

Accessible Transportation Matters

A Publication of the Central New York Regional Transportation Authority

Welcome to our first installment of Accessible Transportation Matters. It's a newsletter designed to provide information about Centro's specialized transportation services such as Call-A-Bus, Rides for Work, and accessibility matters related to Centro's fixed route system.

Am I Eligible for Call-A-Bus?



Customers with a disability or disabling health condition that prevent them from using CNY Centro's transit buses, some or all of the time, are encouraged to apply for Call-A-Bus services. The presence of a disability or a disabling health condition by itself does not result in an automatic approval of Call-A-Bus service. Rather, eligibility is based upon the functional abilities of the individual. For example, the customer would be eligible if an applicant is unable to board, ride or exit a lift-equipped transit bus

without assistance, or must use a lift that cannot be deployed safely at the customer's bus stops or has a disability that prevents travel to and from the bus stop under certain conditions.

Customers must be certified to ride Call-A-Bus which is completed through an application process.

The Call-A-Bus application can be requested by calling 442-3434, Monday through Friday from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm or through Centro's official website, www.centro.org. Applications are available in large print and Braille versions if needed. Applications will be sent out within 5 working days of request.

The application has two sections. The first section is completed by the customer or by another upon the customer's request.

The second section is a Verification of Disability that must be completed by a licensed, certified, or degreed healthcare or rehabilitation professional familiar with the customer's functional abilities. It is the responsibility of the customer to direct the application to the professional of their choice and assure its submittal to Call-A-Bus, upon completion.

Eligibility categories are as follows:

1. Unconditional Eligibility – The disability or health condition prevents the customer from using the regular bus service for all trips.
2. Conditional Eligibility – There are certain conditions where Call-A-Bus trips are necessary, but the customer can use the regular bus service at times when those conditions are not present.
3. Temporary Eligibility – The disability or health condition is expected to change within a period of time.

How do I negotiate and confirm a ride time with Call-A-Bus that will best suit my needs?

There are two steps in the process of setting up a Call-A-Bus ride.

1. The first is to confirm your ride. There are two ways, and each has its benefits.

A. Confirm an eligible ride when you make a reservation.

It is possible to confirm a ride when you call to make your initial reservation. This eliminates the need to make a second phone call to Call-A-Bus. However, because you are confirming a ride before we have fully completed our transportation schedule for that day, you will need to be more flexible in departure and return pick-up times.

B. Confirm an eligible ride with a follow-up phone call the day before your ride.

Many customers will want to confirm their ride with a second phone call to Call-A-Bus on the weekday before their scheduled ride between the hours of 3pm-7pm or 2pm-4pm on week ends and holidays. The number to call is 442-3420. This will allow Call-A-Bus to provide departure and return pick-up times that are closer to the time you request.

2. The second step is to negotiate your ride time.

Call-A-Bus allows you to negotiate your pick-up time when you make your reservation. There are many factors to consider when negotiating a ride time.

Call-A-Bus cannot always give you the exact time you request. You will be given a time that is within 60 minutes (plus or minus) of your requested time. For example, if you ask for a 9am pick-up time, you may receive a time anywhere between 8am-10am.

Once you have negotiated a ride time with Call-A-Bus, Call-A-Bus has a 25-minute window to arrive and be considered on time. For example, if your negotiated pick up time is 9:40am, Call-A-Bus will be considered on time if it arrives between 9:40am and 10:05am.

Keep in mind, Call-A-Bus is a ride share service. You may have other users in the same vehicle at the same time, so you should allow travel time into your plans. A good rule of thumb is up to 1 hour for trips less than 20 miles, and 1.5 hours for trips over 20 miles.

If you need to be somewhere at a specific time, be sure to tell the Call-A-Bus reservationist when you make your appointment.

Accessible Transportation Advisory Committee Established

The Central New York Regional Transportation Authority (CNYRTA) has established an Accessible Transportation Advisory Committee designed to provide improved communication between the disabled community, advocates for the disabled and the CNYRTA's paratransit services.

The objectives of the committee are to:

***ADVOCATE** – To provide a conduit of communications between local stakeholders and collaborative partners of the transit service area and CNYRTA management.

***ADVISE** – To identify problems which were previously unknown to staff, provide feedback to the community and assist in developing solutions to problems.

***EDUCATE** – To openly share information on the transportation needs of specified populations, the policies and procedures of CNYRTA's Accessible Transportation Services and continuously advance the public's understanding of paratransit operations.

The committee will consist of volunteer representatives from the CNYRTA, local human services agencies, and local educational departments. An emphasis is placed on those with a strong mission for advocacy for individuals with special needs and those who have experience using paratransit services.

Initially, meetings of the advisory committee will be held monthly and will include an agenda including an allotted time for public comment. The meetings are held at the CNYRTA Headquarters at 200 Cortland Ave, Syracuse, NY.

Current membership of the committee include representatives from the following:

CNYRTA
VESID
AURORA
Arc of Onondaga

ARISE
BOCES
PTAC

Onondaga County Department of Aging and Youth
Riders to Improve Bus Service
Public Transportation Advisory Committee
Syracuse Metropolitan Transportation Council



The newly created Accessible Transportation Advisory Committee holds its first meeting in May 2006

PHONE NUMBERS

Call-A-Bus Information

442-3434 M-F, 8am-5pm

Call-A-Bus Confirmations

442-3420 M-F, 3pm-7pm;
Sat/Sun/Holiday 2pm-4pm

Call-A-Bus Reservations

442-3420* 7 days a week/8am-5pm
*May require leaving message on answering machine

Call-A-Bus Cancellations

442-3434 7 days a week/24 hours a day



Customer Service Representatives like Marquita Williams help answer customer questions

How Do I Contact Centro if I Have Concerns or Questions About Centro's Paratransit Services?

Any time you use the Centro system for your transportation needs, we hope you'll have a satisfying experience. However, we realize there are times when you may have questions or concerns about the service you received. We encourage customers to provide us with as much feedback as possible. Your input is valuable information for us to use when we consider future changes or enhancements to our system.

There are three ways in which a customer can contact Centro to ask questions or lodge a complaint: by phone, email or regular mail.

*You may call Centro at 442-3400 and speak to a Customer Service Representative

*You may email Centro at:

public@centro.org

*You may write a letter to:

Centro

PO Box 820

Syracuse, NY 13205

Did You Know.....Centro has new "Low Floor" buses on some of its fixed routes. These buses have an entrance step that is lower to the ground than our previous buses. This helps individuals get on and off our buses more quickly and safely than before.

All complaints are then forwarded to Centro's Customer Service Supervisor. It is logged into Centro's centralized complaint system, given a file number and forwarded to the appropriate department for investigation.

A post-card is then sent to the customer acknowledging receipt of the complaint and informing the customer of the file number for that complaint.

After the investigation is performed, a letter is sent to the customer, which restates the problem and notifies the customer of any action taken to resolve the problem.

Each complaint is broken down into categories in the same manner as complaints for Centro's fixed route system. Each month, Centro reviews the breakdown of these complaints for quality control.

It is important that you give Centro your contact information so we may respond to your complaint. Customers can either give Centro their name and address or they may wish to file the complaint through an advocacy group and Centro will respond to the advocacy group.

Centro Policy on Personal Care Attendants, Escorts and Companions

Friends and relatives who travel with you on the Centro Bus or the Call-A-Bus are required to pay a fare. However, there are passengers with disabilities who travel with a personal care attendant or an escort who provide "hands on" support to the passenger during travel.

The most common attendant or escort tasks include positioning the passenger and wheelchair while boarding or exiting the vehicle and escorting passengers to and from the vehicle at the pick up point or destination point. People who serve as personal care attendants or escorts ride free while they are performing these duties on both the Centro Bus and the Call-A-Bus service. These attendants and escorts must identify themselves to the Centro bus driver.