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Transportation and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA): Q&A

Q: What is the Americans with Disabilities Act?

A: The Americans with Disabilities Act gives civil rights protections to individuals with disabilities similar to those provided to individuals on the basis of race, color, sex, national origin, age, and religion. It guarantees equal opportunity for individuals with disabilities in transportation. Barriers to access to transportation for disabled persons must be removed in all instances where removal is reasonable.

Q: What are the ADA's requirements for public transportation?

A: The transportation provisions of ADA Title II cover public transportation services, such as city buses and public rail transit (e.g. subways, commuter rails, Amtrak). Public transportation authorities may not discriminate against people with disabilities in the provision of their services. They must comply with requirements for accessibility in newly purchased vehicles, make good faith efforts to purchase or lease accessible used buses, remanufacture buses in an accessible manner, and, unless it would result in an undue burden, provide paratransit where they operate fixed-route bus or rail systems. Paratransit is a service where individuals who are unable to use the regular transit system independently (because of a physical or mental impairment) are picked up and dropped off at their destinations.

Title III of the ADA covers businesses and nonprofit service providers that are public accommodations, including privately operated transportation services (such as shuttle services) and facilities (such as transportation depots).

Q. Does the ADA cover air transportation?

A. Discrimination by air carriers in areas other than employment is not covered by the ADA but rather by the Air Carrier Access Act. The Air Carrier Access Act prohibits discrimination in air transportation by domestic and foreign air carriers against qualified individuals with physical or mental impairments. It applies only to air carriers that provide regularly scheduled services for hire to the public. More information in the article [Air Passengers with Disabilities](#) .

Q. What are the ADA's specific requirements for public transit buses?

A. Under the ADA, the U.S. Department of Transportation has issued regulations mandating accessible public transit vehicles and facilities. The regulations include requirements that all new fixed-route, public transit buses be accessible and that supplementary paratransit services be provided for those individuals with disabilities who cannot use fixed-route bus service.

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