

Mobility: On-the Move, MARTA Mobility's Bi-Monthly Newsletter

"The Future is Accessible"

Message from the Director

By Miles Turpin, Director, Mobility Services, MARTA Mobility

As we head into the summer months, I want to acknowledge some specific service challenges affecting our Mobility service performance. (1) Operator resources/recruitment, (2) Service overflow capacity, (3) Steady increase in ridership. I want to assure everyone, that your MARTA Mobility Oversight Team, have been relentlessly attacking these challenges with a high-level sense of urgency. We all want to win, but greatness takes time! Nothing great can be achieved without persistence and our Mobility Providers are dedicated to finding a solution to these particular challenges. Nevertheless, we need to gauge our performance regardless of whether we've been successful or not, and my commitment to you, is that our passion and perseverance in providing safe & quality paratransit services for you, will not wain.

Watch this space... our work has just begun! We hope that you had a wonderful 4th of July holiday weekend and are having a great start to a fruitful Summer season.

Out-of-Town Visitor Status

Q: I am a Mobility customer, and I will be traveling out of town this summer. Will I be eligible to ride the paratransit service in another U. S. city?

A: The short answer is YES. MARTA Mobility is a recognized ADA paratransit service, as such, if you are certified with MARTA and you travel to another city with an ADA paratransit service, you are eligible to receive "Visitor Status" to ride that city's paratransit service.

Here is the caveat, you must reach out to that agency in advance and provide them with any requested documentation regarding your eligibility status with MARTA Mobility. Typically, that information is found in the 'eligibility determination letter' that you received from MARTA. However, you should contact that agency prior to your scheduled travel for instructions regarding what specific information is needed and what format is required for submission.

Once your information has been received by the out-of-town transit agency, you will receive "Visitor Status" and will be eligible to ride their ADA paratransit service **for up to 21 days during any 365-day period** (typically a rolling 12-month period). If you need to ride beyond the 21 days, that agency may require (as would be the case with MARTA Mobility) that you apply for eligibility based on their agency's process.

[Source: U. S. Department of Transportation (DOT) Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) regulations at 49 C.F.R. Section 37.127]

MARTA Launches an All-Electrical Bus Fleet

On Sunday, May 1, 2022, MARTA put into service three (3) electric buses on the Route 2 and 102. The announcement of the fleet's deployment was made in coordination with the Agency's observance of Earth Day on April 22, 2022. The routes operate out of the North Avenue rail station and will service the Ponce de Leon Avenue corridor between Midtown and the Poncey-Highland neighborhood, connecting to Ponce City Market and the Beltline's eastside trail. At the eastern end of the route, the 102 turns south to the Edgewood retail district, ending at Edgewood/Candler Park Station, and Route 2 continues east on Ponce de Leon Avenue to East Lake Station.

MARTA's Interim General Manager and CEO Collie Greenwood stated that "Electric buses are ideal for routes that travel through dense urban corridors like the 2 and 102- leaving no noise or emissions in their wake."

The deployment of electrical buses supports MARTA's commitment to sustainability. Electric buses are highly efficient and have lower operating cost than diesel buses. The fuel savings can be significant when comparing electric to diesel, and the buses also have fewer moving parts which could lead to less maintenance needs.

In 2019, MARTA received \$2.6 million through an FTA Low/No Emission Bus Grant to support the purchase of six electric buses and charging infrastructure. And recently MARTA received an additional \$3.8 million in Congressionally Directed Spending to support the purchase of six more buses, bringing our total electric fleet to 12.

MARTA's plans for future electric bus deployment (pending funding), includes the Clayton Southlake Bus Rapid Transit (BRT). This project will use ten (10) electric buses to provide high-capacity transit service from the College Park rail station to key destinations in Clayton County. Electric buses will also be used on Atlanta's first BRT route along Summerhill Road to connect the Beltline, Peoplestown, Summerhill, Capitol Gateway and South Downtown.

This article is excerpted from MARTA's April 22, 2022 official Press Release regarding the launch our electrical bus fleet. For additional information, please click or enter the link (<https://itsmarta.com/marta-celebrates-earth-day.aspx>) in your web browser.

Service Animals on Public Transit

By Cherie Newton, Mobility Service Agent, MARTA Mobility

The vast majority of service animals are dogs. They come in many different breeds- both larger and small, can be trained to perform a wide number of tasks for their handlers with disabilities. Three (3) factors determine whether an animal is a service animal, or an emotional support animal (ESA). (1) They are specifically trained to perform tasks for an individual with a disability for which he/she cannot perform for themselves. (2) They are not allowed to be aggressive. (3) They must be housebroken and completely under the control of their handler at all times.

Some tasks a service animal may be trained to perform include guiding an individual who is visually impaired or blind, alerting their handler to an oncoming seizure, low blood sugar or to remind them to take their medication. Service animals may also help pull a wheelchair, turn on/off lights, open doors, carry and/or retrieve objects for their handler.

Many organizations that train service animals provide their clients with ID cards and/or specialized equipment such as a guide dog harness, vest proclaiming the animal is a service/working animal, but a handler who has self-trained their animal does not usually have ready access to these things.

So, just how would a Bus or Mobility Operator know that an animal, accompanying an individual is a legitimately trained service animal vs. an ESA? There are two (2) questions that the Operator is permitted to ask the passenger: (1) Is this a service animal needed because of a disability? (2) What work or tasks is this animal specifically and individually trained to perform? The individual cannot be required to show identification or documentation for either themselves or their service animal. The individual also cannot be asked about their disability. However, the answer to the question will determine whether the customer will be permitted to board the vehicle with the animal.

ESAs are not trained to perform tasks for an individual with a disability; they are simply pets. Their simple presence is what gives their owner comfort and a feeling of security. This is one of the main reasons why many people have pets at home. Additionally, not all ESAs are housebroken or able to handle the stresses of being out in public. A service animal has been extensively socialized in a wide variety of public environments over the span of many months up to two years, and has proven itself to be stable, calm, and reliable. Also, the ESA may be aggressive to other animals or humans.

Fear, dislike, or allergies are not legitimate reasons for excluding a service animal from boarding a bus, train or from entering a facility. If a passenger objects to the presence of the service animal, the Operator can *offer* him/her an opportunity to move to a different area of the vehicle. If this is on a fixed route bus, and still not satisfactory to the objecting customer, the Operator can then offer an emergency transfer so that the individual with the concern or fear, can wait at the stop for the next bus.

Note that a service animal team may not be restricted to a specific area of the bus, train or facility or be denied entrance because the Operator or facility attendant has animal fear/dislike issues.

Operators and other transit personnel are not required to interact with or handle service animals. That is the responsibility of the animal's handler. Should the service animal get out of control, the handler should be given a chance to correct their animal's behavior. If an out-of-control service animal poses a safety risk it can be denied entrance to the bus, train and/or facility.

If you have questions or would like more information about service animals, please access ADA website by typing the following link (https://www.ada.gov/service_animals_2010.htm) into your web browser.

The MARTA Accessibility Committee

By Denise R. Brown, Equity Administrator, MARTA's Office of Diversity & Inclusion

MARTA is required under The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 and Federal Transit Administration regulations to respond to the total transportation needs of the Metropolitan Atlanta community, seniors, and individuals with disabilities. An essential element of MARTA's responsibilities under ADA is in the provisions of nondiscriminatory accessible transportation services and amenities which accommodate all patrons.

The MARTA Accessibility Committee's (MAC) purpose is to advise MARTA on how best to provide service to the communities of seniors and individuals with disabilities within MARTA's service areas. This includes gathering and giving feedback to MARTA to ensure that decisions, activities, program and services are equitable and do not adversely impact current or potential riders who are seniors or individuals with a disability. MAC members are passionate about accessible transportation and they believe it's the key to independent living for seniors and individuals with disabilities. MAC members are active in their communities and help disseminate information about MARTA projects, programs, and services.

MARTA has had various versions of the MAC for over 30 years. The current MAC comprises of twelve members and a committee chair, six individuals with disabilities, and six members from organizations that support individuals with disabilities/seniors. All members must live or work in the MARTA service area (Clayton, Fulton, or DeKalb Counties, and/or the City of Atlanta). Participation in MAC is voluntary.

Members represent the following groups:

- Upper/Lower Extremity Impairment
- Cognitive/Developmental Disabilities
- Personal Mobility Aid/Wheelchair User
- Deaf/Hard of Hearing
- Seniors (Must be 65 years of age or older)
- Blind/Visually Impaired

The following is a list of a few areas and/or projects that MAC had provided MARTA feedback on:

- AVIS-Audio Visual Information System that is installed in all 38 Stations
- Elevator/Escalator Renovation Project
- The Mystery Customer Program Reports
- Review trends in the Customer Service Complaints
- The Streamlined Mobility Eligibility Application Process
- Accessible Services Videos
- Accessibility of New Rail Cars
- SMART Restrooms in the Stations
- "Where's My Bus" app
- Breeze Vending Machines
- The Fare Gates

The MAC meets every other month beginning in January, and subcommittees meet in the opposite months. Anyone passionate about transit who wants to participate on the MAC can go to the website <https://itsmarta.com/marta-accessibility-committee.aspx> for additional information and to complete an application. You can also call 404-848-4037, or email drbrown@itsmarta.com

Rider's Advisory Committee

By Lyle V. Harris, Sr. Director Customer & Employee Experience

MARTA recently announced the next Riders' Advisory Council (RAC), the all-volunteer body dedicated to helping improve the transit experience for customers. The new, 30-member council is composed of people drawn from MARTA's service area- The City of Atlanta, DeKalb, Fulton, and Clayton counties. RAC members serve for two years and do not vote; MARTA employees, contractors and elected officials are ineligible.

RAC members were selected after an open application process based on criteria including ridership habits, commuting experiences, and community involvement. The RAC's composition intentionally reflects the demographic diversity of the region's fast-growing population.

"MARTA's success depends on responding to and anticipating our customers' needs and expectations whenever they are using our service," said MARTA Interim General Manager and CEO Collie Greenwood. "The Riders' Advisory Council gives us direct input from customers who are collaborating constructively to make us better. That's invaluable."

MARTA's Chief Customer Experience Officer, Rhonda Allen, oversees the RAC in a role that was created to transform the agency's business practices and to sharpen its focus on customer-facing initiatives.

RAC members meet monthly and learn about the inner workings of the transit systems while offering their viewpoints on potential customer impacts of projects including realignment of MARTA's bus network, station enhancements, the new railcar fleet, enhanced customer communication, an upgraded fare collection system and the rollout of digital signage. The group will also take field trips to key MARTA facilities including bus garages and railyards.

The inaugural group of RAC members were seated in 2020 and successfully completed their terms in May 2022 after providing meaningful input to MARTA on a wide range of topics. One of the projects proposed by a previous RAC member- a pedestrian crosswalk at the Civic Center station on West Peachtree Street – has been approved for construction as part of MARTA's capitol program and is scheduled for completion later this year.

Along with the newest cohort of council members, RAC alumni will continue playing a vital role in advancing MARTA's ongoing customer experience journey.

For more information about the RAC visit itsmarta.com/marta-rac.aspx or email rac@itsmarta.com

Download MARTA's security app- "See & Say 2.0"

When we look out for each other, we can all enjoy the ride a little more. See & Say 2.0 allows you to report safety concerns discreetly and anonymously to MARTA Police, chat with MARTA Police and share your location with friends. For more information log on to www.itsmarta.com/marta-see-say.aspx

Please call 404-848-4037 to request this information in an alternative format or another language

Key Contacts

Eligibility:	404-848-5389
Reservations:	404-848-5826
Travel Training:	404-848-5193
Estimated Time of Van Arrival (ETA):	404-848-4212
Automated Advanced Trip Cancellation:	404-848-4212 & follow prompts
Mobility Breeze Card (Lost or Damaged):	404-848-5112
Mobility Breeze Card (Auto-Load of Fare):	404-848-4184
No Show Dispute Line:	404-848-4000

Send comments and suggestions to mobilitycertification@itsmarta.com

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