



# Paratransit Service Passenger Guide



## Harris County Office Of Transit Services

Harris County Community Services Department  
Office of Transit Services  
8410 Lantern Point Drive  
Houston, Texas 77054  
713-578-2216  
[www.harriscountytransit.com](http://www.harriscountytransit.com)

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## **FIXED ROUTE SERVICE**

Before reading this guide any further, don't forget about our fixed route *Transit Bus* services!

Our fixed route *Transit Buses* travel routes with regular frequency, and you may be able to use one for some or all of your trips! If you are able to use the fixed route *Transit Buses* instead of the *Paratransit* service for trips, you will find several advantages:

- No need to call ahead for reservations. With the fixed route buses, we are ready when you are.
- Same day service is always available on the fixed route buses. Unfortunately, we cannot provide same day service on service on the *Paratransit* vans.
- No need to schedule a return trip. Just get on the next bus!
- Lower fares. (The *Paratransit* service is \$2.00 for each one-way trip).

For Fixed Route bus service information call 713-578-2216...press 5... Or on the internet at [www.harriscountytransit.com](http://www.harriscountytransit.com)

## **Paratransit Service**

Section 223 of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) requires that public entities that operate non commuter fixed route transportation services also provide complementary paratransit service for individuals unable to use the fixed route system. The Harris County Transit Paratransit service is provided to individuals with disabilities that are prevented from using the fixed route bus system for their particular trip needs. Eligibility for complementary paratransit service is strictly limited to those with the inability to use the existing fixed route system due to their disability or other barriers. The complementary paratransit service is an origin to destination service that operates within  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile along the bus routes.

Drivers will assist eligible individuals to and from the curb of their driveway or sidewalk however door-to-door service is available upon request. The Paratransit service is only available for qualified individuals and a Personal Care Attendant and one companion. The additional companion(s) may ride based on space availability and must pay a fare. **The one way fare for this service is \$2.00 per person. For riders needing a Personal Care Assistant (PCA) to assist them in making the trip, the PCA will ride for free.**

ADA paratransit standards are provided for in 49CFR37.123 of the Code of Federal Regulations.

The paratransit service is restricted to  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile on each side of the fixed route bus service routes. Verification of trip origin/destination eligibility will be made at the time of booking.

### **CERTIFICATION / RE-CERTIFICATION**

Interested paratransit riders must complete “THE HARRIS COUNTY TRANSIT SERVICE ADA PARATRANSIT ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION FORM” and receive approval before transportation will be provided. The maximum certification periods are 3 years; however, eligibility periods may vary according to each individual’s functional ability to use the fixed route bus system.

Recertification is required for each paratransit participant. All re-certification material will be mailed to you the month prior to the expiration date.

### **OFFICE HOURS**

Monday - Friday            7a.m. – 5p.m.

### **SCHEDULING PARATRANSIT TRIPS**

To make appointments, call (713) 696-1991 between 7am to 5pm. Monday-Friday. Appointments can be scheduled up to 15 days in advance, but must be made ***at least one day in advance*** before the appointment.

On weekends and holidays you will not be able to make appointments, but if you need to cancel a previously scheduled appointment you may do so by leaving a message on the answering machine. Cancellations must be made at least two ***hours*** before scheduled appointment time (a 24 hour notice is preferred).

When scheduling a trip, please provide:

1. Your Name.
2. Whether a personal care attendant, friend or family member will travel with you.
3. Your pick-up address (building number, name and or zip code).
4. The date you wish to travel.
5. The appointment address & appointment time.

**Pick up times will be made a minimum of 1 hour before your desired appointment time, as established under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 service criteria.**

Passengers are required to schedule a return trip when it is possible. There are certain trips such as medical trips that exact time for pick-up is difficult to determine, so the passenger should allow plenty of time (as much as an extra hour) for the scheduled pick-up. Any unscheduled return pick-up (“will call”) returns will be handled on a first come basis and may take two hours or more for pick-up.

### **When To Be Ready**

**Harris County Transit paratransit services may arrive at the pick-up location as much as 15 minutes before or after your one hour pick up time. For example an appointment time of 10:00 AM will have a pick up time of 9:00 AM and will have a pick-up window between 08:45 AM and 9:15 AM**

**When the vehicle arrives, be ready to board or the driver will leave after the 5-minute wait time and you will be considered a no show. NOTE: The driver will not take you to your appointment without the required fare. Eating, drinking and smoking are prohibited on the vehicles; however a small snack or drink will be allowed for medical reasons.**

### **Canceling Trips**

To cancel a trip, please call (713) 696-1991 Monday through Friday between 7 AM and 5 PM. All scheduled trips that are not canceled will be considered a No Show if you fail to board the vehicle at the scheduled pick-up time. Trips can also be canceled after hours weekends and Holidays, 24hrs a day by leaving a recorded message.

### **Driver Wait Time**

Paratransit drivers will wait 5 minutes for a passenger once they have arrived at the pick-up location within the pick –up window. If the passenger does not board the vehicle within the 5-minute wait time, the driver will depart from that location and consider that trip a No Show. Please notify the reservations department if you will require additional boarding time so that a no show will not be assessed.

### **Wheelchair/Mobility Devices**

Harris County Transit services will comply with ADA standards for transporting individuals with mobility devices. Individuals using any device that exceeds ADA standards and/or prevents HCT from providing transportation safely will not be denied service however the mobility device may not be transported. **Before using this service, ensure that your mobility device is in good working condition, clean and safe. Mobility devices that are broken or do not have working brakes must be secured aboard Paratransit service vehicles.**

### **Oxygen/Respirators**

Harris County Transit services will transport passengers with oxygen bottles as long as the devices can be secured to keep from moving inside the vehicle and if possible turned off for the duration of the trip. Please be sure to have adequate oxygen supply or a backup unit. Respirators and concentrators are allowed at any time.

## NO SHOW POLICY / LATE CANCELLATION

A No Show policy has been developed to deal consistently and fairly with passengers who consistently miss scheduled trips. Regulations allow such persons to have service suspended in such cases, for a reasonable length of time. This provision does not apply to trips that are missed for reasons that are beyond the individual's control, and certainly do not apply in cases of scheduling problems, late pickups, or other operational problems not within the control of the individual.

If a passenger fails to be at the scheduled pickup point during the 30 minute window of scheduled pickup time, unless the failure was beyond the control of the individual, the HCT may consider the failure as a No Show. HCT will take into consideration late running doctor appointments and other situations beyond the control of the individual. HCT may also negotiate with passengers regarding scheduled pickup times if the passenger consistently or regularly is late due to late appointments.

A No-Show occurs when you fail to board the vehicle within 5 minutes after it arrives within the pick-up window. Trips that are not canceled at least 2 hours before your scheduled time will be considered **Same-Day Cancellations**. Same-Day Cancellations are counted as No-Shows.

If you No-Show your trip going home, please call the transportation provider to reschedule your trip. You will be scheduled on the next available vehicle. **When you accumulate a total of 3 No-Shows and/or Same-Day Cancellations within a month**, the following penalties will apply:

- .. 1st Month— a written/verbal warning and program counseling.
- .. 2nd Month—10 days suspension letter and program counseling.
- .. 3rd Month— 20 days suspension letter and program counseling.
- .. 4th Month— 30 days suspension letter and program counseling.

Before a No Show is charged, the passenger will be contacted by HCT to determine the reason for the No Show, and to verify if the missed trip was, indeed, a No Show, and to make sure the passenger understands the No Show policy.

Any service suspension imposed due to No Shows will begin five (5) business days from the date of notification of the sanction being imposed. Passengers sanctioned for no-shows may appeal this decision in writing within 15 days of the notice of service suspension. The sanction is stayed pending the outcome of an appeal and transportation will be provided free to the appeals process...

### **Late Cancellation**

A Late Cancellation occurs when you cancel a scheduled trip less than two hours before the scheduled pick-up time. For every 3 Late Cancellations, a rider will be charged 1 No-Show.

**MONTHLY TOTAL** Each month, the number of no-shows and late cancellations are added together. If the monthly total equals five (5) or more and represents at least five (5) percent of the customer's trips for that month, the customer is in violation of the policy. Each month's trips are calculated separately.

If a passenger fails to be at the scheduled pickup point during the 30 minute window of scheduled pickup time, unless the failure was beyond the control of the individual, the HCT may consider the failure as a No Show. HCT will take into consideration late running doctor appointments and other situations beyond the control of the individual. HCT may also negotiate with passengers regarding scheduled pickup times if the passenger consistently or regularly is late due to late appointments.

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### **On-Board Travel Time**

Under normal operating conditions, you should not be onboard the vehicle for more than 60 minutes.

## **GENERAL RIDING AND USE RULES FOR PASSENGERS**

- Passengers must accept service as shared rides, and they must often share vehicles with other passengers.
- Passengers must present a valid photo ID when boarding.
- Passengers must wear seat belts, and passengers using wheelchairs or similar equipment must adhere to securement requirements. Failure to do so may result in the trip being canceled, and the trip charged as a No Show.
- Profanity, abusive language, or threatening or intimidating actions or words are not permitted and may result in suspension of service.
- Eating, drinking, and smoking are prohibited on vehicles.
- Drivers are not allowed to accept tips.
- Adult passengers must properly supervise all children and ensure they remain quiet and seated.

- Passengers may not bring on board any baggage or articles that, due to size or numbers, would restrict free movement of passengers. All items must be stowed securely, out of the aisles of the vehicle, during the entire trip. Items must be stowed in such a manner that they do not become loose during travel, that they do not take up other passenger space and they are not a tripping hazard to other passengers.
- Passengers must be very careful when boarding the bus to avoid tripping, slipping or falling, especially watching for steps, curbs, and street gutters.
- No radios, music boxes, boom boxes, or other distractions are allowed.
- No open containers are allowed – Only spill proof containers are allowed on the bus – Styrofoam “to go” cups, even with lids, are not considered spill proof.
- No person shall deface, damage, write upon, soil, and spit in or on any vehicle.
- No pets or animals are allowed on the vehicle other than a service animal accompanying a person with a disability, or an animal in a cage or approved standard pet carrier.
- No person shall possess any explosives or carry any corrosive acid or flammable liquid, gasoline or a gasoline container or any type of hazardous material while on the vehicle. (Respirators and portable oxygen supplies are permitted on and used on board by a person needing them for health reason).
- No person shall possess firearms, with the exception of law enforcement officers.
- No laundry is allowed on board except in an enclosed bag.
- No person shall interfere with the driver’s operation of the vehicle.
- Vehicles may not be used as a forum for religious, political, or personal beliefs; and no printed materials, other than that specifically provided by or authorized HCT may be distributed on board.
- An adult must accompany children under the age of 12 years.

## **REASONABLE ACCOMMODATIONS**

### **Visitors**

Persons that visit the Harris County Transit service area and are certified by another agency as ADA Paratransit Eligible or by statement that they cannot use the bus service will be provided reciprocal service for up to 21 days during a 365-day period beginning with the first day of service. If the individual plans on being in the service area longer than 21 days, the individual will be required to complete the certification process and be determined eligible before they may continue riding. **Visitors must follow scheduling process in the Scheduling Paratransit Trips section to book a ride.**

### **Packages**

Passengers may not bring on board any baggage or articles that, due to size or numbers, would restrict free movement of passengers. All items must be stowed securely, out of the isles of the vehicle, during the entire trip. Items must be stowed in such a manner that they do not become loose during travel, that they do not take up other passenger space if needed and they are not a tripping hazard to other passengers.

## **Other Passengers and Personal Care Attendants**

Some passengers may require a Personal Care Attendant (PCA). If a PCA is required based on the passenger's disability, and the PCA actually performs an assistant role, the PCA may ride without fare, provided the passenger's ID card so indicates as approved by the HCT. However, the passenger must notify the HCT in advance of the need for a PCA, and the County has the right to verify that need. An appropriate need for a PCA, includes immobility, disorientation, non-comprehension, or communication impairment. If a PCA does not perform a specific necessary travel function, the passenger may be considered as ineligible for a PCA.

Children under the age of two years must have a car seat as required by State Law, and passenger must provide the car seat. Passengers traveling with infants must provide an infant carrier approved for use in cars. The passenger is responsible for placing the infant into the carrier and properly securing the carrier with a seat belt.

Other than a PCA, other passengers accompanying the passenger are subject to space available and must pay the full fare.

## **Service Animals**

When making reservations, please notify the dispatcher/scheduler if a service animal will accompany you on your trip. Service animals are permitted if this is a requirement for your travel and were approved during the certification process.

## **Door-to-Door service**

Drivers must maintain sight of the vehicle; therefore, they will not go beyond the driveway or ground level of any building. Drivers will assist with wheelchairs over one curb or up sturdy, safe, accessible wheelchair ramps.

The following are NOT PERMITTED in Door-to-Door Service

- Locking/unlocking doors or activating/deactivating house alarms.
- Entering beyond the door threshold.
- Loading and unloading personal items, packages, groceries, etc.
- Assisting passengers on unsafe or steeply inclined mobility ramps, steps or stairs.
- Going beyond the main entry or first floor of a facility.

## REASONABLE MODIFICATIONS OF SERVICE

Harris County Transit (HCT) understands that sometimes a passenger may need to modify an existing trip in order to use the service. A reasonable modification of service may be done by calling **713-578-2216** and selecting option #4 or in writing at any time. Please note you do not have to ask for a reasonable modification of service, just request that your existing or next trip be modified.

### Reasonable Service Modifications

The following may be permitted as Reasonable Service Modifications:

- Changing of pick up times within the hours of service;
- Requesting a different entry at the same building for pick up;
- Changing a return trip destination within the service area;
- Mobility device users boarding separate from the device;
- Eating or drinking on the bus for medical reasons ( post dialysis treatment; post day surgery, diabetes) or other medical conditions;
- Asking the driver to handle fare money when the passenger cannot physically do so.

The following may **not be permitted** as Reasonable Service Modifications:

- Changing of pick up times outside the service time hours (before service starts or after it ends);
- Requesting a destination outside the service area;
- Requesting a pick up or drop off location that will endanger the passengers, driver or damage the vehicle ( high traffic areas, high water locations, poor lighting and or reduced visibility of the bus);
- Asking the driver to handle or care for a service animal;
- Additional stops which would change the nature of the original trip;
- Unlocking dwelling doors, setting or disarming alarm systems;
- Carrying groceries or packages through the threshold of the residence or a business;
- Requesting a specific driver to provide service;
- Requesting to be transported as the only passenger of a vehicle;
- Asking the driver to perform money handling, banking or other financial functions;
- Having a metered taxi, van or accessible vehicle wait for client at the destination while the passenger conducts business.

**For additional questions concerning Reasonable Modifications please call 713-578-2216.**

## CONTACT & FARE INFORMATION

### County addresses

Transit/ Dispatch Office: 8410 Lantern Point Drive  
Houston, Texas 77054

### Telephone Numbers

During normal business hours call: 713-578-2216 (press 4) for the following:

- Scheduling Questions
- Reservations
- Cancellations
- Complaints/Comments
- Certifications
- Recertification

TDD Telephone Number (Hearing Impaired)  
800-735-2988

Transportation Assistance Registry  
Persons needing evacuation assistance must pre-register!  
Dial 2-1-1

Web Site  
[www.harriscountytransit.com](http://www.harriscountytransit.com)

E-mail  
[transit@csd.hctx.net](mailto:transit@csd.hctx.net)

Paratransit Service Fares  
Client \$2.00 (each way)  
Personal Care Attendant (PCA) rides free  
Companion \$2.00 (each way)

## **KNOW YOUR RIGHTS**

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin in programs & activities receiving Federal financial assistance (42 U.S.C. Section 2000d).

Harris County Transit is committed to practicing non-discrimination. If you believe you have been subjected to discrimination you may file a complaint with the Harris County Title VI Coordinator.

**For more information visit us on the web at [harriscountytransit.com](http://harriscountytransit.com) and click on Contact or call the Harris County Title VI Coordinator at 713-578-2000**