

Written Statement of Program Accessibility – Direct Connect Program
Regulatory references: 28 CFR §§35.149-35.150

A public entity's services, programs, or activities, when viewed in their entirety, must be readily accessible to and usable by individuals with disabilities. This standard, is known as "program accessibility."

PSTA's services, programs, and activities, when viewed in their entirety, are readily accessible and usable by individuals with disabilities. PSTA provides comparable fixed-route transportation service throughout its service area to individuals with disabilities through its paratransit program.

While there is no requirement that each individual service be accessible, even PSTA's Direct Connect program individually is an accessible subsidy program accessible by individuals with disabilities. The Direct Connect program is a payment subsidy for riders taking a taxi-cab or other paid ridesharing service to or from a PSTA bus stop within certain pre-defined zones. Each rider receives the same amount of payment subsidy. PSTA has contracted with numerous providers to ensure that riders of differing abilities, physically and socioeconomically, can access the payment subsidy. As an example, one of its providers is capable of scheduling rides without the use of smartphone technology. Another provider has developed interface features for blind, vision-impaired, deaf and hard of hearing riders. Finally, PSTA has also contracted with a provider exclusively for wheelchair transport services. Each provider will honor the same payment subsidy amount.

A question has been posed as to whether PSTA should subsidize the rides scheduled through the wheelchair transport service in a greater amount to equalize the amount paid by each rider, regardless of which provider they use for the Direct Connect subsidy. Pursuant to program accessibility regulations, PSTA does not have to take any action that would result in a fundamental alteration in the nature of its program or activity or in undue financial and administrative burdens. If PSTA were to subsidize wheelchair transport service rides in a greater amount to equalize rider costs, it would cost PSTA approximately three times the amount per ride and would unduly burden the limited resources available for use in the Direct Connect program.

As cited in the examples above, however, PSTA has taken other actions that would not result in such an alteration or such burdens but nevertheless ensure that individuals with disabilities receive the benefits and services of the Direct Connect program.

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Brad Miller, CEO
Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority