taxis and FHV's each day, with continued growth over time. A new partnership with Curb Mobility LLC – the taxi technology company currently providing the majority of “advance reservation e-hail” trips to AAR customers – is the foundation of this initiative. Long-standing broker Corporate Transportation Group (CTG) will also continue to provide thousands of FHV trips to paratransit customers each day.

“Making taxis and FHV's a growing part of our paratransit service is a win all around – this service is good for our paratransit customers, good for the MTA, and good for the city's economy,” said MTA President Pat Foye. “In recent years we've seen an increase in the use of this type of service, and under this program their use will increase even further providing customers better service and increased flexibility. We'd like to see more and more of our paratransit trips delivered by taxis and FHV's in a financially sustainable manner, and we're beginning by making scheduled taxi trips an increasingly regular feature of our services.” “Improving accessibility and service for our customers with disabilities is one of the four pillars of our plan to modernize transit in New York City,” said NYC Transit President Andy Byford. “While forging ahead with making the subway more accessible and enhancing our fully wheelchair-accessible bus fleet, we're also modernizing and improving the Access-a-Ride service that more than 150,000 New Yorkers depend upon.”

“I think bringing more taxis into AAR service is great and has really helped for better service overall,” said Sharifa Abu-Hamda, President of Civics League for Disability Rights. “More use of taxis is what riders want and this is going in that direction. Plus, it is bringing new benefits, such as door-to-door service, which will help more users take advantage of taxi options. AAR service has come a long way in the last few years and I hope the MTA remains committed to ensuring an upward trend.”

“More trips done by taxi seems like a no-brainer, it's cheaper and customers like the service better,” said Jose Hernandez, President of United Spinal-NYC Chapter. “It's understandable that it may take a few years to do a wholesale shift to taxi, but this is a step toward that and we support it. I commend the agency for trying new approaches after hearing from customers that the service needed serious improvements for many years.”

This new program introduces an improved taxi-based option that will be a cornerstone of AAR paratransit service in the future. Currently, many AAR customers ride in dedicated AAR-branded vans and sedans, but taxis and FHV's are becoming increasingly available options. All trip types cost the same for the customer: \$2.75.

Benefits of the new enhanced broker service over the “advanced reservation e-hail” pilot that it is replacing include:

- The option to book trips on the myAAR app

- The capacity to provide trips for customers who use wheelchairs
- The inclusion of Staten Island in broker service, provided by Islander Transportation and replacing the voucher system
- The ability to use taxis for door-to-door assisted service by specially trained operators, as opposed to curb-to-curb pickups and drop-offs of traditional taxis
- Ensuring that taxi drivers that perform AAR trips go through specialized training, including wheelchair accessible vehicle training and FTA-regulated drug and alcohol testing
- The ability to track the location of vehicles – whether taxi, FHV or dedicated AAR vehicles – on the myAAR app
- The ability for customers to pay with TransitCheks
- Better tracking and reporting of the on-time performance of taxi and FHV trips
- Streamlining the complaints process for AAR trips in taxis