



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas K. Duane

## Introducing Legislation Mandating Fare Equity for Paratransit Services

THOMAS K. DUANE April 1, 2009

On March 8, Assembly Member Micah Kellner and Senator Duane were joined by New York City Comptroller Bill Thompson, Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer and disability advocates as they announced legislation (A6489/S2933) that would prohibit local transit authorities, like MTA New York City Transit, from charging more for paratransit services, like Access-A-Ride, than the base rate for regular transit services that are often inaccessible to riders with disabilities.

Last November, the MTA unveiled its 2009-10 budget, which includes an up to 25% proposed fare increase from \$2 to as much as \$2.50 for New York City Transit subways and non-express busses. It also includes a separate 150% proposed increase for Access-A-Ride – which provides paratransit for people with disabilities who are unable to use public bus or subway service for some or all of their trips – raising those fares from \$2 to as much as \$5. A \$5 base fare equates to a \$10 round-trip for Access-A-Ride users, who do not have the option of buying fares in bulk as able-bodied commuters do, cutting down on costs by buying daily, weekly, or monthly Metrocards.

Assembly Member Kellner said: “The MTA claims that the high costs of operating Access-A-Ride justify charging people with severe disabilities nearly twice as much as able-bodied riders. This is outrageous and discriminatory. Rather than sticking to the promises they made in their written contract with the City of New York never to raise the Access-A-Ride fare higher than the regular fare, the MTA proposes to leave riders with disabilities stranded,”

Senator Duane added: “While we are all sensitive to the MTA’s dire fiscal circumstances, it is by no means acceptable for the authority to balance its budget on the backs of people with disabilities. The current standard of fare equity is the minimum a just society should expect. People with disabilities should not have to pay more than – let alone twice as much as – other transit users to get to and from their daily appointments. Placing a disproportionate burden on paratransit users is unconscionable.”