

Glossary of Transportation Terms

Part of the *Transportation for Our Military Series*

The following definitions of commonly used transportation terms, topics and services are provided to familiarize veterans service organizations and other organizations serving transitioning military personnel and their families with the many transportation options and services available to serve this population.

Accessibility: The extent to which facilities, including transit vehicles, are free of barriers and can be used by people who have disabilities, including wheelchair users.

ADA complementary paratransit service: The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires public transit agencies that provide fixed-route service to provide “complementary paratransit” services to people with disabilities who cannot use the fixed-route bus or rail service because of a disability. ADA regulations specifically define a population of customers who are entitled to this service as a civil right. The regulations also define minimum service characteristics that must be met for this service to be considered equivalent to the fixed-route service it is intended to complement. In general, ADA complementary paratransit service must be provided within 3/4 of a mile of a bus route or rail station, at the same hours and days, for no more than twice the regular fixed route fare.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA): Passed by Congress in 1990, this Act mandates equal opportunities for people with disabilities in the areas of employment, transportation, communications and public accommodations. Under ADA, most transportation providers are obliged to purchase lift equipped vehicles for their fixed-route services and must ensure system-wide accessibility of their demand-responsive services to people with disabilities. Public transit providers also must supplement their fixed-route services with paratransit services for those people unable to use fixed-route service because of their disability.

Curb-to-curb service: A common designation for paratransit services, in which the transit vehicle picks up and discharges passengers at the curb or driveway in front of

their home or destination. In curb-to-curb service the driver does not assist the passenger along walks or steps to the door of the home or other destination.

Demand-response service: This type of transit service allows individual passengers to request transportation from a specific location to another specific location at a certain time. Transit vehicles providing demand-response service do not follow a fixed route, but travel throughout the community transporting passengers according to their specific requests. The service may also be known as “dial-a-ride.” These services usually, but not always, require advance reservations.

Disabled: Any person who by reason of illness, injury, age, congenital malfunction or other permanent or temporary incapacity or disability is unable, without special facilities, to use local transit facilities and services as effectively as people who are not so affected.

Door-to-door service: A form of paratransit service that includes passenger assistance between the vehicle and the door of the passenger’s home or other destination. A higher level of service than curb-to-curb, yet not as specialized as “door-through-door” service, where the driver actually provides assistance within the origin or destination.

Easter Seals Project Action (ESPA): Funded through a cooperative agreement with the Federal Transit Administration, Easter Seals Project ACTION promotes cooperation between the transportation industry and the disability community to increase mobility for people with disabilities under the ADA and beyond.

Fixed route service: Transit services in which vehicles run on regular, scheduled routes with fixed stops and

no deviation. Typically, fixed-route service is characterized by printed schedules or timetables, designated bus stops where passengers board and alight and the use of larger transit vehicles.

Human services transportation: Transportation for clients of a specific human or social service agency that is usually limited to a specific trip purpose. Human service agency trips are often provided under contract to a human service agency and may be provided exclusively or rideshared with other human service agencies or general public service.

Metropolitan planning organization (MPO): Organizational entities designated by law with the lead responsibility for developing transportation plans and programs for urbanized areas of 50,000 or more in population.

Paratransit: Types of passenger transportation that are more flexible than conventional fixed-route transit but more structured than the use of private automobiles. Paratransit is a broad term that may be used to describe any means of shared ride transportation other than fixed route mass transit services. Paratransit services usually use smaller vehicles (less than 25 passengers) and provide advance-reservation, demand-responsive service that is either curb-to-curb or door-to-door. Paratransit services that are provided to accommodate passengers with disabilities who are unable to use fixed route service and that meet specific service equivalency tests are called ADA complementary paratransit services.

Rideshare/ridematch program: A program that facilitates the formation of carpools and vanpools, usually for work trips. Such programs maintain a database including information on ride times, origins, destinations and driver/rider preferences of users and potential users. Individuals requesting to join an existing pool or those looking for riders are matched by program staff with other appropriate people.

Service route: Transit routes tailored to meet the needs of a specific market segment (such as older adults or people with disabilities) in a community. Service routes often evolve out of a pattern of demand-response travel within a community. Characteristics of a service route include stops at high-density residential complexes or group homes, shopping areas, medical facilities, and destinations specific to the target population such as senior centers or sheltered work sites. Stops are usually positioned near an accessible entrance of a

building instead of on the street, and the ride times are typically longer than on a “conventional” fixed route covering the same general area. Vehicles tend to be smaller and accessible to people with disabilities, and drivers usually offer a relatively high level of personal assistance.

Subscription service: When a passenger or group of passengers requests a repetitive ride (such as on a daily or weekly service on an ongoing basis), trips are often scheduled on a subscription or “standing order” basis. The passenger makes a single initial trip request, and the transit system automatically schedules them for their trip(s) each day or week. This type of service is frequently used in transporting human service agency clients to regular agency programs.

Transportation disadvantaged: A term used to describe those people who have little or no access to meaningful jobs, services, and recreation because a transportation system does not meet their needs. Often refers to those individuals who cannot drive a private automobile because of age, disability, or lack of resources.

Transportation Management Association (TMA): A voluntary association of public and private agencies and firms joined to cooperatively develop transportation-enhancing programs in a given area. TMAs are appropriate organizations to better manage transportation demand in congested suburban communities. TMAs can also be called TMOs (transportation management organizations).

Vanpool: A prearranged ridesharing service in which a number of people travel together on a regular basis in a van. Vanpools may be publicly operated, employer operated, individually owned or leased.

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