

**Allois  
Monroeville**  
ACCESS user for 16 years

“ACCESS helps me to keep my independence.”



# TRIP TIPS

A Guide For ACCESS 65 Plus Customers  
(412) 562-5353  
RELAY 711

[www.MyACCESSRide.com](http://www.MyACCESSRide.com)

**Susan & Whistey**  
**Sewickley**  
ACCESS user since 2001

“I couldn't live life without ACCESS.”



# 65 PLUS TRIP TIPS TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>WELCOME TO ACCESS!</u>	<u>3</u>
<u>SERVICE PROVIDERS</u>	<u>3</u>
• Your ACCESS Service Provider	
<u>CENTRAL ACCESS OFFICE</u>	<u>4</u>
• Let us hear from you	
• When to call the central ACCESS office	
<u>FARES</u>	<u>4-5</u>
• ePurse	
• Discounts	
• Returned Checks	
<u>SCHEDULING A TRIP</u>	<u>5-6</u>
• Reservation Tips	
• Standing Orders	
• Will-Call Returns	
• On-Time “Window”	
• In-Touch Automated Call Outs	
• Cancellations, No-Shows & Reservation Changes	
• No-shows	
<u>CUSTOMER GUIDELINES</u>	<u>7</u>
<u>ASSISTANCE</u>	<u>7</u>
• Drivers will:	
• Drivers are not permitted to:	
• Children	
<u>DRIVER TRAINING</u>	<u>8</u>
<u>SAFETY &amp; MOBILITY</u>	<u>8</u>
• If you use a wheelchair or scooter	
<u>VEHICLES</u>	<u>8</u>
<u>WINTER WEATHER</u>	<u>9</u>
• Path of Travel Between Home and the Vehicle	
• Special Exceptions	
• Road Conditions	
• Traffic Delays	

## **WELCOME TO ACCESS!**

ACCESS service is a shared-ride, public transportation program sponsored by Port Authority of Allegheny County, service is provided throughout Allegheny County and to destinations 1.5 miles from the Allegheny County line in adjoining counties, seven (7) days per week between the hours of 6:00 AM and midnight. There are no restrictions on the type or number of trips you may take except that service may be limited by the number of shared-ride vehicles that are in service.

ACCESS is shared-ride transportation, which means that passengers must share the vehicle with other riders traveling at the same time. The vehicle may make several stops along the way before dropping you off. Ride sharing helps ACCESS make the best use of available vehicles and keeps the cost down. ACCESS does not provide exclusive-ride service.

Subsidies for the 85% discount on the ACCESS 65 Plus fares are provided by the Pennsylvania Lottery through the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation. Lottery funding, which provides the discount on your rides, is not unlimited. Older adults can help to preserve their lottery fund by using Port Authority bus service whenever possible.

## **SERVICE PROVIDERS**

ACCESS services are provided by a number of service providers under contract to ACCESS Transportation Systems. ACCESS service providers are the companies which own and operate the vehicles and actually provide the transportation service.

To place a reservation for ACCESS service, call the ACCESS service provider in your neighborhood. Their special ACCESS phone number is listed below.

## **Your ACCESS Service Provider is:**

## CENTRAL ACCESS OFFICE

The ACCESS program is managed from the central ACCESS office with an experienced customer service staff available to answer questions or provide assistance. The central ACCESS office is located in Downtown Pittsburgh at the corner of Seventh Avenue and Smithfield Street.

**Office Hours:** Monday through Friday, **8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.**

### **Mailing address:**

ACCESS Transportation Systems  
Centre City Tower  
650 Smithfield Street, Suite 440  
Pittsburgh, PA 15222

**Telephone number:** (412) 562-5353 or Relay 711

**Fax number:** (412) 391-0594

**Website:** MyACCESSRide.com

**Accessible Formats:** Upon request, in large print, Braille, audio cassette or txt files by email.

### **Let us hear from you!**

Providing high quality service is a top priority for the ACCESS program. You are encouraged to call the central ACCESS office any time you have a concern, compliment or suggestion about ACCESS service. ACCESS service providers are not permitted to accept complaints from customers. Complaints may be registered by calling or writing the central ACCESS office.

### **When to call the central ACCESS office:**

- You cannot get through on the telephone after trying for **fifteen (15) minutes**.
- Your pre-scheduled vehicle is **more than thirty (30) minutes** late.
- You have waited over **forty-five (45) minutes** for your will-call return.
- You have missed your pre-scheduled pick-up from your home and are requesting that another vehicle be sent for you.
- You have a question about your ePurse account.
- You are traveling to or from Pittsburgh International Airport (*Eligible customers and their personal assistants or companions may each take **two pieces of luggage and one carry-on bag**. Please keep luggage to a reasonable size and weight.*)
- You have a suggestion, complaint or compliment (*Service providers are not permitted to accept complaints from passengers.*)
- You have any questions or concerns.

## **FARES**

All ACCESS fares are predetermined based on trip length. When you place your trip reservation, the reservationist will tell you how much your trip will cost each way. A 65 Plus eligible trip fare ranges between the minimum one-way fare of \$3.15 and the maximum one-way fare of \$5.25. Fares are paid from an electronic account that you will establish called **ePurse**. See the enclosed **ePurse User Guide** for information about setting up and using your ePurse. If you are taking a companion under the age of 65, ACCESS offers a special fare of \$2.50 each way which will also be paid from your ePurse. If you are traveling with another 65 Plus rider, that person's trip must be booked using their own 65 Plus account.

## Discounts

Groups of **four (4)** or more passengers traveling from the same origin to the same destination **may be eligible for a discount**. More information about discounts is available from the central ACCESS office.

## Returned Checks

If your check “bounces” or your credit card is refused after a purchase, you will be charged a service fee. The 1st incident is **\$15.00** and any additional incidents are **\$25.00**.

## SCHEDULING A TRIP

To place a reservation for ACCESS service, call the service provider listed on the front page:

- All trips must be placed **one day in advance** between the hours of **8:00 AM and 3:00 PM**
- Reservations are accepted Saturday for Sunday, and Sunday for Monday (*You may call Friday for Sunday or Monday, but this is not required.*)
- No reservations for transportation are accepted before 8:00 AM or after 3:00 PM
- No reservations for transportation may be placed on the same day as the trip (The ACCESS 65 Plus Program does not provide emergency service and **cannot** be used for personal or medical emergencies.)
- When you call your provider to place your order, have the following information ready:
  - ✓ Your full name
  - ✓ PIN number for your ePurse
  - ✓ Your complete address, including neighborhood (*Ex. Troy Hill*) including any special entrance information
  - ✓ Your apartment number and intercom or bell number
  - ✓ Your home or cell phone number
  - ✓ The day and date of your trip
  - ✓ Appointment time **or** pick-up time. If you do not have an appointment time, the call taker will help you determine a pick-up time that will ensure your on-time arrival, and remember, you may be asked to adjust your pick-up time to accommodate the shared-ride trip.
  - ✓ Return time. Only trips for appointments with non-predictable ending times may be scheduled with a “will-call” return.
  - ✓ Complete address of your destination, including specific entrance. The call taker will tell you which entrance to use if you are going to a mall or hospital.
  - ✓ Phone number at your destination, whenever possible
  - ✓ If you use a wheelchair or need special assistance ex: “I am blind” and if a personal assistant or companion will travel with you
  - ✓ Be sure the call taker tells you his or her name, repeats your itinerary back to you, and tells you the fare for your trip; please keep record of this information

## Reservation Tips

You may be asked to adjust your pick-up or return time to accommodate a shared-ride schedule.

- When traveling during rush hours, allow some extra time to reach your destination
- Traffic and heavy demand for service during peak periods may make your ride a bit longer
- The vehicle may make other stops along the way

## Standing Orders

Customers may request “standing order” reservations for trips which are taken on a regular basis. The vehicle automatically comes as scheduled unless you call to change or cancel the order. A standing order trip must meet the following criteria:

- Taken at least **five (5)** times per week at the same time
- Has the same origin and destination **all** five (5) days
- Taken at least 75% of the time.
- A cancellation rate of 50% or more may result in the cancellation of your standing order
- **Standing orders are automatically cancelled on the following major holidays:** New Year's Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving and Christmas. If you need your regular standing order trip on these days, you must call your service provider.

### Will-Call Returns

If you are traveling to an appointment, with a non-predictable ending time, you may choose to call for return when you are ready to leave:

- After you make the call yourself, go directly to the entrance specified to wait for your vehicle
- You must return from the same place you were dropped off
- If you choose to call for a return trip, you should expect to wait anywhere from **5-45 minutes**
- Will-call returns are not permitted on weekends or after 5:00 PM, even for medical appointments (*You **must** schedule your return trip if riding on the weekend, on a holiday or after 5:00 PM.*)

### On-Time "Window"

Drivers are permitted to arrive **ten (10) minutes before** or **twenty (20) minutes past** the scheduled time and still be considered on-time. Riders must be ready to go and waiting at the door **ten (10) minutes** before the scheduled pick-up time. The driver is only permitted to wait **five (5) minutes** for a late passenger.

### In-Touch Automated Call Outs

You will receive a phone call or text from ACCESS when the vehicle is within approximately **ten (10) minutes** of arrival at your pick-up location. You can also request a call or text within approximately **ten (10) minutes** prior to the vehicle arriving at your destination location for your return trip. In-Touch Calls are a courtesy and are not guaranteed.

### Cancellations, No-Shows & Reservation Changes

You may not change your destination or time once you have boarded the vehicle. If you need to cancel a trip, call your service provider or go online to MyACCESSRide.com as soon as possible but **no less than one hour before** your scheduled pick-up time:

- You must call your service provider directly. Drivers are not permitted to accept information regarding cancellations or changes
- If your first trip of the day is a no-show, all of your other trips for the day will be **automatically cancelled, unless you call your service provider**
- Cancellations at the door and no-shows are a serious violation of ACCESS policy, a waste of valuable resources and may result in suspension of ACCESS service.

### No-shows

A no-show happens when the driver arrives on-time at the correct location, announces him/herself properly, but the customer has not cancelled the trip and does not go.

- If the vehicle is late and you decide to leave before it comes, your cooperation in calling to cancel the ride before leaving will be appreciated
- Trips you do not wish to take should be **cancelled at least one hour before the scheduled pick-up** time
- Failing to cancel a trip at least **fifteen (15) minutes** before the scheduled time is considered a no-show
- Within **thirty (30) days** you will receive a letter of explanation from the central ACCESS office outlining the penalties for no-shows

## Customer Guidelines

- Follow all ACCESS policies
- Refrain from abusive, indecent, vulgar, profane language/behavior or language which threatens other passengers or drivers
- Be ready to leave when the driver arrives, to avoid delaying other customers
- ACCESS passengers must wear seat belts
- There is no smoking, eating or drinking in vehicles
- Use headphones when listening to radios or other audio devices
- Refrain from using cell phones on the vehicle except in emergencies
- Carry your ACCESS card with you as you may be asked to present your ACCESS I.D. card before boarding the vehicle
- Vans, with or without lifts, and sedans are all used for ACCESS service and you must ride in the vehicle that comes for you
- You may not request any specific type of vehicle unless you use a wheelchair or need the lift to board the van.
- Service Animals are permitted on vehicles
- Pets are permitted on vehicles if they are in a carrier which fits on your lap

## ASSISTANCE

Your driver is a professional. Drivers in ACCESS service are thoroughly trained, have good driving records, have had criminal history background checks and drug/alcohol screenings.

Drivers **will**:

- Wear a Photo I.D. Badge, clearly displayed, with their name, employee number and company name and will identify him/herself to you upon arrival
- Knock on the door, ring the bell, or have the office call to announce his/her arrival
- Assist you to and from the door, if there are not more than **four (4) steps**
- Assist you in boarding the vehicle, getting to your seat and getting off the vehicle
- Assist you with fastening your seatbelt and securing your wheelchair
- Assist you with carrying up to **four (4) reasonably sized packages**

Drivers **are not permitted** to:

- Enter your home, or look for you beyond the lobby of any building in which you are waiting
- Drop you off at any destination other than what you have scheduled
- Assist you up or down more than **four (4) steps**, or over unsafe surfaces such as gravel, or grassy slopes
- Accept tips

## Children

Children under the age of ten (10) must be accompanied by an adult. Children aged four (4) and under must use a car seat provided by the parent. PA State law requires that children over the age of four (4) but under age eight (8) must be secured in a seat belt and a child booster seat provided by the parent.

## Hand-to-Hand & Person-Centered Service

In addition to the basic paratransit service offering, ACCESS provides hand to hand service for individuals who require constant supervision and service modifications.

Some ACCESS passengers require a higher level of supervision and cannot be left unattended. These customers carry a special code in their file alerting drivers to ensure they are handed off to a responsible person and cannot leave the passenger unless there is someone available to receive

them both at home and at their destination. An elaborate safety net is in place in the event of a problem. Call ACCESS at **(412) 562-5353** for more information.

Drivers are trained to report incidents which are individually investigated by ACCESS. Although they may not be strictly transportation related issues, ACCESS works with its network of community providers to resolve individual, personal issues including lack of accessibility to the house, a change in condition (onset of confusion) signs of abuse, and problems with personal hygiene or nutrition.

### **Special Requests**

If there is an ACCESS rule or policy that, due to your disability, makes it difficult or prevents you from using the service, you may call or write to the central ACCESS office to discuss your situation. When at all possible, requests should be made in advance and will be considered on a case by case basis as long as they are reasonable and do not create a direct threat to others or a fundamental change to basic ACCESS service.

### **DRIVER TRAINING**

Drivers receive a combination of classroom and on the road training to proficiency, including the following areas:

- Defensive driving
- Substance abuse training
- Passenger assistance techniques
- Use of lifts and wheelchair securements
- Quality customer service
- ACCESS policies and procedures
- Radio and emergency procedures
- Disability awareness
- Pre-trip vehicle inspection
- Use of on board technology

### **SAFETY & MOBILITY**

The safety of all passengers and drivers is one of ACCESS' most important priorities. To ensure safe transportation, the cooperation of ACCESS riders is required:

- Portable oxygen, personal respirators or other life support equipment is permitted on board. The equipment must be small enough to fit into the vehicle and be secured.
- If you are not able to walk up and down the steps of the van, you can ride up and down standing on the lift. There are handrails on both sides for you to hold on to, and the driver will help you.
- If you use a wheelchair:
  - All wheelchairs and scooters will be secured by the driver using a four-point securement system
  - Any wheelchair up to 50" long and 32" wide can be accommodated on a vehicle
  - The total combined weight of the passenger and the wheelchair must not exceed 800 lbs.
  - Requests for service from people whose mobility aid exceeds this size or weight are made on a case by case basis. Contact the central ACCESS office for assistance.
  - The driver will secure the seat belt. Use of the shoulder harness is strongly recommended and ask the driver to adjust the height if it is not comfortable.
  - If you use a power wheelchair or scooter, the driver is not able to provide any assistance up or down curbs or steps
  - Other than assisting you on and off the lift, the driver will not operate your power wheelchair or scooter

### **VEHICLES**

Every vehicle used in ACCESS service is equipped with on-board recording devices and GPS technology including Automated Vehicle Location (AVL) which displays, in real time, the location of every vehicle. All vehicles are inspected regularly and meet all state and federal requirements for safety. Vehicles are equipped with two-way radios, air conditioning and special accessibility features.

## **WINTER WEATHER**

**All ACCESS 65 Plus service is automatically cancelled** when the City of Pittsburgh Public Schools are closed due to severe winter weather. If Pittsburgh City Schools are closed due to severe winter weather, then ACCESS 65 Plus and Older Persons Transportation (OPT) service (*except dialysis*) is cancelled for that same day.

You will receive a call from ACCESS to inform you if your trip is cancelled due to severe weather conditions, but you should also be aware of City of Pittsburgh school closures. Check the school closing information on local TV channels or given on Pittsburgh radio stations early in the morning. If weather conditions require cancellation on the weekend, you will receive a call from ACCESS.

## **Special Exceptions**

Even though 65 Plus and OPT trips are cancelled (*except dialysis*) when the City of Pittsburgh Schools close due to severe weather, if your walkway is clear and the roads are passable, you can call your ACCESS service provider to request that your trip still be provided. If there is space in a vehicle available, your ride will be provided.

## **Path of Travel Between Home and the Vehicle**

It is the responsibility of riders to make sure that the path of travel between home and the vehicle is free of snow and ice, and clear year-round. Local resources, like Snow Angels (412) 475-2459, may be able to assist with snow/ice removal. If there is an accumulation of snow or ice on the walkway, the driver may not be able to assist you to and from the door. If the driver can't get to your door, you will receive a phone call from the service provider.

## **Road Conditions**

Throughout the winter, ACCESS will make every effort to provide your service. However, if your driver cannot find a safe, passable route to your home, you will receive a call to tell you that it is not possible to pick you up that day.

## **Traffic Delays**

Snowy and icy conditions make travel slower and create more traffic. You may wish to allow a little more time to get to your destination if the weather forecast is for snow. Your patience is appreciated during times when late arrivals due to severe weather conditions are beyond the driver's control.