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## SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Senator Dave Cortese, Chair

2025 - 2026 Regular

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<b>Bill No:</b>	AB 1250	<b>Hearing Date:</b>	7/8/2025
<b>Author:</b>	Papan		
<b>Version:</b>	6/30/2025 Amended		
<b>Urgency:</b>	No	<b>Fiscal:</b>	Yes
<b>Consultant:</b>	Melissa White		

**SUBJECT:** Transit operators: paratransit: recertification of eligibility

**DIGEST:** This bill requires transit operators, by June 1, 2027, to use a streamlined recertification process, as specified, for persons who have previously been determined to be eligible for paratransit service to have their eligibility reviewed.

### ANALYSIS:

#### *Existing Federal law:*

- 1) Requires, pursuant to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, public transit agencies operating fixed-route systems must also provide complementary paratransit services that mirror the fixed-route system in terms of service area, hours, and fares.
- 2) Defines “ADA paratransit” eligibility in three categories:
  - a) Category 1: Individuals who cannot independently use the fixed-route system due to a physical or cognitive disability.
  - b) Category 2: Individuals who can use fixed-route transit but no accessible vehicle is available on the route they need.
  - c) Category 3: Individuals with a specific impairment-related condition that prevents them from getting to or from a bus or rail stop.

#### *Existing State law:*

- 1) Defines “disabled person” to mean any individual who by reason of illness, injury, age, congenital malfunction, or other permanent or temporary incapacity or disability, including, but not limited to, any individual confined to a wheelchair, is unable, without special facilities or special planning or design, to

utilize public transportation facilities and services as effectively as a person who is not so affected.

- 2) Defines “temporary incapacity or disability” to mean an incapacity or a disability which lasts more than 90 days.
- 3) States that the Legislature intends that dial-a-ride and paratransit services be accessible to disabled persons and that transportation service be provided for employment, education, medical, and personal reasons, allowing for these persons to fully participate in our society.
- 4) Requires each transit operator, that provides for the provision of dial-a-ride or paratransit service for individuals with disabilities and receives public funding pursuant the Transportation Development Act (TDA) for that service shall provide the service without regard to either of the following:
  - a) Whether the person is a member of a household which owns a motor vehicle; and,
  - b) Whether the place of residence of the person who requests transportation service is within the service area of the provided. To the extent that they are eligible for the specified service requested, all persons requesting transportation service in the service area of the provider shall be provided service on the same terms and at the same price that service is provided to other persons residing within the service area of the provider.
- 5) Stipulates that no transit operator is required to make paratransit services available outside the operator’s established operating service area, or the presentation of identification a condition to using the service.
- 6) Requires a transit operator to honor any current valid identification card for the type of transportation service or discount requested and that has been issued to an individual with disabilities by another transit operator. Authorizes a person who believes a transit operator is in violation to file a report with the transportation planning agency or county transportation commission, and may request the Attorney General to resolve any dispute.

**This bill:**

- 1) Defines “transit operator” to mean a transit district, municipal operator, county transportation commission, transportation authority, joint powers authority, or other public transit operator that provides, or contracts for the provision of paratransit service for individuals with disabilities and that receives public

funding pursuant TDA.

- 2) Defines “recertification process” to mean the process by which a transit operator may require persons who have previously been determined eligible for ADA complementary paratransit service to have their eligibility reviewed again.
- 3) Defines “eligible persons” to mean persons who receive, or who are eligible to receive, paratransit services based on a disability, and whose disability cannot reasonably be expected to improve over time, as determined by the person’s qualified licensed medical professional, and whose ability to access the fixed route system cannot reasonably be expected to improve over time, as determined by the transit operator.
- 4) Requires transit operators, by January 1, 2027, to establish a streamlined recertification process for eligible persons.
- 5) Requires the streamlined recertification process to utilize a telephone interview, mail-in form, or online survey and collect for the purposes of verification only the following information:
  - a) Physical address;
  - b) Mailing address, if different from physical address;
  - c) Emergency contact;
  - d) Phone number;
  - e) Updated mobility devices; and,
  - f) Status of disability, with identification of any worsening of the person’s disability, any additional disability, any changes to the person’s functional abilities, and any changes to the person’s use of an assistive device.
- 6) Authorizes a transit operator to also request an updated photo of the eligible person if the transit operator requires a photo for its initial eligibility determination.
- 7) Requires a transit operator to require eligible persons to complete the streamlined recertification process established pursuant the bill once every five years.

- 8) Allows an eligible person to request recertification at any time and shall complete the recertification every five years thereafter.
- 9) Requires transit operators, by June 1, 2027, to only utilize the streamlined recertification process, as specified, for eligible persons unless one of the following conditions applies:
  - a) There is a review to broaden the person's eligibility for paratransit services based on either the person's disability worsening or the person having an additional disability.
  - b) The person is temporarily eligible for paratransit services, as specified.
  - c) The transit operator has implemented service changes or improvements that may impact the person's eligibility for paratransit services.
  - d) The eligible person has moved to a new physical address.
- 10) Declares that nothing in the bill prohibits a transit operator from establishing and utilizing a different recertification process for persons eligible for the streamlined process.
- 11) Declares that the bill could contain a state mandate.

**COMMENTS:**

- 1) *Purpose of the bill.* According to the author, "AB 1250 creates a streamlined eligibility recertification process for paratransit riders with permanent disabilities. Paratransit is a vital service that enables Californians with disabilities to remain mobile, independent, and connected to their communities. Currently, many transit providers require a full recertification every 2 to 5 years, even when a person's condition is lifelong and unchanging. The recertification process is lengthy, difficult to navigate, and requires medical certification. In addition to the burdens placed on riders, the current system requires transit operators to conduct duplicative and unnecessary administrative reviews. In response, AB 1250 acknowledges that for many riders, disability status does not change. By allowing for a streamlined recertification process in these cases, the bill reduces unnecessary hurdles for riders and improves efficiency for transit agencies, freeing up resources to focus on service delivery. California has a strong record of advancing equity in transportation. AB 1250 builds on that foundation by making the paratransit system more accessible, practical, and respectful of those it serves."

- 2) *What is paratransit?* The ADA (P. L. 101-336), requires public transit operators that provide fixed-route service to provide “complementary paratransit” service 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. While the transit operator is required to provide paratransit for trips with origins and destinations within 3/4 of a mile of a route/station, paratransit eligible customers who are outside the service area could still use the service if they are able to get themselves into the service area. ADA further requires that paratransit rides be provided to all eligible riders if requested any time the previous day. ADA allows providers to negotiate trip times with the customer, but no more than an hour before or an hour after the requested time.

- 3) *California goes further than the ADA.* Many transit operators offer more service than the ADA required service, such as for the elderly. In fact, California law clarifies that the terms “paratransit” and “dial-a-ride,” as used in California apply to a broader range of transportation services, and that not all individuals with disabilities under the state law are eligible for “ADA paratransit” under the federal law.

In California, public transit operators and other providers fund paratransit and other specialized services with federal, state, and local funds. Many transit operators in California contract with paratransit providers to provide ADA and other paratransit services in their area. For example, in Los Angeles, Access Services serves as the Los Angeles County Consolidated Transportation Services Agency on behalf of the county’s 45 public fixed route operators. Access facilitates the provision of complementary ADA paratransit services to certain persons with disabilities. Typically, vans or mini-buses are used to provide paratransit service, but also shared taxis and jitneys are important providers as a form of transportation.

- 4) *How do we determine who is eligible for paratransit services?* The eligibility determination process for ADA complementary paratransit is developed by the transit operator in consultation with the local community. To qualify for this service, it is usually necessary to submit an application, and may also require

supporting medical documentation, an in-person interview and/or an in-person assessment of the applicant's ability to use fixed route service. Some transit operators have more rigorous processes and strictly limit eligibility to those people who are functionally unable to ride fixed route service. Other transit operators have less restrictive eligibility, or may use ADA paratransit application process to determine eligibility for other kinds of demand-responsive services.

For example, in Sacramento, Sacramento Regional Transit (SacRT), provides paratransit services through its SacRT GO program. Specifically, an applicant may be eligible for SacRT GO if, as a result of a specific disability or health-related condition, the applicant is unable to travel to or from transit stops or stations within the service area; unable to independently board, ride or exit an accessible fixed-route (bus or light rail) vehicle, without assistance (except the operator of a wheelchair lift or other boarding assistance device), to board, ride, or disembark from any vehicle on the system which is readily accessible to and usable by individuals with disabilities.

Applicants for ADA eligibility are required to fill out an online application and describe their disability or condition that prevents them from using SacRT's fixed-route service. Additionally, the applicant must include a written medical verification signed by a licensed professional attesting to their disability. When SacRT receives the completed application, it is evaluated, and eligibility is determined based on the applicant's functional ability to use SacRT's fixed-route transit system. As part of its eligibility process, SacRT may request additional information, such as a phone or in-person interview with the applicant.

The process is similar for the San Francisco Bay Area transit agencies. In addition to the online application, they require applicants to authorize the use or release of medical records to provide to the applicants physician that best understands the applicant's functional abilities to use public transit. Additionally, a mobility assessment is completed by the agency. If an applicant is approved, they are eligible to utilize paratransit services throughout the nine-county Bay Area.

Finally, some transit operators require a photo of the applicant as part of the determination process. Transit operators will often take a photo of the applicant at their in-person interview and create a transit ID for the rider. This photo ID allows the rider to not only access paratransit services, but also access regular fixed-route service as well, many times for free or at a discounted rate. Additionally, it is used as a security measure for both riders and transit drivers

by making sure they are picking up the right person and can identify the person in case of an emergency.

ADA requires the transit operators to notify applicants by letter of its eligibility decision within 21 days of receipt of the completed application. An applicant who does not get written notice of eligibility determination within 21 days of receipt of the completed application may ask for and receive paratransit services until a decision is made.

- 5) *How do riders get recertified for continued use?* After a person's initial eligibility determination is made, federal law allows transit operators to require recertification of their eligibility at "reasonable intervals." In California, individuals disabilities that are not consider temporary are required to recertify their paratransit eligibility every two to five years, despite if their condition remains stable.

The recertification process can be cumbersome, with some agencies utilizing the same forms as the initial determination. However, some transit operators, like those in the Bay Area, have implemented a streamlined process with a recertification "short form." Essentially, the agencies are trying to identify if the person's disability has changed and any additional mobility aids that are being used.

- 6) *AB 1250 aims to streamline and standardize the recertification process.* AB 1250 would provide relief for individuals who receive paratransit services and whose medical condition or disability cannot reasonably be expected to improve. Specifically, the bill requires transit operators to establish and, by June 1, 2027, utilize, a streamlined recertification process for all eligible persons to complete every five years.

The streamlined process must utilize a telephone interview, mail-in form, or online survey to collect the required information including, physical address, mailing address, emergency contact, phone number, updated mobility devices, and status of their disability. The status should detail and identify any worsening of the person's disability, any additional disability, any changes to the person's functional abilities, and any changes to the person's use of an assistive device. As described above, this is similar to the information required by Bay Area transit operators. Finally, a transit operator can request an updated photo if a photo is required as part of the initial determination process.

As noted, the streamlined process only has to be complete every five years; however, an eligible person may request recertification at any time if needed due to a change in circumstances.

Finally, AB 1250 does not require the streamlined recertification process if there is a review to broaden the person's eligibility for services; the person's only temporality eligible for paratransit services; the person has moved to a new address; or the transit operator has implemented service changes or improvements that may impact the person's eligibility, such as a closer bus stop or new equipment that make it easier to board and ride.

Writing as the sponsors of AB 1225, the California Council for the Blind state, "Paratransit is an essential service for many Californians with disabilities, offering vital access to healthcare, employment, education, and community life. Currently, many transit providers require riders to recertify their eligibility every 2 to 5 years—even when the individual's condition is lifelong and not expected to improve.

"Medical verification is an important part of establishing eligibility for paratransit services. However, once a disability or medical condition has been determined to be permanent, requiring individuals to undergo the same process over and over again adds little value and creates disproportionate hardship. That hardship includes financial costs, time lost navigating bureaucracy that is not always accessible to those with disabilities, and the stress and frustration of having to justify a disability that is already well documented and understood. A different approach is both reasonable and necessary for these cases."

**RELATED/PREVIOUS LEGISLATION:**

**AB 1351 (Lackey, Chapter 627 of Statutes of 2019)** – Required the California State Transportation Agency to conduct an assessment of the procedures public transit operators use to provide dial-a-ride and paratransit services by July 1, 2021.

**SB 1376 (Hill, Chapter 701, Statutes of 2018)** – Established the "TNC Access for All Act," which requires the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) to develop regulations relating to accessibility for person with disabilities who use transportation network company (TNC) services.

**FISCAL EFFECT:** Appropriation: No    Fiscal Com.: Yes    Local: Yes

**POSITIONS:** (Communicated to the committee before noon on Wednesday, July 2, 2025.)

**SUPPORT:**

California Council of the Blind (sponsor)



California Alliance for Retired Americans  
Californians for SSI  
Disability Rights California  
Educate. Advocate.  
Lighthouse for the Blind and Visually Impaired  
San Francisco Senior and Disability Action  
Seamless Bay Area

**OPPOSITION:**

None received

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