



MTA's Paratransit Program: An Overview

Highlights

- NYCT provides paratransit services in the five boroughs of New York City. It is the largest paratransit system in the nation when measured by riders and is unique in that services are provided 24/7.
- Paratransit ridership returned much faster than fixed route ridership and is expected to exceed the pre-pandemic average (2016 to 2019) in 2023.
- The number of paratransit registrants eligible to use these services as of July 2023 was 176,797.
- From 2016 to 2019, the MTA's expenses rose 3.6 percent annually. During the same period, paratransit costs rose by 7.6 percent annually.
- In 2020, the MTA shifted away from providing most of its trips from the more costly AAR vans, which averaged \$116 per ride in April 2023, to broker services, which averaged \$40 in that month.
- While about 83 percent of paratransit registrants are non-temporary "full users" that are not able to use fixed route services, over 30,000 users could access the MTA's bus fleet and may benefit from further investment in ADA accessible subway stations in the future.
- As of March 31, 2023, about 2 percent of ADA subway station projects in the 2020-2024 capital program were complete and 35 percent of these projects had started construction, compared to 13 percent and 47 percent for all projects.

The Metropolitan Transportation Authority's (MTA) paratransit program operated by New York City Transit (NYCT) provides services called Access-A-Ride (AAR), which are federally mandated by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990. For years prior to the pandemic, MTA paratransit costs rose substantially faster than the costs of providing other services. This rise led the MTA to consider alternative ways to provide the same level of service at reduced costs. This shift, from primary carrier (blue and white vans) to broker services, has been successful in reducing costs. Despite ridership that will exceed pre-pandemic levels in 2023, total costs are expected to remain below 2019 levels because of this shift. Unfortunately, some customer satisfaction indicators for broker services have deteriorated as it has become the most utilized mode of paratransit rides.

To provide customers with increased flexibility, the MTA has also expanded its E-Hail program, which allows paratransit registrants to book on-demand rides, rather than require reserving a ride a day in advance. The MTA, however, has also increased the initial charge for this service and capped the total subsidy. While the new program does not preclude riders from using other paratransit services, the structural shifts suggest monitoring and reporting on customer satisfaction and program costs, once the pilot program reaches a year, is needed.

In addition, the MTA can provide greater detail on the use of both paratransit and fixed route (i.e., subway and bus) service by persons with disabilities. Doing so would provide context for future decisions in changing the program's operations and capital investments as the MTA embarks on developing its next capital plan.

Background

The ADA requires public transit agencies that provide fixed route service, such as buses and subways, to offer “complementary paratransit.” Complementary paratransit is defined by the U.S. Department of Transportation as “...comparable transportation service required by the ADA for individuals with disabilities who are unable to use fixed route transportation systems.”¹

In general, eligibility for paratransit services is not based solely on a particular diagnosis or disability. Two individuals with the same disability may have very different functional abilities regarding access and utilization of fixed route services. Eligibility for paratransit services is broken down into three categories²:

Category 1 – This applies to those individuals who cannot navigate the fixed route system independently. This would include those who, because of a physical, vision or mental impairment, cannot board, ride or disembark from any vehicle in the fixed route system.

Category 2 – This applies to those instances where there is a lack of accessible vehicles, stations or bus stops. This would include those in a wheelchair who need a lift on a street-based vehicle (bus or light rail) or an elevator access point on a subway.

Category 3 – This applies to those who are unable to reach a boarding point or final destination. This would include those whose disability would prevent them from traveling to and from a fixed route transit stop or station.

The ADA obligates a transit agency to accept the reservations of paratransit riders at least one day in advance of their desired trip.

Under the current Federal Transit Administration guidelines, transit agencies may charge paratransit users up to twice the regular fare that riders pay to use fixed transit routes. Regarding scheduling, the paratransit agency must establish a window of 20 to 30 minutes around the negotiated pick-up/return time with the rider. Paratransit agencies are prohibited from limiting the number of trips an eligible rider may take. Service time for paratransit operation must match the hours of the entity’s fixed route service. Personal care attendants are not to be charged.³

MTA Paratransit Services

Currently, New York City Transit provides paratransit services, known as AAR, in the five boroughs of New York City. AAR is the largest paratransit system in the nation when measured by riders. The system serves an area that includes three-quarters of a mile beyond the City’s border into Nassau and Westchester counties. With NYCT operating 24/7, the MTA is obligated to provide paratransit riders with the same level of service under ADA rules. For this reason, the AAR system is unique among national operators in that it is 24/7, which can also have the effect of making the service more costly.

The MTA does not charge a different fare for longer trips to mirror the fixed route service. Other cities’ fixed route services do not operate during late nights and charge higher fares based on the length of the trips, and their paratransit systems do as well. In addition, a large part of the MTA’s fixed route transit system is not accessible, which

¹ U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Transit Administration, Circular FTA 4710.1 Nov. 4, 2015, page 8-1.

² U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Transit Administration, Circular FTA 4710.1 Nov. 4, 2015, pages 9-1-9-5.

³ U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Transit Administration, Circular FTA 4710.1 Nov. 4, 2015, pages 8-6, 8-12, 8-16.

limits those services as an option for many riders who need an accessible trip.

Complementary paratransit service as defined by the ADA as a shared ride service, meaning it is not expected to approximate taxi service. However, 75 percent of AAR trips are not shared.

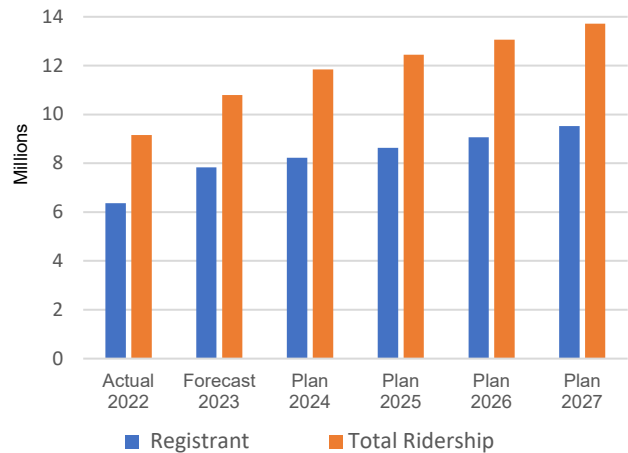
Scheduling is done through a contracted call center or web- or mobile-based application. Reservations can be made one to two days in advance, seven days a week between the hours of 7 a.m. and 5 p.m. In those instances where a reservation was made, and the scheduled vehicle does not arrive within a 30-minute window, the customer has the option to call the paratransit call center for an on-call vehicle. Should an on-call vehicle not be available, the customer can utilize either a taxicab or car service. The customer will then be reimbursed for the cost of the ride. The MTA currently charges paratransit-eligible riders the full fare regular riders pay, \$2.90, less than the allowable rate by the federal government to charge twice that price. Those who are enrolled in New York City's Fair Fares program travel at a 50 percent discount, the same as fixed route riders.

To be eligible to participate in the AAR program, an individual must complete an application, provide applicable medical documentation, and submit to an individualized assessment to determine if their disability prevents them from utilizing public transportation. Registrants are then assigned an eligibility status.

For those who qualify for full continual eligibility, meaning they cannot use regular fixed route services under any circumstances and whose condition is unlikely to improve, the required recertification every five years is unnecessary. These registrants constituted more than half of the 172,440 enrolled in December 2022. Another 57,045 registrants had full eligibility but had to recertify every five years.

Those who are allowed to use paratransit on a conditional basis, such as on days when there is

Figure 1
Actual and Forecasted Rides



Sources: MTA Financial Plan; OSC analysis

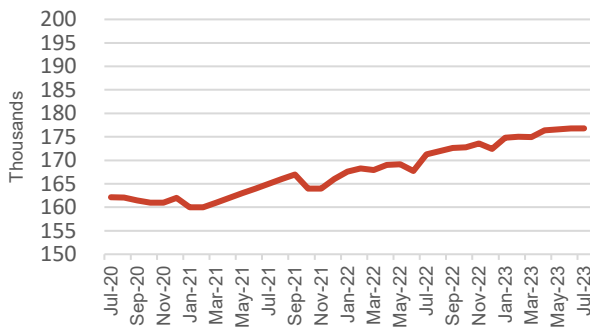
extreme heat or cold, numbered 23,288 in December 2022. Given that more than 30,000 of all registrants could use the fixed route services under certain circumstances in the future, there is potential for some increased utilization of these services as more subway stations become accessible. According to MTA data, 74 percent of registrants in December 2022 were 65 or older, as paratransit use is more common among this group. About 15 percent were wheelchair users, with the highest share of wheelchair users in Manhattan (19 percent) and the Bronx (16 percent).

The MTA currently anticipates that the number of ADA registrant trips will increase by an average of 5 percent from 7.83 million in 2023 to 9.52 million in 2027. This compares to the pre-pandemic period from 2016 to 2019, which saw a ridership average of 6.9 million trips per year. Paratransit ridership rebounded substantially faster than fixed route ridership, which has not yet fully recovered, after the onset of the pandemic. Total ridership, which includes registrants, personal care attendants and guests, is expected to rise by an average of 6.2 percent over the same period; from 10.8 million in 2023 to 13.7 million in 2027 (see Figure 1). Notably, personal

care attendants and guest ridership is expected to rise faster than registrants.

The number of paratransit registrants eligible to use these services as of July 2023 was 176,797. For the period of July 2020 through July 2023, the number of registrants grew by 9.1 percent (see Figure 2). For the period 2023 through 2027, the MTA is forecasting the number of registrants to increase by 5 percent annually — from 7.8 million to 9.5 million. The rise may be related to an aging population in the City, a trend noted by the Office of the State Comptroller in prior [reports](#).

Figure 2
Total NYC Paratransit Registrants



Sources: MTA Performance Metrics; OSC analysis

Paratransit Service Modes

Five modes of transit are provided to those who are eligible to receive paratransit services and are included under NYCT’s umbrella of “carrier services.” They are primary carrier, broker, voucher, street hails and E-Hail.

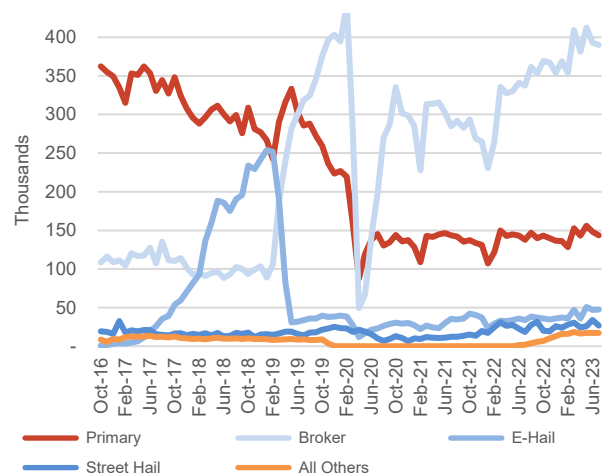
The MTA defines primary carriers as blue and white AAR vehicles that are owned by the NYCT but are operated by private contractors. Brokers provide for-hire vehicles (FHV), metered taxis and wheelchair accessible vehicles (WAVs). E-Hail is currently billed as a pilot program with 3,600 participants selected by NYCT and is described in more detail below. Those participating in the program can utilize a cell phone-based application to schedule a trip in an FHV, metered taxi or WAV. Street hails are services provided by FHVs or traditional yellow or

green taxis where the rider has been given authorization for reimbursement, either directly reserved a day or two in advance, or usually when the carrier for a pre-arranged trip fails to show. The voucher program is primarily geared for users who reside in Staten Island where services are provided by local car services or livery providers.

The MTA has reduced its reliance on the use of its primary carrier service over the past 10 years by increasing the use of broker services to reduce costs. The percentage of trips taken by primary carrier has gone from 68.3 percent in 2013 to 23.2 percent in April 2023. Conversely, the percentage of trips utilizing brokers rose from 20.8 percent to 62.6 percent over the same period. The MTA contends that given current demand, it will be difficult to reduce the percentage of trips provided by the primary carriers. Primary carriers are uniquely equipped to handle larger wheelchairs and to have the trained drivers who can manage customers with more substantial needs.

As noted in Figure 3, the number of trips taken by the primary carrier declined from 362,214 trips in October 2016 to 143,726 in July 2023. The number of trips taken by brokers increased from

Figure 3
Trips By Transportation Mode



Sources: MTA Performance Metrics; OSC analysis

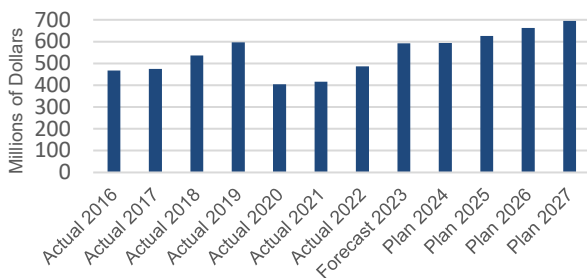
108,538 to 390,165 during the same period. All other services made up less than 15 percent of trips in June 2023.

MTA Paratransit Costs

From 2016 to 2019, the MTA’s expenses rose 3.6 percent annually. The cost of providing paratransit services, however, rose much faster during this same period, leading the MTA to reassess the mix of service types provided.

For the period 2016 to 2019, total paratransit expenses increased by \$129 million, from \$467 million to \$596 million, for a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 8.5 percent (see Figure 4.)

Figure 4
Total Paratransit Expenses By Year

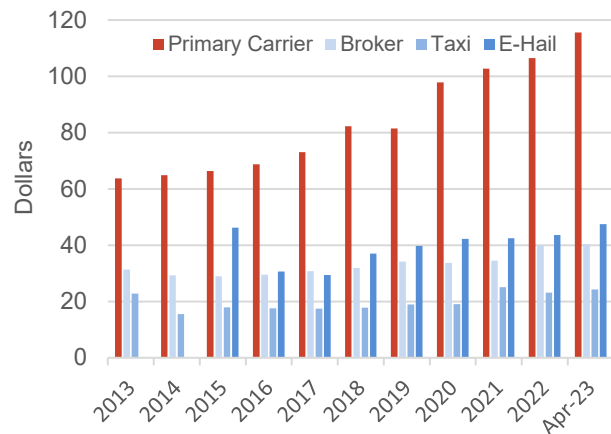


Sources: MTA Financial Plan; OSC analysis

For the years 2020 through 2022, when the pandemic had its greatest effect on mass transit travel, paratransit expenses averaged \$435.6 million. The decline in expenses can be partly attributed to the drop in ridership due to the pandemic, but also a planned shift to broker services. Broker services made up more than half of all trips for the first time in 2020.

Going forward, the MTA expects both its total costs and paratransit costs to grow at approximately 4 percent per year from 2023 through 2027. Projections for this period anticipate an increase in paratransit expenses of \$102.9 million to \$695 million. Broker services are expected to remain the most widely used service; however, the MTA is also looking to expand the use of e-hailing services.

Figure 5
Average Cost Per Trip By Mode



Sources: MTA Provided Data; OSC analysis

As noted in Figure 5, the costliest form of service is the primary carrier, which averaged \$116 per ride in April 2023, while brokerage service averaged \$40 per ride. The gap in the average cost per ride rose from \$33 dollars in 2013 to \$76 dollars in April 2023. Per MTA analysis, the average cost per trip in 2022 was \$57.27.

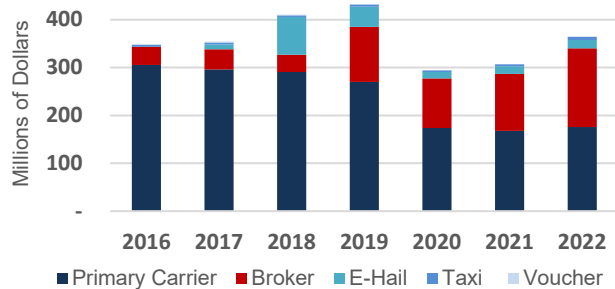
For the period of 2018 to 2022, the MTA reduced the usage of primary carrier service, from 49.8 percent of all ADA rides to 26 percent. Had the MTA allocated rides in the same manner as they did in 2018 to the distribution used in 2022, costs would have been higher by \$102.7 million. Despite making up less than half of the broker service trips in 2022, primary carrier service still ultimately cost the MTA more to deliver than brokered services in that year.

The shift in the composition of services has meant that even as the cost for primary carrier service increased steadily from \$69 per trip in 2016 to \$107 in 2022, overall spending on primary carrier services decreased from \$305 million in 2016 to \$176 million in 2022 (see Figure 6).

For costs relating only to the various transportation modes (primary carrier, broker, taxi and E-Hail), the MTA is projecting a compound annual cost growth rate of 5.4 percent for the

period 2023 through 2027, keeping pace with the projected growth rate of 5 percent of ADA trips taken during the same period.

Figure 6
Cost Per Mode By Year



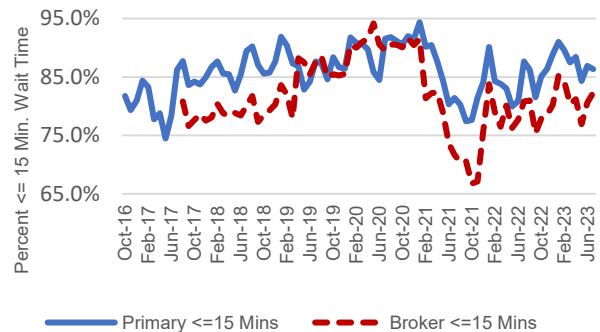
Sources: MTA Financial Plan; MTA Provided Data; OSC analysis

Service Metrics

When the MTA decides to change how a service is provided, such as by switching to brokers, it is important to ensure that a comparable level of performance is maintained. Reviewing the service level provided by paratransit, in recent years, primary carriers have generally provided better on-time performance than brokers. While broker service kept pace with primary carrier services early in the pandemic on this metric, it lost pace as a greater share of trips have been made through broker service. Brokers also experienced a lack of drivers as labor shortages plagued many businesses early in the pandemic. For the period October 2016 through July 2023, primary carriers managed to pick up their passengers in 15 minutes or less of the scheduled appointment, on average, 85.8 percent of the time. Brokers averaged 81.7 percent. This figure dropped substantially in 2021, before seeing improvement in 2022; however it remains below primary carrier services (See Figure 7.)

Several other indicators to follow regarding paratransit passenger service are the number of transportation provider no-shows and the number of passenger complaints regarding transportation service quality. For the period of July 2022

Figure 7
Passenger Pick-Up Percentage Less Than 15 Min Wait



Sources: MTA Performance Metrics; OSC analysis

through July 2023, primary carriers failed to pick up a scheduled passenger on an average of less than one occasion for every 1,000 scheduled rides, while brokers had a failure rate of 3.89. This contrasts with the period of August 2017 through June 2022, where the primary carrier failed to pick up a passenger on an average of 1.64 occasions for every 1,000 scheduled rides, while brokers failed 2.6 times. These figures highlight selected areas of improvement for the MTA to address with its broker service partners.

Complaints regarding transportation service quality (total complaints per 1,000 trips) are similar for primary carrier and broker services. In September 2023, primary carrier services experienced a complaint rate of 4.6 compared to 4 for broker services. Both exceed the MTA's target rate of 3 but have improved in 2023.

These figures suggest that broker services may be able to provide generally comparable levels of service but will require continued monitoring to ensure they will be able to continue to do so as they grow in popularity. In addition, providing this more detailed data to the MTA board and the public to assess the transition and suggest areas for continued improvement will help ensure cost management efforts are not being undertaken at the expense of improved quality. This monitoring should be extended to e-hail service as it expands as well.

Service metrics for persons with disabilities who may be using fixed route services are also critical to ensure the full array of services are being delivered as expected. Elevator and escalator accessibility at stations improved during the pandemic and has remained above 95 percent for all NYCT owned facilities since the beginning of 2023. Elevators performed better than escalators and have exceeded 97 percent availability since the beginning of 2023. Third-party subway elevators and escalators that are not maintained by the MTA, however, have seen a decline in availability when compared to pre-pandemic levels, and were available 86.7 percent of the time as recently as September 2023. The MTA should work with these third parties to improve availability of these elevators and escalators. Accessibility of ADA compliant stations has fluctuated over the past three years but has generally averaged just higher than 94 percent.

E-Hail Pilot Program

Attempting to keep pace with other municipalities in offering supplementary, on-demand paratransit service, the MTA initiated an on-demand pilot program in 2017 known as E-Hail. Initially open to 200 registrants, it was then expanded to 1,200. The participants could take an unlimited number of trips per month with no caps regarding the amount of subsidy paid per ride. The rider did have the responsibility to pay the \$2.75 mass transit fare in effect at that time. The MTA noted in June 2023 that nearly all participants in the program saw an increase in trip frequency, with 89 percent taking 40 or fewer trips per month. The average cost per trip for Phase 1 was approximately \$40.

In June, the MTA announced the establishment of Phase II of the E-Hail program, which commenced in August 2023. The program will expand to 3,600 participants. The selection process for the additional 2,400 participants will be random, ensuring that there is a representative sample of the AAR user base.

Under Phase II of the program, those selected to participate will have two options: 1) a participant can take up to 25 trips in a calendar month and be provided a subsidy of \$40 per trip, or 2) a participant can take up to 40 trips in a calendar month and be provided a subsidy of \$25 per trip. In addition, there will be a \$4 co-pay on each trip. Should the cost of the trip exceed the co-pay plus the subsidy, the participant must pay the balance. To obtain a ride in the E-Hail program, participants may choose from five different on-demand or FHV applications depending on their preference. Unlike conventional AAR service for primary carriers, scheduling is on-demand, as opposed to being required to reserve a time the day before.

The MTA plans to review all data on costs and benefits over the year to determine the feasibility of further expansion. It is to be noted that participation in this program is voluntary, and that service via traditional AAR service can still be used.

This new program is similar to Boston's paratransit service, The RIDE which is run by the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority. The RIDE provides an on-demand service known as The RIDE Flex where reservations can be made via the Uber or Lyft app as well as by phone. This was initially established in October 2016 as a pilot and supplements the conventional paratransit service. Customers approved to participate in The RIDE Flex program receive a monthly allotment of rides based on historical usage. Riders are charged a \$3 co-pay with their rides subsidized up to \$40. Any ride costing more than \$43 is paid for by the rider, effectively adding certainty to the transit systems cost structure but placing the additional cost burden above the capped amount on the paratransit rider. The current subway fare in Boston is \$2.40 and the bus fare is \$1.70.

The Regional Transportation District (RTD) in Denver also offers on-demand paratransit service in addition to its conventional service. Participants

enrolled in this program are permitted to take up to 60 trips per month, with the RTD subsidizing up to \$25. Any amount above the subsidy will be borne by the rider.

Pace Taxi Access program (Chicago) allows ADA registrants the option to use an immediate demand option as well. For a \$2 co-pay, registrants can use the Chicago taxi fleet for up to eight one-way rides per day, capped at \$30 per ride. Uber and Lyft, the two largest on-demand providers, however, are not available as part of Pace's program.

NYC TLC Paratransit Program

The MTA has been constrained in the past by the number of wheelchair accessible for-hire vehicles, which were sufficient to further lower the use of expensive private carrier services. In December 2013, the City settled a class-action lawsuit brought by Disability Rights Advocates representing various plaintiffs by agreeing to have half of the City's yellow taxi fleet wheelchair accessible by 2020. That requirement was pushed back to June 30, 2023, and that goal has not been met.

In 2014, the Taxi and Limousine Commission (TLC) passed rules creating the Taxicab Improvement Fund (TIF) for yellow cabs and the Street Hail Livery Improvement Fund for green cabs. The TLC instituted a surcharge of 30 cents per trip that is to be paid by all passengers and used as an incentive for owners to provide more WAVs. For those medallion owners who convert their vehicle to a WAV, they are provided with a \$14,000 incentive payment as well as \$4,000 in annual payments for as long as the vehicle remains in service. In addition, drivers of both green and yellow taxicabs are paid \$1.00 for each trip completed in a WAV.

According to a 2022 TLC report to the City Council, \$196.4 million in passenger surcharges were collected for calendar years 2015 through 2021, while \$162.8 million was paid out. According to the Mayor's Management Report

issued in September 2023, there are 3,448 active medallion taxis out of a fleet of 13,587 that are wheelchair accessible. In addition, there are 4,665 for-hire vehicles out of a fleet of 98,267 that are wheelchair accessible. Further enhancing the local fleet of WAVs could increase the number of vehicles available to provide broker and e-hail services to paratransit users.

In September 2012, the TLC initiated the Accessible Dispatch Program. It is operated by an outside firm, Medical Transportation Management, and provides 24/7 service. It was designed to provide residents and visitors with disabilities greater access to wheelchair accessible yellow and green taxis. Vehicles can be requested by phone or the Accessible Dispatch NYC app. The rider pays the standard metered fare. The driver, however, receives an incentive payment when completing a pick-up on a sliding scale based on trip distance ranging from \$15 to \$35 for a trip of two miles or greater, funded from the TIF.

With both the NYC TLC and the MTA having infrastructure in place to provide transportation services to the City's disabled community, better coordination may help rein in costs as well as provide superior service and flexibility.

Accessibility of Fixed Route Services

MTA buses, which have a shorter useful life than station equipment, have fully turned over since the creation of the federal ADA law in 1990, enabling purchases that have led all buses to be compliant. With all NYCT buses ADA compliant, they are a viable option for some persons with disabilities. According to an article published by Where We Live NYC, New Yorkers with a disability are more likely to take a bus (15 percent) than those without a disability (11 percent). The MTA also initiated a six-month pilot program on 10 buses to allow wheelchair users to secure themselves without a bus operator in July 2023. It should report on its findings after the pilot is complete early next year.

Paratransit riders also receive a MetroCard that provides free rides to incentivize the use of the fixed route system. Through June 2023, paratransit users took nearly 1.5 million trips on fixed route buses and another 574,000 trips on the subway, about 64 percent of the number of trips paratransit users made in the same period of 2019, and close to the overall ridership return on these services. Overall use of the bus and subway systems is at similar levels when compared to 2019 suggesting that paratransit riders have many of the same concerns about service frequency, reliability and safety that other riders have.

The MTA promised in 2022 to have 95 percent of all stations ADA accessible by the year 2055 as part of a legal settlement agreement. According to the MTA, there are 114 subway stations out of the 472 in the system that are currently ADA accessible, with another six coming into service this year. With the addition of ADA compliant stations and better communication with the public regarding elevator outages, the subway could prove to be a viable alternative for more paratransit users. As additional ADA-compliant stations come into service, it is recommended that the MTA research the impact on overall paratransit ridership in areas where a station has become accessible.

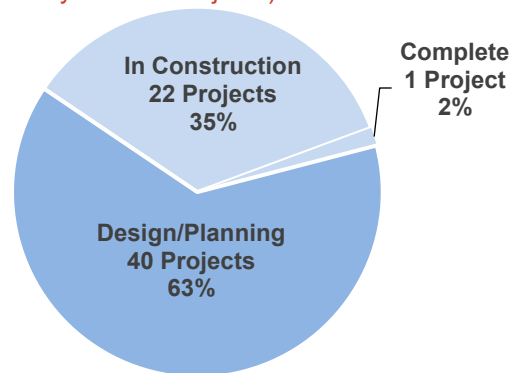
The MTA has accelerated ADA work in recent capital plans, although the system remains far from universally accessible. The 2015-2019 capital program included \$1.67 billion in planned spending for ADA accessibility projects. Another \$569 million in spending was included for escalator and elevator upgrades. In the 2020-2024 capital program, the MTA intends to spend \$5.7 billion on ADA accessibility upgrades and \$1.4 billion on escalator and elevator upgrades. The 2020-2024 capital program will bring 63 additional subway stations to full ADA compliance at an average planned cost of approximately \$81 million. The 2015-2019 capital program has 12 stations under construction with an average

planned cost of \$59.8 million, with completion due no later than March 2025.

As part of the legal settlement, the MTA has agreed to a certain level of funding for ADA subway station work based on the total needs outlined in MTA’s Twenty-Year Needs Assessments (TYNA) and subsequent capital programs. The MTA’s TYNA that was released in October 2023 did not include any cost estimates, so it is currently unclear how much funding will be dedicated to future ADA projects. Ultimately, the size of the system improvement and expansion portion of the 2025-2029 capital program will dictate the amount necessary to direct to ADA upgrades.

As of September 30, 2023, about 2 percent of ADA subway station projects in the 2020-2024 capital program were complete (see Figure 8.) About 35 percent of these projects had started construction. The rates for ADA upgrades compare to a completion rate of 16 percent and an in-construction rate of 43 percent for all projects in the 2020-2024 capital program.

FIGURE 8
Status of MTA 2020-2024 ADA Program
 (63 Subway Station Projects)



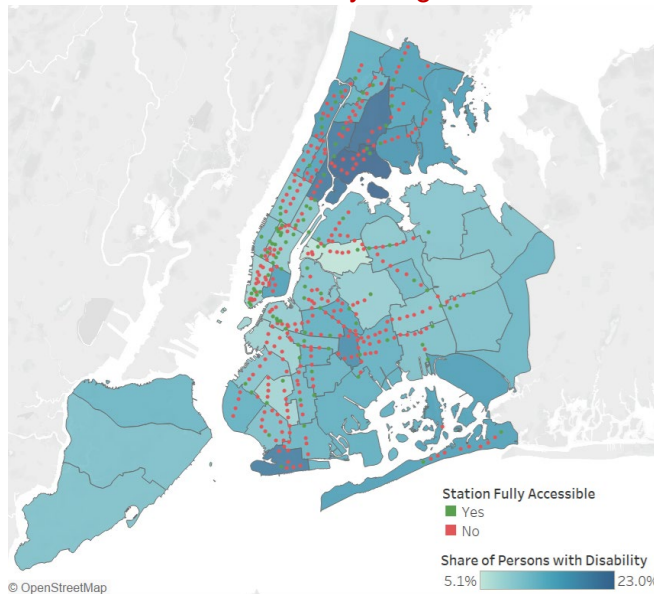
Note: As of September 30, 2023.
 Sources: Metropolitan Transportation Authority; OSC analysis

Even once this work is complete, 40 percent of all NYCT subway stations would be accessible when both the 2015-2019 and 2020-2024 capital programs are complete. The MTA has not provided public details on how accessibility upgrades are attuned to the populations who live,

work or receive services in proximity to existing fixed route infrastructure. These considerations should also be a part of any new expansion projects, such as the second phase of the Second Avenue subway, as well as when the MTA takes on enhanced station initiative projects.

The MTA can also provide greater clarity on how station choices are being made by aligning it with the population of persons with disabilities (see Figure 9.) In particular, the Bronx, Central and Southern Brooklyn and Northern Manhattan have neighborhoods that could benefit from focused investments, based on the share of total population that experiences disabilities. The MTA should also examine whether more paratransit riders are using subway stations that have become accessible since 2019 given that fixed route ridership by paratransit users is only 64 percent of the level in 2019.

FIGURE 9
Accessible NYCT Subway Stations and Share of Persons with Disabilities by Neighborhood



Similar views of neighborhoods with relatively older populations, who are generally more likely to currently use, or become users of, paratransit

services, may also help inform the sequencing of choices over ADA investments.

Conclusion

The MTA has been relatively successful in switching the majority of paratransit trips from primary carrier trips to less costly brokered services. The pilot E-Hail program and the paratransit customer application are other attempts to increase customer satisfaction.

While this shift has occurred and brought the Authority cost savings, customer satisfaction results on broker services suggests that there remains room to improve. On-time rates and no-shows for broker services initially deteriorated as they have become the majority provider of transport, although these metrics have improved in recent months. While services provided to users in the switch from primary carrier vehicles has not significantly worsened the customer experience for a sustained period, it has substantially reduced the average cost per trip for the MTA. The MTA should continue to provide details on complaints for these services and communicate ways in which broker services continue to improve as they maintain their share of services provided to persons with disabilities. In addition, it should work in close coordination with TLC to access the increased number of WAVs that may be able to deliver these services.

The use of technology, including web and mobile applications, should continue to be explored to reduce the reliance on call centers in an attempt to provide more reliable and cost effective service.

As the E-Hail pilot program is expanded, the MTA should develop and release metrics on customer satisfaction and performance just as it does with its carrier and broker services. As these metrics are compiled, adjustments to the service should be made if needed to ensure that riders are not being switched to a service that performs worse than its predecessor. This is especially critical

given MTA plans to charge higher fares and cap subsidies for the more timely service.

The MTA should continue to look into lowering the usage of private carrier vans as much as possible, including working with the TLC to use more taxis for paratransit as the taxi fleet becomes more accessible as required by the City. The MTA board should also be updated on the remaining issues that prevent the MTA from continuing to reduce reliance on costly primary carrier trips while providing quality service to the extent possible.

In addition, there is a benefit to users from enhanced scheduled service and to the MTA from reduced costs per rider to continue to encourage paratransit registrants to use fixed route services, where feasible. Further accessibility of the system should be prioritized and clarification on which stations are selected for upgrades, based on user demand and the potential for cost reduction, should be provided in formulating the MTA's next capital plan.

A rise in the population of paratransit registrants in recent years, an aging population in the City and overall population growth suggest managing paratransit costs will remain an important goal for maintaining fiscal balance at the MTA. The recent shift to broker services and accompanying cost savings also suggests that these changes can be made without leading to significant deterioration in service, but that they must be monitored and remedied where necessary. The MTA should provide additional data on the comparability of the performance of such services to ease concerns over the transition and use that model to apply to the expansion of the E-Hail program. Ultimately, enhancement and monitoring of the services provided to persons with disabilities is necessary not only to improve service for expanded employment opportunities, but for a better quality of life.

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