



Making New York a better place to age

New York City Council
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
Chair, Selvena Brooks-Powers
Committee on Aging
Chair, Crystal Hudson
Committee on Mental Health, Disabilities and Addiction
Chair, Linda Lee
February 24, 2023
Oversight - Access-A-Ride

My name is Brianna Paden-Williams and I am the Communications and Policy Associate at LiveOn NY. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

LiveOn NY's members include more than 110 community-based nonprofits that provide core services which allow all New Yorkers to thrive in our communities as we age, such as older adult centers, home-delivered meals, affordable senior housing, NORCs, and home care. LiveOn NY is also home to the Reframing Aging NYC Initiative, part of the national Reframing Aging Initiative aimed to counteract ageism and improve the way policymakers, stakeholders, and the public think about aging and older people. With our members, we work to make New York a better place to age.

Background

Age friendly transportation is a key element of allowing older adults to age in community and thrive in our city. With a 65% customer satisfaction rating in the most recent MTA customer satisfaction survey, Access-A-Ride is not meeting the needs of its users. We have also heard complaints from our providers whose clients rely on Access-A-Ride to get to and from their centers. Through our network, we've seen the importance of transportation as a top concern for older New Yorkers and one's ability to access reliable and safe transit. And yet, we know that for many older adults who live in transit deserts getting to doctors' appointments, going grocery shopping or taking advantage of the City's resources including Older Adult Centers is a constant challenge.

Furthermore, our members have reported fundamental issues with Access-A-Ride program reliability, timeliness, and ease of use. We have heard reports that older adults have arrived hours late to programming at older adult centers, fully missing the programs that they intended on attending. We have also heard that cars did not arrive when called and required multiple calls from the older adult and center staff to book another car, which stranded the older adult at the center with no way to return home until hours later. Issues like these undermine the purpose of a program meant to reliably transport people who cannot access traditional public transportation.

Creating a robust and completely accessible public transportation system is just one part of turning NYC into an age friendly city. Looking ahead we should incorporate universal design principles in all



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elements of our built environment to remove travel barriers to those with limited mobility

Recommendations

Firstly, we invite the City to utilize our aging policy agenda, [Aging is Everyone's Business](#), released by LiveOn NY in partnership with Hunter College Brookdale Center for Healthy Aging, which is a bold policy agenda that provides actionable policy solutions, including transportation, to make New York a better, more equitable place to age.

Second, in order to address these challenges and created long-term solutions to improve access to transportation for older adults, LiveOn NY recommends the following:

The City should partner with the state to make our public transit system truly accessible for all New Yorkers through the installation of elevators and ramps at all subway stations throughout the city. We applaud the recent announcement by the MTA to install new elevators and ADA enhancements at MTA stations. Currently, only one in four New York City subway stations have elevators, ramps, or other accessible entrances, rendering most inaccessible for people who use assistive devices. The expansion of new elevators and enhancements is a step forward to ensure transportation is accessible for all New Yorkers including older adults and people living with a disability. We encourage the City to continue to work with the State to remove one of the largest barriers of use for many older adults and New Yorkers with limited mobility.

Increase investments in the reliability and speed of bus services. The city's bus service is already accessible and reaches every corner of the city, however reliability issues and slow bus service times can discourage use. The city must invest in reducing bus headways and creating reliable routes free of traffic.

Expand and increase investment for the Metropolitan Transit Authority's Paratransit E-Hail program, which uses the city's fleet of taxis to allow older adults and others with mobility impairments to get around. Given the divergent experiences between traditional Access-A-Ride and the E-hail program, expanding on-demand E-hail, and establishing its permanency, should be a priority for the City and the agency.

to fully utilize the taxi service system that exists throughout our city. Many paratransit users who have had access to this program have expressed their preference for this program over access-a-ride.

Improve real time reporting of elevator and escalator outages and prioritizing timely repair. Reliably planning travel is a key component of effective public transportation. Without clear notifications of outages and adequate confidence that elevators and escalators will be repaired in a timely manner, public transit can become a non-option for people who would otherwise choose to use it.

Expanding on Chair Hudson's Int. 676 to bring universal design principles to streetscape design to make streets safer for those of all mobility levels. LiveOn NY encourages the City to adopt universal



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design principles in all repairs and reconstructions of streets and other public spaces. Universal design makes the city a better place for everyone. For example, curb cuts not only help people who move around using a walker, but also parents pushing strollers and tourists pulling wheeled suitcases.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Testimony provided by Brianna Paden-Williams, Communications and Policy Associate at LiveOn NY For questions, please email bpaden-williams@liveon-ny.org

LiveOn NY's members provide the core, community-based services that allow older adults to thrive in their communities. With a base of more than 100 community-based organizations serving at least 300,000 older New Yorkers annually. Our members provide services ranging from senior centers, congregate and home-delivered meals, affordable senior housing with services, elder abuse prevention services, caregiver supports, case management, transportation, and NORCs. LiveOn NY advocates for increased funding for these vital services to improve both the solvency of the system and the overall capacity of community-based service providers.

LiveOn NY also administers a citywide outreach program and staffs a hotline that educates, screens and helps with benefit enrollment including SNAP, SCRIE and others, and also administers the Rights and Information for Senior Empowerment (RISE) program to bring critical information directly to seniors on important topics to help them age well in their communities.