



# TRIP TIPS

**A GUIDE FOR CONNECTIONS  
CUSTOMERS**

**(412) 562-5353**  
TTY 711

**MyACCESSRide.com**

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## **WELCOME TO ACCESS!**

ACCESS is a shared-ride, public transportation program sponsored by Port Authority of Allegheny County. The ACCESS program is part of Port Authority's family of services. Port Authority's bus and light rail service is accessible to people with a variety of disabilities. All Port Authority buses are equipped with ramps and "kneelers" to lower the first step. Other accommodations such as stop announcements and easy-to-read signs make using the bus easier than ever. People with disabilities are eligible for a half-fare card with Port Authority. Make Port Authority's accessible bus and light rail service your first transportation choice whenever possible. For more information on Port Authority's accessibility, go to [portauthority.org/accessibility](http://portauthority.org/accessibility).

Connections service is provided throughout Allegheny County and to destinations 1.5 miles from the Allegheny County line in adjoining counties, seven (7) days per week between the hours of 6:00 AM and 11:00 PM.

You can use Connections to:

- Get to and from Port Authority bus stops if there is no stop within  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile from your origin or destination. This is called "Feeder Service"
- Take a direct ACCESS trip if the trip on the bus is less than 5 miles and would take you more than 90 minutes one-way
- Take a direct ACCESS trip if there is bus service within  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile, but not within an hour of the time you wish to travel.

The ACCESS program offers only shared-ride transportation, which means that passengers must share the vehicle with other riders traveling at the same time. The vehicle may make several stops along the way before dropping you off. Ride-sharing helps make the best use of available vehicles and keeps the cost down. The ACCESS program does not provide exclusive-ride service.

## **SERVICE PROVIDERS**

Transportation is provided by a number of service providers under contract to ACCESS Transportation Systems. These providers are the companies which own and operate the vehicles and actually provide the transportation.

## ACCESS PROGRAM OFFICE

The ACCESS program is managed from a central office with experienced customer service staff available to answer questions or provide assistance. This office is located in Downtown Pittsburgh in Centre City Tower at the corner of Seventh Avenue and Smithfield Street.

**Office Hours:** Monday through Friday, **8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.**

### **Mailing address:**

ACCESS Transportation Systems  
Centre City Tower  
650 Smithfield Street, Suite 440  
Pittsburgh, PA 15222

**Telephone number:** (412) 562-5353 or TTY 711

**Website:** [myaccessride.com](http://myaccessride.com)

**Accessible Formats:** Upon request, materials can be provided in: Braille; large print; audio cassette tape; and Word or .txt files by email.

**We want to hear from you!** Providing high quality service is a top priority for the ACCESS program. Customer service representatives are available to assist riders with any questions or concerns.

### **When to call the ACCESS program office:**

- You need to book a trip
- You would like to file a complaint or compliment. ACCESS service providers are not permitted to accept these.
- You cannot get through on the telephone after trying for **fifteen (15) minutes**.
- Your pre-scheduled vehicle is **more than twenty (20) minutes** late.
- You have waited over **thirty (30) minutes** for your will-call return.
- You have missed your pre-scheduled pick-up from your home and are requesting that another vehicle be sent for you.
- You would like to place your trip reservation more than one day in advance
- You need to book a trip and have not called the day before
- You have a question about your ePurse account.
- You are traveling to or from Pittsburgh International Airport. Eligible riders and their personal assistants or companions may each take two pieces of luggage and one carry-on bag. Please keep luggage to a reasonable size and weight.

## FARES

All ACCESS fares are predetermined based on trip length. When you place your trip reservation, the reservationist will tell you how much your trip will cost each way. Based on trip length, a direct trip fare will cost \$3.15, \$3.90, or \$5.25. The fare to or from a bus stop is \$2.50 each way. Fares are paid from a personal electronic account that you establish called **ePurse**. See the enclosed **ePurse User Guide** for information about setting up and using your ePurse.

## Want to Travel With Someone?

If you are taking a companion, they will be charged the same fare as you, which is also deducted from your ePurse account.

## SCHEDULING A TRIP

To schedule a trip, call the ACCESS program office. Reservations are accepted Monday through Friday. The calltaker will confirm the service provider for your trip and give you their phone number.

- All trips must be placed **one business day in advance** between the hours of **8:00 AM and 3:00 PM**
- You may call Friday for trips on Saturday, Sunday and Monday.
- Requests for same-day service may be made by calling the ACCESS program office (same-day service is provided Monday through Friday on a space available basis)
- When you call to book your trip, have the following information ready:
  - ✓ Your full name
  - ✓ PIN number for your ePurse
  - ✓ The day and date of your trip
  - ✓ Your complete address, including neighborhood (*Ex. Troy Hill*) and any special entrance information
  - ✓ Your apartment number and intercom or bell number
  - ✓ Your home or cell phone number
  - ✓ Appointment time **or** pick-up time. If you do not have an appointment time, the call taker will help you determine a pick-up time that will ensure your on-time arrival.
  - ✓ Return time. Only trips for appointments with non-predictable ending times may be scheduled with a “will-call” return.
  - ✓ Complete address of your destination, including specific entrance. The call taker may specify a specific entrance for hospitals, malls, etc.
  - ✓ Phone number at your destination, whenever possible
  - ✓ If you’ll be using any mobility aids
  - ✓ If someone will travel with you
  - ✓ Be sure the call taker tells you his or her name, repeats your itinerary back to you, and tells you the fare for your trip; please keep record of this information

## Keep In Mind...

- You may be asked to adjust your pick-up or return time to accommodate a shared-ride schedule.
- When traveling during rush hours, allow some extra time to reach your destination
- Traffic and heavy demand for service during peak periods may add to your trip time
- The vehicle may make stops for other riders along the way

## Standing Orders

Riders may request “standing order” reservations for trips taken on a regular basis. The vehicle automatically comes as scheduled unless you call to change or cancel the order. A standing order trip must meet the following criteria:

- Taken at least **three (3) times** per week at the same time
- Has the same origin and destination **all three (3) days**

A cancellation rate of 50% or more may result in the cancellation of your standing order.

**Standing orders are automatically cancelled on the following major holidays:** New Year’s Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving, and Christmas. If you need your regular standing order trip on these days, you must call the service provider.

## Will-Call Returns

If you are traveling to an appointment with a non-predictable ending time, you may choose to call for return when you are ready to leave. Call the service provider directly:

- Make the call yourself and go directly to the entrance specified to wait for the vehicle
- You must return from the same place you were dropped off unless the pick-up location is very close by (i.e. a different entrance at a hospital, a different shop in a strip mall, etc.). Please communicate the new location to the calltaker.
- If you choose to call for a return trip, you should expect to wait anywhere from **5-45 minutes**
- Will-call returns are not permitted on weekends, on a holiday, or after 5:00 PM, even for medical appointments. You **must** schedule your return trip during these times.

## On-Time—Defined

Drivers are permitted to arrive **ten (10) minutes before** or **twenty (20) minutes past** the scheduled time and still be considered on-time. Riders must be ready to go and waiting at the door **ten (10) minutes** before the scheduled pick-up time. The driver is only permitted to wait **five (5) minutes** for a late passenger.

## In-Touch Automated Call Outs

You will receive a phone call or text when the vehicle is within approximately **ten (10) minutes** of arrival at your pick-up location. You can also request a call or text within approximately **ten (10) minutes** prior to the vehicle arriving at your destination location for your return trip. In-Touch Calls are a courtesy and are not guaranteed.

## Cancellations & Reservation Changes

You may not change your destination or time once you have boarded the vehicle. Drivers are not permitted to accept information regarding cancellations or changes. If you wish to make a change, call the service provider.

If you need to cancel a trip, you can:

- 1) Call the service provider

## 2) Cancel online at [myaccessride.com](http://myaccessride.com)

- Click “My Rides” in the upper right-hand corner of the screen.
- Login by entering your Username, and, if you are a first time user, your PIN. You will be prompted to set up a password. You will use this password to login in the future.
- Click “View Scheduled Trips.”
- Select the trip you would like to view.
- Click “Cancel Trip.” You will be prompted to enter your PIN (4-digit number) to confirm the cancellation.

You can cancel your trip online, as long as you are cancelling at least **1 hour before** your scheduled pick-up time. If you need to cancel your trip **within 1 hour** of your scheduled pick-up time, you must call the service provider to avoid a no-show.

### **No-shows**

A no-show happens when the driver arrives on-time at the correct location, announces their arrival properly, but the rider has not cancelled the trip and does not go.

- Trips you do not wish to take should be **cancelled at least one hour before the scheduled pick-up** time
- Failing to cancel a trip at least **fifteen (15) minutes** before the scheduled time is considered a no-show
- If the vehicle is late and you decide to leave before it comes, your cooperation in calling to cancel the ride before leaving is appreciated
- Riders with excessive no-shows will receive a letter of explanation within thirty (30) days

If your first trip of the day is a no-show, all your other trips for the day will be automatically cancelled, unless you call the service provider. Cancellations at the door and no-shows are a serious violation of ACCESS program policy, a waste of valuable resources, and may result in suspension of ACCESS service.

### **RIDER GUIDELINES:**

#### **As a rider, you:**

- Must be ready to leave when the driver arrives, to avoid delaying other trips
- Must ride in the vehicle that comes for you. Both vans with lifts and sedans are used for ACCESS service
- Must wear a seat belt
- Must carry your ACCESS card or a form of identification with you as you may be asked to present identification before boarding the vehicle
- Can only bring up to four (4) reasonably sized packages
- Cannot smoke, eat, or drink in vehicles
- Must use headphones when listening to radios or other audio devices
- Must refrain from using cell phones on the vehicle except in emergencies
- Must refrain from abusive, seriously disruptive or illegal behaviors
- Can ride with a pet so long as the pet carrier fits on your lap

## ASSISTANCE

Your driver is a professional. Drivers in ACCESS service are thoroughly trained, have good driving records and have had criminal history background checks and drug/alcohol screenings.

Drivers **will**:

- Wear a Photo I.D. Badge, clearly displayed, with their name, employee number and company name and will identify themselves to you upon arrival
- Knock on the door, ring the bell, or have the office call to announce his/her arrival
- Assist you to and from the door if there are no more than **four (4) steps**
- Assist you in boarding the vehicle, getting to your seat, and getting off the vehicle
- Assist you with fastening your seatbelt and securing your wheelchair or mobility aid
- Assist you with carrying up to four (4) reasonably sized packages

Drivers **are not permitted** to:

- Enter your home, or look for you beyond the lobby of any building in which you are waiting
- Drop you off at any destination other than what you have scheduled
- Assist you up or down more than **four (4) steps**, or over uneven surfaces such as gravel or grassy slopes
- Accept tips

## Children

Children under the age of ten (10) must be accompanied by an adult. Children aged four (4) and under must use a car seat provided by the parent. PA State law requires that children over the age of four (4) but under age eight (8) must be secured in a seat belt and a child booster seat provided by the parent.

## USE OF MOBILITY AIDS

Mobility aids are accommodated in all ACCESS vehicles and drivers are trained to assist.

- Portable oxygen, personal respirators or other life support equipment are permitted on board.
- Service animals are permitted on board.
- The equipment must be small enough to fit into the vehicle and be secured.
- You cannot request a specific vehicle type unless you require the use of the lift or cannot go up or down steps.
- If you are not able to walk up and down the steps of the van, you can ride up and down standing on the lift. There are handrails on both sides for you to hold on to, and the driver will help you.
- If you use a wheelchair or scooter:
  - Any wheelchair or scooter up to 50" long and 32" wide can be accommodated.
  - The total combined weight of the rider and the wheelchair or scooter must not exceed 800 lbs.
  - Requests for service from people whose mobility aid exceeds this size or weight are considered on a case-by-case basis. Contact the ACCESS program office for assistance.
  - You may choose to board the lift either facing outward or facing the vehicle.

- All wheelchairs and scooters must be secured by the driver using a four-point securement system
- The driver will secure the seat belt. If you use a wheelchair, the use of the shoulder harness is strongly recommended, but not required. Ask the driver to adjust the height of if it is not comfortable.
- If you use a power wheelchair or scooter, the driver is not able to provide any assistance up or down curbs or steps
- Other than assisting you on and off the lift, the driver will not operate your power wheelchair or scooter

## **HAND-TO-HAND SERVICE**

In addition to the basic paratransit service offering, hand-to-hand service is provided for individuals who require constant supervision and cannot be left alone. These riders carry a special code in their file alerting drivers to ensure they are met by a responsible person. The driver cannot leave the rider unless there is someone available to receive them both at home and at their destination. A safety net is in place in the event of a problem. Contact the ACCESS program office for more information.

## **INCIDENT REPORTING**

Drivers are required to report incidents, which are then individually investigated by ACCESS program staff. Although they may not be strictly transportation-related issues, the ACCESS program works with its network of community agencies to resolve individual issues including: lack of accessibility to the house; a change in condition (onset of confusion or poor balance); signs of abuse; or problems with personal hygiene or nutrition.

## **SPECIAL REQUESTS**

If there is an ACCESS program rule or policy that, due to your disability, makes it difficult or prevents you from using the service, you may call or write to the ACCESS program office to discuss your situation. When at all possible, requests should be made in advance. They are considered on a case-by-case basis and implemented as long as they are reasonable and do not create a direct threat to others or a fundamental change to basic ACCESS service.

## **DRIVER TRAINING**

Drivers receive a combination of classroom and on-the-road training to proficiency, including the following areas:

- Defensive driving
- Substance abuse training
- Passenger assistance techniques
- Use of lifts and wheelchair securements
- Quality customer service
- ACCESS program policies and procedures
- Radio and emergency procedures
- Age and disability awareness
- Pre-trip vehicle inspection
- Use of on-board technology

## **VEHICLES**

Every vehicle used in ACCESS service is equipped with on-board video recording devices and GPS technology including Automated Vehicle Location (AVL) which displays, in real time, the location of every vehicle. All vehicles are inspected regularly and meet all state and federal requirements for safety. Vehicles are equipped with two-way radios, air conditioning and emergency equipment.

## **WINTER WEATHER**

### **Path of Travel Between Home and the Vehicle**

It is the responsibility of riders to make sure that the entry way of their home is free of snow and ice, and clear year-round. Local resources, like Snow Angels ((412) 255-0846), may be able to assist with snow/ice removal.

If there is an accumulation of snow or ice on the walkway, the driver may not be able to assist you to and from the door. If the driver can't get to your door, you will receive a phone call from the service provider. You can meet the driver at the curb.

### **Traffic Delays**

Snowy and icy conditions make travel slower and create more traffic. You may wish to allow a little more time to get to your destination if the weather forecast is for snow. Your patience is appreciated during times when late arrivals due to severe weather conditions are beyond the driver's control.

### **Road Conditions**

Throughout the winter, every effort will be made to provide your service. However, if your driver cannot find a safe, passable route to your home, you will receive a call to tell you that it is not possible to pick you up that day.