

# Paratransit Service

Helping people with  
disabilities get more  
out of life.





**GREATER CLEVELAND REGIONAL  
TRANSIT AUTHORITY**

RTA has dedicated  
185 Paratransit staff,  
77 public vehicles and  
33 contractor vehicles  
to provide more than  
1,700 trips each weekday,  
and more than 540,000  
trips annually.

The numbers rise  
each year.

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## **Paratransit service, an introduction**

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The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was signed into federal law in 1990. The ADA protects the rights of all people without regard to their physical and/or cognitive disabilities. The ADA states that all individuals have a right to use available public transportation. The ADA requires that individuals not able to independently ride public buses be provided with an equivalent, corresponding service for their transportation needs within the established service area.

This corresponding service is called Paratransit service. Paratransit service is provided to persons who, because of their disabilities, are unable to independently travel on the public transit system.

Tens of thousands of people choose RTA as a convenient, economical way to get around the Greater Cleveland area. RTA is proud to count so many people

with disabilities among its riders. All over town, you will find RTA buses with the universal “wheelchair symbol” on the front, complete with wheelchair lifts or ramps to help people to board buses safely and easily.



RTA is proud to be one of the first transit authorities in the nation to operate a bus fleet that is totally accessible.

RTA also offers ADA-accessible Rapid Transit stations, to help passengers safely ride RTA trains.

However, some riders may need more assistance than the standard RTA service offers. These riders may be eligible for ADA certification to travel on specially equipped Paratransit vehicles.

## **SECTION 1**

# **PARATRANSIT CERTIFICATION PROCESS**

## Are you eligible for ADA certification?

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To determine if you qualify for Paratransit service, simply answer these questions:

- Are you unable, as a result of a physical or mental impairment, to travel on the public transit system without the assistance of another?
- Do you need a wheelchair lift or similar device to board the vehicle, but one is not available at the Rapid Transit station where you wish to board?
- Do you have an impairment-related condition that prevents you from traveling to or from a station or stop on the public transit system?

If you responded “yes” to any of these questions, you may be eligible for RTA’s Paratransit service, as outlined by the Americans with Disabilities Act.

## Service eligibility

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As a Paratransit-certified customer, you will be provided “door-to-door” travel from your home to a destination within a five-mile radius.

Service beyond this five-mile radius may be available, if there is a standard RTA route during the desired time and date with stops within  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile from your places of pickup and drop-off.

## **Obtaining an application**

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- Go to RTA's Web site, [www.rideRTA.com](http://www.rideRTA.com), and click on Riding Options > Paratransit
- Call 216-566-5124, 8 a.m.-4:30 p.m. Monday-Friday. If you are hearing-impaired, call 216-781-4757 (TDD). An application will be mailed to you.
- Feel free to call these numbers if you need assistance completing the application.
- Go to RTA's Main Office, 1240 West Sixth Street, in the Warehouse District. Two downtown trolley routes provide free service to this location.
- Applications are also available in accessible formats upon request.

## **Completing the application**

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- Please complete pages 1-6. A social worker or medical professional must fill out page 7. Have page 8 notarized. If a notary is not available, RTA can help you notarize your application later.
- Mail the application to:  
RTA-ADA Eligibility  
1240 West Sixth Street  
Cleveland, Ohio 44113-1331
- Please be sure to fill out all parts of the application. If the application is not completely filled out, it will be returned to you.
- After your application is received, an RTA employee may call you to clarify certain parts of your application. Your cooperation is greatly appreciated.

# Functional testing

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When your application is complete, an RTA employee will review it to determine the next step.

- If it is clear that you qualify for Paratransit service under federal ADA guidelines, the RTA employee will approve the application and notify you in writing. The letter will include instructions on how to pick up your Paratransit ID card.
- If it is NOT clear that you qualify for Paratransit service, the RTA employee will call you to schedule a functional test to determine your eligibility for Paratransit service.

It is estimated that about 40 percent of all Paratransit applicants will be required to take a functional test. If you need to schedule Paratransit service to reach the functional testing location, tell the RTA employee when you are called.

A trained professional conducts each functional test. It starts with a 10-15 minute interview. The entire test should be completed within one hour. The purpose of the test is to determine if you have the physical and cognitive ability to ride fixed-route RTA service.

If you miss your functional test appointment, the application process will not continue. You will have to re-apply.

After the functional test is complete, the testing agency will make one of three possible recommendations to RTA.

- You qualify for the Fixed-Route Disability Fare Program
- You qualify for Travel Training
- You will be certified for Paratransit service

Based on the testing agency's recommendation, RTA will make a determination. You will be notified of your ADA eligibility status within 21 working days from the date that RTA received your completed application.

If RTA fails to notify you within 21 days, you will be eligible to ride Paratransit until a decision is made.

## **Appealing the Decision**

If you disagree with RTA's decision, you have 60 days to write a letter notifying RTA that you plan to appeal.

See the **Paratransit Appeals Process** section for more details.

## **SECTION 2**

# **TRAVEL TRAINING**

## **Travel Training Program**

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Travel training, or travel instruction, is one-to-one individualized instruction designed to teach seniors and people with disabilities to travel safely and independently on fixed-route public transit.

This includes buses operating on regular routes and trains.

You will learn travel skills for following a specific route, typically to school, medical appointments, or job sites.

Travel Trainers work with you to determine how your disability affects your ability to travel and develop methods to teach travel skills tailored to your needs.

## **Benefits of Travel Training**

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Benefits of successfully completing the travel training program include:

- More choices and flexibility for travel
- Greater self-esteem and independence
- Better access to employment, job training, education and recreation

## **Who is eligible?**

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Travel Trainers believe that everyone who is capable should have the opportunity to learn to travel independently using public transportation to meet their travel needs. All persons with disabilities should be allowed the dignity afforded by independent travel.

## What does Travel Training include?

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Each training program is individually tailored to your needs and will help you:

- Plan your trip
- Ride specific routes
- Read and understand route maps and schedules
- Get to and from your bus stop or rapid station
- Recognize bus numbers, bus stops, rapid stations and landmarks
- Pay fares and purchase tickets/ passes
- Get on and off the bus /train safely
- Use the lift or ramp to board with a mobility device
- Position your mobility device in the bus /train

- Use the phone and/or internet to plan your trip
- Cross the street safely
- Be aware of strangers
- Learn and use safety/ emergency skills
- Travel independently and confidently while riding RTA!

## The Travel Training process

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You will work with a Travel Trainer who will help you find solutions that best fit your situation, abilities and needs. Training involves a series of steps, initially with one-on-one instruction to the gradual fading of trainer assistance leading to independent travel. You and your Travel Trainer can focus on destination training, which teaches you to travel to a specific destination and back or general training, which provides you with greater overall riding instruction.

## Why do I need an assessment?

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The Travel Trainer must have a thorough understanding of your ability to travel safely and independently. They carefully assess your functional ability and skills in a number of areas:

- Level of awareness and ability to avoid danger
- Familiarity with your surroundings and personal space
- Street crossing skills
- Time awareness and management
- Money-handling skills
- Use of personal identification

This assessment usually has two parts. The initial assessment is done inside your home, and the second portion takes place outside in your immediate environment. In that setting, the Travel Trainer evaluates your

pedestrian skills, including awareness of traffic and street crossing skills.

## Get started today!

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Begin by calling the Customer Service Department at 216-566-5037.

You will be referred to the Travel Training Department to arrange a training assessment and establish travel goals.

Training sessions provide first-hand experience riding buses in the community.

Each person's needs and abilities are different, so training techniques and time devoted will vary with each unique individual.

Group training is also available.

**SECTION 3**

**USING  
PARATRANSIT  
SERVICE**

## Getting started

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After you receive your letter describing the approved service, bring the letter and a photo ID card to Customer Service on the first floor of RTA's Main Office Building, 1240 West Sixth Street, to receive your ADA identification card.

You can begin using RTA's call-ahead system to request Paratransit service 48 hours after receiving your ID card.

## Affordable fares

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With your valid ID card, Paratransit "door-to-door" service costs \$2.25 each way. Fixed-route bus and rail service are free for ADA-eligible persons. Personal Care Attendants, as defined by the ADA, travel free on all services.

## Arranging your travel

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Once you are certified for Paratransit service and have your ID card, just call 216-621-9500.

- Select either English or Spanish.
- Press "3" for Paratransit trips and services.
- Select "2" for the scheduling office.
- Hearing-impaired persons can call 216-781-6148 (TDD) to schedule service.

RTA schedulers handle trip requests seven days a week, 8:30 a.m.- 4 p.m.

If you have a computer, you may want to consider using RTA's flexible on-line scheduling service 24 hours a day, seven days a week. This frees up staff to help those who must use the telephone to schedule trips.

- Go to [www.rideRTA.com](http://www.rideRTA.com), and click on Riding Options > Paratransit

There, you can schedule new trips, review trips you have already scheduled, and cancel trips.

The first time you visit this page, you will be asked for your user name and password. Just type your Paratransit pass number into both areas. After you log in, you can reset both your user name and password.

Another option for scheduling trips 24/7 is to use RTA's interactive voice response, or IVR. To use the IVR:

- Call the RTA Answerline, 216-621-9500. Select either English or Spanish.
- Press "3" for Paratransit trips and services.
- Follow the prompts to schedule a new trip, review trips you have already made, or cancel a trip.

You will need the same user ID and password that you have for on-line scheduling.

## **Calling to schedule a trip? Please remember:**

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- Schedulers are busiest at 8:30 a.m., when the call center opens. If you call later in the day, you will find a shorter wait time.
- Have your identification number on your ADA card ready.
- Know the address of both your pickup and drop-off points. Tell the scheduler what entrance you want to be picked up at. When appropriate, name buildings or landmarks.
- Have the month, date and times of pickup and drop-off ready. Reservations can be made up to seven days in advance.
- Trips may be requested by either pickup time or by drop-off time.

- When reserving a return trip from a medical appointment, remember that medical appointments are rarely completed on time. Please allow additional time for your requested return pickup time. Paratransit requires a minimum stay of one hour after a drop-off at any destination.
- You can request up to three round trips per call, or one trip with three stops.
- Let the scheduler know if someone will be traveling with you. Guests are required to pay a fare, with the exception of a Personal Care Attendant.
- The scheduler will arrange your trip while you are on the phone, and will give you a window of time for your pickup.

## **Tips for smooth travel**

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- Paratransit trips are usually scheduled with 20 minutes leeway on either side of your requested time, so please be ready at the beginning of your window. For example, if you requested a 1:30 p.m. pickup, the driver may come as early as 1:10 p.m., or as late as 1:50 p.m. However, in order to accommodate all scheduled riders, the time of your window may vary. Your scheduler will give you the correct window of time for your pickup when you make your appointment.
- If you need to arrive by a definite time, please request your trip be scheduled by drop-off time.
- When your vehicle arrives, show your ADA ID card and pay your fare.
- Eating, drinking and smoking are prohibited in all RTA vehicles and facilities.

- If your vehicle arrives within your pickup window and you are unavailable for more than five minutes, the driver must continue on. If your pickup point is your home, the vehicle will not return for you.
- Unexpected delays may arise from traffic conditions, inclement weather and stops required for other passengers.
- To minimize delays, riders are limited to four carry-on packages weighing no more than 50 total pounds. Grocery carts are not permitted.
- Be aware of the opening and closing times of your destination to avoid waiting outside. If your destination is closed at the time you arrive, the Paratransit driver cannot wait with you until it opens.
- Wait where you can see the bus arrive, or where the driver can see you. Drivers cannot enter your home.

- RTA will make every attempt to accommodate standard wheelchairs, scooters and similar devices. If your device exceeds standard regulations, RTA may not be able to provide Paratransit service.
- Paratransit drivers will secure all mobility devices.
- Paratransit vehicles are equipped with seat belts for passengers. All riders are asked to use the seat belts.

## Using fixed-route service

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If you are ADA-certified, you can ride free on any of the more than 80 bus and rail fixed routes that RTA offers.

All buses are equipped with wheelchair lifts or ramps, and most key rail stations are ADA-compliant.

## Paratransit service limits

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RTA's goal is to accommodate all Paratransit riders. However, drivers are not allowed to:

- Lift you in and out of wheelchairs or scooters. You must provide your own Personal Care Attendant (PCA) or escort for assistance. A PCA can ride free. If you use a wheelchair, you must have a safe ramp or be at ground level to board RTA vehicles.
- Assist you on unsafe mobility ramps.
- Clear snow, ice or other objects from your steps, driveway or walkway.
- Lock or unlock house doors.
- Load or unload personal items.

## How to cancel a trip

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As soon as you realize that a trip needs to be canceled, please go on-line or call RTA. There are 13,000 disabled persons registered to use Paratransit service. Please be considerate of your fellow Paratransit customers.

Whenever possible, please call to cancel 24 hours before your scheduled trip, so RTA can schedule other passengers.

If a 24-hour notice is not possible, RTA requires that you give at least 60 minutes notice for cancellations.

**SECTION 4**

**PARATRANSIT  
RULES AND  
POLICIES**

## **Paratransit customer policies**

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RTA's Paratransit service is committed to providing safe, secure and reliable service to our customers. To ensure this level of service, the cooperation and support of our customers is critical. It is for this reason that RTA has adopted these policies.

## **Customer behavior policy**

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Ensuring the safety of our customers and employees remains our top priority. Any action taken that jeopardizes the safety of our riders and staff will not be tolerated.

Threats, acts of violence, general harassment or sexual harassment are strictly prohibited. These include any physical or verbal action that endangers, harms or injures another rider or RTA employee.

Any act of violence or abusive behavior will result in the immediate suspension of service.

## **No-show policy**

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When a Paratransit customer does not “show up” for his/her scheduled trip or cancels a trip with little advance notice, other Paratransit customers’ service may be adversely affected.

Customers are expected to be ready for Paratransit trips at the beginning of the 40 minute pickup window. This is usually 20 minutes before and after scheduled pickup time.

Due to the uncertainty of scheduling, customers must remain available for pickup for the entire 40-minute period.

A customer who is either not available, not ready, or refuses to take a scheduled trip within the 40-minute “pickup window” will be considered a “No-Show” for that trip.

It is important to remember that the Paratransit vehicle is required to wait only 5 minutes for a customer when arriving within the 40-minute pickup window. That’s why it is critical for the customer

to be ready for the trip once the vehicle arrives.

In the event your Paratransit vehicle fails to arrive within the 40-minute pickup window, you should contact the Paratransit dispatcher and you will not be assessed a No-Show.

## **Late cancelation policy**

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RTA recognizes there may be occasions when a scheduled Paratransit trip needs to be canceled. However, it’s important that you notify Paratransit at least 60 minutes prior to your scheduled pickup. This may allow RTA to reroute the assigned vehicle to provide service to another Paratransit customer.

If a customer fails to call at least 60 minutes before his/her scheduled trip, he/she will be charged with a “Late Cancellation.”

## **Warning and suspension process**

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In the event of a No-Show, Late Cancellation or improper behavior, the following steps will be taken:

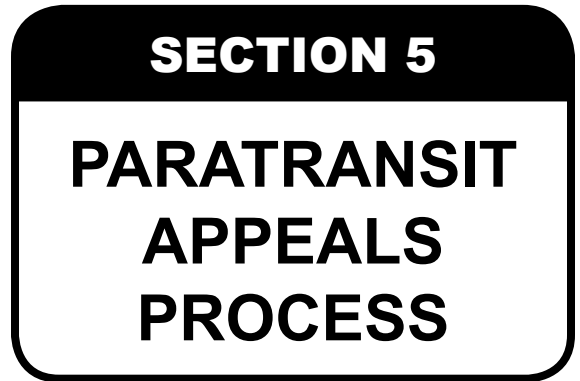
Following the first and second infractions, customers will receive written notification of their infractions and, if called for, the prescribed penalties.

After three (3) infractions, representing any combination of Late Cancellations, improper behavior and/or No-Shows that occur during a 90-day period, customers may be suspended from using Paratransit service for 30 days. Additional service infractions may result in longer service suspensions.

## **Appealing suspensions**

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A customer receiving notification of a suspension may appeal the decision within ten (10) calendar days of receiving the notification. See the Paratransit Appeals Process section for more details.



## Right to appeal

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The ADA requires that transportation providers establish a process for persons to appeal decisions if they are denied access to Paratransit service. RTA has established an appeals procedure for persons whose applications for Paratransit eligibility are denied or for persons who have received suspension notices for other reasons.

An individual may file an appeal when RTA denies Paratransit service for any of the following reasons:

- Denial of Eligibility
- Suspension resulting from excessive No-Shows or Cancellations
- Suspension for Disruptive Behavior

## The appeals process

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RTA will inform an applicant or current customer of a decision to deny eligibility status or to suspend service by letter.

Requests to appeal a denial of eligibility must be received within 60 days of the date on the eligibility denial letter. Requests to appeal a suspension must be received within 10 calendar days of the date of the notice of suspension letter.

Requests for an appeal must be sent in writing to the ADA Administrative Appeals Committee at the following address:

Manager, EEO & ADA Programs  
Attn: ADA Appeal Request  
RTA Office of Equal Opportunity,  
1240 West Sixth Street  
Cleveland, OH 44113

Once the request for an appeal is received, It will be reviewed by an Appeals Committee that convenes once a month.

The Appeals Committee consists of two RTA staff members, and a volunteer from the ADA Committee of the Citizens Advisory Board.

The Appeals Committee will issue a final written decision within 30 days of the appeal hearing. The decisions of the Appeals Committee shall be final.

RTA is not required to provide service to individuals who are pursuing an eligibility appeal. However, if the Appeals Committee has not made a decision within 30 days after the hearing, temporary service will be provided. This temporary service will continue until a decision on the appeal is reached.

Persons requesting an appeal will be notified in writing of the time, date and location of the appeal hearing. Individuals are encouraged to attend the appeal hearing although attendance is not mandatory. If Individuals

requesting appeals cannot attend, they may request a telephone interview or have another person(s) represent them at the hearing. If the individual or a designated representative is not present at the appeal hearing, the Appeals Committee decision will be based on the documentation submitted. All copies of the appellants' application and all supporting materials used in the appeals process will remain confidential.

Upon appeal for a No-Show or Cancellation suspension, Paratransit service will be provided pending the appeal; suspension of service will not begin until the appeals process is complete. If a decision is not made within 30 days of the completion of the appeal hearing, the individual appealing the suspension shall be granted service until a final decision has been reached.

## Questions about appeals

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If you have questions about your right to appeal, call the RTA Customer Service Center.

Our voice telephone number is (216) 566-5124.

Our TDD for the hearing impaired is (216) 781-4757.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

**For an ADA application, call:**

- 216-566-5124 or
- 216-781-4757 (TDD)

**To schedule Paratransit service after you have received your ADA ID card:**

- Go to <http://paratransit.gcrta.org>
- Call 216-621-9500 or
- Call 216-781-6148 (TDD)

**If your vehicle has not arrived at the end of your scheduled window of time, call the**

Paratransit dispatcher:

- 216-566-5244

**For general questions about RTA service, call the**

RTAnswerline:

- 216-621-9500

**For on-line information:**

- Go to [www.rideRTA.com](http://www.rideRTA.com)



**Greater Cleveland  
Regional Transit Authority**

**1240 West 6th Street  
Cleveland, Ohio  
44113**