

***ACCESS***

# Rider Guide

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**Everything you need to know  
about the 65 Plus Program**



For information, visit  
[myaccessride.com](http://myaccessride.com)



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

# Welcome to ACCESS

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.

To place a trip reservation, call the ACCESS service provider for your neighborhood:

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# ACCESS Program Overview

## About ACCESS Service

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. ACCESS service is provided throughout Allegheny County and to destinations 1.5 miles from the Allegheny County line in adjoining counties, seven days per week between the hours of 6 a.m. and midnight. There are no restrictions on the type or number of trips you may take.

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.

65 Plus riders receive an 85% fare discount. Subsidies for this program are provided by the Pennsylvania Lottery through the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation. Lottery funding is not unlimited. Older adults can help to preserve their lottery fund by using Port Authority bus service whenever possible. People age 65 and older ride Port Authority for free.

Port Authority's bus and light rail service is accessible to older adults and people with a variety of disabilities. All Port Authority buses are equipped with ramps and "kneelers" to lower the first step. You can also ask the driver to wait until you sit down before pulling away from a stop. Other accommodations such as stop announcements and easy-to-read signs make using the bus easier than ever. For more information, go to [portauthority.org/accessibility](http://portauthority.org/accessibility).

## 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.

### ACCESS Transportation Systems

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

(412) 562-5353 or TTY 711

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

Office hours are Monday through Friday, 8 a.m.–4:30 p.m.

### Accessible Formats

Upon request, all materials can be provided in the following accessible formats: Braille; large print; audio cassette tape; and Word or Text files by e-mail.

Language Line services are available for individuals who need an English language interpreter.

Upon request, aids and services are provided to communicate with people who have communication disabilities.

## **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 would like to learn more about other program options for which you may be eligible.
- You would like to file a complaint or compliment. ACCESS service providers are not permitted to accept these.
- You cannot get through to your service provider on the telephone after trying for 15 minutes.
- Your prescheduled vehicle is more than 20 minutes late.
- You have waited over 30 minutes for your will-call return.
- You have missed your prescheduled pick-up from your home and are requesting that another vehicle be sent for you.
- You have a question about your ePurse account.
- You would like to request a reasonable modification.
- 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.

# Using ACCESS Service

## Fares

All ACCESS fares are predetermined based on trip distance. When you place your trip reservation, the reservationist will tell you how much your trip will cost each way. Based on trip distance, your fare will be \$3.15, \$3.90, or \$5.25. 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?**

You may take one companion under the age of 65 for a special fare of \$2.50 each way, which is deducted from your ePurse account. If you are traveling with another 65 Plus rider, that person's trip must be booked using their own 65 Plus account.

### **Discounts**

Groups of four or more passengers traveling from the same origin to the same destination may be eligible for a discount. More information about discounts is available from the ACCESS program office.

## Scheduling a Trip

To schedule a trip, call the service provider listed on the front page:

- All reservations must be placed one day in advance between the hours of 8 a.m. and 3 p.m.
- Reservations are accepted Saturday for Sunday, and Sunday for Monday. You may call Friday for trips on Sunday or Monday, but this is not required.
- The 65 Plus Program does not provide emergency service and cannot be used for personal or medical emergencies.

## **Scheduling Information**

When you call your provider 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 (e.g., 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 you need any special assistance, (e.g., "I am blind")
- 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.

## **On-Time Definition**

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

## **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:

- The trip is taken at least five times per week at the same time.
- The trip has the same origin and destination all five days.

A cancellation rate of 50% or more may result in the cancellation of your standing order. Standing orders are automatically canceled 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 your service provider.

## **Will-Call Returns**

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

- 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 (e.g., a different entrance at a hospital, a different shop in a strip mall, etc.). Please communicate the new location to the call taker.
- 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 p.m., even for medical appointments. You must schedule your return trip during these times.

## **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 canceled the trip and does not go.

- Trips you do not wish to take should be canceled at least one hour before the scheduled pick-up time.
- Failing to cancel a trip at least 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 30 days.

If your first trip of the day is a no-show, all your other trips for the day will be automatically canceled, unless you call your 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.

## **Cancellations and 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 your service provider.

If you need to cancel a trip, you can:

1. Call your service provider.
2. Cancel online at [myaccessride.com](https://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 canceling at least one hour before your scheduled pick-up time. If you need to cancel your trip within one hour of your scheduled pick-up time, you must call your service provider to avoid a no-show.

## **Guaranteed Ride Home**

The ACCESS program has a guaranteed ride home policy. If ACCESS service takes a rider to a destination, the rider will not be left without a ride home. The return trip will be provided as promptly as possible.

## RealTime Information



RealTime uses Automatic Vehicle Location (AVL) to give up-to-date information about your trip. You can see the vehicle's estimated time of arrival (ETA), the number of stops before yours, and the vehicle number. It is available 30 minutes before your scheduled pick-up time. You can also use it after boarding the vehicle so you know the expected arrival time at your destination. RealTime information is available in three ways:

### 1 Online by Computer or Smartphone:

- Go to [myaccessride.com](http://myaccessride.com) and click "My Rides" in the upper right-hand corner of the screen.
- Login using your username and password.
- Click "View Scheduled Trips," select the trip you'd like to view, and click "Map."
- RealTime information will be displayed below a map that shows your pick-up location and the vehicle's current location.



### 2 By Text:

- Make sure the phone number you're using is on file with the ACCESS program office.
- Text "ETA" to (412) 727-8262.
- You will receive a text with RealTime information about your trip.

### 3 By Phone:

- Make sure the phone number you're using is on file with the ACCESS program office.
- Call (412) 727-8262.
- You will hear automated RealTime information about your trip.

## In-Touch Callouts



In-Touch Callouts offer an automated call or text message to the phone number you choose when the vehicle is within approximately ten minutes of arrival.

You can personalize callouts to have them go to different phone numbers for different parts of your trip. Riders and care partners can receive calls or texts when a vehicle has arrived or departed from home and any destination. For example:

- Donna receives a text to her cell phone when the vehicle is arriving to pick her up from home, and receives a text when she is being picked up from the grocery store.
- Edward and his family receive a call to his home phone number when he is being picked up, and his mother receives a call to her cell phone when he is dropped off at his day program.
- Callouts are also sent to advise you of a low ePurse balance, weather-related cancellations, and system wide updates about the service.

### Tips for Using Callouts

- Please remember that these callouts are a courtesy and not guaranteed, as there may be issues in communication beyond our control. It's always good to be ready at least 10 minutes prior to your scheduled pick-up time.
- Set a special ringtone just for ACCESS trip calls or text messages, so you'll know when your vehicle is close.

### Setting Up Callouts

To set up callouts in a way that works for you, you can call the ACCESS program office during regular business hours at (412) 562-5353 or TTY 711.

# Safety and Service

## Rider Guidelines

As a rider:

- You must be ready to leave when the driver arrives, to avoid delaying other passengers.
- You must ride in the vehicle that comes for you. Both vans with lifts and sedans are used for ACCESS service.
- You must wear a seat belt.
- You must carry your ACCESS ID card or a form of identification with you as you may be asked to present identification before boarding the vehicle.
- You can only bring up to four reasonably sized packages.
- You cannot smoke, eat, or drink in vehicles.
- You must use headphones when listening to audio devices.
- You must refrain from talking on your cell phone on the vehicle except in emergencies.
- You must refrain from abusive, seriously disruptive, or illegal behaviors.
- You can ride with a pet so long as the pet is in a carrier that 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 ID 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 steps
- Assist you in boarding the vehicle, getting to your seat, and getting off the vehicle
- Assist you with fastening your seat belt and securing your wheelchair or mobility aid
- Assist you with carrying up to four 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 steps, or over uneven surfaces such as gravel or grassy slopes
- Accept tips

### Children

Children under the age of 10 must be accompanied by an adult. Children age 4 and under must use a car seat provided by the parent. Pennsylvania state law requires that children over the age of 4 but under age 8 must be secured in a seat belt and a child booster seat. The booster seat must be provided by the parent.



## Mobility Aids

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

- Portable oxygen, personal respirators or other life support equipment are permitted on board. The equipment must be small enough to fit into the vehicle and be secured.
- Service animals and service animals in training are welcome. Service animals must sit on the floor of the vehicle.

### Accessibility of Vehicles

ACCESS service is provided with a combination of lift-equipped vans and sedans.

- If you use a wheelchair or scooter, a lift van will always be provided for you.
- You cannot request a specific vehicle type unless you require the use of the lift or cannot go up or down steps.
- If you cannot walk up or down steps of a vehicle, 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 can't get in and out of a sedan, a van will be provided for you.

To make sure the right vehicle type is on file for you, please call the ACCESS program office.

### If you use a wheelchair or scooter:

- Any wheelchair or scooter with three or more wheels and 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 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 meet 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 request a reasonable modification. 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 are trained to proficiency using a combination of classroom and on-the-road training, including the following topics:

- Defensive driving
- Fatigue awareness
- Passenger assistance techniques
- Use of lifts and wheelchair securements
- Quality customer service
- ACCESS program policies and procedures
- Radio and emergency procedures
- Age, disability, and diversity awareness
- Pre-trip vehicle inspection
- Use of on-board technology
- Protected personal information and confidentiality training

## Vehicles

Every vehicle used in ACCESS service is equipped with on-board video recording devices and GPS technology including Automatic 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, climate control, and emergency equipment.

## Winter Weather

### 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.

### 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. The ACCESS program office is available to connect you with community resources for 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.

## Compliments and Complaints

Providing the ACCESS program office with information about your service is always helpful. Please call the program office promptly when you have had a problem so that staff can work to prevent it from happening again. Every complaint is reviewed the same day it is received. All complaints are investigated and responded to—usually within two weeks.

Hearing about a positive experience you have is always appreciated as well. Compliments about drivers, call takers, or service in general are passed along and help to highlight superior performance.

You may file a compliment or complaint by telephone, in writing or in person at the ACCESS program office. Complaints must be registered with the ACCESS program office. Neither your service provider nor your driver is permitted to accept a complaint.

### Filing a Complaint

Prompt, accurate reporting of complaints makes follow-up easier and more effective. Complaints are handled in a confidential manner. Your complaint should include as much of the following information as you can provide:

- Your name and address
- The date and day of the week of your trip (e.g., Monday, January 25)
- The service provider for your trip
- Scheduled pickup and return time, or the time you called for return
- The address of your destination
- The name of the call taker who took your call
- An exact description of the incident

# We want to hear from you!

**Your comments and suggestions help continue to improve the ACCESS system and are very valuable in planning and evaluating the transportation service.**

**Write or visit in person:**

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

**Call:**

(412) 562-5353 or TTY 711

**Office hours are Monday through Friday, 8 a.m.–4:30 p.m.**

**If you need help understanding ACCESS programs or services, please reach out.**



Centre City Tower  
650 Smithfield Street, Suite 440  
Pittsburgh, PA 15222-3907



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



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