Allegheny County Discounted Fares Pilot Program
FAQS

Overview:

Why a Pilot Program?

A pilot is a short-term opportunity to learn from participants with the goal of informing the design of a permanent program. To study how transportation affordability affects the participants, we will randomly assign participants in the Pilot to receive one of the following discount levels, with an equal chance of being assigned to each level:

1. Free fares: This group will receive unlimited free fares on all PRT trips (bus, T and incline) for 12 months

2. 50% discount: This group will receive a ConnectCard (pre-loaded with $10) that reduces the cost of all PRT trips by half (50%) for 12 months

3. No discount: This group will receive a ConnectCard pre-loaded with $10 but will not receive a fare discount through this pilot.

This will allow us to evaluate how the cost of fares affects public transit ridership and other socioeconomic outcomes. These results will inform a longer-term commitment to making transportation more affordable for lower-income Allegheny County residents.

Who qualifies for the Allegheny County Discounted Fares Pilot Program?

Eligible participants:

- Currently reside in Allegheny County
- Are ages 18 through 64
- Were receiving SNAP benefits on September 30, 2022
- Do not have another household member ages 18 through 64 who is already participating in this pilot program

Individuals with disabilities who currently receive a half-fare ConnectCard are eligible to participate in this pilot. Individuals who currently receive a fare discount through an employer or university are not eligible to participate.

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Participation in the pilot is voluntary. If you choose to participate, you will agree to receive periodic requests to participate in paid data collection and research activities such as surveys, travel diaries and interviews. You will not lose access to your fare discounts if you choose not to take part in these optional data collection activities.

How is my discount level determined?

Your discount level is assigned by random chance, like a lottery. Your chances of receiving each discount level do not depend on any factors related to you or your household. Every participant has exactly the same chances of receiving each discount level.

What about discounted fares for my children?

Your children ages 6 to 17 can also receive discounted fares through this pilot. All members of your SNAP household who are between ages 6 to 17 will receive a ConnectCard that contains the same pre-loaded value and fare discount that you receive. For example, if you are assigned to the 50% Discount group and you have three children ages 6 to 17, then we will send you a total of four ConnectCards with a 50% discount; one card for you and one for each of your three children. The child must be part of your household as defined in your SNAP benefit records in order to receive their own ConnectCard.

Please note that children ages 0 to 5 always ride for free on PRT vehicles. Children ages 6 to 11 are always able to receive half-off fares on PRT trips regardless of your participation in this pilot. Please visit **https://www.rideprt.org/fares-and-passes/discounted-fares/** to learn more about PRT's existing discount programs for children.

How do I use my ConnectCard?

We will send a new ConnectCard to you and each of your age-eligible children. We will kindly ask you and your children to use these ConnectCards for all of your trips on PRT buses and light rail for the next 12 months.

How you use your card depends on which discount level you are assigned to:

Free fares: If you are assigned to this group, your card will contain stored value that will be automatically replenished as you use it. You will not need to load anything onto the card to access your free rides. Simply tap your card anytime you want to ride a PRT vehicle. The card will expire and the free rides will end 12 months after you enrolled in the pilot. On this date, your card will stop working.

50% discount: If you are assigned to this group, your card will contain $10 of stored cash value as a "thank you" for participating. Please treat the card like any normal ConnectCard. You can add more stored cash or load any PRT fare product (with the exception of an annual pass) onto the card, as needed. The card will contain a 50% discount that applies to

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any type of PRT fare product except an annual pass. A trip paid with stored cash will now cost you $1.35. A 31-day pass will now cost you $48.75. The card will expire and the 50% discount will end 12 months after you enrolled in the pilot. On this date, your card will stop working and you will lose any stored cash that is left on the card.

No discount: If you are assigned to this group, your card will contain $10 of stored cash value as a "thank you" for participating. Please treat the card like any normal ConnectCard. You can add more stored cash or load any PRT fare product onto the card, as needed. The card will not have an expiration date.

Why should I participate?

If you participate, you and your age-eligible children will have the chance to receive discounted rides on all PRT buses and light rail for 12 months. You will have a 1-in-3 chance of getting completely free unlimited rides for 12 months. You will also get paid to answer several short surveys during your time in the pilot. Beyond this, you will be helping DHS understand how local residents may benefit from lowering the cost of public transit. This is very important for DHS to understand as we work to address transportation needs in Allegheny County. We greatly appreciate your participation!

Your participation is voluntary, and your choice of whether to participate will not be held against you in any way. It also will not affect any public benefits that you may be receiving, including your SNAP benefits. If you choose to participate, you must consent to allow DHS to use its administrative records to measure your experiences during the pilot. You will also be asked to complete short, optional surveys at certain points during the pilot.

How do I apply for the pilot?

- Apply online by clicking the 'Join the Pilot' button on the **website**.
- If you need assistance to complete the application, contact one of our participating community-based organizations, which are available to assist you in-person or over the phone. See a full list of locations and hours **here**.
- You will be asked to provide personal information, including your Social Security Number, and to consent to the terms of the pilot.
- We'll verify your eligibility and notify you of your assigned discount level in a timely fashion.

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Privacy

Why do you need my Social Security Number?

Your Social Security Number will be used to look up information about your eligibility to participate in the pilot.

What questions will you ask me?

The application includes questions about your family and household. We'll also ask about your transportation needs, employment status and current use of public transit. Your answers to these questions will have no impact on which group you will be randomly assigned to.

How will the information I provide be used?

Your responses will be combined with answers from others enrolled in the pilot. Researchers will use the collected responses as well as administrative records to assess whether the discounted fares improved certain aspects of recipients' lives. The results of the pilot will only be reported for groups of participants and not for any specific individual. Responses will remain confidential, and you will never be named or personally identified in any publications or reports about the pilot.

What will I be asked to do if I'm accepted into the pilot?

After you enroll in the pilot, you will be asked to complete short, optional surveys about once every 3 months. You will be compensated as a "thank you" for completing each survey. You may also receive an offer from the external researchers to participate in separate paid research activities that are related to your involvement in the pilot.

How will you know if the bus fare discounts make a difference?

The external researchers will analyze data from participant survey responses and DHS administrative records to estimate the effect of the pilot on participants and their household members.

How do you handle my privacy?

We are committed to protecting your privacy. This study will follow strict rules to keep your participation in the study and your survey responses confidential. For example, your name will be replaced with a study number. Your personal identifying information will be kept in secure files and will be separated from the survey responses you provide. All of the data will be stored on highly secure password-protected computers and servers.

Can I drop out of the pilot?

Your participation is voluntary, and you can choose to drop out of the pilot at any time.

To learn more and apply, visit:
discountedfares.alleghenycounty.us

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Doing so will not affect your eligibility for SNAP or any other social services that you may be receiving. We will continue to offer you opportunities to participate in surveys, but you do not need to answer them.

Funding

Who is operating the pilot?

DHS designed the program and PRT is providing operations support. The independent evaluation is being conducted by researchers from Carnegie Mellon University and Harvard University.

Who is paying for the pilot?

The pilot and its evaluation are funded by DHS.

Support

How can I get more information or answers to my questions?

Visit **Allegheny Analytics** to read more about the pilot, including our plan for research and evaluation.

If you need support with completing your application, visit our **Support page**.

For other questions related to the pilot, please email **Allegheny-Discounted-Fares-Pilot@ alleghenycounty.us.** We answer most emails within 24 hours. Please note: This email address cannot assist with completing an application.

To learn more and apply, visit:
discountedfares.alleghenycounty.us

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