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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

People with Disabilities Fight Back Against Unfair Access-A-Ride Policies

Class Action Lawsuit Charges Violation of Constitutional Rights

New York, NY, May 12, 2015 – Barbara Walsh, a Queens senior citizen, and four other people with disabilities filed a class action lawsuit today in federal court against New York City Transit (NYCT) for the unconstitutional policies of Access-A-Ride, the City’s paratransit service for people with disabilities. Represented by MFY Legal Services, Inc., and Pillsbury Winthrop Shaw Pittman LLP, they are among the tens of thousands of New Yorkers with disabilities who need Access-A-Ride for basic transportation.

“Ms. Walsh’s case is typical of people with disabilities who relied on Access-A-Ride for years and were suddenly cut off with no meaningful notice or opportunity to challenge the denial,” said Nahid Sorooshyari, a staff attorney at MFY Legal Services. “New York City Transit’s procedures and policies are unconstitutional and wreak havoc on the lives of people who depend on these services.”

Ms. Walsh received Access-A-Ride for more than five years due to a brain injury and other permanent disabilities. When she attempted to recertify in 2014, NYCT changed its position and found her eligible for only three months of services, even though her disabilities were permanent and had not improved. When she then attempted to extend her services, NYCT changed its position again, found her completely ineligible and cut off her services altogether. “I got only generic form letters – never any real information explaining why NYCT was changing my eligibility,” Ms. Walsh said.

“The U.S. Constitution and state and federal law require New York City Transit to tell applicants and those recertifying eligibility why they are being denied services or receiving reduced services,” said Jay D. Dealy, a senior associate at Pillsbury Winthrop Shaw Pittman LLP. “New York City Transit’s generic denial letters are practically useless. Without knowing why the application was denied, it’s very difficult to appeal successfully. And when New York City Transit denies appeals, it sends another generic letter that says the only option for redress is to start a new application and fails to tell people that they have the right to appeal the denial in court. This class action seeks to redress these, and other, due process violations.”

MFY Legal Services is a non-profit organization that provides a wide range of free civil legal services to low-income New Yorkers and focuses extensively on protecting the rights of people with

disabilities. MFY works closely with organizations that serve New Yorkers with disabilities and conducts Access-A-Ride Legal Clinics to help people to access services and file appeals if they are improperly denied. Pillsbury Winthrop Shaw Pittman LLP is a full-service law firm that has partnered with MFY to staff the legal clinics and increase services to people with disabilities. It provides a wide range of pro bono services including work on voting rights, political asylum proceedings, prisoners' rights and bankruptcy assistance.