

The ADA and Transit Accessibility

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) prohibits discrimination and ensures equal opportunity and access for persons with disabilities.

There are five sections in this law, called “titles.” Title II focuses on the right to transportation access. The ADA has not fully achieved our hopes for inclusive transportation services, but we have made great progress and will keep working to implement more inclusive transportation services.

Title II (Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Disability in State and Local Government Services) enables people with disabilities to have access to transportation services such as city busses, subways, commuter rails, Amtrak, ferries, etc. These kinds of public transit services must make their design of vehicles and services accessible to people with all different kinds of disabilities. Examples are lift-equipped busses, elevators to train platforms, and Braille signs and auditory announcements.

The Title II of the ADA also requires public transit services to provide complementary paratransit service is required where public entities provide fixed route service (bus and rail), but exempts commuter bus, commuter rail, and intercity rail (i.e., Amtrak) from the requirement for complementary paratransit service. Complementary paratransit service is intended to serve as a “safety net” service that mirrors fixed-route service for individuals who, because of their disabilities, are unable to use fixed route services.

Typically, paratransit services are door to door, and are scheduled ahead of time (usually 24 hours in advance) for a fee.

Required Services and Accessibility Features

Here is a list of required services and accessibility features of transportation facilities:

- Paths of travel, such as entrances, exits, boarding areas, level entrances to vehicles, narrowing gaps between doorways and platforms
- Ramps for boarding
- Bus stops
- Working elevators with Braille and working escalators
- Visual alarms
- Accessible ticket vending and fare collection machines
- Alternatives to turnstiles
- Emergency evacuation plans
- Accessible restrooms and water fountains
- Accessible signs and making announcements of bus stops
- Blue accessible parking spaces
- Accessible websites with schedules and information
- All devices and vehicles must be kept in working order; repairs must be done in a timely fashion
- Services animals trained to assist people with disabilities are allowed on transportation vehicles

Transit drivers are required to assist people with disabilities in specific ways, such as boarding, and securing wheelchairs, devices and buckling seat belts. They may not pressure people with disabilities to hurry up. They

are not required to help with personal items, such as groceries, luggage, or to carry on children or secure baby seats. If drivers discriminate against someone with a disability, or refuses to provide appropriate assistance, disabled passengers may file a complaint with the transit agency.

Filing a Complaint

Individuals may file a complaint regarding a problem with access to services or equipment, as required by the Federal Transit Administration at: FTA Office of Civil Rights, 1200 New Jersey Ave., E, Washington, DC 20590, or by visiting:

<https://www.transit.dot.gov/regulations-and-guidance/civil-rights-ada/file-complaint-fta>.