



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

# NEWS

ROD R. BLAGOJEVICH – GOVERNOR

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## **Governor Blagojevich expands Free Rides program to include people with disabilities**

*SB 1920 builds on successful Seniors Ride Free program,  
started earlier this year*

**CHICAGO** – Governor Rod R. Blagojevich today signed landmark legislation to allow people with disabilities statewide to ride free on all fixed route transit systems. Senate Bill 1920 requires transit systems statewide to begin providing free rides to people with disabilities who are enrolled in the State’s Circuit Breaker program no later than October 24, 2008.

Statewide, approximately 275,000 low-income individuals with disabilities are eligible for this benefit. This new benefit builds on the success of Seniors Ride Free, which the Governor launched in January of this year. In combination, these two programs ensure that nearly 1.6 Illinoisans can ride fixed-route transit for free, once they register with their local transit agency.

“My Seniors Ride Free program has been a success from its beginning in January,” said Governor Blagojevich. “Now, thanks to this new law, all disabled individuals eligible for Circuit Breaker in Illinois can also enjoy the benefits and freedoms that public transit provides. I am very pleased to sign this bill into law today.”

Senate Bill 1920, sponsored by Sen. Susan Garrett and Rep. Kathleen Ryg, received strong bipartisan support in the Illinois Senate, where it passed 55-1-0 and in the Illinois House where it passed 95-15-0.

“This new law will make the daily lives of individuals with disabilities easier by limiting the burden of transportation costs. I am proud to have co-sponsored this bill, and look forward to seeing it take effect,” said Sen. Garrett.

“I have been looking forward to this ever since I heard the Governor announce the Seniors Ride Free Program this winter,” said Mitchell Cohen, 52, of Chicago. “He promised he would work to extend the benefit to people with disabilities, and I am excited that he lived up to his promise. I look forward to riding the buses and trains to doctor’s appointments, the grocery store, or wherever I need to go, without having to cut into my budget.”

People with disabilities who wish to take part in the free transit benefit must enroll in the Circuit Breaker program in order to be eligible. The Circuit Breaker program provides support to senior citizens and persons with disabilities to help them reduce the impact of taxes and prescription medications on their lives. When the costs of property taxes and prescription medicines begin to “overload” our seniors and persons with disabilities, this program steps in to help, just as a circuit breaker prevents overloads in an electrical system.

Circuit Breaker annual household income limits are as follows:

- \$22,218 for a household of 1
- \$29,480 for a household of 2
- \$36,740 for a household of 3

To apply for Circuit Breaker, people with disabilities can visit [www.cbrx.il.gov](http://www.cbrx.il.gov) or call 1-800-624-2459 [1-888-206-1327 (TTY)] to request an application.

Those already enrolled in Circuit Breaker should contact their local transit agency to find out what they will need to do to take advantage of the free rides. For a list of local transit agencies, visit [www.illinois.gov/transit](http://www.illinois.gov/transit).

Individuals with disabilities who are not eligible for Circuit Breaker will still be eligible for reduced fare, half-price transit rides as provided under current law. Eligibility for reduced fare service is generally determined at the local level.

“Persons with disabilities are often transit dependent, so it is important that we improve access to transit for those who need it most to live independently,” said Rep. Ryg. “I am pleased to see Governor Blagojevich sign this legislation.”

“By providing these free rides on fixed-route service, we are giving additional mobility to those who need it most and helping them to improve their quality of life,” said Steve Schlickman, RTA Executive Director.

“We are pleased that this new free ride benefit will be available to people with disabilities on a limited income,” said Janice Stashwick, Civil Rights Advocate for Access Living. “Public transportation is critical to the everyday lives of many people with disabilities. This free ride benefit will offer more independence to get to work, school, medical and social appointments, etc., and thus will benefit us all.”

“The enactment of a free ride program for people with disabilities will help them to be more active and achieve the goals and daily necessities of importance to the entire community,” said Tony Paulauski, Executive Director, The Arc of Illinois.

SB 1920 is effective immediately. Free rides for those who meet the eligibility requirements must begin within 60 days of today’s bill action or no later than October 24, 2008.