



Essential Trip Card Guide

PLAN

Older adults (65 and older) or persons with disabilities may apply for the Essential Trip Card by calling 311 and mentioning the program.

Once you are enrolled, you will receive an Essential Trip Card in the mail. Each Essential Trip Card is uniquely encoded to include an eligibility expiration date, ID number and a 16-digit debit card number. You will use this card to pay for your taxi trips. 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.

Your Essential Trip Card can 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.

Taxi services are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. During the shelter-in-place period, San Franciscans should only make essential trips. You may use the Essential Trip Discount Card for essential trips that you would have otherwise taken on Muni, such as medical appointments and services and food shopping throughout San Francisco.

Activating your Essential Trip Card:

Once you receive your Essential Trip Card it will need to be activated by SF Paratransit staff before it may be used. There will be a sticker on the Essential Trip Card with instructions for activation.

For help or questions regarding activating your Essential Trip Card please contact the SF Paratransit Office by calling 415.351.7000.

Before taking your first trip, make sure to sign your card on the back. If you are unable to sign the card, print or have someone print "UTS" (unable to sign) for you in the signature block.

Getting Taxi Services

Selecting a taxi company to call

Once you are registered for the Essential Trip Discount Card, you may call or hail any cab company operating in San Francisco. All taxi companies in San Francisco are participating in the Essential Trip Card program.

Know which taxis can serve your mobility needs



Most taxis within San Francisco are hybrid-powered sedans or SUVs. These taxis have enough storage space for the driver to fold up and stow a walker or mobility device after you board. In addition, “ramp taxis” equipped with wheelchair accessible ramps operate within San Francisco. If you are traveling using a wheelchair or similar mobility device and are unable to transfer out of your mobility device, be sure to request a ramp taxi. See the Taxi Directory for a list of taxi companies that operate ramp taxis which can be found in your Essential Trip Card orientation packet or online at [SFMTA.com/TaxiDirectory](https://www.sfmta.com/TaxiDirectory).

Know how to hail a taxi

On the Street

In busier areas of the city, you’re likely to spot available taxis on the street. Available taxis will have an illuminated top light on the roof of the vehicle. Unlike many other private transportation services, taxis can be hailed on the street. Hail a taxi by waving at an available taxi from the edge of the curb.

By Phone

All San Francisco taxi companies are affiliated with a telephone dispatch service that you can call to request an immediate pickup or to schedule a taxi in advance. These dispatch services are available 24 hours a day. See our Taxi Directory (located in your Essential Trip Discount program orientation packet) or online at [SFMTA.com/TaxiDirectory](https://www.sfmta.com/TaxiDirectory) for a list of taxi companies and their dispatch phone numbers. We also maintain a list of Ramp Taxi Drivers at [SFMTA.com/RampTaxiDirectory](https://www.sfmta.com/RampTaxiDirectory) that you may choose to call directly to schedule a ride (also located in your Essential Trip Card orientation packet if you indicated that you are a wheelchair user when you enrolled).

By Smart Phone or Tablet

The Flywheel app allows you to request your taxi ride using your smartphone or tablet. It also provides live views of taxis nearby and arrival times. You can even request a ramp taxi through the app. The Flywheel app lets you use your Essential Trip Card instead of a credit card to sign up and hail rides. Learn more about downloading the Flywheel app in the flier included in your Essential Trip Card orientation packet.

When to Call for a Taxi

Call the taxi company or e-hail your taxi as soon as you know you will need it, but at least 30 minutes before you absolutely need the ride. Since there are fewer wheelchair accessible ramp taxi vehicles available, we recommend that you call one hour in advance of your preferred pick up time for service by these taxis.

If you have a set appointment, be sure to allow ample time to get there. Even though taxi rides are direct, you need to allow enough time for the driver to get through any traffic.

When you request a taxi, listen carefully to the questions the dispatcher asks. The more detail you give, the better service the cab company is able to provide. Please notify the taxi dispatcher if you want a sedan vehicle instead of a minivan; efforts will be made to accommodate your request. If you use a wheelchair (or are riding with someone using a wheelchair), please be sure



to immediately tell the taxi company dispatcher that you need a wheelchair accessible ramp taxi.

During holidays, eves of holidays, Friday afternoons or at any time when the weather is bad, you may find it more difficult to get a taxi. Please keep this in mind when requesting sedan or ramp taxi service and allow extra time.

If after 20 minutes, your taxi has not arrived, call back to check on its status. If you decide to arrange alternative transportation or can hail a taxi on the streets, please be sure to call and cancel your request before taking the hailed taxi or before calling another cab company.

Riding with companions

The San Francisco Transportation Code allows you to ride in the taxi with the maximum number of people that can be safely secured and transported (usually four adults). However, we recommend a maximum of two passengers in addition to the driver. Passengers should sit in the backseat to avoid close contact between the driver and the riders. No extra fares will be required for additional passengers.

Traveling with Children

If you will be traveling with a child under the age of eight (8) who is less than four feet nine inches (4'9") in height, you must provide the child's safety seat so that you may properly secure the child in it in accordance with California law. Any child seat used with the Essential Trip Discount Card must meet the State of California standards for a child of that size and age. The driver may provide assistance if your disability prevents you from securing the seat.

RIDE

When you get in the Taxi

Minimize health risks to yourself and your driver: To limit risk to both riders and drivers, a CDC-approved sanitizer to clean frequently touched surfaces between trips is being provided to taxis. We ask riders to do their part by 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.

Paying: Before the start of the trip, let your driver know you will be using the Essential Trip Card and tell them your destination. You will then swipe your card to verify that you have enough funds in your account to pay for the trip. If you do not have enough value, you may use the remaining amount on your Essential Trip Card and pay the additional cost of your trip with either cash or a credit card. If you don't have any value in your account, you must pay for your entire trip with another form of payment.



If you want to check the full balance of your Essential Trip Card account, call toll free 877.SFTAXI.1 (877.738.2941).

At the end of your trip

The driver will tell you the cost of the trip from the taxi meter. To pay, swipe your Essential Trip Card on the payment device in the backseat.

Tipping is currently allowed with the Essential Trip Card. If you choose to provide a tip, the system will automatically calculate the tip at 10% of the ride, up to a maximum of \$2, and deduct it from your Essential Trip Card account balance along with the fare amount. You may also choose to tip by cash.

The driver will print two receipts – one for you to sign and return and one for you to keep for your records. Your receipt will show the remaining balance in your Essential Trip Card account after the trip you just completed. For your privacy, \$75+ will show on your receipt if your balance is greater than \$75.

If your debit card is not working or the machine processing the debit card is not accepting the card:

1. Make sure that you are using an activated Essential Trip Discount Card.
2. Ask your taxi driver to drive a couple of feet forward as you may be in an area preventing the necessary cellular reception to process the payment.
3. If still not processing, request that the taxi driver complete a paper "Manual Receipt" and have the driver call the phone number listed on the receipt to obtain an approval code.

You should not be required to pay the full meter fare using your personal funds if there are enough funds in your Essential Trip Card account. Please report any issues to SF Paratransit by calling us at 415.351.7052.

After your trip, wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water or use hand sanitizer. We also recommend cleaning your debit card, child seat, and any items that your driver or anyone else loaded or helped you carry with a sanitizing cleaner.

Prohibited Essential Trip Card uses

In your information packet there is a list of prohibited debit card uses that could lead to suspension or revocation of your Essential Trip Card. Any fraudulent use will result in its immediate revocation. Customers have no right to appeal.

Expiration

Your card will be valid on a temporary basis while the program is active. Eligibility for the Essential Trip Card 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.

Complaints and Compliments

If you had a positive or negative experience in a taxi, we'd love to hear about it. Report this by calling 311 and share your questions or feedback, including relevant details such as company name and vehicle number.

Taxi Lost & Found

Unfortunately, it happens to us all at one time or other. Here's your action list for retrieving your lost belongings.

- If you know the taxi company you were using, please contact them directly. This will get you the most immediate results.
- If you can't remember the taxi company, call 311. You will be given an incident number either over the phone or via email. Save it for future reference.
- For calls from outside San Francisco, call 415.701.2311.

If your lost item is found, we will contact you.

PAY

Monthly Allotment

When you activate your card, SF Paratransit staff will also walk you through how to load value on it each month. If you pay \$6, you will receive \$30 of value on your debit card, or if you pay \$12 you will receive \$60. Your maximum monthly allotment of debit card value will be \$60.

Your monthly purchase date will be established on the date of your first purchase. If you miss this original window, and the next time you add value to your Essential Trip Card is ten or more days after your designated purchase date, we will assign you a new purchase date. For example, if your purchase date was the 5th of the month and you don't purchase until the 18th, your new purchase date will be the 18th of the following month.

Funds may be added to your Essential Trip Card on your monthly purchase date or during your purchase window online, by phone, by mail or in person:

- Online at SFParatransitTaxi.SFMTA.com
- By phone at 415.351.7000.
- By mailing a check or money order to the SF Paratransit Brokers Office, 68 12th Street, 1st Floor San Francisco, CA 94103. Make your check or money order payable to "SF"



Paratransit". Write your SF Paratransit ID number on your check, and "Essential Trip Discount" in the check's memo.

- Arranging to pay by cash by calling 415.351.7000.

With SF Paratransit Taxi Online, you can check your card balance and the amount in your reserve account, make a purchase, review your purchase history, view your recent taxi trip, find out when your next purchase date is and report a lost or stolen card.

Checking your balance:

There are four ways to check your Essential Trip Card balance:

1. Call the toll-free automated voice response system at 877.SFTAXI.1 (877.738.2941) and follow the prompts.
2. You may swipe your card on the payment device of any taxi to print a receipt with your balance. If you have more than \$75 value on your card, the receipt will say \$75+ for privacy reasons.
3. Log into your account on [SF Paratransit Taxi Online](#).
4. Call the SF Paratransit office at 415.351.7052 and ask a customer service representative to check your balance.