

REDUCED-COST PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES IN MASSACHUSETTS

Prepared by the Mental Health Legal Advisors Committee
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DISCOUNTED PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION¹

Individuals who live in an area covered by the MBTA

Benefits

Qualifying individuals can access the following services at a reduced rate:

- local buses
- inner and outer express buses
- MBTA subway
- commuter rail
- boat services
- monthly passes for unlimited travel on local bus and subway

Eligibility

In order to qualify for these benefits, an individual must be disabled or be over age 65. In addition, the individual must be able to use the MBTA's public transportation services.

How to apply

To receive the discount, you must obtain a special Transportation Access Pass (TAP) CharlieCard at the Reduced Fare CharlieCard Office.

- Medicare recipients:
 - Medicare (but not Medicaid or MassHealth) recipients are automatically eligible for reduced rate fares
 - No need to fill out an application
 - Present your Medicare card and another form of identification to an agent at the Reduced Fare CharlieCard Office
- Department of Mental Health (DMH) /Department of Developmental Services (DDS) clients:
 - DMH/DDS clients are eligible for reduced rate fares
 - Must submit an Application for a Transportation Access Pass (TAP)

¹ The information for this section was largely drawn from http://www.mbta.com/fares_and_passes/reduced_fare_programs/ and <http://www.massresources.org/public-transit-discounts.html>.

- Attach an original letter to your application from your DMH or DDS caseworker or another representative of the agency confirming your status as a DMH or DDS client
- THE RIDE customers:
 - Current customers of The RIDE qualify for reduced rate fares
- Veterans:
 - Veterans with a disability rating of 70% or greater qualify for reduced rate fares
 - Must submit an Application for Transportation Access Pass (TAP)
 - Must attach an original letter (from the Veteran's Administration office and signed by a Veteran's Services officer) that specifies your disability rating
- All others:
 - A licensed health care provider must complete the Application for a Transportation Access Pass (TAP)
 - The health care provider must answer questions about your disability. Such disability may include a serious, long-term mental illness

Where to find and submit your application

Applications for Transportation Access Passes are available online and in person. Online applications can be found at http://www.mbta.com/uploadedFiles/documents/ACCESS_PASS.pdf. Applications are also available at Reduced Fare CharlieCard Offices.

There are two offices, both in Boston. The main office is located at the Back Bay station next to the Amtrak Ticket windows in the lobby. You may contact the Back Bay offices at (617) 222-5976, 800-543-8287, and TTY at (617) 222-5854. There is also an office at the Downtown Crossing Summer Street Concourse, which is in the corridor between the Orange and Red line platforms. That office has no telephone access.

Submit your application to:
 MBTA Senior and Access Pass Program
 Back Bay Station
 145 Dartmouth Street
 Boston, MA 02116-5162

Retain a copy of your application for your records.

After you submit your application

You should receive a response within 21 days after you submit your application. Once you receive an approval notice in the mail you will need to return to the transit authority office. You may go to either the Back Bay or Downtown Crossing office, regardless of where you submitted your application originally. You will need to bring with you two forms of identification and your approval notice. Your picture will be taken and your card will be created for you while you wait.

If you have a complaint, comment, or concern about the MBTA you can contact the MBTA's customer service representatives at (617) 222-3200, (800) 392-6100, and TTY at (617) 222-5146. There is also a comment and complaint form available on the MBTA website at http://mbta.com/customer_support/feedback/.

Individuals who live outside of the MBTA service area

The information in this section may not apply to all transit authorities. Different transit authorities may have different standards, policies, and procedures. If a transit authority receives certain federal funding, it is required to offer reduced rate fares to elderly and disabled populations during non-peak hours.² Some transit authorities may offer reduced rate fares during peak and non-peak hours. The transit authority may require you to obtain a transportation access pass in order to pay the reduced fare. Some transit authorities may accept transportation access passes that have been issued by other transit authorities, but some may not.

Contact your local transit authority in order to determine whether discount fares are available for seniors and disabled individuals in your area. For contact information of your local transit authority, visit <http://www.massdot.state.ma.us/transit/RegionalTransitAuthorities.aspx>.

Benefits

Qualifying individuals should pay, during non-peak hours, no more than one-half of the regular rate that is generally applicable to other persons at peak hours.³

Eligibility

Different transit authorities will have different policies. For the senior citizen discount, the local transit authority can determine the age of eligibility, but it must include at a minimum individuals age 65 and over.⁴ Some transit authorities, including Worcester, Pioneer Valley, and Cape Cod, require that the individual be only 60 years of age to qualify.

For disabled persons to qualify for the reduced rate fare, the individual must be unable to use public transportation as effectively as other persons without special facilities, planning, or design.⁵

How to apply

Different transit authorities will have different policies. Qualifying elderly individuals can often go to the local transit authority and show photo ID that has proof of birth date to obtain a discount pass. Some transit authorities may accept a Medicare card, but some will not. A small fee may apply. Check with your local transit authority for more information.

To pay a reduced fare based on disability, many transit authorities will require you to submit an application in order to determine if you have a qualifying disability. Some, but not all, transit

² 49 CFR 609.23.

³ 49 CFR 609.23.

⁴ 49 CFR 609.23, Appendix A.

⁵ 49 CFR 609.23, Appendix A.

authorities may accept a Social Security benefits award letter as proof of your disability. If you are required to submit an application, it is likely that your doctor will need to fill out part of it for you. You will then receive a letter in the mail that either approves or denies your application, along with what steps you can take next. If approved, you may need to bring your letter to the local transit authority to get your discount pass. A small fee may apply. Check with your local transit authority for more information.

If you have any complaints, comments, or concerns, you should contact your regional transit authority and find out if there is a complaint form or someone you can talk to about your complaint. Contact information for the regional transit authorities is available at <http://www.eot.state.ma.us//default.asp?pgid=content/rtacontact&sid=about>.