



All the news on Access-A-Ride

Welcoming the Holiday Seasons

With many new customers and as a reminder to our seasoned travelers, we would like this issue to focus on some repeat questions we receive here at Paratransit in hopes of helping you navigate the service, connect with your driver, and have a positive customer experience.

Planning Your AAR Trips

What is the difference between a pickup and appointment time?

Many of us often say to friends when planning a trip, pick me up or let's leave (depart) at a certain time. That is a natural thing to say, and one might think the same when using AAR. However, because this is a shared ride service and the traffic is unprecedented, we recommend scheduling trips as an appointment/arrival time.

“Depart” or **“Pickup”** time is the requested time a customer would like to be picked up to travel to their destination.

“Arrive By” or **“Appointment”** time is the requested time a customer would like AAR to arrive at their destination. Customers may want to request a time earlier than the actual destination appointment to allow for security check points, elevators and other unforeseen delays.

For example, if one must be at work by 9 AM, they should make their appointment time for - 8:35 AM. The reservation pick-up time

will be determined based on trip distance and may be an hour or more before the appointment time. This will allow for other trip accommodations to be made if your vehicle doesn't arrive within the 30-minute service window. For this trip, a 7:28 AM pick-up would be scheduled.

When is the best time to call AAR to make a reservation?

While we encourage all to use MY AAR to book and track your trips, our reservation agents are available 7 days a week, from 7 AM – 5 PM, however our busiest time is from 3 PM – 5 PM. If you call and you are in the queue, please hold on and your call will be answered in the order it is received.

But with MY AAR, you can make your reservation up to 5 PM the day before your trip. For example, at 7 PM on Friday, you get a call from a friend to go to a concert on Sunday, you don't have to wait till Saturday to call AAR to make a reservation, rather, you can log on to MY AAR from your computer, table or smartphone and make your reservation on Friday night!

What does shared-ride mean and why does the driver have to pick-up other people?

Paratransit service is by nature a shared-ride service. The standard of service is not intended to reflect that of a taxi service, which typically transports passengers directly to their destination. A paratransit trip should be comparable in length to an identical trip on the fixed route system (NYCT buses), including the time necessary to travel to the bus stop, wait for the bus, actual riding time, transfers, and travel from the final stop to the person's ultimate destination. Shared rides have always been an integral component of AAR service, as per the Americans with Disabilities Act (49 C.F.R. Section 37.121(a)) and is necessary in order to balance the trip demand (over 32,000 trips daily) with vehicle capacity.

We would like to suggest, if you are traveling within a borough, please consider requesting taxi authorization during your reservation process. This allows you to contact a taxi or car service, pay out of pocket, and submit the receipt to AAR for a reimbursement (minus the AAR fare) in less than three weeks if submitted online (see pg 6 for more info).

Why do seniors have to pay full fare on AAR?

Department of Transportation (DOT) ADA regulations at 49 C.F.R. Section 37.121 require paratransit fares to be comparable to the fare for a trip between the same points on the regular fixed route (buses / subways) transit system. “Comparable” is defined in DOT ADA regulations at 49 C.F.R. Section 37.131(c) as not more than twice the fare that would be charged to an individual paying full fare for a trip of similar length, at a similar time of day, on the entity’s fixed route system, exclusive of discounts.

Please be mindful to pay your fare upon boarding. The fare is \$2.90 (unless you have been approved for [Fair Fares](#)) in cash/ exact change. Drivers are not required to provide change. Failure to pay your fare may result in refusal of service or suspension.

On the Day of Your Trip

Do I have to wait outside for my ride?

While there might be a bench to sit upon at your pickup location, you should wait for your ride in a safe area inside with a clear view of the pickup location. Please be prepared and ready to travel at the scheduled pickup time /location. An automated call will inform you of the vehicle’s estimated time of arrival (ETA). You can also track your vehicle’s location and ETA with MY AAR. If you need to take an elevator or walk a distance to your pickup location, please allow for extra time.

We ask our customer to please be prepared to wait up to 30 minutes after the scheduled pickup time. The 30-minute wait period begins at the scheduled pickup time and ends 30 minutes later. After the 30-minute waiting period, customers may call AAR “same day” at 877-337-2017 / prompt #5, 24/7 for assistance. But tracking your vehicle with MY AAR is easy and accurate and is the same GPS tracking our staff is utilizing.

What if my vehicle doesn’t arrive within the 30-minute waiting period?

Please call AAR “same day.” Staff is available 24/7 to assist in providing recovery vehicle or a taxi authorization if your scheduled vehicle is unable to perform your trip in a timely manner. They are also available to address any concerns that may arise during your trip.

After Your Trip

What if I have a complaint about my AAR service or would like to commend someone who went above and beyond to assist?

Please use one of the following methods to share your comments, commendations, or complaints with us:

- Call 877-337-2017/Prompt # 8/Monday – Friday from 9 AM – 5 PM to speak with a representative. Their responsibility is to enter your details into our Customer Relations Management System (CRM) called ‘cassie.’
- E-mail: new.mta.info/customer-feedback and select “Paratransit(AAR)” in the “MTA Service” field. This also enters the information into ‘cassie.’
- Write: MTA New York City Transit, Paratransit Division, Customer Relations, 130 Livingston St., Brooklyn, NY 11201. Once received, the letter is scanned into ‘cassie.’

Once the case is established in 'cassie' it is assigned to a member of the Customer Relations Unit (CRU) to determine the best course of action to take after additional details are retrieved from internal trip records or a conversation with the customer. If warranted, additional investigation(s) are requested, and action are documented in 'cassie.' A customer may receive a letter, email, or call to acknowledge the actions taken.

Cassie has reporting and dashboard tools that allow us and supervisors throughout MTA NYCT to collect and display [customer feedback](#) in a way we never had before. Understanding the customer's experience, we are able to make sure we continue to move forward by putting out customers at the center of all our initiative and operational decisions.

Make your comment or complaint while the details are still fresh in your mind. We look forward to receiving customers' positive comments and helpful suggestions. If you have a complaint, we will try to resolve it. When making a complaint, please tell us your name, address, telephone number, and AAR MetroCard/ID number. Also, provide specific details of your complaint and when and where it happened. If you are complaining about a trip, the information on your trip ticket helps us investigate. Thank you!

FREE FARE BUS ROUTES

On September 24th, the MTA began a new pilot program designating five MTA bus routes — Bx18A/B, B60, M116, Q4, and S46/96 — as free fare. This pilot program will run for at least six months.

During the program period, AAR service will also be free fare for riders who begin and end a trip within 3/4 of a mile of the Bx18A/B, B60, M116, Q4, and S46/96 routes.

Please note, reservation agent will not be able to tell you whether a trip is fare-free during the reservation process. You can check on the day of service through MY AAR or by calling AAR.

Taxicab/Car Service Authorizations – Putting your trip in your hands!

When traveling within a borough, taxicab/car service reimbursement authorization may be offered to customers at the time of the reservation or in the event of a day of service issue. Customers are not required to accept a taxicab/car service reimbursement authorization; however, all taxi reimbursements must be pre-authorized. When a taxicab or car service is authorized, the customer is responsible for paying the full fare plus any tolls and obtaining a valid receipt from the driver. Only valid licensed NYC Taxi and Limousine commissioned taxi or For-Hire Vehicles (FHV) service receipts are qualified for reimbursement. Wheelchair users can call 311 and ask for Accessible Dispatch or call 646-599-9999 for a wheelchair accessible taxi (WAV) to travel in NYC for the metered rate.

Fastest Way to Submit Authorized Taxi/Car Reimbursement Requests: ONLINE!!

- Go to the AAR website: <https://new.mta.info/accessibility/paratransit>
- Scroll down to Policies and Forms to find the “Online Taxi/Car Service Reimbursement Request” link.
- Complete the form and attach a PDF (Scan) or Photo (JPEG) of the receipt and press “submit.”
- Approved reimbursements may be issued in 30 days or less!

For those who prefer to mail the request/receipt to AAR, that option is still available. Please remember, the [Taxi/Car Service Reimbursement Policy](#) still applies.

Take our MTA Customers Count Travel Survey:

Your Opinion Counts! Take the MTA Fall 2023 Customers Count Survey! You will be giving us valuable feedback to improve Access-A-Ride services. Customers who complete the survey can enter a drawing to win one of several \$50 gift cards.

Please click on the following link to take the survey:

<https://bit.ly/mtacustomerscountsurvey>.

Gridlock Alerts

The Department of Transportation (DOT) identifies Gridlock Alert Days throughout the holiday season when heavy traffic is expected in Manhattan. While we understand the need for our customers to get to their destinations, it is important to be aware of Gridlock Alert Days when scheduling your trips. Random street closures and heavy traffic volume affect every form of traffic flow throughout the 5 boroughs, even if you are not traveling in and out of

Manhattan. Visit the DOT website to see the latest list of [Gridlock Alert Days](#) and [sign up](#) for weekly alerts.

Your Conduct When Traveling on AAR

The safety of all our passengers and operators is our utmost concern. That being said, our conduct policy will be enforced if behavior exhibited while on our vehicles results in the disruption of service. As a reminder, please note,

- Customers are prohibited from bringing items on the vehicle that are very bulky (fill a seat) or exceed two bags/parcels weighing more than 40 lbs.
- AAR cannot accommodate additional shopping carts, bags or parcels your PCA or guest is carrying.
- The use of abusive language and threatening behavior is prohibited.
- Fare evasion or fraudulent use of the AAR services by anyone other than the customer is illegal.

AAR is operated in compliance with the ADA which permits the refusal of paratransit service to AAR customers who engage in violent, seriously disruptive, or illegal conduct (49 CFR §37.5). Section 1035 of the MTA rules governing paratransit service implements the enforcement of ADA-permitted suspensions/terminations. All AAR customers must adhere to the policies and rules pertaining to the AAR service and are responsible for the conduct of their PCAs and guests, including children. For more information, please see pages 41 - 42 in our [AAR Guide](#) or visit: new.mta.info/accessibility/paratransit/policies-and-forms/conduct-policy

Bus Demo at Brooklyn Museum

At our new designated AAR stop - Brooklyn Museum (traffic circle off Eastern Parkway next to the museum and accessible subway station 2/3), AAR showed one of the newest vans to join the fleet, the Ford E-450. The 20 vans are painted New York State blue and gold with one test van featuring the “Q-Straint One All-in-One Wheelchair Securement Station.”

To read more about the Q-Straint and see photos, visit:

new.mta.info/press-release/photos-mta-access-ride-debuts-van-featuring-new-wheelchair-securement-system



Caption:

The Outreach Team (Kevin Flores, Tammie Francisque and Donna Fredericksen) join GVC Driver Trainer Leonard Simkins (second from left) at the Brooklyn Museum for the demo of the Ford E-450.

Thank you to Leonard and GVC Road Supervisor Rosalino Rodriguez and all who came out for the event on Monday, October 9th.



Disability Pride Parade was held on Sunday, October 22, 2023, in Manhattan. Over 109 trips were scheduled that day and AAR provide on-site support for the parade participants to and from the parade.



Thank you to Maggies Road Supervisors (RS) Cruz, Shahriar, Torres and GVC RS Rodriguez, along with our great Paratransit team on-site, and awesome support from HQ & carrier dispatch.



Access-A-Ride (AAR) Telephone Directory

Call 877-337-2017 toll-free from area codes in the NY Metro Area and adjacent counties / call 718-393-4999 from other area codes. Customers who are deaf/hard of hearing can use their preferred relay service or the free 711 relay service.

After an important announcement, callers will be guided to

- press “1” for English (If “1” is not pressed, callers will hear choices in each of the respective languages):
- press “2” for assistance in Spanish,
- press “3” for assistance in Russian, Chinese, French Creole, Korean or Bengali, or
- press “4” for all other languages,

Callers will then be directed to press one of the following prompts:

Prompt #1 - Eligibility & Compliance Unit

Agents are available Monday – Friday from 9 am - 5 pm to assist with eligibility, appeals, certification or application questions, requests for updates to customer’s contact information, visitor/reciprocal service etc.

Prompt #2 - Travel Planning

Agents are available to make a reservation 7 days a week from 7 am - 5 pm.

Prompt #3 – Change a Trip - Agents are available 7 days a week from 7 am - 5 pm to change a trip.

Prompt #4 – Cancel a Trip - Agents are available 24/7 to cancel a trip.

Prompt #5 - Travel Services

Agents are available 24/7 to assist with same day trips. This may include getting information about your vehicle and its estimated arrival time, help with delays that may arise with your pick-ups or with your return trip such as rescheduling a later pick-up, etc.

Prompt #6 - Subscription Service

Agents are available 7 days a week from 8 am - 5 pm to help arrange, re-schedule or cancel subscription service. This service is offered to any customer who travels from the same location to the same destination at the same time of day for each trip at least one day a week.

Prompt #7 - Automated system to check status of your same day service

Prompt #8 - Customer Comment Line

Agents are available Monday – Friday from 9 am - 5 pm to submit suggestions, commendations, complaints, along with requests for publications, and outreaches. If one prefers, you may submit [online](#).

Callers may repeat the prompt menu by pressing “0.” They may also hold for assistance if they don’t have a touch-tone phone. Conversations with AAR personnel are recorded and may be monitored.

AAR Resources

[Most up to date AAR information, including AAR policies, Guide, newsletter and customers' bill of rights.](#)

[MY AAR tutorials are available that will guide you on how to book, manage and monitor your AAR trips!](#)

Follow us on social media @nyctAAR.

[On the Move is posted online quarterly.](#) To ensure that you are alerted to postings and all other AAR updates, please provide AAR with a viable email address. If you don't have an email address, please consider sharing one of a trusted family member or friend who will alert you to these communications.