

# RIDER AND PROVIDER HANDBOOK for Central Connecticut Paratransit

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## 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 at <http://busoncall.com>.)
- 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 origins 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 with sufficient notice shall be treated as 'no-shows.' (See *Late cancellations and no-shows*.)

Vehicle operators are not allowed to make changes to trips.

## Late 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." No-shows also include trips where the vehicle arrives at the scheduled pick-

up time, and the rider fails to board the vehicle. Each leg of a rider's trip will be treated separately. If a rider misses a scheduled pick-up, the return trip will not be cancelled. If the rider does not appear for the return trip, it will be counted as a second no-show.

Riders who have three (3) or more no-shows in one (1) calendar month will be in violation of this policy. When a rider violates the policy, the following progressive action(s) will be taken:

1. The rider will be issued a warning letter notifying the rider that he/she has violated the policy.
2. If a rider accumulates three (3) or more no-shows in two (2) separate calendar months in a three hundred and sixty-five (365) day period, the rider will be issued a letter notifying them they will be suspended from use of the service for two (2) weeks (14 consecutive days).
3. If a rider accumulates three (3) or more no-shows in three (3) separate calendar months in a three hundred and sixty-five (365) day period, the rider will be issued a letter notifying them they will be suspended from use of the service for four (4) weeks.

With each additional violation in a three hundred and sixty-five day (365) day period, the term of suspension will increase by four (4) weeks.

Before suspension of service begins, riders will be given one (1) week from the date of the suspension letter to contact the Cen-

tral Connecticut Regional Planning Agency to appeal the suspension. If an appeal is not received after one (1) week, the suspension will begin. If appealing, transportation will be provided until a final determination is made.

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 *Late cancellations and no-shows.*)

## 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, 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 nor shall this section apply to single seat interregional trips. (See *Interregional trips*.)

## Service area

The ADA paratransit service area includes Bristol, New Britain, Newington, and Plainville. The area also includes parts of Berlin, Farmington, Hartford, Meriden, and West Hartford. For details, including hours of service by location, see <http://busoncall.com>. If a rider lives outside the service area, ADA paratransit service may be provided if the rider is able to travel to a bus stop within the service area.

## 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 provider 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.

Riders are not entitled to single seat service (trips completed entirely by the same service provider) to locations outside the Agency's service area.

### 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, but not limited to, 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 mo-

bility device at any point. The vehicle operator is not to modify or change the mobility device in any way nor may the vehicle operator operate or push electric mobility devices. 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 vehicle seat. However the vehicle operator may not require the individual to transfer. Some mobility devices come with a manufacturer's warning stating they are not intended to be used as a seat on a moving vehicle; personal injury and/or property damage may result. If an individual uses such a device, it is strongly recommended the individual transfer to a seat and use a seatbelt.

### Seatbelt use

It is recommended all riders utilize seatbelts once on board the vehicle. If a rider uses a mobility device, it is recommended the rider transfer to a seat and utilize a seatbelt. If a rider is unable, or chooses not to transfer to a seat, it is recommended that the rider utilize both the seatbelt/shoulder harness equipped in the securement area and the seatbelt on the mobility device to ensure safe transport.

### 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. The vehicle operator may not operate or push electric mobility devices.

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 out-bound 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.

## Personal care attendants

Riders who need assistance may travel with one person who provides assistance during the trip (a “personal care at-

tendant”), 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 *Disruptive behavior and unsafe conduct.*)

## 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 *Late 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 *Disruptive behavior and unsafe conduct*.)

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 *Changes to reservations*.) Afternoon pick-up times will remain unchanged. It is the rider's responsibility to notify the service provider if the rider decides to cancel the afternoon trip to avoid being classified as a no-show. (See *Late 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 earli-

er 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.

### Personal hygiene

To protect the health and well-being of vehicle operators and passengers, all riders must maintain an acceptable standard of personal hygiene. Failure to conform to this policy may result in service refusal or a temporary suspension of service.

### Recertification

Riders will be recertified for the paratransit service once every three (3) years. The recertification process involves completing a new paratransit application and professional verification form(s). The Central Connecticut Regional Planning Agency may also conduct an in-person interview if deemed necessary. Following recertification a rider's eligibility to use the paratransit service may change.

### Appeals for eligibility determinations

Individuals have the right to appeal eligibility determinations, including a determination that an applicant is ineligible for paratransit service and/or the conditions placed upon eligibility or use of the 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 Committee. The Committee will notify the individual of the determination in writing within thirty (30) days of the hearing. Service shall not be provided to individuals pursuing an eligibility appeal. However, if a determination has not been made within thirty (30) days of the hearing, temporary service will be provided. The Committee's determination may be appealed to the Connecticut Department of Transportation, Bureau of Public Transportation. The decision of the Connecticut Department of Transportation shall be considered final.

## Disruptive behavior and unsafe conduct

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 (see *Payment*), disruptive or unsafe conduct, and late cancellations or no-shows (see *Late cancellations and 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, scheduling an excessive number of trips and taking few or none of them, 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.

### Disruptive behavior

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 two (2) weeks (14 consecutive days). With each additional offense the term of suspension will increase by two (2) weeks. 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 one (1) week from the date of the letter to appeal. If an appeal is not received after one (1) week, the suspension will begin. If appealing the suspension of service for disruptive behavior, transportation will be provided until a final determination is made.

## Unsafe conduct

For unsafe conduct, violent, threatening, and/or illegal behavior including, but not limited to, brandishing a weapon, sexual assault or harassment, destruction of property, endangering the safety of individuals on board the vehicle, and physical assault, service will immediately be suspended for four (4) weeks (28 consecutive days). Riders will be notified in writing of the suspension. Riders may appeal the decision however, transportation will not be provided until a final determination is made. All appeals must be submitted in writing to the Central Connecticut Regional Planning Agency. With each additional offense the term of suspension will increase by four (4) weeks.

## Appeals for service suspension

Individuals have the right to appeal a service suspension. The process for appealing a service suspension for unsafe conduct or disruptive behavior is as follows:

1. Riders submit an appeal letter in writing to the Central Connecticut Regional Planning Agency.
2. Upon receipt of the appeal, individuals will be contacted within seven (7) business days to schedule an appeal hearing. The appeal will be heard before members of the ADA Transportation Advisory Committee.
3. If the rider is unable to attend the hearing, the rider may submit additional information that can be distributed to the Committee.

4. The Committee will make a determination to uphold the service suspension or overturn the decision. The rider will be notified in writing of the decision.

## Service refusal

Service refusal is intended to address conduct or behavior occurring at the time of service delivery but for which suspension would not be appropriate. For example a rider who is engaging in violent conduct or appears visibly agitated may be refused service on that occasion. Before service may be refused, the vehicle operator must immediately notify dispatch of the service refusal and the reason(s). The Central Connecticut Regional Planning Agency will then contact the rider, guardian, or caregiver regarding the behavior. Service refusals may not be used as a substitute for a service suspension. Behavior occurring repeatedly will be reviewed in accordance with the *Disruptive behavior and unsafe conduct* policy.

### Disclaimer

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.

While efforts have been made to provide accurate information, the Central Connecticut Regional Planning Agency shall not be held responsible for errors in information it provides in relation to paratransit service.

The handbook was last updated February 12, 2013 and is subject to revision.



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