

BOROUGH OF POTTSTOWN

POTTSTOWN AREA RAPID TRANSIT



ADA Paratransit User Guide



Revised June 2023

WHAT IS “ADA PARATRANSIT” SERVICE?

The goal of the transportation provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is to provide persons with disabilities access to public transportation, allowing them to use the same modes of transportation as anyone else. Nevertheless, for persons with disabilities who find it impossible to use the regular bus, Pottstown Area Rapid Transit (PART) provides curb-to-curb service with additional door-to-door service when requested.

As you will see below, eligibility for paratransit service is based not just on the presence of the disability, but on the effect that the disability has on the person’s ability to use the regular bus.

DEFINITIONS

Denials: A trip not scheduled due to capacity constraints, or the inability of PART to meet the clients requested pick up or return time within 1 hour of the clients requested time. Failure to meet one leg of a trip that results in the rider declining service should be tracked as two denials.

Excessively Long Trips: Trips are considered excessively long when they are in excess of one (1) hour, which is based on the times of fixed-route origin to destination length.

Missed Trip: A trip which PART did not show up for within 15 minutes of the scheduled appointment time.

On Time Performance: A trip is considered on time when arrival is within 10 minutes of the scheduled time.

HOURS OF SERVICE

The days, hours, and location in which paratransit service will be available are determined by where and when our regular bus is available. Also, the paratransit service is limited to within 3/4 mile of the routes of our regular buses. In this way, the paratransit service complements the regular bus service. If your origin or destination is beyond 3/4 mile of the regular bus route, or if you want to ride at a time our regular bus does not run, then your trip will not qualify for paratransit service.

Consult the regular bus schedule to determine the hours paratransit service will be available. Monday through Saturday, the service operates from approximately 6:00 AM until 10:00 PM. Note that paratransit service is not available on Sundays because our regular buses do not run on Sundays.

HOW TO DETERMINE IF YOU ARE ELIGIBLE FOR PARATRANSIT SERVICE

Once you have determined that you wish to go from and to points within 3/4 mile of our regular bus service and at times when the regular bus service is operating, then PART must determine if you have a disability which makes it impossible for you to use the regular bus.

The ADA creates three categories of eligibility for paratransit service:

1. *Any individual with a disability who is unable, as the result of a physical or mental impairment (including vision impairment), and without the assistance of another individual (except the operator of a wheelchair lift), to board, ride, or disembark from any vehicle on the system that is readily accessible and usable by individuals with disabilities.*

This category might include people who cannot operate a wheelchair by themselves. It also would include passengers with cognitive or visual impairments who cannot “navigate the system.” Navigating the system might involve obtaining and understanding route information.

2. *An individual with a disability requiring the use of a wheelchair or other mobility device who wants to travel on a route and at a time when a vehicle with a chair lift is not available on that route.*

Because every vehicle operated by PART is equipped with a wheelchair lift and is fully accessible, this category need not be considered. The DOT’s Final Rule amending 49 CFR Part 37, which went into effect October 19, 2011, prohibits public entities from setting weight or size limitations on wheelchairs it will transport. There are no limits on the accessibility of wheelchair devices on PART vehicles.

It should be noted that wheelchair lifts can be used by persons who have difficulty walking or using stairs, but do not require the use of a wheelchair. A person with a leg brace, for example, who cannot climb the stairs to enter the regular bus, can ride the lift standing in order to get on.

3. *Any individual with a disability who has a specific impairment-related condition that prevents such individual from traveling to a boarding location or from a disembarking location on such system.*

There are two important elements to consider for this category. First, the disability which a person has must prevent the individual from reaching the bus stop. Disabilities which make it more difficult to reach the bus stop will not qualify a person for paratransit service.

The second element has to do with certain barriers (whether distance, weather, terrain, or architectural barriers such as a lack of curb cuts), which a disabled person might encounter when traveling to or from a bus stop. The presence of these barriers alone does not confer

eligibility. Only when those barriers, when combined with the disability, make it impossible for the disabled person to travel to or from a bus stop will the person be eligible for paratransit service.

TRIP ELIGIBILITY

Determining eligibility for paratransit service is based on each individual's circumstances. Depending on the specifics of their disability, one person may be able to use the regular bus for a certain trip, but their neighbor may have to use the paratransit service. Likewise, there will be cases where a single person can use the regular bus for some trips, but not for others.

As you have seen, having a disability does not, by itself, make an individual eligible for paratransit service. Instead, eligibility is based on the fact that there are certain *trips* that a person with a disability cannot make using a regular bus. For some individuals, their disabilities may prohibit them from ever using the regular bus. These persons would have *unconditional* eligibility to use the paratransit service.

But others may be able to use the regular bus for most trips but require paratransit service for other trips. These persons would have *conditional* eligibility. For persons with conditional eligibility, PART will decide whether a person's ride is eligible for paratransit service on a trip-by-trip basis by weighing information gathered about the person's disability, the location of the bus stop, any barriers en route to or from the bus stop, and other information.

THE APPLICATION PROCESS

If you believe you are eligible for paratransit service, you or another person will need to call Pottstown Area Rapid Transit (PART) -- **610-326-5413** -- for an application. You can either complete the application yourself or have someone help you complete it. Upon request, application materials and subsequent documents will be supplied in accessible formats.

Once the application is complete, return it to PART. After receiving your application, PART has 21 days in which to review the application material and determine your eligibility. As part of the process, PART personnel may contact you or your medical/social service professional in order to gather additional information. You may also be interviewed in person. If you must be interviewed at PART, you will be provided a ride on the van in order to get to the interview location.

If after 21 days your eligibility has not yet been determined, you will be presumed unconditionally eligible, and you can use the paratransit service for rides until the evaluation is complete.

After the eligibility determination is complete you will be sent a letter from PART, which will either deny you eligibility, confer unconditional eligibility, or confer conditional eligibility.

If you are denied eligibility or have been given conditional eligibility, you will be told in the letter the reasons behind the determination. These reasons will relate directly to the information you or a professional provided to PART. If you are dissatisfied with your eligibility determination you may appeal. The Statement of Appeal form must be submitted to the Borough Manager, 100 E. High Street, Pottstown, PA 19464, who will review the appeal and provide a determination within 10 days of receipt.

HOW TO RESERVE A TRIP

ADA paratransit service is provided by reservation only. You must make a reservation for your entire round trip. Reservations can be made up to 14 days in advance and no later than the day prior to the trip.

When you call, you should identify yourself, where you want to go, and what time you need to be picked up and returned.

Reservations can be made during regular office hours between 8:00 AM and 5:00 PM, Monday through Saturday, by calling PART at 610-326-5413.

CANCELING YOUR TRIP

Reservations must be canceled at least two hours before your scheduled pick-up time. If you do not cancel, you will be charged with a “no-show.” Repeated no-shows may eventually lead to the suspension of riding privileges (see the suspension/termination policy).

To cancel your trip, call PART from 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM, seven days per week.

NO SHOW POLICY

A no-show occurs when Pottstown Area Rapid Transit-provided vehicle arrives on time for a scheduled trip, but the customer elects not to take the trip and has not canceled the trip ahead of time.

- Passengers must whenever possible cancel unwanted trips through the PART office at least two (2) hours prior to their negotiated pick-up time.
- Passengers must be ready to ride, waiting at the address used in scheduling their trip. If a rider's pick-up location changes for any reason, they must give at least two hours advance notice of the change so the trip can be rescheduled.
- If a PART vehicle arrives on time for a scheduled pick-up and after waiting five (5) minutes the rider is not present, or decides not to take the trip, the rider will be considered a no-show.

- On time is defined as when the vehicle arrives no more than five (5) minutes before or ten (10) minutes after the negotiated pick-up time. If a vehicle arrives early, the rider is not obligated to board until five (5) minutes before the negotiated pick-up time.
- Even though an individual may fail to contact PART to cancel a trip, the return trip will not be automatically cancelled. The return trip will remain in the schedule.
- PART can impose sanctions for a pattern and practice of no-shows, as listed below.
- Trips missed by riders for reasons beyond their control, including trips missed due to PART driver or system error, will not count in assessing no-show penalties. (However, the customer must inform PART about such circumstances.)
- PART will track and document all customer no-shows in riders' files. Before any penalties are imposed, PART will notify the rider in writing and provide a list of the no-show trips incurred.
- Customers have the right to appeal or dispute PART no-show findings by submitting the Statement of Appeal Form

No-show policy penalties:

PART can impose sanctions for a pattern and practice of missed trips by a customer. A pattern or practice involves intentional, repeated, or regular actions, not an isolated, accidental, or singular incident.

A review of a rider's no-shows can occur if there are at least three (3) no-shows within a 30-day period. A sanction could be imposed if more than 50% of all trips scheduled during that period were no-shows that were not beyond the rider's control.

Sanctions:

- Riders will receive a written warning after the first (1) no-show.
- After three (3) no-shows within a 30-day period, AND if more than 50% of all trips scheduled during that period were no-shows that were not beyond the rider's control, a one-week (7 days) suspension of service may occur.

APPEALS PROCESS

Any individual who is denied ADA eligibility or has been suspended from utilizing the service may appeal PART's determination within 60 days of the denial.

An individual will be able to present information and arguments to the Appeal Committee consisting of:

- Borough Manager
- Grants Administrator
- Chief Operating Officer (PART Inc)

A decision of the committee will be made within 30 days of the appeal that will include the reason for the decision. If a decision is not made within 30 days, service will be provided until a decision is made. The decision will be provided in an accessible format if requested.

See Appeal Form on page 10.

STANDING ORDERS

You may make a “standing order” to take the same trip on a regular basis. For example, you may wish to make a standing order to go to and from work everyday.

FARE

The fare for any ADA paratransit trip will be twice the fare on the regular bus. The regular bus fare is \$2.25, so the cost of a paratransit trip is \$4.50 each way.

REASONABLE MODIFICATION

PART is dedicated to ensuring programs and services are accessible to individuals with disabilities. If you would like to request a Reasonable Modification to policies, practices, and/or procedures, contact PART at 610-326-5413 or visit www.pottstownarearapidtransit.com.

PERSONAL CARE ASSISTANT

If you require that a personal care assistant to travel with you because of your disability, that person is considered a “mobility aid” and will not be charged a fare. To travel free, your assistant must travel from the same origin to the same destination as you. The ADA refers to this type of escort as a “personal care attendant.”

GUESTS

When you travel, you may have guests ride with you so long as space is available on the van. Guests will be charged the full fare for each ride.

VISITORS

Visitors to the Pottstown Area Rapid Transit service area, who are eligible for paratransit service in another service area (e.g., BARTA), are also eligible to use PART's paratransit service. Visitors should arrange for this service by calling PART and forwarding to their office documentation that they are paratransit eligible. PART will review this documentation to determine eligibility within one day of request.

Visitors who do not have documentation that they are paratransit eligible may also use PART's paratransit service. These persons should forward to PART documentation indicating their permanent place of residence and, if the individual's disability is not apparent, documentation indicating their disability. Upon providing this documentation to the satisfaction of PART, these persons may ride PART paratransit service for up to 21 days during any calendar year. After 21 days, however, these persons must obtain eligibility through PART's normal application process in order to continue to ride.

QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE

ADA PARATRANSIT SERVICE

TELEPHONE NUMBERS

APPLICATIONS, RESERVATIONS,
AND CANCELLATIONS

610-326-5413

BOROUGH OF POTTSTOWN
TRANSIT ADMINISTRATION

610-970-6512

ADDRESSES

Pottstown Area Rapid Transit
902 Farmington Avenue
Pottstown, PA 19464

Borough of Pottstown
100 E. High Street
Pottstown, PA 19464

HOURS

RESERVATIONS

7 days per week.

Call in advance for next day service. Standing orders will be accepted.

FARE

\$4.50 each way

Personal care attendants, needed because of the rider's disability, ride free. Other riders accompanying the paratransit rider may ride for \$4.50 each way if space is available.



Statement of Appeal Form

Contact Information

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Telephone: _____ Email: _____

Dates of Suspension: _____

I am appealing my suspension because:

Customer Signature: _____ Date: _____

Return to: Borough of Pottstown, Attn: Grants Administrator

100 E. High Street

Pottstown, PA 19464