



June 24, 2003

Metropolitan
Transportation
Authority

One Gateway Plaza
Los Angeles, CA
90012-2952

TO: BOARD OF DIRECTORS

THROUGH: ROGER SNOBLE
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

FROM: JOHN B. CATOE, JR.
DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

SUBJECT: ACCESS SERVICES: JULY 2003 SERVICE CHANGES AND
COMPLAINTS TREND UPDATE

ISSUES

As previously discussed at the December 2002 MTA Board meeting, Access Services, Inc. (ASI) will implement its FY04 Paratransit Plan on July 1, 2003. This new plan, which includes changes in reservations and service delivery, shifts the emphasis from the current "same day" service plan to a "next day" service delivery model.

This report also provides updates on Access Services complaints for the six-month period from October 2002 through March 2003, per the May 23, 2002 Board motion.

DISCUSSION

ASI is the provider of Access Paratransit, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) paratransit service in Los Angeles County. Planning for implementation of the FY04 Paratransit Plan has been ongoing for the past six months and has included input and interaction from the disability community, the member agencies, the service providers and Access Services and MTA staff. In addition, service policy changes have been approved by the ASI Board.

Attachment A is the Rider Alert newsletter including Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) that will be sent to over 27,000 active riders who have used Access Services in the last six months. ASI has also communicated the Paratransit Plan changes through numerous community meetings, discussions with provider and Customer Service staff, meetings with social service agencies and other customer groups and will be implementing a special toll-free recording provided through INFO LINE.

As indicated in the Rider Alert, the most significant change includes reservations taken on a next day basis between 6 a.m. and 10 p.m. with a very limited number of Same Day trips available. Access Services strongly recommends that all riders schedule their trips the day before travel. Since inception nearly ten years ago, ASI has provided immediate response service in which customers could reserve a ride and travel on the same day. While the Paratransit Plan envisions that some same day service will still be available, it is expected that 85% or more of the riders will book their trips the day before. This new reservations system is consistent with ADA regulations.

The six-month trend for complaints beginning October 2002 is very positive. Since December, ASI has met its goal of no more than 3.75 complaints per 1,000 passengers. Attachment B shows the specific ratios for each month compared to the goal. As part of the Paratransit Plan implementation, complaints will be monitored on an ongoing basis.

NEXT STEPS

The FY04 Paratransit Plan includes a number of policy and financial assumptions targeted towards maintaining mobility options for persons with disabilities, but in a manner that also improves service efficiency. Staff will closely monitor the operational and fiscal impacts of the plan and report significant issues to the Board. In addition, the five-year Business Plan preparation will also begin within the next three months and we will continue to monitor the complaint resolution process.

Attachments

- A. Access Services Rider Alert and FAQs
- B. Complaints Ratio Trend

ATTACHMENT A – ACCESS SERVICES RIDER ALERT AND FAQs

IMPORTANT NOTICE

Beginning July 1, 2003, the following changes will be taking place with Access Paratransit:

- Reservations will be taken on a “Next Day” basis. Access Paratransit vehicles will continue to operate 24 hours a day. However, trip requests will only be taken between the hours of 6:00 a.m. and 10:00 p.m. People calling during these hours will be able to book up to six one-way trips for any time during the following day, regardless of whether or not the trip takes place more than 24 hours away.
- Same Day trips will be provided, but at a greatly reduced level and on a “space available” basis. If you call for a Same Day trip, **you may not get your ride.** Same Day trips may be booked by calling the standard reservations telephone numbers between 6:00 a.m. and 10:00 p.m.
- The Steady Service that some riders are using will continue, but the trips will be called “Standing Order” trips. Standing Order trips are good for riders who make repeating trips (for example, to work or school). Once a rider has a Standing Order trip, they don’t need to call the day before each trip to schedule it; the vehicle shows up automatically. These Standing Order trips will be available to more riders. Call 888-512-0200 to request a Standing Order trip.

Here is a comparison of the current Access Paratransit policies and the policy changes that will take effect on July 1st, 2003:

Currently	Effective July 1, 2003
• Reservations taken 24 hours per day	• Reservations taken only between 6:00 a.m. and 10:00 p.m.
• Service operates 24 hours per day	• Service operates 24 hours per day (no change)
• Maximum of four trips can be booked per call	• Maximum of six trips can be booked per call
• Trips can be booked a maximum of 24 hours in advance	• Trips can be booked for anytime for the following service day
• Many Same Day trips available	• Very limited number of Same Day trips available
• Dispatchers available 24 hours per day	• Dispatchers available 24 hours per day (no change)

ATTACHMENT A (continued)

FAQs ("Frequently Asked Questions")

- Q: *Does this mean that there will be no more Same Day trips?*
A: No, but there will be far fewer Same Day trips. Riders who wait and try to schedule trips on the day they wish to travel may end up without a trip! We strongly recommend that you schedule your trips the day before you travel. For return trips back home, you should schedule your trip for the latest time you think you will be ready to travel. If on the day of your trip you are ready to go early, call reservations and ask if your pickup time can be moved up. We may not always be able to move the trip up, which means you would then have to wait until the originally scheduled pickup time.
- Q: *Do I have to call exactly 24 hours before my requested pickup time?*
A: No. When you call between 6:00 a.m. and 10:00 p.m., you can request a pickup for any time the following service day. For example, after July 1st, you will be able to call at 12:00 noon today and request a 7:00 a.m. pickup tomorrow and a 5:00 p.m. return. We encourage riders to call reservations during "off-peak" periods (generally 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. and 5:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.).
- Q: *Does this mean that trips can only be taken between 6:00 a.m. and 10:00 p.m.?*
A: No. There is no change in the hours that Access Paratransit vehicles operate. Only the times that you can call for a reservation will change.
- Q: *What happens if I need to check on a trip scheduled for after 10:00 p.m. when reservations are no longer being taken?*
A: You can still call the reservations phone number. It is answered 24 hours a day, but reservations will only be taken between 6:00 a.m. and 10:00 p.m.
- Q: *What happens if I have a "last minute" appointment that comes up on the day I wish to travel?*
A: You can call to see if there are any Same Day trips available. If there aren't, then you may have to find another way to get to your appointment.
- Q: *How will these service changes affect my travel time on the vehicle? I'm not sure what time I should book my pick-up for.*
A: When planning your trip, please remember that Access Paratransit is a shared ride service. There may be other passenger pick-ups and drop-offs along the way. When making a reservation, riders should generally allow 60 minutes for trips less than 20 miles and 90 minutes for trips over 20 miles. Shorter trips may take less than 60 minutes, and some longer trips may take more than 90 minutes. Our concern is to get you to your destination on time.
- Q: *What happens if there is a problem and I miss my scheduled trip?*
A: If a rider schedules a trip on Access Paratransit (Next Day or Same Day) and a system failure causes the trip not to occur, the rider can contact the Operations Monitoring Center (OMC) and will be guaranteed a trip. However, if a rider schedules a trip on Access Paratransit (Next Day or Same Day) but, due to circumstances related to the rider, the trip does not occur, the rider may call the OMC for assistance but a trip is not guaranteed. Riders who have scheduled an outbound Next Day or Same Day trip but did not pre-arrange a return trip may contact the OMC for assistance but are not automatically entitled to a return trip.

ATTACHMENT A (continued)

Q: *Why does the service have to change at all?*

A: Access Services must provide Americans with Disabilities- (ADA) compliant service. Because of the increasing number of trips and the increasing cost of providing the service, Access Services was required to make changes to ensure that we continue to satisfy the demand for trips. Next Day service will be more cost-effective and efficient.

The discussions we have had with our stakeholders regarding these service changes have been both wide-reaching and constructive, and Access Services is grateful for the assistance of the following organizations which have had considerable participation in the planning process:

Access Services Board of Director

Access Services Community Advisory Committee and its Subcommittees

Access Services Ad Hoc Group

Access Services Transportation Professional Advisory Committee

Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority

If you have questions about these service changes, you have several resources to refer to for more information:

- The Access Services web site (<http://www.asila.org>)
- Community Forums (held countywide; see web site or call Customer Service for details). We encourage all riders and other interested parties to attend a meeting if possible.
- Rider's Guide. We are currently updating the Rider's Guide, which will be mailed to all registered riders when completed.

**ATTACHMENT B: Complaints Ratio Trend
Oct 2002 - March 2003**

