

Rider and provider handbook for Central Connecticut Paratransit

Definitions

The following definitions are used within this document:

- **Rider:** a person who, by virtue of disability that prevents him or her from using the fixed route bus system when a non-disabled person could do so, has been certified as eligible for ADA paratransit service.
- **Service:** Central Connecticut Paratransit.
- **Service provider:** the party (currently Dattco of New Britain, Connecticut) who provides reservation, scheduling, and transportation for ADA paratransit service.
- **Service area:** the region in which ADA paratransit is available. (See map.)
- **Fixed route bus system:** the local bus network operated by the Bristol/New Britain divisions of CT TRANSIT. Commuter (express) buses are not included, nor are services provided by other operators, including other divisions of CT TRANSIT.

Reservations

All trips must be scheduled at least the day before a planned trip and no more than fourteen (14) days in advance of the

trip. Reservationists are available by telephone during regular business hours to schedule trips. When calling outside of regular business hours, callers will be prompted to leave a message. Riders or their guardians should give the rider's ID number, first and last name, date requested for the trip, pick-up address, requested pick-up time, drop-off address, and the number of people traveling including personal care attendant and/or companions. If it is a round-trip, the pick-up time for the return trip, address of the pick-up location, and address of the drop-off should also be given. Persons making reservations must leave a telephone number where they may be reached. This will allow the reservationist to call and confirm the reservation.

When scheduling a pick-up time for a trip, please notify the reservationist if the trip is time-sensitive. For instance, if a rider must arrive on time for a doctor's appointment or if a rider must get picked up before a facility closes. These parameters will be taken into account when determining the pick-up time. However to accommodate as many riders as possible, per federal regulations pick-up times may be negotiated. Negotiated pick-up times shall be within one (1) hour of the rider's desired departure time (up to one hour before or one hour after the desired departure time).

Changes to reservations

Any modification of an existing reservation, including adjustments to pick-up and drop-off times and changes to ori-

gins and destinations, shall be considered a new reservation. As such, the service provider must be notified at least the day before the planned trip and no more than fourteen (14) days in advance.

Changes to reservations will not be accepted the day of the trip. The only changes to trips that may be made the day of the scheduled trip are cancellations. Riders who fail to cancel a trip shall be treated as “no-shows.” (See Cancellations and No-Shows.)

Vehicle operators are not allowed to make changes to trips.

Cancellations and no-shows

If a rider, personal care attendant, or companion needs to cancel a scheduled trip, the trip must be cancelled as soon as possible. Failure to cancel a trip at least two (2) hours prior to the scheduled pick-up time will result in a “no-show.” If twenty-five percent (25%) of scheduled trips within a thirty (30) calendar day period are considered “no-shows,” the Central Connecticut Regional Planning Agency shall suspend the rider, personal care attendant, or companion, respectively, from use of the service. (See Suspensions.)

Trips missed for reasons beyond the rider’s, personal care attendant’s, or companion’s control shall not be used when determining a pattern of “no-shows.”

Multiple trips

A rider may schedule as many trips as desired during the hours the service operates. If a rider wants to go to multiple destinations in one outing, each destination will be scheduled as an individual trip. Vehicle operators may not wait for a rider while the rider conducts business at a drop-off destination. Vehicle operators may not make unscheduled stops.

Pick-up window

There is a thirty (30) minute pick-up window during which the vehicle may arrive. The pick-up window is fifteen (15) minutes before to fifteen (15) minutes after a rider’s scheduled pick-up time. The rider must be ready to board the vehicle during this time. If the vehicle arrives during the pick-up window, the vehicle operator is required to wait five (5) minutes for the rider. Failure to begin boarding the vehicle within five (5) minutes of the vehicle arriving will result in a “no-show.” (See Cancellations and No-Show.)

Trip duration

ADA paratransit trip duration shall be comparable to the trip duration for a similar trip on the fixed route bus system, on the same day, at the same time. This includes time spent on the bus, transfer time, and the time it takes to walk to/from the bus stop. In accordance with these standards, the maximum trip duration shall be as follows:

1. For trips on the fixed route bus system that would take 30 minutes or less, ADA paratransit trips are not to be more than twice the duration of a trip on the fixed route to and from the same origins and destinations on the same day, at the same time.
2. For trips on the fixed route bus system that would take 31 minutes or more, ADA paratransit trips are not to be more than 1.5 times the duration of a trip on the fixed route bus system from the same origins and destinations on the same day, at the same time.

Trips provided by the service that are longer than this shall be considered ‘excessive’ and should be reported to the Central Connecticut Regional Planning Agency. Interregional trips provided by other services shall abide by those services’ policies. (See Interregional Trips.)

This section shall not apply during periods of severe weather or other extraordinary circumstances.

Interregional trips

Interregional trips carry riders from one service area into another service area. Interregional trips are possible to the service areas of neighboring agencies, which are:

1. Greater Hartford Transit District
2. Middletown Area Transit
3. Meriden Transit District

Trips to these areas require prior approval to scheduling. Depending on trip locations and times, interregional trips may be handled in one of three ways:

1. Service providers arrange for a transfer, where riders change from one provider’s vehicle to another’s. This may take place on one or both out- and inbound legs of a round trip.
2. One provider handles the outbound trip; another handles the inbound one.
3. One provider assumes both inbound and outbound trips.

Transfers, when deemed necessary, will take place at designated transfer locations that have been agreed upon between the service providers. Such locations were determined based on their safety and where possible, allow riders to wait in enclosed areas.

All trips, including those necessitating transfers, cost the same. (Riders will be informed how to handle payment but the amount paid will not exceed the fare charged to riders traveling within the core service area only.)

The Central Connecticut Regional Planning Agency must be contacted prior to scheduling an interregional trip. An authorization form allowing the Agency to release the rider’s information to the other service provider is required. Once the rider’s information is released to the other service pro-

vider and the rider is enrolled in the other service provider's system, it is the rider's responsibility to contact the two service providers involved to schedule the trip.

Curb-to-curb service

The service operates curb-to-curb. Vehicle operators shall give assistance to riders while they are at the curb or in the vehicle. At these points the vehicle operator may assist riders to enter and exit the vehicle.

In some cases assistance beyond the curb may be needed. In the event that door-to-door assistance is needed, riders or their guardians must contact the Central Connecticut Regional Planning Agency. The Agency will then assess if additional accommodations will be made; all requests are assessed on case by case.

If door-to-door service would require a driver to leave the vehicle unattended or prevent the vehicle operator from keeping the vehicle under visual observation, door-to-door service may not be authorized. If the path from the origin to the vehicle is obstructed or presents a safety hazard, or a ramp is not up to code, door-to-door service may not be authorized.

If door-to-door service is authorized, vehicle operators may only assist riders from the door of the home, facility, etc. to the vehicle. Vehicle operators are not permitted to enter buildings, homes, or any other structure. Vehicle operators

may only provide assistance up or down one step or one curb for riders using a mobility device and up or down ramps that are code compliant. There must also be a safe, clear path from/to the origin/destination to the vehicle.

Mobility devices

All mobility devices, including wheelchairs, scooters, walkers, canes, braces, and crutches, must be placed in a designated securement location on the vehicle and secured using the securement system. Mobility devices must be secured and stored in locations as to keep the vehicle aisles and exits clear. Any rider using a mobility device must allow the vehicle operator to secure the mobility device. Vehicle operators must assist in the securement of all mobility devices.

During the maneuvering and securement of mobility devices, the vehicle operator is not permitted to lift the rider or the mobility device at any point. The vehicle operator is not to modify or change the mobility device in any way. The only contact the vehicle operator may have with a mobility device is assisting the rider from the origin to the vehicle, loading the mobility device on and off the lift, and securing and un-securing the mobility device from the securement location on the vehicle.

Once on board, the vehicle operator may recommend to a user of a mobility device that the individual transfer to a ve-

hicle seat. However the vehicle operator may not require the individual to transfer.

Lift use

Riders who use wheelchairs and other mobility devices are permitted to use the lift to enter the vehicle. However, if the combined weight of the mobility device and the occupant exceeds that of the lift specifications, riders will not be permitted to use the lift. ADA paratransit service may not be provided to such persons. The lift and vehicle must also be able to accommodate the size of the mobility device. For instance, if the wheelchair measurements are in excess of what the vehicle may accommodate, ADA paratransit service may not be provided.

Riders who are unable to climb stairs may also use the vehicle's lift to enter the vehicle, provided they do not exceed the weight and size capacity of the lift.

Vehicle operator assistance

The vehicle operator will provide assistance to riders under the following circumstances:

1. Entering and exiting the vehicle
2. Maneuvering a mobility device on and off the vehicle
3. Securing a mobility device
4. Securing a seatbelt

The vehicle operator may not handle packages, lift clients or mobility devices, or enter any structure.

Only if authorized will the vehicle operator provide assistance outside the scope of assistance described above. (See Curb-to-Curb service.)

Payment

Payment for service is due at the time service is provided. Vehicle operators accept payment in the form of cash or ticket. If paying by cash, exact change is required. Vehicle operators do not make change. If riders or companions do not have exact change, they will forfeit the difference in the cost of the trip. If paying by ticket, one ADA Paratransit Ticket is needed each time a rider or companion boards the bus; two tickets are required for a round trip. No prepayment of trips is allowed (for example a rider cannot pay for the return home trip on the outbound ride).

If a rider or companion fails to pay, the rider or guardian will be notified via phone the amount owed. Riders shall be held responsible for their companions. (See Companions.) If a rider is unable to be reached by phone, a letter will be sent to the rider's home address notifying the rider of the amount owed. The rider shall be suspended from use of the service until the outstanding amount has been paid. (See Suspensions.)

Personal care attendants

Riders who need assistance may travel with one person who provides assistance during the trip (a “personal care attendant”), provided they have been certified as requiring a personal care attendant. The personal care attendant is picked up and dropped off at the same times and locations as the rider. The personal care attendant is not charged a fee to use the paratransit service.

At the time an individual is certified for ADA paratransit service, the certification will indicate whether and under what conditions the rider may travel with a personal care attendant. This does not mean that the rider must always travel with a personal care attendant. The reservationist must be notified when a trip is scheduled if a personal care attendant will be accompanying a rider. This will ensure there is space on the vehicle to accommodate the personal care attendant. The service provider may not be able to transport the personal care attendant if advance notification is not given.

Companions

All riders are allowed to travel with one companion. A companion is a person who would like to travel with a rider but whose presence is not required so that rider may successfully complete the trip. A companion may only be picked up and dropped off at the same time and locations as the rider.

The reservationist must be notified when a trip is scheduled that a companion will be accompanying the rider on the trip to ensure there is adequate space on the vehicle. The service provider may not be able to transport the companion if advance notification is not given. A companion constitutes a regular passenger and must pay the appropriate fare.

Additional companions may be accommodated when space permits. All companions must pay the appropriate fare.

Supervision of dependents

Riders who are dependent on the care of others may not be left alone for pickup or drop off, unsupervised, by the service. Riders needing such care must be sent off and received by a guardian or accompanied by a personal care attendant.

Repeated failure to provide adequate supervision at pick-up or drop-off or via a personal care attendant will disrupt the service and may result in suspension of the rider from the service. (See Suspensions.)

Age of riders

Children under twelve (12) years of age, whether a rider or companion, will not be transported unless accompanied by an adult.

Service Animals

Service animals are allowed on the vehicle. It is the rider's responsibility to supervise and control the service animal at all times. If the service animal engages in behavior that disrupts the service or endangers vehicle occupants, the rider will be asked to remove the service animal from the vehicle. Animals engaging in such behavior may be suspended from the service. Behavior that is grounds for suspension may include, but is not limited to, biting, defecating, vomiting, scratching, and chewing persons or property.

Animals

Riders may bring animals on the vehicle. Non-service animals must be carried and kept in secured containers while on board the vehicle. Animals will not be permitted on board if they or their secured containers block any aisle or exit, pose a risk to vehicle occupants, or otherwise interfere with service.

It is the rider's responsibility to control the animal at all times. If the animal engages in behavior that disrupts the service or endangers vehicle occupants, the rider will be asked to remove the animal from the vehicle. Animals engaging in such behavior shall be suspended from the service. Behavior that is grounds for suspension may include, but is not limited to, biting, defecating, vomiting, scratching, and chewing persons or property.

Packages

Riders may take packages on the vehicles for the duration of the trip. Only packages that riders, their personal care assistants, or their companions are personally able to load, secure, and unload are allowable. Riders must be in control of the packages at all times. Vehicle operators may not assist with packages.

Riders may not leave packages on the vehicles, nor may they make repetitive trips on and off the vehicle to load or unload packages. Packages will not be permitted on board the vehicle if they block any aisle or exit, pose a risk to other vehicle occupants, or otherwise interfere with service. Packages will not be permitted on board the vehicle if they cannot safely be secured.

Service during severe weather

ADA paratransit service follows the operating schedule of fixed bus route service, including during severe weather or extraordinary circumstances.

When fixed route bus service is cancelled, ADA paratransit service will also be cancelled.

When fixed route bus service has an official late start, ADA paratransit service will also start late by the same period. All scheduled trips that occur during the timeframe when bus service is delayed will be cancelled. Trips scheduled in the

afternoon will not be cancelled. However if a rider decides to cancel the afternoon trip, it is the rider's responsibility to notify the service provider to cancel the trip. Failure to cancel the trip may result in a "no-show." (See Cancellations and No-Shows).

When fixed route bus service has an official early stop, ADA paratransit service will also stop early by the same period. The service will attempt to provide but cannot guarantee return trips.

It is the responsibility of the rider to monitor the weather and fixed route bus service notices.

Facility cancellations, delayed openings, early closings

If a rider is traveling to a location that is closed for any reason, including severe weather, it is the rider's responsibility to contact the service provider to cancel the trip. If the service provider is not notified and transportation is provided, the rider will not be dropped off at the closed facility. The rider will be returned to their origin. This may result in a disruption of service. (See Suspensions).

If a rider is traveling to a location that has a delayed opening and the rider would normally arrive before the delayed opening time, the rider will not be transported. Same-day trip modifications, including adjustments to pick-up times,

will not be accommodated. (See Trip Modification.) Afternoon pick-up times will remain unchanged. However, it is the rider's responsibility to notify the service provider if the rider decides to cancel the afternoon trip to avoid being charged with a "no-show." (See Cancellations and No-Shows.)

If a rider is at a location that is closing early, the scheduled pick-up time will not be modified. Only when the schedule permits may efforts be made to adjust pick-up times. It is the rider's responsibility to contact the service provider to inquire if an earlier pick-up time can be arranged. Otherwise, the service provider will arrive at the scheduled pick-up time.

Special needs and requests

Riders with special needs or requests must contact the Central Connecticut Regional Planning Agency to discuss their situation. Neither reservationists nor vehicle operators may provide special treatment without prior authorization from the Agency.

While a seat for a companion may be booked, schedules change from day to day. As a consequence, the service cannot and shall not guarantee that a rider is served by a particular vehicle operator, or that particular riders travel together.

Vehicle maneuvering

Vehicle operators are not permitted to reverse the vehicle at any time. In accordance with this, if a rider's origin or destination does not have adequate room for the vehicle to maneuver without backing up, alternative arrangements may be required, or service may not be provided.

Appeals

Individuals have the right to appeal eligibility determinations and the suspension or limitation of service. Individuals have sixty (60) days from the time of notification to submit a request for an appeal hearing in writing. Upon receipt of request, individuals will be contacted within seven (7) business days to schedule an appeal hearing. All appeals will be heard by the ADA Paratransit Advisory Board. The Board will notify the individual of the determination in writing within thirty (30) days of the hearing.

Transportation will be provided until a final determination is made. However, if appealing a suspension for violent, threatening, and/or illegal behavior, transportation may not be provided.

Suspensions

The service will not tolerate behavior that endangers the safety of other riders and vehicle operators, that damages the vehicle, or that disrupts the service. Behavior that may

lead to suspension of service includes refusal to pay the proper fare, disruptive or unsafe conduct, and late cancellations and/or no-shows. Examples of disruptive behavior include, but are not limited to, failure to have a person meet the rider at the destination (where applicable and necessary), refusal to board or disembark the vehicle, and instances where a vehicle had to be removed from service to be sanitized. Examples of unsafe conduct include, but are not limited to, violent, threatening, and/or illegal behavior.

The initial determination of such behavior shall be made by the vehicle operator, the operations manager, and/or the Central Connecticut Regional Planning Agency. The vehicle operator may at any time he/she deems necessary, request assistance of law enforcement in handling disruptive and/or dangerous passengers. In the case of a rider, the final determination to suspend service will be made by the Central Connecticut Regional Planning Agency. For violent, threatening, and/or illegal behavior including, but not limited to, brandishing a weapon, sexual assault/harassment, destruction of property, and physical assault, service will immediately be suspended for a thirty (30) day period. Riders may appeal the decision however, transportation may not be provided until a final determination is made. (See Appeals policy.)

The process for the suspension of service for behavior that disrupts service is as follows:

1. After the first offense, the vehicle operator will file an incident report with the Central Connecticut Regional Planning Agency. The Agency will investigate the incident and contact the rider and/or the rider's guardian or caseworker to inform them of the possible suspension of service resulting from the rider's behavior. A first (verbal) warning will be issued. Depending on the circumstances surrounding an incident, a written warning may also be issued. Where circumstances warrant, the Central Connecticut Regional Planning Agency may suspend service after the first offense until such time as the suspended rider demonstrates that he/she no longer presents a safety problem for the service.
2. After a second offense, the Central Connecticut Regional Planning Agency will inform the rider that service will be suspended for a thirty (30) day period. With each additional offense the term of suspension will increase by thirty (days). Notification of the suspension of service will be sent to the rider or the rider's guardian via certified mail. The rider will be given seven (7) business days from receipt of the notification to appeal. If an appeal is not received after seven (7) days, the suspension will begin.

An appeal of a decision to suspend service can be made at any time during the suspension term. A determination will be made by the ADA Paratransit Advisory Board within thirty

(30) days from receiving the appeal. Further appeals can be made to the Connecticut Department of Transportation, Bureau of Public Transportation. The decision of the Connecticut Department of Transportation shall be considered as final. If appealing, transportation will be provided until a final determination is made. (See Appeals policy.)

Central Connecticut Paratransit operates in accordance with applicable federal and state laws and regulations, including the Americans with Disabilities Act. In case of conflict with this Handbook, the latter shall take precedence.

The handbook was last updated January 18, 2012 and is subject to revision.



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