



# Essential Trip Card FAQ

## ***What is the Essential Trip Discount Program?***

Muni is making [necessary service reductions](#) during the order to shelter-in-place. We know that for many people with disabilities and seniors, walking farther to an alternate bus — or paying for other transportation — isn't possible. To serve this need, the SFMTA is announcing the Essential Trip Card (ETC) — a discount program to help seniors and people with disabilities make essential trips in taxis during this crisis.

The ETC will subsidize about two to three round trips by taxi per month. Eligible participants will pay 20% of the cost of a regular cab ride fare for essential trips. The program uses taxis to take people on essential trips like going to the grocery store, pharmacy or other necessary medical trip during the shelter-in-place period. Customers who pay \$12 will receive \$60 value of credit for taxi trips on a debit card.

We ask riders to do their part by making only essential trips, washing their hands thoroughly or using hand sanitizer before and after taxi trips, wearing a mask or cloth face covering if possible, coughing or sneezing into a tissue or elbow and not touching their faces. We also encourage riders to clean their debit card, child seat, or any items that the driver or anyone else may help to carry or load with a sanitizing cleaner, before and after your trip.

## ***Who qualifies?***

To qualify for the program, customers must meet at least one of these qualifications:

- Age 65 or older
- Have a disability

## ***Where can I go?***

The program subsidizes taxi rides for essential trips like going to the grocery store, pharmacy or a necessary medical visit.

The card is only valid to pay for travel within San Francisco.

## ***How do I apply?***

An older adult or persons with disabilities may apply for the ETC program by calling 311 and mentioning the program. Staff will be available weekdays between 9:00 a.m. and 4:45 p.m. While we encourage using the phone to minimize contact, as a last resort, qualifying customers may enroll in person at the SF Paratransit Broker's Office (68 12th Street) if needed. The office remains open during regular weekday business hours (April 13, 2020).



Those eligible will be automatically enrolled in the program and will be mailed a debit card. Note that because Essential Trip Cards come via mail, there will be several days between enrollment and when you are able to use your card.

***How does it work?***

Once your Essential Trip Card is activated, you will need to put funds on your card to use the trip discount. For every \$6 you load on your card, you will receive a \$30 value. You may load up to \$12 per month to receive a monthly maximum of \$60 of value on your card.

***How do I load my card to pay for my trips?***

Once you receive your Essential Trip Card, you will need to activate it. Your Essential Trip Card has a sticker on it with instructions. Funds can be added by:

- Setting up an account online at <https://sfparatransittaxi.sfmta.com>
- Providing payment information over the phone (for debit/credit payments only)
- Sending a check in the mail to SF Paratransit, 68 12th Street, San Francisco, CA 94103; or
- Arrange to pay in cash by calling SF Paratransit at 415.351.7052.

***How often can I load a card?***

Cards may be filled once a month, for each month of the reduced transit service.

***What if I need to take more than \$60 worth of taxi trips each month?***

This program is intended to support essential trips only. To maximize the number of people who can be served, we are limiting the discounted value to \$60 of taxi service per month.

***How do I get a taxi once I have my card?***

To start a trip, ETC cardholders can [hail taxis, including ramp taxis](#), on the street, by phone, or by Flywheel app. Get details on all San Francisco taxi companies [on our website](#) or in your Essential Trip Discount Program orientation packet.

***What information do you need to provide to apply?***

Our goal is to get eligible people enrolled quickly and we will work with people to verify their eligibility. For registration, applicants should have:

Seniors (persons 65 and over) can provide their date of birth and their Senior Clipper Card number, or another proof of age, like a driver's license, a California ID, passport or other documentation.



Disabled persons under 65 should have a Regional Transit Connection (RTC) Discount Card. An RTC card also serves as Clipper Card for persons with disabilities. The customer would provide the RTC number on the front of Card, as well as their birthdate for verification. If you do not have an RTC Card and are under 65, we can help determine if you are eligible for one.

***How can customers apply in a language other than English?***

Staff will provide language assistance for customers who prefer a language other than English.

***I know someone who needs the program - can I call on their behalf to sign them up?***

Reaching out to a family member, friend or neighbor to let them know about the Essential Trips Discount Program can help them during this challenging time. You can also help a qualified person sign up if you have their Senior Clipper Card or Regional Transit Connection (RTC) Discount Card and their date of birth, or for seniors, other proof of age, like a driver's license, a California ID, passport or other documentation.

***I am not an older adult nor do I have a disability, but the Muni service cuts impact me. Can I use this program?***

At this time, we are prioritizing people with disabilities and seniors as they are most likely to have mobility limitations to reach alternative Muni routes. The Muni service cuts were designed to place most San Franciscans within one-half mile of a transit route, and all San Franciscans within one mile of a transit route. This program focuses on people for whom traveling that distance may be a challenge because of age or physical ability.

***I am a senior/person with a disability and need other services in addition to the Essential Trips Discount Program; where should I go?***

For other needs, the City's Disability and Aging Service helpline at 415.355.6700 now operates 7 days per week from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Disability and Aging Service helpline operators are available to connect people to the City's existing service providers and expanded services as they become available.

***Can I ride with a family member or caregiver while using my Essential Trips Discount card?***

You may ride in a taxi with the maximum number of people that can be safely secured and transported (usually four adults). We recommend a maximum of one driver and two passengers, who should ride in the back seat, to prevent close contact between non-family members. No extra fares will be required for additional passengers.

***Can I let someone else like a family member or a caregiver use my card?***



Your Essential Trip Card may *only* be used by you to pay for an Essential Trip Card trip. It is illegal to allow anyone else to use your card. This action could lead to suspension or revocation of your taxi riding privileges under this program.

***What sort of precautions should I take when traveling in a taxi to keep myself healthy?***

When traveling in public, follow CDC Guidelines, such as practicing good hygiene and frequently washing your hands and/or use hand sanitizer, avoid touching your face, sneeze or cough into a tissue or the inside of your elbow. The CDC recommends wearing a cloth face covering or mask and avoid unnecessarily touching surfaces other than the door handle, payment device and seatbelt. Wash your hands and/or use hand sanitizer thoroughly before and after your trip.

***What sort of precautions are taxi drivers taking?***

Taxi drivers are required to clean frequently touched surfaces in their vehicles between trips to limit risk to both riders and drivers, and they have been provided a CDC-approved sanitizer. Training has been provided for taxi drivers on proper cleaning techniques following CDC guidelines. Taxi drivers are provided with personal protective equipment including masks and cleaning supplies. SFMTA's Taxi Division is monitoring compliance with this requirement to minimize potential exposure.

***How can a taxi driver assist me while still honoring social distancing guidelines?***

Drivers may assist you by loading your personal items into the trunk of a sedan, or luggage area of an SUV, including groceries or walkers. If you are a wheelchair user, the driver will assist you with boarding and securement. To limit risk to both riders and drivers, a CDC-approved sanitizer to clean frequently touched surfaces between trips is being provided to taxis along with instructions to clean before and after each trip. We ask riders to do their part by washing their hands thoroughly before and after taxi trips, wearing a mask or cloth face covering if possible, coughing or sneezing into a tissue or elbow and not touching their faces. We also encourage riders to clean their debit card, child seat, or any items that the driver or anyone else may help to carry or load with a sanitizing cleaner, before and after your trip.

***Can I take a taxi if I am sick to a hospital or medical provider or to get tested for COVID-19?***

Yes, you may take a taxi if you are sick. To prevent potential infection of others, wear a cloth face covering or mask and minimize touching surfaces in the taxi. Alert the driver so that surfaces can be cleaned on your exit.

***Can a taxi driver refuse to take me to a location based on perceived infection risk?***

No, a taxi driver cannot refuse to transport passengers, provided the customer presents themselves for transportation in a clean, coherent, safe and orderly manner and for a lawful purpose.



***Do I have to wear a face mask or cloth face covering to ride this service?***

Current CDC guidelines recommend wearing cloth face coverings in public settings where other social distancing measures are difficult to maintain, and while you are not required to wear a face mask, we strongly encourage all riders to wear a cloth face covering while riding a taxi.

***How do I maintain the distance required under the social distancing guidelines in a taxi?***

Sedan and SUV taxis do not allow a passenger to sit six feet away from the driver. However, you can take preventative measures by washing your hands well before and after your trip, wearing a cloth face covering, not touching your face, and minimizing the surfaces you touch while in the taxi.

***How long does the program last?***

The Essential Trip Card program will end upon announcement by the SFMTA that the program is ending. Once the SFMTA announces an end to this temporary and special program, participants will be able to exhaust any remaining value on the Essential Trip Card.