

Information Regarding Milwaukee County Transit System's Transit Plus Program

Paratransit is a specialized service for individuals with a disabling illness or condition that prevents them from using Milwaukee County Transit System buses. Not all people with disabilities are either eligible, or choose, to use paratransit services. The following describes the program more thoroughly.

Who qualifies for Transit Plus service?

- A person with a disability who cannot independently board, ride or get off a bus.
- A person whose disability-related condition or environmental barrier makes it impossible to independently travel to or from a fixed route bus stop.

To be eligible for paratransit services an individual must experience a disability which precludes them from accessing fixed route bus transportation. Eligible individuals may either be found eligible for all paratransit trips (unconditionally eligible) or eligible for trips under some conditions (conditionally eligible).

There are many circumstances in which a person with some disability does not qualify, need or choose to use paratransit services such as:

- Individual may not have a disability that rises to the level of requiring special transportation.
- Some may have difficulties occasionally. For instance, conditions such as poor night lighting, uneven surfaces, hills, etc. may compromise the ease, or possibility of independence.
- An eligible paratransit rider may be expected to use fixed route services some of the time when capable of doing so.
- Others with disabilities may not identify themselves as people experiencing transportation limitations while reducing their involvement in the community or family life.
- And some with recently acquired disabilities may not know of transportation services available to them.

Benefits of Riding the Bus over Paratransit Service

MCTS is proud to provide paratransit service for those who need it, but we make every effort to encourage citizens to ride the bus. In fact, we continuously work to remove barriers that might prevent someone from riding the bus.

Currently, there are 5,000 Transit Plus users:

- 2,541 have conditional eligibility
- 2,459 have no conditions on service

Also there are 4,204 reduced fare clients made up of the following:

- 680 who are eligible due to Medicare
- 1,044 who are eligible since they are over 65 years
- 2,480 who are eligible due to physician notification

The following are examples of benefits of using bus transportation over paratransit:

- Increase everyone's travel independence by increasing mobility options with 59 bus routes traveling across Milwaukee County.
- Bus is easier to use. The van program requires reservations, made at least the day prior.
- Less wait time with the bus. There may be up to a 25 minute wait time when using paratransit. This is within ADA parameters.
- By using the bus system, riders can travel more spontaneously, count on a bus's regular schedule and be more connected to the community. Many times people need to travel to a location that was not planned or unable to plan a day in advance.
- The bus is cost effective for the rider and the community. Each paratransit trip costs taxpayers nearly \$32, of which passengers pay \$3.50.

National statistics suggest that more than 50 million Americans will experience a disabling condition during the span of their lives. This not only impacts their lives, but the lives of family and friends. Becoming a person with a disability is a minority population which anyone can join in the course of their lives.

I hope that this explanation further clarifies the importance of not creating unnecessary barriers for people with disabilities and unmask the false report that people with disabilities can rely on paratransit services for the entirety of their transportation needs.