

**Public Comments Received Regarding  
Proposed Amendments to DSS/HRA's Fair  
Fares NYC Rule**

**CHAIRMAN MAJORITY MEMBER**  
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August 31, 2020

New York City Human Resources Administration/Department of Social Services  
c/o Office of Legal Affairs  
150 Greenwich Street, 38th Floor  
New York, NY 10007

Dear Commissioner Banks:

I write to express my support for the inclusion of Access-a-Ride in the Fair Fare's Program and I applaud DSS/HRA for proposing this rule change.

Access-a-Ride customers who would otherwise be eligible for reduced fares on other NYCT-operated subway and local bus lines, but cannot use those transportation services due to accessibility issues, should be able to access the same discount for Access-a-Ride.

This is an issue of equity and accessibility in our transit systems and in access to our City, and I would like to express my strong support for this rule change.

Should you have any questions or wish to discuss this matter further, please contact me at hoylman.nysenate.gov or 212-633-8052.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Brad Hoylman".

Brad Hoylman  
State Senator  
27th District



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## **Center for Independence of the Disabled, NY**

September 3, 2020

### **Fair Fares**

My name is Tashia Lerebours. I am a Community Organizer for Access-A-Ride for the Center of the Independence of the Disabled, NY. After over a year of discussions, we thank you for expanding it to the Access-A-Ride users who are under the age of 65.

When letters were sent for AAR users to apply for Fair Fares they were very excited. In a very short time CIDNY received calls because of all the confusion with the mixed information given by 311 and other sources. The AAR users were told if they had or were eligible for half-fare cards they were not eligible for Fair Fares.

A very confusing point was with regard to the AAR Feeder Service. It seemed no one knew the answer to how Fair Fares would work with AAR users who are only eligible for Feeder Services.

Although it seems that most matters have been settled, the AAR users should have been included during your efforts to roll out the Fair Fares program. If they had been included, the massive confusion could have been eliminated.

Recently we were informed that the internal policy information and 311 staff has been updated. In addition, that 311 website has been updated. This was all to have occurred late last week. Has this been done. If so, thank you.

Of course, we are concerned that the Fair Fares online eligibility tool and FAQ will not be available until late September.

There are still many issues regarding Fair Fares. I will only state three that we have heard about.

- Discount cards - seven and monthly passes on AAR
- Seniors' over 64 ineligibility -- We receive many calls from many Access-A-Ride users who are elderly. They feel that they are being discriminated against because of their age.
- Not everyone has a smartphone to download the Fair Fares app nor are they tech savvy to upload pictures of documents in order to prove their identity. Photos of SSI and letters with name and address must be taken then uploaded.

These need to be addressed.



September 3, 2020

HRA Rules  
150 Greenwich Street, 38th Floor  
New York, NY 10007

***Re: Comments on Proposed Rule: Amendment of Fair Fares Program  
Reference No. HRA-27***

To Whom It May Concern:

Mobilization for Justice and New York Lawyers for the Public Interest submit the following comments regarding the Human Resources Administration's Proposed Rule on the Fair Fares NYC Program.

Mobilization for Justice's mission is to achieve social justice, prioritizing the needs of people who are low-income, disenfranchised or have disabilities. We do this by providing direct civil legal assistance, conducting community education, engaging in policy advocacy, and bringing impact litigation. Since 2012, Mobilization for Justice has advocated on behalf of Access-A-Ride (AAR) applicants who have been denied eligibility for the program.

New York Lawyers for the Public Interest is a community-driven, multidisciplinary civil rights organization which strives to achieve equality of opportunity, self-determination, and independence for people with disabilities, create equal access to health care, fight racism, ensure immigrant opportunity, invigorate local nonprofits, and defend environmental justice for low-income communities and communities of color. NYLPI's Disability Justice Program has represented thousands of individuals and triumphed in countless campaigns that have improved the lives of New Yorkers with disabilities, including a campaign to improve Access-A-Ride.

Both organizations also advocate for improvements to AAR with our partners—Brooklyn Center for Independence of the Disabled and Center for Independence of the Disabled - New York—as part of AARRG!, the Access-A-Ride Reform Group.

Mobilization for Justice and New York Lawyers for the Public Interest have long supported the goal of the Fair Fares NYC Program, which is to help New Yorkers who are low-income afford their local public transportation needs. However, by administering the program through the MTA's MetroCard system, the City's implementation of the program excluded people with disabilities who use AAR. Many low-income New Yorkers have disabilities and must rely on AAR because the bus or subway is not accessible to them. But, unlike the bus and subway, AAR does not accept MetroCards. AAR trips are also not eligible for discounts, including the disabled or senior half-fare available for subway and bus service. This means AAR riders face higher

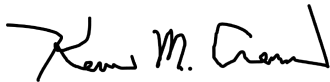
transportation costs than people who have not been excluded from buses and subways. And AAR riders must pay their exact fare in cash. Fair Fares is therefore particularly important for low-income AAR users.

Soon after the program launched in January 2018, Mobilization for Justice and New York Lawyers for the Public Interest joined more than a dozen other organizations representing New Yorkers with disabilities in a February 8, 2019, letter to Mayor de Blasio and Speaker Johnson demanding that AAR riders have access to Fair Fares. The advocates met with HRA twice, in June and December 2019, but HRA did not agree to make the Fair Fares program available for rides on AAR. In the fall of 2019, HRA proposed Fair Fares rules that did not contemplate AAR users' inclusion in the program, and—over our objections—refused to modify the rule to include AAR customers before adopting the proposed rule.

Mobilization for Justice and New York Lawyers for the Public Interest continued our advocacy for low-income AAR users to benefit from the Fair Fares discount for their public transportation needs. In a January 10, 2020 letter to HRA Commissioner Steven Banks, we threatened litigation to redress the City's policy of excluding public transit riders with disabilities that prevent them from using buses and subways. Over the course of the last eight months, we have worked collaboratively with HRA to devise and implement a system to provide the Fair Fares discount to AAR riders.

Mobilization for Justice and New York Lawyers for the Public Interest support the proposed rule change. It not only removes reference to the Fair Fares MetroCard, which is only relevant for Fair Fares enrollees who use buses and subways, it also extends the Fair Fares discount to AAR riders in accordance with applicable federal, state, and local law.

Respectfully submitted,



Kevin M. Cremin  
Director of Litigation for  
Disability & Aging Rights  
Mobilization for Justice, Inc.

Ruth Lowenkron  
Director  
Disability Justice Program  
New York Lawyers for the Public Interest

Entered into the chat box at the hearing:

From Letitia:

*I have a disability and my daughter has been injured at work. It's difficult getting someone to take place to place with a walker. So I'm saying, I approve of Access A Ride participating with F F. Without the FF program it would be even worse for individuals like myself.*

From Maria T. Walles:

*I do approve the Access A Ride with the Fair Fares.*