

Accessibility at the STC Summit 2008

For the seventh year in a row, the STC AccessAbility SIG is proud to provide you with accessibility information for the annual STC conference.

To help plan your travels, we have information about arriving in Philadelphia by train or by plane. For those who would like to rent a scooter while in Philadelphia, we have an offer from Scootaround. We also have information about getting around the Pennsylvania Convention Center and downtown Philadelphia, and we have some practical tips about how you can make the most of your conference experience.

About the guide

The concept of an accessibility guide was originally to encourage people with special needs or disabilities to attend the conference by providing advance notice about the accessibility of the conference location. Some members have told us that their attendance at conferences was only possible thanks to the practical information in the guide that addressed their particular needs.

As is often the case with accessibility issues, benefits for one group tend to benefit everyone. The entire STC community can benefit from the information collected here on these conference pages.

We are pleased to continue the accessibility guide tradition begun by Fabien Vais at the 2002 STC conference with the then Special Needs SIG, now the AccessAbility SIG.

We want to thank the Philadelphia Metro chapter for its local support and collaboration.

Before you leave home, print - or download - any relevant pages, included the referenced links. They are useful travel companions!

Look for other links about accessible travel on the AccessAbility SIG resource pages.

Stay tuned as we post more information about the accessible Summit during the coming weeks! We plan to bring updates, as well as encourage discussion and sharing of travel tips on the new blog for the AccessAbility SIG.

Best regards,
The AccessAbility SIG of STC
and
The STC Philadelphia Metro Chapter site

Arriving by Plane

The Philadelphia International Airport has its very own accessibility guide called the "Getting Around Guide." which it describes as

(...) geared to travelers with disabilities and (...) designed to assist them in navigating the Airport and locating various services and facilities. It includes a "Frequently Asked Questions" section and a detailed Airport map.

The guide is available on the Web site in PDF format, DOC format, and MP3 audio file format.

Download them onto your MP3 player for easy reference when traveling.

For quick reference, you can print the following ADA/Accessibility pages (HTML format), which repeat certain information from the guide:

Telephone numbers

Parking & FAQ

The airport has a hotline number for mobility services: +1 215-937-6700 (TDD: +1 215-937-6755).

For a printed copy or an audio cassette version of the airport guide please send an email request. Remember to include your complete mailing address and indicate whether you want print or audio cassette. You may also place your order for the "Getting Around Guide" by calling +1 215-937-5499 or TDD: +1 215-937-6755.

An update about the latest improvements in accessibility at the airport are listed in a separate document in PDF format only:
http://www.phl.org/pdf/PHL_AD Au.pdf.

The "Getting Around Guide" is almost all you need to answer your questions about getting around the airport. You are, however, encouraged to check the main airport site itself for details about your flight and the latest security information. You may also find relevant information that is more up-to-date than the brochure at the time of your departure.

Ground Transportation

If you need transportation in wheelchair accessible vehicles, you should make arrangements before arriving at the airport. The ADA/Accessibility page includes a link about the ground transportation, which lists phone numbers and information about rental cars, parking, wheelchair accessible ground transportation, and more. All ground transportation information is located in each baggage claim area.

Rail service is provided by SEPTA from Terminal A, B, C, D, and E straight to the Market East Station just near the hotel at 12th and Filbert (downtown Philadelphia). This service costs about 6 USD.

The stations at the airport and at Market East are accessible. For more information about the Market East station and getting to the hotel, go to the Train page in this conference accessibility guide.

Shuttles and Taxis

Shuttle service is available from the airport directly to the Marriott for 10 USD one-way. This might be the most convenient if you have extra luggage to carry. You can pick up any service phone in the airport and dial "19" to request shuttle service. The Tropiano shuttle service takes you to the conference hotel, Philadelphia Marriott Downtown. (The shuttle marked Marriott at the airport only goes to the Marriott located near the airport!)

Current information about taxi fares from the airport to the Marriott are approximately 27 USD one way.

Taxi fares are changing June 2nd and the airport information might not reflect this in time for your travels. The new fares are 2.70 USD for the start fee and 2.30 USD for each mile.

Scooting around Philly

Do you use a scooter or wheelchair and feel it is too cumbersome to bring with you in your travels? STC has a special arrangement with Scootaround for rental services to Summit attendees.

Scooter and wheelchair rentals are available by contacting Scootaround Inc. at its Toll-Free hotline: +1-888-441-7575.

You can also submit a rental inquiry on the Web on the special link for STC Summit attendees or by fax at +1-204-478-1172

General Travel and Conference Tips

Attendees at past conferences have tips about getting the best experience from your conference attendance.

Come early and sit closer to the speaker to improve the hearing or sight quality of your participation.

Ask the speaker to repeat questions from the audience for clarity; speakers are usually extremely understanding and cooperative.

If you have a need for a specific seat in a room (due to a hearing or sight limitation), try to arrive at your session approximately 10 minutes early and place a polite note on the seat of your choice. You can return later and occupy it at your convenience.

If you have other tips, please visit the new AccessAbility SIG blog and share your tips.

The SIG also has some links that provide general advice for travellers with disabilities. Use them as checklists to ensure that you are well prepared for your trip and can fully enjoy the conference.

http://www.suite101.com/article.cfm/travel_with_disabilities/104743

<http://barrierfreetravels.com/serendipity/>

<http://www.abletotravel.org/trips.php>

<http://airconsumer.ost.dot.gov/publications/horizons.htm>

Look for more links about accessible travel at the AccessAbility SIG resources page for accessible travel.

Arriving by Train

If you are traveling by train to the conference, call +1-800-872-7245 (+1-800-USA-RAIL). That is the friendly advice from Amtrak. They can help you plan a comfortable train trip that considers all your needs. When you call this number, a service representative from Amtrak can help you book your trip, answer all your questions to the best of their ability, and give you peace of mind about your trip. Just remember to state that you need special assistance when placing your booking to get the personalized service to suit your particular needs.

Amtrak has a section devoted to information about travellers with disabilities called Services for People with Disabilities and Special Needs. The information includes details about station accessibility, wheelchair transport, and more.

Rail Service in Downtown Philadelphia with SEPTA

Amtrak uses the 30th Street Station in downtown Philadelphia. From there, you can switch to SEPTA (Philadelphia's bus and rail service) transportation to get to Market East Station at 11th and Filbert, one block away from the conference hotel, the Marriott. At present, a transfer from 30th Street Station to Market East Station costs USD 3.50 when ordered in advance, or USD 4.00 when purchased on site.

For more information about SEPTA's bus and rail services in the city, contact SEPTA Customer Service at +1 215-580-7800. Other phone numbers are 215-580-7145 for CCT (paratransit) services or TDD: +1 215-580-7712.

The SEPTA Web site has an Accessible SEPTA section that describes the accessibility of each station and how to get assistance. There are specific rules about how many personnel are permitted to assist you. Please read the information carefully for your particular needs.

There are reduced fares for people with disabilities, but these must be requested in advance.

Check with Amtrak or SEPTA for your particular travel plans if you are planning to use other stations. It is also a good idea to check the links or call the numbers listed here before you leave if you want the latest travel advisory.

The Market East Station and 30th Street Station are fully wheelchair accessible. Remember that STC has a scooter rental offer from Scootaround for attendees who want the convenience of wheels for getting around the convention. For more information, see the scooting around Philadelphia page in this conference accessibility guide.

From Market East to the Marriott

To get to the Marriott from Market East Station, you can go outside at 12th and Filbert and cross the street to the north entrance of the hotel.

You can also get to the hotel without going outside. From the Market East station, you go in the direction of the Gallery and go up two levels of escalators (or use the elevators). This brings you close to the double doors that lead to the Skybridge toward the Marriott. When you reach the Marriott, go down one level to reach the lobby to check in.

SEPTA staff and security guards are always around the station and are happy to point you in the right direction.

Visiting the Pennsylvania Convention Center and Philadelphia

The Pennsylvania Convention Center is the site of all the conference activities for STC's 55th conference. The Center displays the universal symbol for accessibility throughout the Center to signal its accessible services. All meeting rooms and exhibits halls are accessible. All public services are accessible, including, bathrooms, telephones, elevators, and concession stands.

If you enter the Center at the main entrance (12th and Arch Streets), curb cuts are on each side of the street for easy access. Symbols on the doors indicate the entrances with automatic door openers.

One level up, you can enter the Center using the Skybridge from the Marriott or from the Market East Station. The Marriott Skybridge connects to the Grand Hall, which is the former Reading Terminal Train Shed. The Market East Station also connects here, so you can make an easy connection without going outside. You can download maps of the convention center from the convention center Web site to familiarize yourself with the layout before you arrive.

Lighting in the convention center comes from metal halide or incandescent lighting with dimmers.
Service signage includes Braille.

Two of the closest garages have accessible parking.

The garage at 9th & Filbert

Self-park garage with elevator and security patrol
Entrance from 9th between Arch & Filbert
15 accessible car spaces and 2 accessible van spaces (van accessible parking on 1st level only)
Open from 6 in the morning until midnight.

The garage at 10th & Ludlow

Self-park garage
Entrance from 10th between Market & Chestnut
9 accessible car spaces and 1 accessible van space (which is on the 1st level)
Open from 6:30 AM to 11:30 PM.

Getting Around Philadelphia

The hotel and convention center are located in the center of the city, where curbside accommodations for people using a wheelchair or a cane. The sidewalks in the area of the hotel and convention center are generally smooth riding for a wheelchair, but the volume of people in the area can slow your journey.

Remember to be sensible and watch your belongings carefully like you would in any major city.

We are in downtown Philadelphia so you can expect lots of traffic and lots of noise when you are outside. Rush hour is approximately from 7 AM to 9:30 AM and again from 4 PM to 7 PM.

The city itself has a site about accessible Philadelphia from the Philadelphia Accessibility Compliance Office. This site includes information about accessible health centers. You may enjoy reading comments about accessibility in the city in this excerpt from Frommer's or this article from the National Federation for the Blind, which includes a good description of the Market East station from the perspective of a blind person. The NFB article is from 2001, so you must disregard the prices it mentions.

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