



# Queens Civic Congress

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November 30, 2007

## *A Special Message on Access-A-Ride*

The Queens Civic Congress supports legislation -- A.3926/S.2045 -- developed by Assemblyman Mark Weprin to require the Metropolitan Transportation Authority to provide Access-A-Ride service to destinations within five miles of the Queens-Nassau county line. Our CIVIC 2030 Platform specifically endorses this Weprin legislation of which Senator Frank Padavan was the Senate sponsor. Advocates for people with disabilities and seniors supported extending Access-A-Ride into Nassau so residents of eastern Queens, especially could more easily access medical centers in western Nassau.

Assemblyman Weprin deserves credit for responding to this need and championing this needed service enhancement. Current law bars Access-A-Ride from leaving the city limits. This prohibition imposes significant hardship for Queens residents who must travel for their medical needs to points just across the city-line in Nassau County where many doctors and other medical providers maintain offices in facilities just outside Queens.

Earlier this year both the State Senate and Assembly passed the legislation -- unanimously.

In spite of a broad-based letter writing campaign, Governor Eliot Spitzer vetoed the bill at the urging of the MTA.

This unfortunate setback leaves seniors and other people with disabilities who need to visit North Shore Hospital or other Nassau destinations including several Medical offices on or just past Lakeville Road with no other choice but to continue boarding a NYCT Access-A-Ride van for a ride to Long Island Jewish Hospital where they can transfer to an Able Ride van to continue to their destination in Nassau County. Needless to state, it is tough enough to schedule one van and now seniors and other people with disabilities need to try to coordinate vans from two services and risk the possibility -- too often an occurrence -- of missed connections. This situation remains outrageous. The MTA funds both Access-A-Ride and Able Ride.

Assemblyman Weprin pledges to reintroduce his bill in January. Meantime, Queens civic and senior advocates need to impress that MTA and Governor Spitzer that a trip to Nassau ought not be a painful trek for Queens residents who qualify for Access-A-Ride services.

Thank you.

Corey B. Bearak, Esq.  
President  
Queens Civic Congress

Kevin J. Forrestal  
Chair, Health & Human Services Committee

c. Council of Senior Centers and Services

[On the next page, please find a sample letter for your use.]

[Sample Letter]

Governor Eliot Spitzer  
Executive Chamber  
Albany, New York 12224

Dear Governor Spitzer:

I write to ask you to commit to signing into law the re-introduced version of Assembly bill 3926 / Senate bill 2045, which you regrettably vetoed this past summer. This much-needed legislation would allow Access-A-Ride and Able Ride to provide reciprocal service in either direction to destinations within five miles of the border between Queens and Nassau Counties. The bill is vital to senior and other New Yorkers with disabilities who rely on both transportation services to reach medical appointments, family members, and other destinations that are close to their homes, but happen to lie on the opposite side of the county line.

As you know, Access-A-Ride and Able Ride, which provide paratransit services in New York City and Nassau County, respectively, cannot cross the border that separates Nassau County from Queens County (and the rest of New York City). As a result, whenever they need to reach a destination on the other side of the boundary, passengers of these two services – who are all seniors or people with disabilities – have to ride to the county line, disembark, wait for the other service, and then ride to the destination. The procedure is a waste of time, a ridiculous inefficiency, and a major burden for New Yorkers with disabilities.

But for your veto, Assembly bill 3926 and Senate bill 2045 would have remedied this situation by requiring the Metropolitan Commuter Transportation Authority to provide adequate means for individuals with disabilities to cross the border between Queens and Nassau counties and travel up to five miles within the neighboring county. You would do a tremendous service to people with disabilities and senior populations of New York State by committing to signing this legislation which the sponsors will re-introduce in the next session into law.

Sincerely,

Alternatively, you can contact the Governor via the Internet visiting [www.ny.gov/governor](http://www.ny.gov/governor) and click the Contact the Governor icon. You can also call the Governor at (212) 681-4580 or (518) 474-8390.

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