



PARATRANSIT SERVICE Rider Handbook

MACON-BIBB COUNTY TRANSIT AUTHORITY (MTA)

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31206

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Definition of Complementary Paratransit Service

The Americans with Disabilities Act regulations requires the MTA, as a public entity that operates a fixed route system, to provide complementary paratransit services to individuals with disabilities (that is, service that is comparable to the level of service provided to individuals without disabilities who use the fixed route system). See 49 CFR Sec. 37.131 (a).

Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and of 2008

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) prohibits discrimination and ensures equal opportunity and access for persons with disabilities. It provides the general framework and approach for ending discrimination for persons with disabilities. The stated national goals of the ADA are to guarantee that persons with disabilities have equality of opportunity, a chance to fully participate in society, ability to live independently and be economically self-sufficient.

Section 223 of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 requires that public entities that operate non-commuter fixed-route transportation service also provide complementary paratransit service for individuals unable to use the fixed-route system. The regulations define minimum service characteristics that must be met for this service to be considered equivalent to the fixed-route service it is intended to complement. ADA complementary paratransit standards are provided for in 49 CFR Sec. 37.123 of the Code of Federal Regulations.

In general, the law prohibits public transit systems from denying individuals with disabilities the opportunity to use public transportation services, when they are available. It prohibits public entities from providing services that discriminate against persons with disabilities. The ADA requires the development of programs that will ensure the integration of all persons into the public transportation system, and thus all of the opportunities transportation makes possible. The goal is to ensure non-discriminatory, equitable, accessible and safe public transportation, enhancing the social and economic quality of life for people with disabilities.

MTA complies with all requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Rules for ADA Eligibility for Complementary Paratransit Services

ADA complementary paratransit service must be provided to all passengers described as being:

1. Any individual with a disability who is unable, as a result of a physical or mental impairment (including a visual impairment), and without the assistance of another individual (except the operator of a lift or other boarding assistance device), to board, ride or disembark from an accessible vehicle in the fixed- route system. Included in this category are individuals with mental or visual impairments who cannot navigate the fixed-route system.
2. Persons who cannot use vehicles without lifts or accommodations. These persons are eligible for paratransit service if accessible fixed-route vehicles are not available on the bus routes in which they need to travel, when they need to travel during operational hours of MTA Transit. (All MTA Transit fixed-route vehicles are accessible).
3. Persons with specific impairment related conditions that cannot travel to a boarding location or from a disembarking location to their final destination. The condition must prevent the person from using the fixed-route system. Conditions that make getting to the fixed-route bus stop “more difficult” do not grant eligibility. Second, architectural barriers (such as no curb cuts) are not under the control of MTA, and environmental barriers (such as distance, terrain, and weather) do not, when considered alone, confer eligibility. If, however, travel to or from a boarding location is impossible when these factors are combined with the person’s specific impairment- related condition, conditional paratransit service will be provided to eligible passengers.

Paratransit ADA Eligibility Certification Process

Applications for Paratransit ADA eligibility for MTA’s complementary paratransit service are available at MTA’s office located at 2737 Broadway, Macon, Georgia 31206 or a request for an application to be mailed can be made by calling the MTA office at (478) 621-7116.

Once the completed application is received, MTA will notify the applicant within twenty-one (21) days of his/her eligibility status. If a determination has not been made within 21 days of receiving the completed application, the applicant will be treated as eligible and will be provided service until MTA determines their eligibility. The applicant will receive a letter verifying whether they are eligible for service or not, and if so, what type of

eligibility, and for how long. If the eligibility is limited or denied, MTA will state specifically the reason for the limitation or denial. For visually-impaired customers, a phone call will be made in addition to the letter.

Eligibility Expiration/Reapplication

MTA can request any or all customers to reapply at any time based on health conditions or after legal or policy changes, among other reasons, but must give 90-day minimum notice of expiration in writing. These requests cannot be arbitrary or capricious, discriminatory, or unreasonably frequent.

Eligibility Determination Process

Eligibility will be determined by trained MTA staff and will be based on ADA eligibility standards described in 49 CFR 37.123 and 49 CFR 37.125. Regulation 49 CFR 37.125(a) states, "The process shall strictly limit ADA paratransit eligibility to individuals specified in 37.123 of this part." The Transit Coordinator will review applications to ensure that due process has been observed. The applicant will receive a letter describing their eligibility. If eligibility is denied or limited, the letter will describe why they were denied or provided limited service, and how they can appeal the decision. The letter will be sent in the format requested in the application.

SCHEDULING

Please have the following information ready...

**To schedule your ride call:
478-621-7116**

**Monday through Friday
8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.**



- Date of trip
- Appointment time/Return time
- Exact Address and Entrance
- Personal Care Attendant (PCA)/Escort
- Any special mobility aids utilized
- If you need a lift to board the vehicle

TRIPS WILL NOT BE SCHEDULED WITHOUT COMPLETE INFORMATION.

- Trips must be called in before 4:30 p.m. for service the next day. Trips may be scheduled up to four weeks in advance. There are no trip purpose restrictions or restrictions on the number of round trips allowed per individual per day.
- MTA's Customer Service Representative will inform you of your pick-up time. An MTA vehicle will pick you up within 15 minutes of your pick-up time. Please be ready and waiting at your given pick-up time.
- You must be ready to exit the building at the specific door or exit that you scheduled when the vehicle arrives. The driver will sound the horn and will not wait more than 5 minutes.
- The driver will collect the fare when you board the vehicle. If you do not have your fare you will not be transported.
- Drivers may accept more than the required fare at your request. MTA cannot, however, guarantee that change will be returned.
- If you do not call and you are not ready when our vehicle arrives, you will be considered a No Show. You will receive a warning or suspension letter.
- If an appointment runs late, call MTA at least 30 minutes before your return time. If you are ready early, call MTA and we will attempt to pick you up earlier.
- Notify MTA of cancellation at least 30 minutes before the scheduled trips. Same day changes will not be accommodated.

No Show/Cancellation Policy

When someone no shows for a scheduled ride, it is very expensive and takes away the opportunity that a ride could have been scheduled for someone else. There are consequences when riders have a behavior pattern of either not being ready or simply not showing up to take their scheduled ride.

What is a No Show?

A "No Show" is when you schedule a Paratransit ride but then you:

1. Call MTA and cancel the ride too close to your pick-up time (less than 30 minutes).
2. Are not ready to board the bus within five minutes, and you delay a prompt departure.
3. Do not come out to board the bus and take your scheduled ride.

4. Delay the departure of the bus by not getting off the bus.
5. Delay the bus's departure when you cannot be left unattended and no one is at the drop off location to receive you.

What is a Same Day Cancellation?

A late cancellation is when you cancel your scheduled Paratransit ride after midnight the day prior to your ride and up to four hours before your scheduled ride.

What is a Late Cancellation?

A same day cancellation is when you cancel your scheduled Paratransit ride between four hours and up to thirty minutes of your scheduled ride.

What if the No Show/Late Cancellation was MTA's Error or Outside Your Control?

Call Paratransit Customer Care Department immediately to explain what prevented you from taking your scheduled ride. You may be requested to provide documentation that explains what happened. The purpose of the documentation is to provide a fair and consistent policy for all.

Does MTA Automatically Cancel my Later Rides if I No-Show the Bus?

No. Later trips for the day will not be automatically cancelled when you "no-show" a ride. It is the rider's responsibility to cancel rides they no longer need.

Will MTA Come Back and Pick Me Up if I No Show the Bus?

MTA policy is this: if we take you somewhere, we will make every possible effort to come get you.

If you no show the first leg of your ride, no bus will be sent to pick you up for that ride. If you no show another ride and Paratransit took you to the location, Paratransit will schedule a return ride upon request, and as schedule permits.

EXCEPTION: If you "no-showed" the Paratransit bus and we didn't take you, you will have to find other transportation.

What Are No Show or Cancellation Points, and How do They Work?

Each ride that is no-showed, late cancellation or same day cancellation has a specific point value. Riders will be assessed points for each ride they schedule and do not take. This may result in multiple points assessed on the same day. The result of no show points on your record will be a service suspension.

There are 3 kinds of No Shows and Point Values:

1. (1 Point) Same Day Notice is charged to your record if you cancel your ride after 11:59 pm the day before, and up to 4 hours before your scheduled ride pick up time.
2. (3 Points) Late Notice is charged to your record if you cancel your ride between 30 minutes and 4 hours before your scheduled ride pick up time.
3. (5 Points) No Notice/Cancel at Door is charged to your record if you cancel your ride less than 30 minutes before your scheduled ride pick up time, or you notify the driver when the driver arrives that you are not taking your scheduled ride, or you are not present after the vehicle has waited five minute after the ready time window.

Consequence of Points that Lead to Service Suspension

Points	Within	Results in Service Suspension
12	30 Days	1 Week
24	60 Days	2 Weeks
36	90 Days	6 Weeks, Loss of Subscription * Note Below
48	120 Days	10 Weeks, Loss of Subscription * Note Below
**		*Note Below

* Educational meeting with MTA Paratransit staff can reduce your suspension.

**If you reach 60 or more points on your record, your service suspension will increase by 4 weeks per additional 12 points. For example 60 points would be a 14 week suspension; 72 points would be an 18 week suspension, and so on.

What if I disagree with my “No Show” Suspension?

Call customer care immediately upon receipt of your letter (see last page for phone number). MTA will not take away or stop providing rides to you without advance notification of a service suspension. You will always be given the opportunity to appeal any decision that includes meeting with us before your suspension starts. Once you receive your letter, follow the instructions in the letter. Failing to follow these instructions will result in your “no-show” service suspension.

What Happens When the Bus is Late?

If you notify us that your ride is more than 15 minutes late (16 minutes past the end of the ready time window), and if the lateness is within MTA control (scheduling problem, driver error), we will send you a coupon that can be redeemed for either the removal of a points or a free ride.

COUPONS

The coupons will be mailed out to you and are good for one year from the date of issue. To use the coupon for a free ride, give it to the bus driver. To have points removed, either give the coupon to the driver or mail it to MTA, indicating which points you want removed from your record.

COUPONS WILL NOT BE REPLACED IF LOST

Sometimes a schedule delay, bad weather, or bus breakdown may cause the Paratransit bus to be late. If your bus hasn't arrived by the end of your ready window, and you decide to find another way to your appointment, please call MTA Paratransit to let us know you found another ride so we do not send the bus or assess points for a no show.

Are There Other Rider Rules I Need to Know?

MTA has a list of common-sense rules to ensure the safety of all riders and drivers. All riders, their personal care attendants and any companions traveling with riders must observe the following Rules of Conduct or risk penalties up to and including service suspension.

- You must pay your fare
- You must maintain appropriate, reasonable personal hygiene.
- You cannot eat or drink on-board (unless required for health reasons).
- You cannot ride with open containers of alcohol or with illegal drugs.
- You may not smoke on the vehicles.
- You may not use vulgar, foul, abusive, threatening, or obscene language or actions.
- You may not physically abuse of another rider or the driver.
- Disorderly, lewd or inappropriate behavior is not allowed.
- No petting guide dogs or other service animals without the permission from of the owner.
- When using audio or video devices you are required to use earphones
- Loud noise is not allowed
- You may not operate, tamper with or vandalize with any vehicle equipment. • You may not be throw any objects through or from the bus
- You must control your objects within the bus.
- Littering is prohibited.
- For a complete list of Rules of Conduct refer to www.rideuta.com

Riders, personal care attendant or companions traveling with riders, who engage in an activity that disrupts the safe or effective operation of Paratransit service or who engages in illegal activities including physical abuse or cause physical injury to another rider or driver, may be subject to immediate and permanent suspension of Paratransit service. They may also be subject to possible criminal prosecution, which may include fines.

MTA reserves the right to require that a personal care attendant travel with the rider as a condition to ride instead of service suspension.

Any rider or personal care attendant or companion traveling with a rider who is suspended from service will be notified in writing and will be given an opportunity to appeal the suspension.

How Do I Appeal My Eligibility Decision?

A rider who disagrees with their eligibility decision may request an appeal. The appeal request must be made in writing and must be sent to MTA's ADA Compliance Officer within 60-days of the eligibility determination. Send written request to:

**ADA Compliance Committee
Macon Transit Authority
2737 Broadway
Macon, GA 31206**

A written copy of the appeal process may be obtained by calling the Paratransit Department (478)621-7116

Can I Appeal Suspension/Termination of Service Decisions?

Yes. Call customer care immediately. There will be an immediate suspension for any assault or threat of an assault while on the bus or on MTA property. Riders will be notified by telephone of the process that must be followed for immediate suspensions. For all other suspensions, you must follow the process outlined in your written notification. Refer to the No Show policy on page 21 to appeal a no show suspension. Failure to follow the process listed by the dates listed in the letter will result in the service suspension being upheld.

How Do I Reach You With Suggestions and Comments?

We welcome feedback, suggestions, and comments on our Paratransit service. Call Paratransit Department [478-621-7116](tel:478-621-7116) or write to:

**Paratransit Department
Macon Transit Authority
2737 Broadway
Macon, Ga. 31206**

To allow us to follow-up on your comments or suggestions, please be specific and provide us with the following information:

- Your name, address, and phone number.
- The date, time, and location of the incident.
- If your concern involves a Paratransit office staff person, it will be helpful if you have the name of the employee, and the date and time of your conversation with them.
- A detailed explanation of the incident or suggestion.

To assist us in researching a scheduling concern, you are encouraged to keep track of the date, time and scheduling specialist who scheduled your rides on a calendar. We commit to you to log and follow-up on each comment received, and will contact you by phone or in writing to discuss our findings.

Due to the research procedure, please allow us 5-7 days to complete our research once you have left your information.

What if I Still Have Questions?

Contact the *Paratransit* office at:

- 478-621-7116

For effective independent communication, this print information is available in an alternate format upon request. The Rider's Guide is available on the MTA web site www.mta-mac.com

Visitors' Information

MTA welcomes the opportunity to provide paratransit service to eligible visitors to the City of Macon. In advance of your visit to our city, you must send MTA Transit a copy of your paratransit ID card (front and back) or other equivalent paratransit eligibility documentation issued by the city or town in which you reside. A legible, dated letter noting your disability and signed by a doctor or rehabilitation professional is acceptable proof. In addition, we need the following information:

1. Your name, address and telephone number
 2. Whether you will travel with a Personal Care Attendant (PCA), a guest, or both
 3. If you use a service animal
 4. If you use a cane, walker, crutches, wheelchair, scooter or other equipment
- Note: MTA vehicles cannot accommodate wheelchairs or scooters wider than 33.5 inches, longer than 51 inches and weighing more than 800 lbs. when occupied.
5. If you need information in large print, Braille or recorded format

Appeals Process for ADA Eligibility

If the applicant disagrees with the determination, he/she may appeal the decision. The appeals process will be carefully explained to all applicants who are rejected or granted limited eligibility. A description of this process appears later in this handbook.

COVERAGE AREA

The Paratransit service operates along the same coverage area as the Fixed Route system but with an added benefit. The added benefit to our system is that Paratransit will pick up riders who live three-quarters ($\frac{3}{4}$) of a mile on either side of Fixed Route. We provide curb to curb service and door to door upon request, if the area can safely accommodate it.

HOURS OF OPERATION

MONDAY – FRIDAY 5:20AM – 10:00PM

SATURDAY 5:20AM – 7:00PM

RATES

One Way	\$2.50
Round Trip	\$5.00
20 Ride Pass	\$40.00
Monthly Pass	\$100.00

Escorts pay same fare as rider (limit 2).
Personal Care Attendants ride free.

THERE IS NO SERVICE ON SUNDAYS, NEW YEARS DAY, MARTIN LUTHER KING DAY, MEMORIAL DAY, INDEPENDENCE DAY, LABOR DAY, THANKSGIVING AND CHRISTMAS

FOR YOUR SAFETY...

- Drivers will properly secure all wheelchairs.
- All passengers are to wear seat belts while riding on a MTA Paratransit vehicle.
- All service is provided on a curb-to-curb basis. Drivers will provide assistance to passengers on and off the vehicle. Drivers will not carry any packages or equipment.
- Carry on packages are limited to three (3) bags which do not disrupt normal entrance onto the vehicle or payment of fare.
- No eating, drinking or smoking on vehicles.
- Behaviors or acts that damage MTA property, endanger the safe operation of the vehicle or other passengers or create a public nuisance will not be tolerated. Passengers may be asked to leave the vehicle in these cases.
- Children age five and under must be accompanied by a responsible adult.
- Children who weigh forty pounds or less, regardless of age, must ride in an approved car seat and children under five who weigh more than forty pounds must ride in an approved booster seat. Children with a medical certification that states an inability to use any child restraint device are exempt. Any medical certification must be reviewed by MTA before service is required.
- Children aged six to eight and who are under 4'9" must ride in an approved booster seat.
- Car seat and Booster must be provided by the passenger.

**Passes may be purchased at MTA in lieu of cash fares.
Exact fare is required; the driver is not allowed to make change.
Escorts pay same fare as rider (limit 2).
Personal Care Attendants ride free.**

Service Animal

You are welcomed to travel with your service animal aboard MTA. Only dogs, and small miniature horses (24 to 34 inches, 70 to 100 pounds), are recognized as service animals under titles II and III of the ADA. A service animal is a dog that is individually trained to do work or perform tasks for a person with a disability. Service animals are working animals, not pets. The work or task a dog has been trained to provide, must be directly related to the person's disability. Dogs whose sole function is to provide comfort or emotional support do not qualify as service animals under the ADA. **All other animals must be in a small cage or kennel.**

Remember to inform MTA reservationist when you are traveling with your service animal. All riders are asked to show consideration to these animals and their owners who have the right to use MTA.

VIOLATIONS

VIOLATIONS OF ANY OF THE ABOVE RULES WILL RESULT IN A WRITTEN WARNING OR SUSPENSION.

PENALTY FOR VIOLATIONS:

FIRST and SECOND OFFENSE – You will be notified in writing of the violation. The written notification will apprise you of your ability to invoke the appeal procedure established by MTA. An appeal form will be attached to each warning letter. (Refer to appeal process on next page)

SUBSEQUENT OFFENSE – You will be notified in writing of the pending suspension. The suspension will become effective 10 calendar days from the date of the letter. The written notification will include the offense, the date of the offense, the effective date of the suspension, the length of the suspension, and the appeal process to be followed. An appeal form will be attached to each warning letter. (Refer to appeal process on next page)

ALL VIOLATIONS REMAIN ON RECORD FOR SIX MONTHS

OXYGEN REQUIREMENT

Travel with oxygen equipment is permitted, but the equipment must be small enough so that the Operator does not have to assist with the loading and unloading of it. The safety and use of this equipment is the responsibility of the passenger.

WHEELCHAIR CUSTOMERS

The Macon Transit Authority (MTA) is a “curb to curb” service, but if a passenger is unable to negotiate their wheelchair on his/her own, to and from the curbside location, then the passenger can request that the driver assist them to the door, but the driver cannot go beyond this limit or lose sight of the vehicle.

Per Section 37.3 of the DOT regulations implementing the ADA of 1990 (49 CFR Parts 27, 37, and 38) defines a wheelchair as a mobility aid belonging to any class of three or more wheeled devices, usable indoors, designed or modified for and used by individuals with mobility impairments, whether operated manually or powered. An electric scooter is considered a wheelchair as long as it meets the definition of "wheelchair" in Section 37.3 of the DOT ADA regulations. When you make your reservation, be sure to mention if you have difficulties walking, are using a mobility device or are using a wheelchair. Wheelchairs must be provided by the passenger.

LIFT REQUIREMENTS

ADA regulations require that lifts have a minimum design load of 600 pounds and that the lift platform accommodate a wheelchair measuring 30" x 48". Our vehicles are equipped to transport "wheelchairs" which do not exceed 800 pounds when occupied. An Operator may deny transportation if carrying the wheelchair and its occupant would be inconsistent with legitimate safety requirements, as when, for example, the wheelchair is so large it would block an aisle or would interfere with the safe evacuation of passengers in an emergency. ADA specifies that a lift must permit both inboard and outboard facing of wheelchair users.

APPEALS

Any warning or suspension of eligibility whether temporary or permanent may be appealed through the administrative procedure established by MTA and which is a part of this programs description. In the case of a suspension, individuals may use the MTA service once their appeal is received in the MTA office and they may continue using the service until the appeal process is complete. Appeals should be addressed to June Slaughter, Paratransit Manager, MTA, 2737 Broadway, Macon, GA 31206.

APPEAL PROCESS

If your ADA Paratransit Eligibility determination results in a finding of your being ineligible to receive paratransit service and you feel that this determination has been made in error, you have the right to appeal this determination. Or, if you receive notice of a warning or temporary suspension, based on violation of program rules, you have the right to appeal the determination.

To file an appeal, you must notify the Macon-Bibb County Transit Authority, either in writing or in person, within 60 days of the date on the letter advising you that you are ineligible or advising you of the pending warning/suspension. Your written appeal may state your reasons why you feel that the determination of ineligibility or the warning/suspension issued is unjust. After your appeal is received, a hearing will be scheduled to evaluate your case. This hearing process will allow you to present information and arguments on your behalf. You may have others who are knowledgeable of your physical and/or mental limitations speak on your behalf. Applicants who need accommodations should request this in advance. For example, MTA will

pay for a sign interpreter for a deaf person or a reader for a blind person.

After the hearing, you will be advised in writing and in accessible formats as appropriate, and within reason, of the decision of the appeal board. For other than ADA Paratransit Eligibility determinations, the advisory board will present its decision to the MTA Administrator for confirmation. If an advisory board's negative decision is confirmed by the Administrator, his ruling will be final.

The Macon-Bibb County Transit Authority is not required to provide you with paratransit service while your appeal is under consideration. However, for suspension, paratransit service will be provided from the day after which MTA receives a letter appealing the suspension until the advisory board has rendered its decision. If the appeal board has not made its decision within 30 days of the date on your written request for appeal, you are entitled to paratransit service from that time until a final decision is made.

For consistency, one staff person reviews all applications. Any questions or concerns raised by this individual are discussed and reviewed with the ADA program manager. In particular, all decisions to deny ADA eligibility are discussed with the program manager. If the ADA program manager confirms the decision to deny eligibility, a notice of denial, which is part of the application form, is sent to the applicant including the reason for denial and the procedure which may be utilized to appeal the decision. All notices sent to an applicant will be in a format, within reason, that can be utilized by the applicant.

The appeal board for warnings or suspensions will consist of an MTA representative who is familiar with ADA guidelines but was not a part of the initial determination procedure, one member of the local disabled community and one member of the ADA paratransit committee.

HOW TO FILE A TITLE VI COMPLAINT

MTA is committed to ensuring that no person is excluded from participation in, or denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance on the grounds of race, color or national origin as protected by Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 as amended (*Title VI*). If you feel that you have been subjected to discrimination on the grounds of your race, color or national origin under Title VI, you may file a written complaint with: Michael L. Thurmond

Commissioner of Labor
Georgia Department of Labor
Safety Engineering Section
Suite 100
1700 Century Circle
Atlanta, Georgia 30345
(404) 679-0687

This Document is available in large print or on audio cassette for visually impaired individuals.