



ACCESS Transportation Systems
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ACCESS-AT-A-GLANCE

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- ADA complementary paratransit exceeding all ADA minimum requirements
- Among the largest coordinated systems in the country
- Public – Private Partnership
- 5,000 trips average weekday
- 1.5 million annual ridership
- 300 vehicles
- 6 service providers operating from 7 locations
(4 providers are locally owned, and 1 is a non-profit)
- 140+ agency sponsors

Outstanding Operating Performance

- On-time performance of **96.4%**
- Vehicle Productivity of 2.24 trips per hour
- Administrative Cost of 5.5% of total cost

Award Winning Coordination

A distinguishing characteristic of ACCESS is the high level of coordination. Service sponsored by over 140 agencies is combined into a transparent network of paratransit services, avoiding costly duplication and achieving economies of scale for all the sponsors. More than 11 separate and distinct state and federal funding sources are blended allowing ACCESS to effectively leverage funds and share costs between all the sponsors. ACCESS has achieved a large measure of success in coordinating paratransit services within Allegheny County, as evidenced by the variety of customers, the multiple funding streams and the size of the ridership.

ACCESS was the recipient of the United We Ride National Leadership Award. The Federal Interagency Coordinating Council presented the award, which recognizes the work ACCESS and Port Authority have done to create a highly effective coordinated service which stands as a model for the rest of the nation.

System Design and Service Delivery

ACCESS is a decentralized brokerage, a fairly unique model that draws on the skills and resources of the private sector, avoids duplication of effort but has a high degree of accountability and flexibility.

Services are provided through private companies under contract to a broker, ACCESS Transportation Systems. Service providers, which currently include five for-profit transportation companies and one non-profit human service agency operating from seven distinct locations, are responsible to ACCESS for providing service in designated service areas and for meeting service standards as set forth in provider contracts. ACCESS, in turn, compensates service providers, as documented on vehicle manifests and invoices.

Service providers are selected through a negotiation process. The system remains competitive, with service area assignments based on demonstrated performance and cost. Port Authority of Allegheny County uses a competitive process to select its broker, issuing a Request for Proposal (RFP) every five years.

Person Centered Service

In addition to the basic paratransit service offering, ACCESS provides sponsoring agencies a menu of amenities that serve to make the service more user friendly. These include assistance with car and booster seats, assistance with packages, hand to hand service for individuals who require constant supervision and service modifications.

Door-to-door transportation means that drivers provide assistance from the door of the origin to the door of the destination, including boarding the vehicles. The ACCESS system is one of only a few systems in the US that offers door to door assistance for 100% of the trips and requires drivers to provide a high level of personal assistance including up and down as many as four exterior steps and assistance with packages.

Some ACCESS passengers require a higher level of supervision and cannot be left unattended. For these individuals, ACCESS was the first system in the US to provide **hand-to-hand** service. These customers carry a special code in their file alerting drivers to ensure they are handed off to a responsible person and cannot leave the passenger unless there is someone available to receive them. An elaborate safety net is in place in the event of a problem.

Drivers are trained to report incidents which are individually investigated by ACCESS. Although they may not be strictly transportation related issues, ACCESS works with its network of community providers to resolve individual, personal issues including lack of accessibility to the house, a change in condition (onset of confusion) signs of abuse, and problems with personal hygiene or nutrition.

Service amenities tailored to the sponsor or individual

- Determining and managing individual and trip eligibility
- Assistance with fare collection
- Customized invoicing and reporting
- Reasonable modification of policies
- Hand to hand assistance

Cutting Edge Technology

- On-board cameras
- Automatic Vehicle Location (AVL) technology on each vehicle
- On-board computer tablets for driver manifests and GPS technology
- Computer assisted dispatch and scheduling with real time information
- Automated In touch call-outs advising customers that their vehicle will arrive within 10 minutes, ePurse balance updates and winter service updates. Development of the In touch call outs was funded through a grant from the National Center for Senior Transportation. 50,000 calls are made each month.
- ePurse paperless electronic account management for fare payment
- Website and Interactive Mobile Webpage Application

Vehicles

ACCESS service is provided with a combination of 4-15 passenger, lift-equipped vans and sedans owned, operated and maintained by ACCESS service providers. All ACCESS service providers are under contract to ACCESS Transportation Systems and must comply with specific requirements including insurance, maintenance, driver training, and vehicle safety and accessibility standards.

Driver Screening & Qualifications

- Over age 23 (as required by insurance)
- Clean driving record – 10-year retroactive check
- US DOT physicals for van drivers
- Act 33 (child abuse) and 34 (criminal history) clearances according to PA Adult Protective Service standards
- Pre-employment, post-accident and reasonable suspicion drug and alcohol testing
- FBI clearances for a subset of drivers (required to transport unaccompanied minors)
- Driving record checked monthly
- Criminal history checked annually

Driver Training & Monitoring

To ensure training to proficiency, ACCESS has established training standards by setting forth contractually mandated minimum requirements including topics to be covered, length of classroom and on-the road training, trainer certification and retraining requirements.

Each ACCESS service provider is required to have a certified Master Trainer on site to manage and supervise all aspects of the driver training programs, and certify training to proficiency. To ensure high quality and consistency, ACCESS has developed standardized training modules on topics including customer service, providing assistance, use of lifts and securements, ACCESS policies, disability awareness and requirements of the ADA. US DOT/TSI modules are used for fatigue and distracted driver awareness training.

Driver monitoring is conducted by both ACCESS and safety managers at each provider location. A combination of on the road, unannounced monitoring and review of on board videos is used to evaluate performance and take corrective action as needed.

Providers are required to perform an Motor Vehicle Records check on every driver monthly and provide the results to ACCESS.

Service Monitoring and Oversight

ACCESS is responsible for monitoring all aspects of performance and compliance. Multiple audits are routinely conducted by ACCESS staff including:

- Performance standards
- Provision of Training
- Maintenance
- U.S. Department of Transportation compliance
- Americans with Disabilities Act compliance
- Call center performance and telephone hold time
- Use of scheduling and dispatch tools
- Equal Employment Opportunity compliance
- Drug and alcohol program compliance

Public Participation

In cooperation with Port Authority, ACCESS works with the Committee for Accessible Transportation (CAT) to resolve issues and make recommendations for improvements to both the fixed route and paratransit programs. ACCESS staff also have leadership positions in a number of local initiatives working on enhancing transportation including the Allegheny County Area Agency on Aging, The Allegheny County Health Department, the Jefferson Collaborative, TIRES, Southwestern Pennsylvania Partnership on Aging and Age Friendly Greater Pittsburgh.