

ASSEMBLY, No. 4208

STATE OF NEW JERSEY 219th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED JUNE 1, 2020

Sponsored by:

Assemblyman DANIEL R. BENSON

District 14 (Mercer and Middlesex)

Assemblywoman CAROL A. MURPHY

District 7 (Burlington)

SYNOPSIS

Establishes program to adopt paratransit best practices, requires greater coordination among paratransit service providers, and establishes regional paratransit coordinating councils; appropriates \$6 million.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.



(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 6/4/2020)

1 AN ACT concerning paratransit services, the establishment of
2 regional paratransit coordinating councils, supplementing Title
3 27 and Title 30 of the Revised Statutes, and making an
4 appropriation.

5
6 **BE IT ENACTED** by the Senate and General Assembly of the State
7 of New Jersey:

8
9 1. This act shall be known and may be cited as the “Paratransit
10 Services Improvement Act.”

11
12 2. The Legislature hereby finds and declares:

13 The current system for paratransit services is fragmented and
14 includes various providers from different levels of government as
15 well as from private enterprise in different regions, counties, and
16 service areas. The ultimate impact of the current system is poor
17 service, including but not limited to long trip times and poor
18 communication of trip status, and high costs.

19 Access Link, which is a program administered by the New Jersey
20 Transit Corporation that was established to enable the State to meet
21 the minimum standards of the federal “Americans with Disabilities
22 Act of 1990” (42 U.S.C. s.12101 et seq.), provides the majority of
23 paratransit trips in the State. The Access Link Program, which has
24 a very high per trip cost, should serve as a safety net for paratransit
25 within the State, not as the primary provider of paratransit services
26 within the State as is currently the case. Community organizations
27 that provide paratransit services for individuals with developmental
28 disabilities have provided evidence to the Legislature that certain
29 paratransit services may be provided that are objectively safer, have
30 shorter average trip times, and cost less per passenger mile. The
31 average cost per trip for Access Link trips is, in many cases, triple
32 the cost of similar paratransit services. Accordingly, it should be an
33 objective of the State to direct service for regular and recurring
34 paratransit trips away from Access Link, where possible, and
35 toward other providers, including those funded through the
36 Department of Human Services and the Division of Vocational
37 Rehabilitation Services within the Department of Labor and
38 Workforce Development, to both improve the quality of service and
39 reduce costs, effectively using Access Link as a paratransit provider
40 of last resort.

41 In addition to Access Link, county transit providers provide
42 paratransit services to senior citizens and individuals with
43 disabilities. The level of service available varies widely from
44 county to county and the source of State funding for these services,
45 the Casino Revenue Fund, has experienced reduced revenues in
46 recent years. Furthermore, organizations at the county level have
47 been charged by the New Jersey Transit Corporation with
48 developing local coordination transportation plans within each

1 county but often lack knowledge of best practices, do not coordinate
2 regionally, and many organizations do not have common platforms
3 or systems for requesting, sharing, and completing trips.

4 Direct administrative connections and coordination between
5 agencies and organizations that provide programs and services for
6 disabled persons, generally, and transit agencies that provide transit
7 trips for those individuals would assist the State in improving the
8 quality of service and reducing State costs.

9 Building these relationships will help the State, community
10 organizations, and transit agencies develop best practices for
11 providing paratransit services, which will lead to additional
12 improvements in the quality of services and additional reductions in
13 costs.

14 The current system is insufficient to meet the needs of persons
15 with disabilities in the State, including the use of routing software
16 that has proven to be wholly inadequate to serve the special needs
17 of the disabled community.

18 It is essential that the State improve coordination, share best
19 practices, advance proven models, and improve the efficiency of the
20 system.

21

22 3. For the purposes of P.L. , c. (C.) (pending before
23 the Legislature as this bill):

24 “Community organization” means an organization that provides
25 programs and services to persons with disabilities.

26 “County transit agency” means a transportation service
27 organized under or in conjunction with a county government to
28 provide trips to senior citizens and residents with disabilities under
29 the "Senior Citizen and Disabled Resident Transportation
30 Assistance Act," P.L.1983, c.578 (C.27:25-25 et seq.).

31 “Division” means, unless another meaning clearly applies, the
32 Division of Developmental Disabilities in the Department of
33 Human Services.

34 “Paratransit provider” means any organization or entity that
35 provides paratransit services, including State and local transit
36 agencies, directly or through contract service, and community
37 organizations that provide transportation trips, either directly or
38 through a third party, funded by the Department of Human Services
39 or the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services within the
40 Department of Labor and Workforce Development.

41 “Paratransit service” means and includes any transportation
42 service other than fixed route transportation service, except that.
43 “paratransit service” does not include private or charter services
44 provided by taxicabs, limousines, or transportation network
45 companies.

46

47 4. The corporation shall ensure that all paratransit service that
48 it directly manages, administers, or supports financially, including

1 but not limited to Access Link service, shall adhere to the following
2 standards:

3 a. All paratransit providers shall implement an open software
4 platform such that the customer's user-interface and the trip
5 planning software can interact with the platforms of other
6 paratransit providers, allowing a trip requested by a customer via
7 the user interface to be fulfilled by a paratransit provider that
8 chooses to utilize a compatible platform without any additional
9 action on the part of the customer. Specifically, the open software
10 platform shall be interoperable with software developed pursuant to
11 subparagraph (1) of subsection b. of section 5 of P.L. ,
12 c. (C.) (pending before the Legislature as this bill).

13 b. The corporation shall structure the Access Link program as a
14 service of last resort. In structuring the program in this way, the
15 corporation shall: (1) actively develop a methodology whereby
16 customer trips can be tracked, and identify any trips requested by
17 customers that are regular and recurring in nature; (2) track and
18 document these regular and recurring trips by pickup location,
19 source of the request such as by phone, website, or mobile
20 application, and relevant regular or recurring characteristics, such
21 as, but not limited to, daily, weekly, monthly intervals, or several
22 trips from a single source or to a single destination; (3) make
23 information about these regular and recurring trips available to
24 other paratransit providers in the State, including county transit
25 agencies and community organizations that provide transportation
26 service, either directly or through a third party, funded by the
27 Department of Human Services or the Division of Vocational
28 Rehabilitation Services within the Department of Labor and
29 Workforce Development; (4) develop a system that allows county
30 transit agencies and community organizations that provide
31 paratransit service to compete to conduct these regular and
32 recurring trips, which would have otherwise been provided under
33 the Access Link program, by establishing a new Access Link
34 program structure where the corporation is able to realize contract
35 or operating cost savings when it shifts requested regular and
36 routine trips from the primary Access Link provider to a paratransit
37 provider that is able to provide these trips at a lower cost; (5)
38 develop a system that provides a payment equal to a portion of the
39 savings from the shifting of trips in paragraph (4) of this subsection
40 to the paratransit provider that provides the trips in place of the
41 Access link provider; and (6) shift trips out of the Access Link
42 program entirely, and to other State agencies or entities if it is found
43 that a regular and recurring trip requested through the Access Link
44 program is better provided under a different program through the
45 Department of Human Services or the Department of Labor and
46 Workforce Development, especially those trip requests that would
47 not otherwise be eligible to be provided under the Access Link
48 program.

1 c. Following the effective date of P.L. , c. (C.)
2 (pending before the Legislature as this bill), the corporation shall
3 not enter into any contract, or exercise any option to extend an
4 existing contract, concerning the provision of Access Link service
5 unless the contract or option includes a provision that the fixed
6 costs of the contract or option shall be proportionately reduced to
7 reflect any reduction in the provision of regular and recurring trips
8 provided by the contractor that are subsequently fulfilled by another
9 paratransit provider. The corporation shall establish minimum
10 operating standards for any paratransit provider that may wish to
11 participate in this program to ensure that all applicable federal
12 standards are met by the paratransit provider and that adequate
13 safeguards are provided to customers.

14 d. The corporation shall utilize the paratransit best practices
15 training module developed pursuant to subsection b. of section 5 of
16 P.L. , c. (C.) (pending before the Legislature as this bill) in
17 meeting the requirements of this section. The corporation, when
18 establishing the open software platform, required pursuant to
19 subsection a. of this section, shall ensure that the platform is
20 affordable for the corporation to adopt and easily implemented by
21 the various paratransit providers that will utilize the software
22 platform.

23

24 5. a. (1) The Division of Developmental Disabilities within the
25 Department of Human Services, in consultation with the New
26 Jersey Transit Corporation, shall develop and implement a
27 paratransit best practices pilot program.

28 (2) The division, in consultation with the New Jersey Transit
29 Corporation, shall select a qualified community organization to
30 assist it in developing and implementing the pilot program. The
31 qualified community organization shall meet the following criteria:

32 (a) the organization shall operate a facility that provides services
33 to persons with intellectual or developmental disabilities;

34 (b) the organization shall directly provide paratransit services to
35 persons with disabilities with those services paid, in whole or in
36 part, by funds received from the Department of Human Services and
37 the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services within the
38 Department of Labor and Workforce Development;

39 (c) within the previous five years, the organization has received a
40 Federal Transit Administration grant awarded by and administered
41 through the New Jersey Transit Corporation for improvement to
42 paratransit services;

43 (d) during the previous five-year period, the organization has
44 demonstrated improvement in key performance metrics, including
45 average trip time, vehicle accidents, and cost per passenger mile for
46 paratransit services; and

1 (e) the organization provides transportation trips on a sufficient
2 scale, including at least 250 daily trips under normal operating
3 conditions.

4 b. Phase one of the pilot program shall include the following:

5 A training module for paratransit best practices shall be
6 developed jointly by the qualified community organization and the
7 New Jersey Transit Corporation and subject to approval by the
8 division. The training module shall include: (1) an integrated
9 paratransit software package that includes trip generation and
10 scheduling, GPS directions for drivers, a mobile application for
11 users that allows for trip requests, confirmation of trip requests, and
12 trip status updates, and a trip accounting system; (2) a driver safety
13 system that includes dashboard cameras, incident monitoring, and
14 driver training; (3) assistance in hiring staff if necessary to fully
15 implement the transportation system and train existing staff in the
16 use of new technologies and business processes; (4) a curriculum
17 that educates agencies about fleet management and specialized
18 driver training for the needs of paratransit users; (5) personalized
19 agency culture training; and (6) agency training on how to develop
20 synergies between optimal transportation practices and the other
21 programmatic needs of paratransit providers who provide
22 transportation trips funded by the Department of Human Services.

23 c. Phase two of the pilot program shall include the following:

24 The division shall establish an application process where up to
25 five paratransit providers that provide transportation trips directly
26 funded by the Department of Human Services or the Division of
27 Vocational Rehabilitation Services within the Department of Labor
28 and Workforce Development are selected by the division, in
29 consultation with the qualified community organization, to receive
30 training in paratransit best practices from the qualified community
31 organization. When selecting service providers to receive training,
32 the division shall consider the cost for the paratransit provider to
33 adopt these best practices, which may include but is not necessarily
34 limited to the acquisition of new software, hiring of staff, and any
35 necessary changes in vehicle fleet composition as well as potential
36 savings that the paratransit provider will be likely to realize from
37 reducing average trip time, vehicle accidents, and cost per
38 passenger mile by adopting these best practices and the likelihood
39 that those savings could self-fund the adoption of the best practices.
40 Any paratransit providers selected to participate in the pilot
41 program shall receive training from the qualified community
42 organization.

43 d. Phase three of the pilot program shall include the following:

44 (1) If the efficiencies realized by the paratransit providers that
45 received training in phase two are sufficient to justify widespread
46 adoption, then the division and corporation, in consultation with the
47 qualified community organization, shall expand the training
48 program by further developing the module into a best practices

1 training package designed in a manner that allows a paratransit
2 provider to independently adopt the best practices and software on
3 its own, or in conjunction with assistance provided generally
4 through the paratransit coordinating councils established in
5 accordance with section 6 of P.L. , c. (C.) (pending before
6 the Legislature as this bill). It is intended that this phase three
7 training module shall allow for the eventual integration of
8 paratransit services throughout the State. Integration of paratransit
9 services shall mean the widespread adoption of the software
10 developed pursuant to phase one of the pilot program, or similarly
11 compatible software, so that requested trips by customers may be
12 fulfilled, if possible, by any applicable paratransit provider, and that
13 paratransit providers shall meet the minimum operating standards
14 established by the New Jersey Transit Corporation so that those
15 paratransit providers may compete for regular and routine Access
16 Link trips under the revised Access Link program as described in
17 section 4 of P.L. , c. (C.) (pending before the Legislature
18 as this bill).

19 If the efficiencies realized in phase two do not justify expansion
20 of the training program further, then the division and corporation, in
21 consultation with the qualified community organization, shall
22 determine an alternate method of integrating paratransit services
23 throughout the State in a manner that allows paratransit providers
24 that meet minimum operating standards to compete for regular and
25 routine Access Link trips under the revised Access Link program as
26 described in section 4 of P.L. , c. (C.) (pending before the
27 Legislature as this bill).

28 (2) The regional paratransit coordinating councils shall be
29 established in accordance with section 6 of P.L. , c. (C.)
30 (pending before the Legislature as this bill).

31 e. The New Jersey Transit Corporation shall utilize the
32 complete paratransit best practices training module, including the
33 associated software, when making changes to its paratransit service
34 and the Access Link program to comply with the requirements of
35 section 4 of P.L. , c. (C.) (pending before the Legislature
36 as this bill).

37 f. (1) The New Jersey Transit Corporation shall enter into a
38 contract with the qualified community organization that
39 compensates the qualified community organization for its costs in
40 developing the paratransit best practices training module as required
41 for phase one of the pilot program as established in subsection b. of
42 this section, and providing the training module as a publicly
43 available resource that can be utilized by other paratransit providers
44 in the State and used by the corporation for its own paratransit
45 services. If phases one and two of the pilot program are determined
46 to be successful, the corporation shall also enter into a contract with
47 the qualified community organization to further develop the training
48 module into a self-administered best practices training package as

1 required for phase three of the pilot program in subsection d. of this
2 section. The self-administered best practices training package shall
3 also be a publicly available resource that can be utilized by other
4 paratransit providers in the State and by the corporation for its own
5 paratransit services.

6 (2) The division shall enter into a contract with the qualified
7 community organization for the actual training of agencies under
8 the pilot program, which shall include performance standards as the
9 division shall deem appropriate to ensure that the agencies being
10 trained are adequately prepared to implement safer, more efficient,
11 user friendly, and customer-focused transportation services.

12 (3) To the extent possible, the division shall require paratransit
13 providers being trained under the program to first utilize operating
14 savings resulting from adoption of the paratransit best practices
15 training pilot program to fund the costs of software, staff, and
16 equipment that may be required under the program, and limiting the
17 overall costs of the program.

18

19 6. a. There is hereby established within the Department of
20 Human Services six separate regional paratransit coordinating
21 councils. The regional paratransit coordinating councils shall be
22 organized as follows:

23 (1) one council shall cover the counties of Atlantic, Cape May,
24 Cumberland, Gloucester, and Salem;

25 (2) one council shall cover the counties of Burlington, Camden,
26 and Ocean;

27 (3) one council shall cover the counties of Mercer, Middlesex,
28 and Monmouth;

29 (4) one council shall cover the counties of Hunterdon, Sussex,
30 and Warren;

31 (5) one council shall cover the counties of Essex, Morris,
32 Somerset, and Union; and

33 (6) one council shall cover the counties of Bergen, Hudson, and
34 Passaic.

35 b. Each regional paratransit coordinating council shall have the
36 following members:

37 (1) one designee of the Director of the Division of
38 Developmental Disabilities in the Department of Human Services;

39 (2) one designee of the New Jersey Transit Corporation who
40 works on the Access Link program or the Senior Citizen and
41 Disabled Resident Transportation Assistance Program;

42 (3) one representative of any company or entity that has
43 contracted with the New Jersey Transit Corporation to provide
44 Access Link paratransit service within the region;

45 (4) one representative of each county within the respective
46 region to be chosen by the county executive director or by the board
47 of freeholders, as applicable;

1 (5) one representative of each county transportation agency or
2 other comparable entity within the respective region that provides
3 paratransit service for a county under the Senior Citizen and
4 Disabled Resident Transportation Assistance Program;

5 (6) one representative from each county chapter of the Arc of
6 New Jersey within the respective region;

7 (7) one individual that represents one or more members of the
8 Alliance for the Betterment of Citizens with Disabilities within the
9 respective region;

10 (8) one representative of Community Access Unlimited within
11 the respective region;

12 (9) one representative of the New Jersey Association of
13 Community Providers within the respective region; and

14 (10) up to three additional appointees of the Director of the
15 Division of Developmental Disabilities to represent paratransit
16 providers within the region that provide the most passenger trips to
17 persons with disabilities.

18 c. Each agency with an eligible representative of a regional
19 paratransit coordinating council provided in subsection b. of this
20 section shall submit information in a form and manner determined
21 by the Director of the Division of Developmental Disabilities to the
22 director not later than 30 days following the enactment of P.L. ,
23 c. (C.) (pending before the Legislature as this bill) and on or
24 before January 1 of each year thereafter identifying the name and
25 contact information for the person to represent each respective
26 agency. The term for each member on the regional paratransit
27 coordinating council shall be one year provided, however, that any
28 member may be selected to serve on the council for subsequent
29 terms at the discretion of the respective agency. The director may
30 appoint one member of each regional paratransit coordinating
31 council to serve as the chair of that council.

32 d. Each regional paratransit coordinating council shall meet not
33 less than quarterly, with the first meeting happening not less than 60
34 days following the enactment of P.L. , c. (C.) (pending
35 before the Legislature as this bill). The chair, in consultation with
36 the other members of the council, shall set meeting dates and shall
37 lead the coordination effort. The members shall serve without
38 compensation but may be reimbursed by the division for reasonable
39 expenses incurred in the execution of their duties.

40 e. The purpose of the regional paratransit coordinating councils
41 is to exchange best practices among paratransit providers within the
42 State. Those best practices shall include but are not limited to
43 scheduling and routing, fleet maintenance, driver training, customer
44 communications, safety practices, and improving the customer
45 usability experience. The councils are also to establish a system to
46 exchange information among and between paratransit providers and
47 eventually open platform standards so that: (1) each paratransit
48 provider may provide basic information to its customers about other

1 paratransit service options within each respective region; (2)
2 paratransit providers may eventually share customer trip requests
3 amongst each other; and (3) a single platform may eventually be
4 developed that enables a paratransit user to visit a single platform or
5 place to request a trip, and that trip may be distributed amongst the
6 paratransit providers in a manner that optimizes State cost and
7 customer experience. The councils shall also exchange budget
8 information and investigate more efficient means of organizing the
9 New Jersey Transit Corporation's expenditures for paratransit
10 services, use of State casino revenue funds, and appropriations for
11 the division related to paratransit services, for the purpose of
12 coordinating these three respective funding pools to eliminate any
13 duplicative funding, and to direct trips and funding to service
14 providers that offer the highest quality service and overall best
15 value.

16 f. The county plans required under section 6 of P.L.1983,
17 c.578 (C.27:25-30) and any committees or groups organized to
18 effectuate the purposes of the "Senior Citizen and Disabled
19 Resident Transportation Assistance Act." P.L.1983, c.578 (C.27:25-
20 25 et seq.) shall be consolidated into the regional paratransit
21 coordinating councils. If necessary, county level subcommittees of
22 the regional paratransit coordinating councils may be established to
23 more effectively develop county plans; however, following the
24 effective date of P.L. , c. (C.) (pending before the
25 Legislature as this bill) county plans shall also take into account the
26 larger regional and Statewide goals of integrating paratransit service
27 and creating a more cohesive user experience under the pilot
28 program established in P.L. , c. (C.) (pending before the
29 Legislature as this bill).

30 g. The New Jersey Transit Corporation shall utilize each
31 regional paratransit coordinating council to disseminate information
32 about the new Access Link program structure developed pursuant to
33 section 4 of P.L. , c. (C.) (pending before the Legislature
34 as this bill) and coordinate with the council in determining the
35 operating standards required for paratransit providers to compete to
36 provide Access Link trips and when developing the system for
37 paying paratransit providers to provide regular and routine trips
38 requested through the Access Link program.

39 h. The regional paratransit coordinating councils shall also
40 advise other paratransit providers in each region and develop
41 support materials to assist other paratransit providers in adopting
42 and implementing the best practices training package developed
43 under phase three of the pilot program established pursuant to
44 paragraph (1) of subsection d. of section 5 of P.L. , c. (C.)
45 (pending before the Legislature as this bill).

46

47 7. The division, in consultation with the New Jersey Transit
48 Corporation, shall develop a framework to evaluate the efficacy of

1 the paratransit best practices training materials as well as the
2 training program. Within 180 days of the completion of phase two
3 and within 180 days of completion of phase three of the pilot
4 program, the division shall deliver a report to the Governor and the
5 Legislature. Each report shall include feedback from the agencies
6 that received training, a fiscal analysis of each agency with
7 projections on how the implementation of the training will impact
8 each agency's safety performance, average trip times, cost per trip,
9 number of trips provided, and overall impact on each agency's core
10 mission of serving people with disabilities. The division and
11 corporation shall conduct a survey of consumers of paratransit
12 services within the pilot program and shall include feedback from
13 these consumers in the report. The report shall include
14 recommendations from the division and the New Jersey Transit
15 Corporation concerning whether the pilot program should be
16 extended or made permanent, suggested changes to the program,
17 opportunities for improvement, and the potential for future savings.
18 The report shall also identify the extent to which software from the
19 pilot has been integrated into the corporation's paratransit services,
20 the analysis that determined how to execute the integration required
21 under the first part of phase three of the pilot program, and findings
22 from the division and the corporation about the overall change in
23 coordination between paratransit providers throughout the State at
24 the time of the report.

25

26 8. There is appropriated from the General Fund to The New
27 Jersey Transit Corporation up to \$4,000,000 from a portion of the
28 additional Federal Transit Administration funds granted in FY 2020
29 under the Section 5307 Urbanized Area Program, pursuant to the
30 provisions of the "Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security
31 Act," Pub.L.116-136, exclusively for eligible costs to develop the
32 paratransit best practices training module, including but not limited
33 to, software development and licensing costs as required pursuant to
34 section 5 of P.L. , c. (C.) (pending before the Legislature
35 as this bill).

36

37 9. There is appropriated \$2,000,000 from the General Fund to
38 the Division of Developmental Disabilities in the Department of
39 Human Services, which shall be used to fund the paratransit training
40 pilot program established pursuant section 5 of P.L. ,
41 c. (C.) (pending before the Legislature as this bill)

42

43 10. This act shall take effect immediately.

STATEMENT

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This bill reforms the State’s system of providing paratransit services. The goal of the reforms is to better integrate the various types of paratransit service currently offered in the State, allow lower cost providers to provide more of the trips, and ensure that best practices are adopted across the State.

The bill requires the New Jersey Transit Corporation (NJ Transit) to better integrate its paratransit services with other paratransit services. Under the bill, this is achieved by requiring NJ Transit to ensure that all paratransit service that it directly manages, administers, or supports financially develops an open software platform that will be compatible with the software used by other paratransit providers. The bill requires NJ Transit to begin identifying regular and recurring trips, and to develop a system where other paratransit providers can complete those trips on behalf of NJ Transit if the provider can meet applicable federal standards, provide the trip at a lower cost, and protect customer safety. The bill also requires NJ Transit to develop an Access Link program structure that allows NJ Transit to realize cost savings when reducing Access Link trip volumes, and to share those savings with paratransit providers that meet minimum federal standards and successfully compete for regular and routine trips under this new system. The bill also encourages NJ Transit to move trips requested under the Access Link program to other State based programs entirely, especially if those trip requests are not eligible under the Access Link program. This is intended to provide greater integration of paratransit service across the State, so that NJ Transit can allow paratransit providers to compete for regular and routine Access Link trips.

The bill requires the establishment of a best practices pilot training program for paratransit providers. The program is to be run by the Division of Developmental Disabilities (division) in consultation with NJ Transit and a qualified community organization to be selected by the division. Under the first phase of the program, the qualified community organization and NJ Transit will develop a paratransit best practices training module, with final approval from the division. Under the second phase, the division is to select five paratransit providers, upon application, to receive training in paratransit best practices under the pilot program. The qualified community organization will then provide the training to each of the five paratransit providers under a training contract with the division. The training will include modern trip making software, trip confirmation, scheduling, a mobile phone application for customers, dashboard camera safety technology, as well as agency-wide and individual employee training and guidance. Depending upon the success of phase two of the pilot, phase three will involve either revising the training module into a training

1 program that other paratransit providers can adopt without direct
2 training from the qualified community organization, or NJ Transit,
3 the division, and the qualified community organization will
4 determine some other method of integrating paratransit service so
5 that paratransit providers meeting certain standards can compete for
6 regular and routine paratransit trips. The second part of phase three
7 involves the establishment of regional paratransit coordinating
8 councils.

9 The bill creates new regional paratransit coordinating councils
10 (coordinating councils). The coordinating councils are to be located
11 within the Department of Human Services. There are to be six
12 coordinating councils divided geographically by county.
13 Membership on the coordinating councils include the division, NJ
14 Transit, NJ Transit Access Link contractors from each service
15 region, county government, county paratransit system operators,
16 several listed community organizations, and up to three additional
17 paratransit providers from each region as chosen by the division.
18 The coordinating councils are to meet at least quarterly and share
19 best practices. They are also required to establish a system to
20 exchange information between paratransit providers and eventually
21 develop open platform standards and share budget information. The
22 coordinating councils will replace the county based councils used to
23 develop county plans under the Senior Citizen and Disabled
24 Resident Transportation Assistance Program, but the councils may
25 establish county level subcommittees for this purpose. The county
26 plans also must now account for the efforts of this bill to integrate
27 Statewide paratransit service under a unified platform and
28 improving Statewide coordination across geography and across
29 agency. The coordinating councils are also to be utilized by NJ
30 Transit to develop its revised Access Link program so that the
31 paratransit providers on the council can be used as a resource when
32 allowing paratransit providers to compete for regular and routine
33 Access Link trips. Finally the coordinating councils are to serve as
34 a resource and develop materials to assist other paratransit
35 providers in achieving the integration objectives in the first part of
36 phase three of the pilot program, either through the revised training
37 module or the alternate solution developed.

38 The bill requires the division to issue a report with NJ Transit to
39 the Governor and the Legislature at the end of the pilot program
40 with information on the pilot program and a recommendation on
41 whether or not to continue the pilot program, as well as an analysis
42 of the decisions made about how to proceed with the Statewide
43 integration required in the first part of the third phase of the pilot
44 program. The division and NJ Transit are also required to survey
45 users about how their user experience is impacted by the pilot
46 program and changes to the Access Link program, and report on
47 how each have impacted paratransit users.

A4208 BENSON, MURPHY

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1 The bill provides a supplemental appropriation of federal funds
2 to NJ Transit for the cost of developing the training module and
3 related software development, and a general fund appropriation to
4 the division for the cost of the pilot's phase two training program.