Access-A-Ride Making Travel Easier For NYC Seniors

By Angella Brown

With 8.8 million riders boarding, and 21,000 trips a day, the New York City paratransit program (Access-a-Ride) of the MTA is the largest public system of its kind in the world.

Access-a-Ride fares are the same as regular, or “fixed-route” service (currently $2.75). However, Access-a-Ride offers door-to-door or curb-to-curb transportation for individuals whose disability prevents them from using fixed-route services. And, if needed, personal care attendants travel free-of-charge with paratransit customers.

Where does Access-a-Ride go?
All trips are eligible, not just medical or therapy visits. Ken Stuart, Customer Relations Officer for Paratransit at MTA, notes many customers have expressed gratitude for this aspect of the service. “Customers thank us all the time,” he says. “They constantly mention how Access-a-Ride has, in their words, given them their lives back, enabling them to get around the city.”

Seniors Usage of Access-A-Ride
69% of New York City’s Access-a-Ride current registered customer base is over age 65. For seniors traveling throughout New York City, the trains are not ideal, as seniors are forced to climb stairs to go in and out of stations. Access-a-Ride allows seniors to travel throughout New York City with less stress, which in turn allows seniors to remain active. Aaron Holiday, senior member of Berean Baptist Church from Brooklyn, states, "before Access-A-Ride I had to leave my house at least a half an hour earlier to make it to the bus stop or to go out and wait for a taxi. It was very hard for me to get around. Access-A-Ride has made my life a lot easier to get to doctor's appointments and to get to and from church. It is a definite necessity for seniors."

Access-A-Ride Technology
Steve Lopiano, Vice President of Paratransit Operations states: “Ours is a 24 hours a day, 7 days a week service, only requiring a reservation 1 to 2 days in advance. Far more customers call in these reservations than use our online method.” Lopiano adds that his department is open to all kinds of tech, and studies opportunities to provide better trip experiences with things like smartphone and tablet apps. “Scheduling trips online or through apps versus the use of the call center will give the rider greater flexibility in booking, changing and cancelling trips.” Stuart adds, “Our website and Twitter accounts are also used to connect with customers and update them with service or emergency messaging.”

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