



Paratransit Welcomes New Vice President

As New York continues its recovery, we all recognize that public transportation serves as the backbone of our region’s resurgence.

Access-A-Ride (AAR) Paratransit, along with Buses and Subways, make up New York City Transit’s three core transportation services.

Now, as with Buses and Subways, Paratransit report directly to the Office of the NYCT President. This means that Paratransit is now on equal footing with Subways and Buses as one of Transit’s three core services.

To lead this effort, we welcome Chris Pangilinan as the new Vice President of Paratransit. Chris is a Paratransit customer and longtime transportation professional with experience at NYCT, TransitCenter, USDOT, and most recently Uber. He is therefore uniquely qualified to lead the MTA into a new era in which Paratransit customers can count on us to provide more flexible, affordable, and reliable service, because all riders should have the ability to be spontaneous and take advantage of all that New York City has to offer. Chris sees our services through a unique lens, and our Paratransit customers will benefit from his personal and professional experiences.

“I am excited to be joining the Paratransit team at such a pivotal time. As the city opens up and more people are looking to travel, it will be more important than ever for us to deliver the kind of service our customers can count on. As a customer myself, I know how important this is, and look forward to working with our team to make Paratransit the best it can be.”

— Chris Pangilinan

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Pangilinan (lower left), Paratransit Deputy VP Donald Raimondi (behind), with Quemuel Arroyo (lower right), MTA Chief Accessibility Officer & Special Advisor to MTA Chair and CEO Janno Lieber, during a recent visit to Paratransit HQ. They are joined by Paratransit leadership as they tour operations.

As reported in past issues of **On the Move**, AAR needs to overcome significant issues. Priority one is hiring new drivers and to that end, the MTA has provided space on advertising signs and digital screens for Paratransit carriers and is reaching out to recently retired bus operators who may be seeking job opportunities. The carriers themselves are running television ads and offering hiring bonuses as high as \$2,000 for new drivers. We also declared an immediate operating need at the end of last year to fast track procurement of supplemental paratransit services.

Additionally, we want to ramp up broker services to provide

increased capacity. The MTA has amended commercial agreements by adding incentives to perform AAR trips, increasing their investment in the Paratransit program.

This aggressive approach is already yielding results. We are pleased to report that Paratransit's performance in December saw clear improvements, reversing a negative trend. For the past three months, the 30-minute pickup window for on-time performance for our primary carrier service improved and remains better than our goal at 95 percent. And as for broker service, the same metric went up by 8 percent, returning to the 90 percent performance level for the first time since August 2021. No-shows by primary carriers also reduced significantly and are now outperforming the goal.

These improvements have been noticed by our customers, who are returning to Paratransit in record numbers. On Wednesday, March 16, more riders took Access-A-Ride trips than on any day since March 13, 2020, before the pandemic first arrived in NYC.

Access-A-Ride Demand Increases

As COVID restrictions are lifted in NYC, many of our customers are returning to essential services, including work and school. As mentioned in the first article, this is reflected in our weekday trip requests, which are returning to pre-pandemic levels. It is important to remember that traffic, construction (especially pothole repair), and a remaining driver shortage may extend your travel time. You may request an appointment time when booking your trips online, on the MYmta app, or when speaking to a reservationist.

On the day of your trip, please be prepared to wait up to 30 minutes after your scheduled pickup time. The 30-minute waiting period begins at your scheduled pickup time and ends 30 minutes later. AAR vehicles arriving during this time are considered on time. You may call Travel Services to check on your vehicle's location or ETA or use the MYmta app to track your vehicle.

For more information about how to manage and monitor your AAR trips online or via your smartphone, see AAR Resources on the last page of this issue.

Your AAR ID is required to confirm your AAR service.

Have it at the ready to show your AAR ID driver at the start of your AAR trip. Be mindful of your AAR ID, because if it is used fraudulently by someone else, your AAR service may be suspended.

For those AAR riders with temporary eligibility, please use your eligibility confirmation letter as ID.

Other government issued photo IDs, like a driver's license, may also be used. If your ID is lost, please report it immediately to AAR.

The Paratransit Advisory Committee (PAC) Welcomes New Chair

At the January virtual PAC meeting, we welcomed the new Chair Ms. RueZalia Watkins. The Bronx resident is the Education Services Specialist of Vibrant Emotional Health, the New York City Chapter of the Mental Health Association of New York State. Ms. Watkins is a representative of the Independent Care System community and its Civic League for Disability Rights. She also serves on the Board of Directors of Families on the Move, the NYC chapter of the National Federation of Families for Children’s Mental Health. Her work and life require traveling all around New York State and our country in her motorized wheelchair. To read more about Ms. Watkins and the PAC, including guidelines and minutes from past meetings, please visit: <https://new.mta.info/accessibility/paratransit/newsletter-and-announcements/access-a-ride-advisory-committee>

If you are an AAR customer or an active member of a disability organization, and are interested in an opportunity to work with fellow advocates and paratransit administration to help shape the future of AAR, you may apply to serve on the PAC. To submit your name for consideration, mail a letter of intent and your resume to the attention of Chairperson Watkins at MTA New York City Transit, Paratransit Advisory Committee, 130 Livingston Street, Brooklyn, NY 11201

The fastest way to submit authorized taxicab/car service reimbursement requests is ONLINE! For more information, visit: <https://new.mta.info/accessibility/paratransit/policies-and-forms/taxicab-car-service-reimbursement-policy>

Queens Assessment Center Opens

On March 1, 2022, the new Queens assessment center opened, joining three (3) other ADA compliant assessment centers that are supporting the eligibility process for customers recertifying and applying for AAR.



Whether applying or recertifying for AAR, please call AAR to start the process (see AAR phone directory on

page 6). Persons who are deaf or hard of hearing can call through the relay. Telephonic interpretation service is also provided in many languages.

Except for those with temporary eligibility, recertifying customers receive a notice in the mail about the recertification process. If you do not receive the notice, please call eligibility staff six weeks before the expiration date on your AAR identification to begin the recertification process.

Those who agree to visit an assessment center will be told that they will receive an application and a letter providing the date, time, and location of their appointment, including instructions for scheduling a round-trip visit to the assessment center. The documents should arrive in about five days.

Call us if you do not receive these documents.

There is no fare charged for the trip to and from the assessment center.

Changes in your contact information or mobility equipment must be updated in your permanent records maintained by the Eligibility Unit. While you may have told a reservationist, this will not ensure an update in your permanent records. This can only be done with the agents in Eligibility. Some changes may require a visit to an assessment center. See the phone directory for more information.

Access-A-Ride (AAR) Telephone Directory

Call 877-337-2017 toll-free from area codes in the NY Metro Area and adjacent counties. Reminder that we have a 718 number and from other area codes, call 718-393-4999. 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,*
- *press “4” for all other languages,*

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

Prompt #1 – [Eligibility 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 – [Trip Planning](#)

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

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

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

Prompt #5 – **Travel Services**

Agents are available 24/7 for assistance with same day trip. 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 Monday – Friday from 9 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, 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.

The most updated AAR information, including AAR policies, newsletter and customers’ bill of rights are available Online at new.mta.info/accessibility/paratransit or via the [MYmta app](#).

AAR Resources

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Manage and monitor your AAR trips online or via your smartphone: <https://new.mta.info/accessibility/paratransit/making-a-reservation-and-managing-trips/faqs>

Follow us on social media @nyctAAR.

On the Move is posted online quarterly at: <https://new.mta.info/accessibility/paratransit/newsletter-and-announcements>. 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.