

# Rider's Guide



Transit services for people with disabilities.



## MTS Access Services

The Metropolitan Transit System (MTS) operates a fixed route bus and light rail system using ramp or lift equipped vehicles in full compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). We also operate a complementary paratransit division, MTS Access, for those riders who have been certified as unable to use fixed route service.

MTS Access provides complementary paratransit service that is comparable to the level of MTS fixed route service. This is offered within a ¾ mile radius of a nearby bus route and/or trolley station.

MTS Access service is available during the same hours and days, including on holidays, as the MTS fixed route system. If riders can take a particular trip between two points on MTS fixed route system at a specific time of day, the same trip is available on complementary paratransit. The MTS Access service area, therefore, may change by time of day and day of week when certain fixed routes are not in service.

For example, if a bus route runs from 5 a.m. until 9 p.m., MTS provides complementary paratransit service, at minimum, from 5 a.m. until 9 p.m. corresponding to that route. A rider's pick-up time for paratransit is also dictated by the fixed route hours. For example, if the earliest time a rider could depart from a particular fixed route stop is at 6:45 a.m., MTS Access trips could be provided starting at 6:45 a.m. If MTS runs fixed route service on weekends and holidays, it must provide MTS Access service on those days/hours as well. On board times for MTS Access will also be comparable to taking the same trip on fixed route.

*Please note that the MTS Access service area will always complement the fixed route bus and trolley routes/times. The MTS Access service area and hours may contract or expand as service changes are made to the MTS fixed route bus and trolley operations. If schedule or route changes are made to an existing bus or trolley line, the MTS Access Service Area will be modified accordingly.*

MTS offers several types of vehicles including minivans and smaller buses. MTS has also contracted with a local taxi provider to provide some trips under contract and supervised by MTS. MTS Access is a shared ride service. Other passengers may be picked-up and dropped-off during your trip.

If you reside outside the MTS ADA service area, your service is restricted to trip origins and destinations within our ADA service area. If your home address is outside the ADA service area, you may still receive paratransit service by selecting a pick-up or drop-off location within our service area. In this scenario, the passenger will be required to transport themselves to/from a location within the service area.

To use MTS Access services, a passenger must first be certified. You can call MTS Access paratransit service at (888) 517-9627 to determine if a trip is within the ADA service area. MTS suggests that all prospective passengers determine if the locations of their trip's origin and trip destination are within the MTS service area before beginning the certification process.

## Transfers to NCTD LIFT

If you plan a trip into the northern area of San Diego County, the trip will need to be booked with the North County Transit District (NCTD). NCTD has its own complementary paratransit system known as NCTD LIFT; their reservation phone number is (760) 726-1111. At the direction of the passenger, you may be dropped off and left unattended at a designated transfer point before your scheduled pick up time with the other service or you may remain in the vehicle.

## Fares and Ticket Sales

**One-Way Fare ..... \$5.00**

To make fare payment easier, you may purchase 10-pack ticket books for \$50 each in advance.

### In Person:

Visit the **Transit Store** at 12th & Imperial Transit Center, M-F 8:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m. Cash, checks, money orders, traveler's checks, Visa and MasterCard credit cards accepted.

### By Phone:

**619-234-1060**, M-F, 8:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m., and pay with a credit or debit card.

### Online:

**www.sdmts.com/purchase-access-tickets-online**

### By Mail:

Send form with check or money order for the total amount of books (\$50 each) you would like, payable to MTS, to: **Transit Store, MTS Access Ticket Sales, 1255 Imperial Avenue, Suite 100A, San Diego, CA 92101.**

*Subject to change.*

## ADA Eligibility Certification

To become certified for MTS Access, prospective riders are required to complete an application process for ADA certification. The application can be obtained by calling **(844) 299-6326 (TTY/TTD 7-1-1)**, emailing **access@sdmts.com**, or completing it online at **www.sdmts.com/access**. The certification offices are open Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Once your application and medical certification forms are completed please call (844) 299-6326 to schedule your in-person assessment. MTS will make a decision within 21 days from the date of your completed assessment. If 21 days have passed since your assessment at an in-person appointment, you will be given temporary eligibility until a final determination occurs.

After a review of all application materials, one (1) of the following determinations will be made:

- **Unconditional:** Individuals who are never able to board, ride, disembark, or understand the fixed route bus and trolley system under any circumstances. Five year certification.
- **Conditional:** Individuals who are eligible to use MTS Access under any circumstances when fixed route is not a viable option due to effects of a disability. Individuals have been determined to be able to use fixed route service under certain circumstances as identified in their eligibility determination. Five year certification.
- **Temporary:** Individuals whose disability is expected to improve over time.
- **Ineligible:** Individuals who indicate or demonstrate they have the functional ability to board, ride, disembark, and understand the fixed route bus and trolley system under all circumstances.

### Appealing Eligibility determinations

Applicants have 60 days from the date of their eligibility determination letter to appeal. Details regarding the applicant's options and timeframes will be outlined in the eligibility determination letter. Appeals must be submitted in writing to: MTS Access Eligibility via Mail: **MTS Access Eligibility Center, 100 16th St., San Diego, CA 92101**; Email **Access@sdmts.com** or fax **(844) 299-6369**.

## Visitor

A visitor is an individual with disabilities who does not reside in the jurisdiction served by MTS. To qualify for visitor eligibility, either the visitor or the applicable transit agency can submit documentation that the individual is ADA paratransit eligible in the jurisdiction in which they reside.

If a visitor does not have documentation of ADA paratransit eligibility, MTS Access may require documentation of the individual's place of residence and disability. For visitors whose disability is apparent, per 49 CFR § 37.127(d), no other documentation is required. For visitors whose disability is not apparent (e.g., cognitive disability or cardiac condition), per 49 CFR § 37.127(d), MTS Access may require documentation of disability, such as a letter from a medical professional or eligibility for other services based on a determination of disability. Visitors request eligibility by contacting MTS Access Eligibility:

Phone: **(844) 299-6326** • Fax: **(844) 299-6369**

Email: **Access@sdmts.com**

Mail: **MTS Access Eligibility Center, 100 16th St., San Diego, CA 92101**

Upon receipt of a visitor's request for eligibility or visitor eligibility documentation, if applicable, MTS Access staff will process within one (1) business day. The visitor will be notified by email or phone, as applicable. Only if an email address or phone number is not provided or if not valid/not working will determinations be mailed. Visitor eligibility can be used for 21 days during any 365-day period. The visitor may be required to apply for eligibility if the visitor wishes to use the paratransit service beyond the 21 days within the same year.

## Contact Us

**Reservations:** 1-888-517-9627 or 1-800-921-9664

### ADA Eligibility Certification

Tel: 1-844-299-6326 • Fax: 844-299-6369

Email: **access@sdmts.com**

### Customer Service:

Tel: 619-557-4555

Visit: **sdmts.com/contact**

### MTS Access Services:

100 16th Street, San Diego, CA 92101-7490

### Online: **sdmts.com/access**

For any complaints alleging discrimination based on disability, contact MTS Deputy General Counsel at 1255 Imperial Avenue, Suite 1000, San Diego, CA 92101, call 619-557-4539 or email **ADAComplaints@sdmts.com**.

### MTS Accessible Services Advisory Committee

**(ASAC):** ASAC is comprised of a MTS Board of Directors representative, MTS fixed route and MTS Access passengers, and social service organizations. ASAC generally meets quarterly. The aim of ASAC is to provide feedback to MTS staff and/or the MTS Board of Directors on MTS's services. For more information or a meeting schedule, please visit **sdmts.com** or call (619) 231-1466.

## Reservations

Once certified to ride, schedule your trip by either:

1. **Calling (888) 517-9627 or 1-800-921-9664**, any day between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. (TTY/TDD: 1-800-568-7097); or
2. **MTS EZ Access** - MTS EZ Access offers riders the ability to schedule, modify and cancel trips online. Riders are also able to book trips 24/7 using the app. Riders must first go to **access.sdmts.com** to register to use the website. Apps are available in the iOS and Android App stores under MTS EZ Access. This app allows riders to track their ride in real time.

Reservations are accepted from ten (10) days in advance until 5 p.m. the day before travel. Please be ready to provide us with the certified passenger's name, pick-up address, when they would like to travel, the destination address, and if/when to book a return trip. On occasion, our reservation agents may not be able to immediately provide a pick-up window for your trip. However, you will be guaranteed a trip to begin no more than one (1) hour before or one (1) hour after your original requested departure time. You will receive notification by 5 p.m. the day prior to your ride with your pick-up window time. MTS Access does not provide same-day trips.

Reservations may be booked in one (1) of the following formats below:

### 1. Pick-up time based

Your reserved pick-up time will be within one (1) hour of your requested pick-up time. For example, if you request an 8:00 am pick-up, your trip offer will be between 7:00 and 9:00 am. Your arrival time will depend on your trip pick-up time, other passenger's pick-ups and drop offs, and the varying amount of time it may take to travel to your destination. Please calculate sufficient riding time since trip lengths are comparable to fixed route travel times. You will be provided with a 30-minute window in which your ride will arrive to pick you up.

### 2. Appointment time based

You must inform the reservationist at time of booking that you wish to make an appointment-based reservation. Your scheduled drop off time will be between 30 minutes prior to your scheduled appointment until your scheduled appointment time. For example, if you have a 9:00 am appointment, your drop off window will be between 8:30 and 9:00 am. You will be provided with a 30-minute window in which your ride will arrive to pick you up.

You cannot request both a set pick-up and drop-off time. Since trip prioritization is prohibited by federal law, all trips (e.g. medical appointments, school schedules, work schedules, personal appointments, etc.) have equal priority in the MTS Access reservation system.

Passengers using service animals or traveling with a respirator or portable oxygen supply are welcome on MTS Access. Please advise MTS of any of these situations at the time you make your reservation.

## Traveling Outside of the MTS Service Area

If you are certified by MTS Access and will be traveling outside of the MTS Access service area, you can contact MTS Access and we will forward a copy of your eligibility for Complementary Paratransit service to the local provider in the area you are traveling to.

## No-Shows and Late Cancellations

MTS understands that because MTS Access requires trips to be scheduled in advance, riders may sometimes miss scheduled rides or forget to cancel rides they no longer need. MTS also understands that riders may sometimes miss scheduled trips or be unable to cancel trips in a timely way for reasons that are beyond their control. However, repeatedly missing scheduled trips or failing to cancel trips in a timely way can lead to suspension of service. The following information explains MTS No-Show Policy.

### A. Definitions:

- 1. No-show:** In instances when the vehicle arrives at the scheduled pickup location within the pickup window and the driver waits at least five (5) minutes, a no-show occurs when a rider fails to appear for a scheduled trip. In these instances, driver will contact dispatch and dispatch will attempt to call the rider to inform them their driver is waiting. If the dispatcher is unable to contact the rider then dispatch will issue a no show and release the driver to proceed with their route. An automated call will be made to the rider after the no show is logged notifying them of the no show.
- 2. Late Cancellation:** A late cancellation is defined as either: a cancellation made less than one (1) hour before the scheduled pickup time or as a cancellation made at the door or a refusal to board a vehicle that has arrived within the pickup window.

### B. No-Shows Due to Operator Error or to Circumstances Beyond a Rider's Control

MTS does not count as no-shows or late cancellations any missed trips due to our error.

MTS does not count as no-shows or late cancellations situations beyond a rider's control that prevent the rider from notifying us that the trip cannot be taken.

Riders should contact MTS Access when experiencing no-shows or late cancellations due to circumstances beyond their control

### C. Suspension Policies for a Pattern or Practice of Excessive No-shows and Late Cancellations

MTS reviews all recorded no-shows and late cancellations to ensure accuracy before documenting them in a rider's account. Each verified no-show or late cancellation, consistent with the above definitions, counts as one (1) no-show or late cancellation. Riders may be subject to suspension after they meet all of the following conditions:

- Three (3) or more no-shows or late cancellations in one (1) calendar month; and
- Booked at least 10 trips in the month; and
- Have "no-showed" or "late cancelled" at least 10 percent of total number of scheduled trips in the same one (1) calendar month.

MTS will notify riders by automated telephone call after each no show to inform the rider of the no show and to provide information on how they may dispute the no-show.

If a rider has no shows but it does not reach the threshold for suspension, they will receive a warning notice, which will be sent out after the end of the month.

If a rider has no shows that do reach the threshold for suspension, they will receive a suspension notice, which will be sent out after the end of the month.

Suspensions begin 30 calendar days after the suspension letter is issued. Violations result in the following suspensions:

- First violation: 7-day suspension
- Second violation: 14-day suspension
- Third violation: 30-day suspension
- Fourth and subsequent violations: 30-day suspension

### D. Disputing Specific No-Shows or Late Cancellations

Riders wishing to dispute specific no-shows or late cancellations are encouraged to contact MTS Access as soon as possible after the no show or late cancellation. Riders should contact MTS by email at [noshow@sdmts.com](mailto:noshow@sdmts.com) or call, Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. at (888) 517-9627 Option #8 to explain the circumstance, and request the removal of the no-show or late cancellation.

### E. Appealing Proposed Suspensions

Riders wishing to appeal suspensions have the right to file an appeal, which must be in writing, to MTS Access. The appeal request can be mailed to 100 16th St, San Diego, CA 92101 or sent via email at [noshow@sdmts.com](mailto:noshow@sdmts.com). Riders must submit written appeal requests within 21 calendar days of issue date of suspension letters.

For a complete copy of the MTS Access No Show policy please contact us at:

Phone: **(888) 517-9627**

Email: [noshow@sdmts.com](mailto:noshow@sdmts.com)

Online: [sdmts.com/access](https://sdmts.com/access)

MTS does not charge riders for no-show or late cancellation trips. No-show or late cancellation totals reset each month.

## General Information

**Subscriptions:** For passengers with a regular travel pattern (the same trip on multiple days), subscription service may be available. Subscriptions will be reviewed for efficiency, and if they comply with 49 CFR Section 37.133. If subscriptions become inefficient, MTS may decide to eliminate some or all subscription services. Subscriptions, if granted, may be placed on hold for a maximum of 60 days (for vacations, school breaks, etc.). After 60 days, any subscription that has not been reactivated will be discontinued. Any passengers who receive a suspension as a result of violation of the MTS Access No Show Policy may have their subscription services discontinued. All subscription requests will be reviewed and may be accepted or rejected based on the shared ride nature of this service. Changes to subscription rides may result in the discontinuation of the individual's subscription. There are only a limited number of subscription trips available. Please call MTS Access at (888) 517-9627 for more details. All subscription trips are automatically cancelled on most holidays and days of reduced service that surround holidays. For a current list of days where subscription trips are cancelled, please call (888) 517-9627 or visit [sdmts.com/access](https://sdmts.com/access) If you have a subscription and will still need your ride on a given holiday, you must contact the reservation office from ten (10) days in advance until 5 p.m. the day before travel to book your trip.

**Passenger Assistance:** Passengers and/or caregivers must advise our reservations center if a passenger cannot be left unattended. The passenger will receive origin-to-destination service within our guidelines. Passengers who appear, or claim to be, unable to care for themselves and do not have someone to receive them will be transported back to the origin of their trip, to the nearest medical facility, or to a police or sheriff's station, at the discretion of MTS.

Please note, MTS Access drivers may travel up to 60 feet from the vehicle if they can remain in visual contact with their vehicle. MTS Access drivers are forbidden to enter any private residence.

Drivers will assist passengers with up to two (2) twenty (20) pound packages on and off the vehicle. All packages must be able to be safely secured under the passenger's seat or in the passenger's lap. When traveling to/from the airport, cruise ship terminal, or a transit center, the driver will assist with up to two (2) fifty (50) pound packages.

**Personal Care Attendant (PCA):** Any MTS Access passenger may travel with a PCA. A PCA typically assists with one (1) or more daily life activities such as providing personal care, performing manual tasks, or providing assistance with mobility or communication. A PCA may ride with you free of charge. While a PCA may travel without paying a fare, at least one (1) passenger must always pay a full fare. Two (2) passengers cannot claim each other as PCA to avoid fare payment.

**Companions:** You may reserve up to two (2) spaces in addition to yourself. One (1) seat for a companion, which can be anyone (certified or not) that you choose

to bring with you and one (1) a Personal Care Attendant (PCA). Additional companions may ride on a space available basis. All companions must pay the full fare.

**Children:** On MTS Access, children five (5) years of age or younger may ride free with a fare-paying adult.

**Reasonable Modifications:** Passengers may request reasonable modifications on the spot with the driver or in advance with MTS Access Reservations staff. MTS may deny a reasonable modification request, whether made in advance or on the spot, for the following reasons:

1. Granting the request would fundamentally alter the nature of MTS's services, programs or activities;
2. Granting the request would create a direct threat to the health or safety of others;
3. The individual with a disability is able to fully use the entity's services, programs, or activities for their intended purpose without the need of a modification; and/or
4. Granting the request would cause undue financial or administrative burden.

If a request is denied, MTS will take any other action to the maximum extent possible to ensure that you receive MTS's services or benefits.

Examples of reasonable modification requests that may be denied, include but are not limited to:

- a. drivers taking on "attendant services" typically provided by a PCA (e.g. drivers are not permitted to assist passengers with the consumption of food, beverages, or medication)
- b. requested pick-up/drop-off location poses a direct threat (e.g. reversing the vehicle down a narrow alley or hard to maneuver stops).

For a full copy of MTS's reasonable modification policy, please see [www.sdmts.com/rider-info/accessibility/reasonable-modification](https://www.sdmts.com/rider-info/accessibility/reasonable-modification).

**Mobility Devices:** The wheelchair lifts on our vehicles are designed to not exceed a combined device and passenger weight of 800 pounds, and accommodate devices 30 inches in width, and 48 inches in length. If you and your mobility aid exceed those dimensions but can safely fit on the vehicle, you will be transported. Mobility aids and passengers that exceed the 800 pounds or are not able to safely fit onboard the vehicle will not be transported.

**On-Time:** MTS Access vehicles will arrive any time within a 30-minute ready-time window and still be considered "on time". For example, if your ready-time window is between 9:00 a.m. and 9:30 a.m., the vehicle can arrive any time between 9:00 a.m. and 9:30 a.m. Please be ready to board the vehicle immediately upon arrival. This helps to ensure better on-time performance that benefits all riders.

**Late MTS Access Vehicles:** If your MTS Access vehicle does not arrive within the 30 min window, please call MTS Access at (888) 517-9627 to check on the status of your ride. Please inform the dispatcher that you are checking on the status of a scheduled ride or log in to MTS EZ Access to check the status of your ride.

**Missed Trips:** If a passenger misses their return trip, MTS does not guarantee to provide an alternative return trip. MTS will make our best effort to offer you an alternative return trip time. Please note if a trip is available, there is no guarantee on how quickly their scheduled trip will arrive. In the event a trip is missed due to an error on MTS' part, MTS will send a ride to pick up the passenger as soon as possible.

**Destination Changes:** If a passenger wishes to change their destination while on board the MTS Access vehicle, they must call the MTS Access reservation office. Destination changes can only be authorized by the MTS Access reservations office. If a passenger no longer wishes to travel to the originally booked destination, and the new trip destination cannot be accommodated or approved, the driver will be instructed to return the passenger to the place of their trip origin.

**Automated Notifications:** MTS Access utilizes an automated notification system that will call riders with important information such as day before trip notification, day of trip notification, imminent arrival notification, no-shows, cancelled trips and trip booking notifications.

## Passenger Code of Conduct

MTS Access may exclude riders from our services if they engage in violent, seriously disruptive or illegal conduct, or represent a direct threat to the health or safety of themselves or others. At the time of such an incident, the passenger will either be returned to the place of their origin, or local law enforcement will be called to the scene at the discretion of MTS management.

## Your Civil Rights - Title VI Policy

MTS assures that no person shall, on the grounds of race, color or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be otherwise subjected to discrimination under any agency program or activity. To request additional information on MTS' nondiscrimination obligations or to file a Title VI complaint against MTS, please write to: MTS Deputy General Counsel, 1255 Imperial Ave., Suite 1000, San Diego, 92101, email [TitleVIComplaints@sdmts.com](mailto:TitleVIComplaints@sdmts.com) or visit [sdmts.com](https://sdmts.com).

**Alternative formats available upon request. Please call: (619) 231-1466**