

Governor Phil Murphy

Governor Murphy Signs Legislation to Recognize Crucial Importance of Paratransit Workforce

02/23/2023

TRENTON – Governor Phil Murphy today signed bill A-2857/S-2977, which requires NJ TRANSIT to pay certain persons one-and-a-half times the regular rate for work during periods of commercial vehicle travel restriction issued by the Department of Transportation (DOT). The legislation reinforces the Murphy Administration’s commitment to its critical transit workforce and the provision of accessible and efficient transportation for all New Jerseyans.

“When severe storms exacerbate the transportation obstacles that older adults and riders with disabilities already face, it’s our paratransit workforce that rises to the occasion time and time again to deliver critical service,” said Governor Murphy. “These drivers quite literally put their lives on the line to ensure our most vulnerable residents make it home safe, but for far too long their contributions to our nation-leading transportation system have gone overlooked. This legislation serves as an acknowledgment of their tremendous sacrifices and underscores the importance of safe and equitable transportation for all.”

“Access Link provides a vital service to our state’s residents with disabilities. Unfortunately, when bad weather hits, drivers are often left out in the cold,” said Senator Gordon M. Johnson. “Because they are required to finish their routes, even during commercial travel bans, they may have to work hours after their shift is scheduled to end to get riders home safely. Then workers reliant on public transportation are left with no other option than to stay overnight at the bus depot, since NJ Transit service is suspended. At minimum, these workers are entitled to increased compensation when driving in these hazardous conditions.”

“Access Link serves New Jersey’s seniors and residents with disabilities who have difficulty using public transportation. Paratransit drivers ensure their riders are safely transported to and from important medical appointments, community events, family visits and other errands,” said Assemblyman Dan Benson, Chair of the Assembly Transportation and Independent Authorities Committee. “Even when severe weather limits commercial travel, Access Link drivers must brave the storm to help our most vulnerable. With this new law, we are recognizing the important service these drivers provide and appropriately compensating them.”

“When inclement weather requires restricting certain types of travel on State Highways, Access Link continues to operate to ensure the customers who rely on this service have the transportation they need,” said NJDOT Commissioner and NJ TRANSIT Chair Diane Gutierrez-Scaccetti. “This legislation demonstrates the value and importance of these Paratransit drivers.”

“We applaud Governor Murphy for signing this important bill into legislation & Senator Johnson and Chairman Benson for introducing this bill,” said Connor Shaw, United Service Workers Political Director and Business Agent. “Paratransit drivers work hard jobs, they take New Jersey’s most vulnerable citizens to life critical appointments like chemotherapy and dialysis. These drivers deserve recognition for risking their lives during states of emergency to make sure that our state’s disability population is not forgotten about and are able to get where they need to be.”

“We are emergency workers, there has never been a doubt about that but I am glad for the state recognizing that fact,” said Shelia Graham, Local 455, United Service Workers Union Shop Steward & paratransit driver. “My coworkers have driven through snowstorms, have gotten stuck on the side of the road but we continue to show up for New Jerseyans in need! Thank you my Governor, the state legislature and United Service Workers Union who have been fighting for this recognition for us!”

Governor Phil Murphy

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