



Loreen Arbus Accessibility is Fundamental Program

NYC MTA to Cut Services for Disabilities Community

The proposed cuts are scheduled to go into effect on or about August 21, 2023.



Dawn Grabowski
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New York is arguably called the ‘Greatest City’ in the world, and seemingly does everything to maintain its reputation as the ‘City That Never Sleeps – unless you have a disability, that is. The City’s Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA) is currently proposing cuts to a ‘taxi on demand pilot’ which has enabled disabled passengers to

Disability Rights Advocate & Founder of the non-profit, [*Give Beauty Wings*](#), [*Xian Horn*](#) contends that these cuts will turn the clock back to a former transportation model that made it more difficult for disabled individuals to travel around the City. “Traditionally, with Access a Ride you have to book your ride by phone or app 24-48 hours in advance,” Xian says. “By phone it could take 45 minutes to get a reservationist and then the process to book can take as long as half an hour. And you must call before 5pm,” she continues. “You also have to have exact addresses and times and often your pick up time could be two hours before you need to be there and so-called on time performance is up to a half hour late by anyone else’s standard; and once you get in your vehicle, because it is shared, it could take another two or three hours.” Xian recalls one experience where she was picked up at night from the airport in Queens and then having to go pick up a couple who were attending a funeral in Brooklyn. It took her another three hours to get home, which was about the same amount of total time as the flight she had taken from Florida back to New York. “These experiences are so common, in fact, that it’s nicknamed “Stress a Ride,” she adds. In fact, of the 174,000 people signed up for Access A Ride there are only 60,000 active users, which Xian believes is the result of its poor service.

According to Assembly Member Rebecca Seawright, who also serves as the NY State Assembly Chair of the People with Disabilities Committee, “The e-hail access-a-ride pilot program has been a life changing program for people with disabilities to live and work across the city without barriers imposed by inaccessible and expensive buses, trains, and taxi cabs. Expanding the program to include triple the number of participants has changed people’s lives for those who were a part of the pilot program. It is disturbing that in exchange for expanded participation, the new pilot will require riders to pay more out of pocket and caps the number of rides per month”

infancy stages. Although the traditional transportation model of Access a Ride was created with 1990 technology, it has not since been updated.

The MTA has admitted that traveling by the same-day, e-hail access-a-ride pilot is much cheaper per ride than the blue and white van carriers. (The average cost of e-hail per trip is \$37, including interborough travel, while the van carriers average cost is \$86.) Yet the inefficient, more expensive van rides are unlimited, while the same day, e-hail pilot is much more cost effective. The MTA's decision to reduce total paratransit budget by limiting e-hail service, rather than decreasing carriers, therefore seems counterintuitive. The Gothamist further listed the e-hail on-demand pilot as one of the [best transit programs of the past decade](#) and named its newly announced constraints as one of its [worst](#) of the past decade as well.

So, why is the same day transportation program being cut? It seems unclear. "I'm disheartened with the lack of transparency over the \$16 million they said that the on-demand pilot costs," Xian continues. "They then said it was \$6 million. Still an impossible number. I wonder if they have inflated the numbers because fear the demand for a working program. I wish everyone understood how hard PWDs (Persons With Disabilities) have to fight for so many things that others take for granted, like the ability to travel anywhere on a moment's notice; or not needing to panic when a doctor's appointment goes over because it means having to wait up to three hours for a new vehicle; or going into a job knowing you can be on time every day. It seems the only people who don't get it are the ones who have to pay for it. But it's not our fault that the MTA has been reckless and inefficient with \$614 million allotted to them for paratransit. The thing that really bothers me most here is how callous the powers that be have been about our needs as a community now," Xian adds.

For the 1,200 people that were able to use the Same Day Unlimited Program for five years, the new cuts could cause them to go back into isolation, as during the recent

So, what are people like Xian doing in the face of losing such a valuable transportation program? They are fighting back. Xian is continuing the fight for equality, that the legacy of [Judy Heumann](#) (known as the mother of Disability Rights) started. “As an American I’m so thankful that we have the right to speak and fight when something is not right and we have laws and legislation like the ADA (Americans With Disabilities Act) that can help make it right,” Xian says. “With the spirit of Judy with us, we shall overcome, and we will thrive!”

If you would like to help save the traveling by ‘Same-Day Travel Program,’ please add your name to the petition, [which can be found here](#).

About the Author: Dawn Grabowski is a fellow with [The Loreen Arbus Accessibility is Fundamental Program](#), a fellowship created with Women’s eNews to train women with disabilities as professional journalists so that they may write, research and report on the most crucial issues impacting the disabilities community. Dawn is also an Actress, Filmmaker, Content Creator, Speaker, Voiceover Artist, Producer, & Sit-Down Comic because she’s not qualified to stand. Born with Central – Nervous Disorder Cerebral Palsy, the industry and the world label her as a Person/Performer With Disability (PWD), but she believes labels are for jars and not for people. IG Handle: @grabowskidawn

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