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Report: NYC's Paratransit Program Inefficient

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Two studies reviewing New York City's program providing transportation to disabled residents say it is far too expensive and inefficient.

The twin reports released Tuesday by New York University's Rudin Center for Transportation and the **Citizens Budget Commission** conclude the paratransit program operated by the Metropolitan Transportation Authority could improve services and lower costs. The program now spends more than \$70 per trip, compared to \$38 per trip in Chicago and \$33 in Los Angeles.

New York's program cost \$461 million last year. More than 144,000 residents rely on it.

To help reduce costs and increase service, one recommendation is to give disabled residents subsidies for accessible cabs and ride-hailing services like Uber and Lyft. The authors of the studies also noted that the program often dispatches wheelchair-accessible vehicles to transport people who do not require wheelchairs -- a misuse of resources that the reports say leads to extra costs.

"The time is now to improve paratransit using technology for faster service and a better customer experience," said Sarah Kaufman, lead author of the Rudin Center's report. "It's urgent - demand and costs are increasing sharply every year."

In a statement, the MTA noted that it has already taken steps to make paratransit more efficient, saving more than \$1.9 billion overall since 2010.

"We will remain committed to providing high quality, safe, and cost-effective service to our customers while making every effort to operate the service efficiently," the agency said.

Kaufman said demand for paratransit services is likely to increase even more in coming years as the population ages.

This story has been corrected to show the program now spends \$33 per trip in Los Angeles, not \$28.