



March 16, 2020

Michael Cosgrove, Vice President
Paratransit Division, Department of Buses
MTA New York City Transit
33-00 Northern Boulevard
Long Island City, New York 11101

Re: COVID-19 Precautions for Access-A-Ride

Dear Mr. Cosgrove:

We are writing to ensure that New York City Transit takes all necessary steps to safeguard the wellbeing of its Access-A-Ride customers as we face the COVID-19 pandemic. We greatly appreciate the vital work that you personally, and all transit employees and AAR providers, are undertaking during this crisis, but we are requesting that specific actions be taken and also requesting that you provide AAR customers and AARRG! with details about the actions you have taken, especially in light of the fact that NYC Transit Interim President Sarah Feinberg's letter to the public today about the MTA's response to COVID-19 did not mention AAR service at all.

First, we urge NYC Transit to cancel, or at least delay, its changes to the on-demand program in light of this crisis, especially given that on-demand service keeps at-risk Access-A-Ride users away from other users, and minimizes the time they spend waiting and congregating in lobbies, medical offices, and other communal spaces.

Second, while we share NYC Transit's concerns about in-person assessments for Access-A-Ride eligibility at a time when social distancing is important, a simple bar on applications and re-certifications is not appropriate and would deprive people with disabilities of a vital service. We urge you to extend any expiring eligibility period by 90 days during the pandemic, and render new eligibility decisions based on the application and medical documentation alone, at least pending the safe reinstatement of in-person assessments

Third, as you know, many AAR users, including those who are immune-compromised, seniors, and people with serious underlying health conditions, are at particularly high risk if they contract COVID-19. Since they rely on AAR to receive health care, shop for food and medicines, commute



to work, etc., it is vital that they be assured that AAR is taking every step to keep them as safe and protected as possible from COVID-19. Please advise what COVID-19 protocols have been established for AAR, particularly:

- whether AAR vehicles (dedicated, brokers, and on-demand) are being thoroughly cleaned and disinfected at least as often as subways and buses are cleaned, and how often that is;
- what training drivers (on the dedicated, broker, and on-demand fleets) have received regarding COVID-19 safety practices such as use of hand sanitizers and sterile gloves when assisting passengers;¹
- whether shared rides are being eliminated or reduced in favor of individual rides to increase social distancing;
- whether you are reducing the use of feeder services for AAR riders, which would be a way of reducing risk to those riders; and
- what other changes you are making in service.

Please advise us of the measures New York City Transit has taken with respect to AAR and COVID-19, and intends to take in response to this letter. In addition, we would appreciate your communicating regularly with all AAR customers about the steps New York City Transit is taking with respect to the pandemic.

Your immediate response to this urgent matter is greatly appreciated.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Eman Rimawi

Eman Rimawi
on behalf of AARRG!

¹ See Centers for Disease Control, “How to Protect Yourself,” available at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/prevention.html>.