Statement on Expansion of Access-a-Ride On-Demand E-Hail Pilot
MTA Board Meeting
September 25, 2019

We were happy to see that many of the goals of the next 5-year capital plan, like modernizing the subway's outdated signaling system, overhauling station accessibility, and replacing old subway cars and buses, are aligned with many of the priorities of New York City's 8 million subway and bus riders. These improvements are vital to the future of New York City's transit system, but require leadership from Albany to ensure that the MTA has the full funding necessary to turn this plan into reality, one that doesn't borrow funds on the backs of riders.

While many New Yorkers anticipate these upcoming improvements on buses and subways, those that depend on Access-A-Ride are still left in the lurch with the fate of on-demand e-hail service uncertain.

As you know, AAR is notorious for its poor service. The on-demand ehail pilot has been considered “life changing” by many who have used it, and the transformation of Access-A-Ride using on-demand e-hail service has the potential to be one of the great success stories to come out of this agency. But this service has only been made available to a small fraction of the 150 thousand New Yorkers who depend on Access-A-Ride each day, and is expected to expire in 2020.

The future of Access-a-ride should be one that includes, and expands, on-demand ehail service. We recognize the particular cost challenges that come with providing paratransit service that, while it cost less per trip than traditional service ends up costing more overall because it is popular, but the MTA cannot be disincentivized from providing paratransit riders with decent service for this reason.

Lastly, paratransit should be included in the rollout and implementation of OMNY. As a reminder, Access-a-Riders are expected to pay the fare in cash, using exact change. Including paratransit in the new fare payment rollout isn’t just a matter of convenience, it’s a matter of equity- because of this barrier in payment method, paratransit riders are currently not eligible for the same fare discounts as everyone else, like unlimited weekly or monthly MetroCards or half-priced MetroCards for low-income Access-A-Ride users.

Accessibility of our transit system was made a huge priority in the next 5-year capital plan. But a broad plan to overhaul accessibility that overlooks Access-A-Ride is incomplete.