

# Paratransit Policies



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## Table of Contents

Introduction to Paratransit .....	pg 3
<b>Paratransit Policies.....</b>	<b>pgs 4 – 22</b>
Reservation Policy .....	pg 4
Staff Cell Phone use policy .....	pg 5
Vehicle use policy .....	pg 6
Lift Use Policy .....	pg 7
Two Way Radio Use .....	pg 8
Payment Policy .....	pg 9
Comparable Fixed Route Ride Time Policy.....	pg 10
Wait time policy .....	pg 11
Mobility Aid Policy.....	pg 12
Foot step Policy .....	pg 13
Same Day Service Policy.....	pg 14
PCAs, Companions, Service Animals and Pets Policy.....	pg 15
Seatbelt Policy.....	pg 16
Suspension of Service Policy.....	pg 17
Door to Door Service Policy .....	pg 18
Customer Baggage Policy.....	pg 19
Double Amputee Policy .....	pg 20
Hand to Hand policy .....	pg 21
Passengers with Open Wounds, Sores, or Other Potential Hazards .....	pg 22
Ride with Us Rules .....	pg 23

## Introduction to Paratransit

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires public transit agencies that provide fixed route service to provide complementary paratransit services to peoples with disabilities who cannot use the fixed route bus service because of disability. The ADA regulations specifically define a population who are entitled to this service as a civil right.

In general, ADA complementary service must be provided within a  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile of a bus route, at the same hours and days, for no more than twice the regular fixed route fare. Eligible customers who are outside the service area could still use the service if they are able to get themselves within the service area.

The ADA further requires that paratransit rides be provided to all eligible riders if requested any time the previous day. The ADA allows providers to negotiate trip time with the customer, but no more than an hour before or an hour after the requested time.

Cottonwood Area Transit (CAT) Paratransit is the complementary paratransit system to the local fixed route bus service operated by CAT. CAT Paratransit operates the same hours and serves the same areas as the fixed route system. Paratransit service is provided for customers who are functionally unable to use the fixed route service.

This policy manual is designed to be a quick reference guide for operators and customers. This manual is not comprehensive of all the policies and practices of CAT.

## **Reservation Policy**

Subject: Reservations, Cancellations, No Shows

Purpose: To establish guidelines for the above subject

Guidelines:

CAT Paratransit accommodates advance reservations from 1 to 7 days in advance as well as subscription or standing order reservations. Additionally, same day rides are accepted on a space available basis if called in before 1pm.

Reservations may be made by calling the CAT main number (928-634-2287) from 8:00 am to 4:45 pm, faxed to the CAT fax number (928-634-1685) or emailed to the CAT email address ([cat@cottonwoodaz.gov](mailto:cat@cottonwoodaz.gov)).

Cancellations must be called in to the CAT office at least 1 hour before the scheduled pick-up time. Failure to cancel your ride in a timely manner will be considered a “No Show” for purposes of potential suspension of service or termination of service. See the appropriate policy following in this document for further information.

## Staff Cell Phone Use Policy

Subject: Staff Cell Phone Use Policy

Purpose: To establish guidelines for acceptable cell phone use

Guidelines:

In the interest of safety, employees are prohibited from using cell phones and other personal communication devices while operating CAT owned and operated equipment.

Below are guidelines for staff on ways to be compliant with this policy.

1. Cell phones are to be turned off and safely stored while operating CAT vehicles or equipment. Vehicles and equipment include, but are not limited to, buses, vans, service vehicles, carpool vehicles, rental cars, and other equipment.
2. Cell phone use is **not** permitted while a vehicle is on route or stopped at locations on route or while passengers occupy a CAT vehicle.
3. Cell phone use is **not** permitted while Operators are occupying the driver's seat of any CAT vehicle, even if the vehicle is stopped at the side of the road or at a designated stop.
4. Cell phone use **is** permitted while parked at the transfer centers. Drivers need to secure vehicle and step out of vehicle while on cell phone.
5. Cell phone use **is** permitted for Paratransit drivers stopped at pick up or drop off locations with a wait time of more than 15 minutes. Drivers need to secure vehicle and step out of vehicle while on cell phone.
6. Cell phone use **is** permitted during breaks or lunch periods or when there are no passengers in the CAT vehicle. Drivers need to secure vehicle and step out of vehicle while on cell phone.
7. Cell phone use **is** permitted by management and senior staff using hands free equipment only when responding to an emergency situation. Vehicle should be stopped in a safe location before using cell phone.
8. If emergency contact with employees is required, the office is available to contact persons operating CAT vehicles or equipment. If the office is closed, shift leaders and managers are available by cell phone contact. Contact numbers can be provided to immediate family for use in case of an emergency.

Violation of this policy is subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

## Paratransit Vehicle Use policy

Subject: Vehicle use, pre-trip, post-trip inspections, rotations, and cleanliness

Purpose: To establish guidelines for the above subject

Guidelines:

*Vehicle use* – A Paratransit vehicle can only be used for official business. Because of the nature of our service, breaks and lunches cannot be planned to be at a certain location. Operators may go to a convenient location to be able to take a break or lunch. Vehicles must be secured. All doors must be locked if the vehicle is going to left out of eyesight.

*Pre-trip and Post-trip Inspections* – Before leaving the lot or when relieving on-the-line, the operator will check the vehicle. Defects must be recorded on the Pre-trip Checklist. If the defect is serious enough to affect the safety of the vehicle, it should be reported to the Field Supervisor or Office immediately, and the bus will be replaced. Post-trip inspections shall be conducted. Safety Defect Reports shall be submitted to the Field Supervisor at the end of each evening shift.

*Vehicle Rotations* – Vehicles will be assigned to a specific route for a week at a time. Vehicles may be switched mid-shift in the case of a breakdown. As soon as the vehicle is repaired that same vehicle will be placed back on route.

*Vehicle Cleanliness* – Operators are responsible to maintain clean vehicles. At the end of each shift, operators shall sweep the vehicle, wipe down the dash, remove unnecessary papers, and clean out trash for their assigned vehicle. Trash shall be disposed of at the local CAT transportation building.

## Lift/Ramp Use Policy

Subject: Lift/Ramp Use

Purpose: To establish rules and guidelines on when to use a wheelchair lift/ramp in an equipped vehicle.

Guidelines:

The lift/ramp is a tool to use for the loading/unloading of customers. Any customer can use the lift/ramp to board or to disembark the vehicle upon request. This includes ambulatory customers.

Operators should ride on the lift for only the following reasons:

- A customer has requested the additional service.
- The customer is a double amputee.
- The operator feels that the person needs the additional help.

## Two-way Radio Usage Rules

All operators will use the radio for proper communication purposes.

The operator *shall* use the radio to:

- report an accident, incident, emergency, etc. occurring on or off the bus;
- report an equipment malfunction;
- report any unusual situations such as a route blockage, passenger problem, or lost article;
- ask for route clarification (NOTE: It is the operator's responsibility to know the route and, if not sure about a route or any special conditions on the route, to find out before leaving the CAT transportation building);
- communicate schedule information for passengers including transfer and arrival times

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The operator shall *not* use the radio:

- while fueling the vehicle;
- around designated "Blasting Area" or "do not use radio" construction areas;
- if another conversation is in-progress, except in grave emergencies;
- to send personal messages (the radio must be used strictly for business);
- for prolonged or sensitive business conversations (switch to the administration channel or use cell phone when stopped)

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Ten-codes

An operator should always identify him/herself by route number or unit number (if not on route), and use common English speaking. Ten codes will be discontinued.

## Paratransit Payment Policy

### **FARES:**

Each person\*\* riding Paratransit is responsible for making payment at time of boarding.

- The driver manifest will show amount due from the client.
- The driver will request payment upon boarding. No client will be provided with a ride without prepaying.
- Monthly, Daily, or Punch Passes can be presented as payment. The driver is to punch the pass and record pass used on manifest. CAT's punch pass is equal to \$2.25 per punch.
- All cash is to be placed in the vehicle's bank bag or Fare box and will be turned in at the end of the day.
- If fixed route has a free fare day, Paratransit must also have a free fare day.

Drivers' manifests will be compared to the drivers' bank bag or fare box totals. Driver should note cash amount, pass, or punch amount.

The Paratransit fares will be included with the daily or weekly deposit.

\*\*If a client fare is paid for by agency authorization, this will be noted on the driver's manifest. These clients will not be asked to pay at boarding as their bill is paid by an outside funding source. Personal attendants will be provided a ride free of charge per ADA guidelines.

## Comparable Fixed Route Ride Time Policy

Subject: Comparable Fixed Route Ride Time

Purpose: To establish guidelines for how long a customer may be able to ride on the van.

Guidelines: CAT has always had a policy where a customer can ride on the vehicle for a maximum of an hour. There is a need for this policy to be revised to be comparable to the fixed route ride times and therefore is accurate for all Paratransit systems of CAT. The following formula is used throughout the industry.

Ride Time = time to walk the distance to bus stop +  $\frac{1}{2}$  FR wait time + FR ride time + time to walk from the bus stop to the destination

For example:

A CAT Customer lives at  
2240 E Rio Mesa Drive and he is going  
to the Safeway

Walking to the bus stop = 8 mins

FR Wait Time = 20 mins

FR ride time = 8 mins

Walking from bus stop = 6 mins

Total time = 42 minutes

For example:

A CAT Customer lives at  
2240 E Rio Mesa Drive and he is going  
to the Safeway

Walking to the bus stop = 8 mins

$\frac{1}{2}$  FR wait time = 10 mins

FR ride time = 8 mins

Walking from bus stop = 6 mins

Total time = 32 minutes

## Wait time policy

Subject: Wait time policy

Purpose: To establish a policy to designate a wait time when picking up customers.

Guidelines: The wait time is five (5) minutes.

The operator will start the wait timer from the moment that their wheels stop turning when they pull up to an address to pick up a customer, if the time is within the “ten minute window” either side of the requested pick-up time. If the time is not within the “ten minute window”, the operator may not begin to time until the “ten minute window” starts.

The operator may call into dispatch after about 2 to 3 minutes of waiting. Operators may honk horn and go knock on the door if the door is within sight of the van and there are no clients on board that may not be left alone. Upon calling in, the operator may ask dispatch to place a call to the customer to notify them that the van is waiting.

If the customer does not come out within the five minute wait time, the operator will place a call into dispatch to inform them that there is no movement at the stop. Dispatch will then advise the driver to either drive to the next pick-up or wait if they have information that the client is on the way out, but has not reached the door.

## Mobility Aid Policy

Subject: Mobility Aids and how to transport them

Purpose: to establish guidelines on how to transport them

Guidelines:

Definition: A mobility aid is a helpful tool that a person may use which assists the person to be more mobile.

All mobility aids must be transported.

All wheelchairs and scooters must be secured to the vehicle using the equipped wheelchair securement system. Wheelchair and scooter users will be requested to place their device in the off position with brakes locked. This is not mandatory but is strongly recommended.

Other mobility aids may also need to be secured to the vehicle. This may be done by the customer grasping the object, folding the device and placing it under the seats, or by securing the device to the vehicle floor by using the equipped wheelchair securement system.

Mobility aids include but are not confined to the following list:

- Oxygen tanks up to 100lbs
- Walkers
- Canes
- Wheelchairs
- Scooters
- Crutches

## Footstep policy for non-door-to-door requests

Subject: Footstep Policy

Purpose: To establish a policy for guidance on how much service to give for origin to destination ride requests.

Guidelines: The operator shall take no more than 6 steps from the perimeter of the bus to assist “origin to destination” riders.

For example: The driver has five different customers on the bus and stops to pick up the sixth. The sixth customer’s home is 65 feet from the curb. When the bus arrives the customer is not out at the curb and one of the other five customers currently on the bus won’t stay seated and continually unbuckles the seatbelt. The sixth customer is locking their front door and is trying to get out to the bus. In order for the driver to maintain complete control of the vehicle and to insure the highest safety for all parties involved the operator should use the five minute wait time window and wait for client number six to make to journey to the bus alone. Many unsafe projections could occur if the driver were to leave the bus and go the 65 feet to the door to help the sixth customer to the bus. If client number six used a wheelchair and needed the help to maneuver the chair to the bus, the driver would be advised not to go more than SIX steps away to make sure they could intervene quickly if any unplanned circumstance should occur.

## Same Day Paratransit Trip Scheduling

Subject: Same Day Scheduling

Purpose: To set up Procedures for Same Day Trip Scheduling

Guidelines:

1. Customers will be able to call for a trip on the same day Monday through Friday 8am to 1pm.
2. Customer trips will be approved on a first come first serve basis and will be denied if there is not capacity to accommodate the trip.
3. ADA Mandated priorities must be adhered to when scheduling trips i.e. requested 'same day trips' may not be scheduled (will be denied) if it bumps an ADA trip outside of the 10 minute pick up time, makes a customer late for an appointment or keeps a customer on a van more than the comparable fixed route ride time.
4. A dispatcher will schedule the trip while the customer is on the phone and will let the customer know if and when their trip will be. If this is not possible, the dispatcher will call the customer back as soon as possible with trip information.
5. Cost of 'Same Day Trips' is the same as what the cost is per trip for the customer currently.

## Personal Care Attendants, Companions, Service Animals and Pets

Subject: PCAs, Companions, Service Animals, and Pets

Purpose: to clearly identify the guidelines for the above subject

### Guidelines:

An eligible person's PCA (Personal Care Attendant) shall be provided a trip free of charge as long as the PCA is riding with an eligible person. A companion of an eligible person shall also be provided a trip but shall pay the same fare as the eligible person. A second companion, however, shall be provided a trip only if space is available. PCAs and companions shall have the same origin and destination as the eligible person.

Definitions: PCA – A PCA is someone specifically designated or employed to help the eligible person meet his or her personal care needs and is considered a “mobility aid” similar to a wheelchair or cane. A PCA may be a friend or family member.

Companion – A companion is a friend, family member, business associate, date, etc. A companion is not a PCA unless the eligible person regularly uses a PCA and the companion is actually acting in that capacity. Unless the eligible person states that he or she uses a PCA, any individual accompanying the eligible person shall be regarded as a companion and shall pay a fare.

Service Animals and Pets – Eligible persons will inform Dispatch of their intent to use a service animal. Pets are welcome as long as the pet is in a pet carrier and the eligible person can carry the carrier with the pet inside it. Pets and service animals must be under the control of the animal's owner. Larger pets may be accommodated if they can be controlled and not cause discomfort for other passengers that may be on the bus. Please call dispatch and inform them if you intend to bring a large pet that is not a service animal.

49 CFR 37.3 defines a service animal as “any guide dog, signal dog, or other animal individually trained to work or perform tasks for an individual with a disability, including, but not limited to, guiding individuals with impaired vision, alerting individuals with impaired hearing to intruders or sounds, providing minimal protection or rescue work, pulling a wheelchair, or fetching dropped items”.

## Seatbelt Policy

Subject: Seatbelt use in Paratransit Vehicles

Purpose: To establish rules for seatbelt use in Paratransit vehicles

Guidelines:

It is ***strongly recommended*** that seatbelts, for passengers, should be worn while being transported in a Paratransit vehicle. Ambulatory passengers should wear the provided seatbelt. Passengers using a wheelchair or scooter should use the lap and shoulder belt. Children and infants riding in car seats should have their car seats securely fastened to the bus seat.

Operators must always wear their seatbelts while the bus is in motion.

## Suspension of Service Policy

Subject: Paratransit customer suspension policy

Purpose: To incorporate a suspension policy

### Guidelines:

1. An ADA eligible person who engages in violent, seriously disruptive or illegal conduct, to themselves or others, while receiving ADA Paratransit service shall be refused ADA Paratransit service. This policy is the same on the Fixed Route service.
2. A person with ADA Paratransit Eligibility who establishes a pattern of late cancellations may have his or her ADA Paratransit service suspended.
3. *Pattern or Practice:* A “pattern or practice” is established when an ADA eligible person has three (3) late cancellations or no shows in a one month period. Once a “pattern or practice” is established during a month, each additional late cancellation or no show is subject to sanction. A rider may only have disciplinary actions taken against them for late cancellations and no shows.

### *Types of Cancellations:*

*Late Cancellation:* Client called to cancel trip but the time of the call is within 1 hour of the scheduled pick up time.

*Cancel at Door:* Client cancelled after the driver arrived due to circumstances beyond the client’s control.

*Same Day Cancel:* Client cancelled trip on the same day as the ride, prior to the 1 hour window.

*No Show:* Driver arrived at the point of pick up but client wasn’t there or decided not to ride.

*Missed Trip:* Client was not present for trip where there were multiple client pickups at the address.

*Suspension:* When an ADA eligible person has established a pattern or practice of late cancellations and or no shows, he or she may have service suspended or terminated.

### *How does it affect the Rider?*

Customers should expect:

1. A warning letter after three late cancellations or no shows combined in any one month.
2. One week suspension if there is another late cancellation or no show in the next month. After the week’s suspension, service will be reinstated.
3. Any further late cancellations or no shows may result in a one month suspension of service.
4. Additional late cancellations or no shows may result in termination of service.
5. Service will be reinstated after arrangements have been determined between the customer and the Transportation Manager.

## Door to Door Policy

### Paratransit Policy on Door to Door Service

The current policies of the CAT Paratransit programs are to provide origin-to-destination service (curb-to-curb). We understand that origin-to-destination service can be a hardship on customers who need additional assistance, yet lack a family member, caregiver, or other agency to provide such assistance. In order to respond to this need, CAT has implemented the following policy:

**CAT Paratransit will provide door-to-door service for customers who need such service and have no other resource(s) available. Paratransit customers must request this additional service.**

This is a significant policy shift for CAT and will require the help of caregivers, family members and other agencies to be successful. Clearly, CAT has limited resources of vehicles and drivers. If Paratransit staff were to provide door-to-door assistance to all customers, we would have to drastically reduce the total number of trips we provide. For these reasons, CAT staff will be relying on customers, family members, caregivers and other agencies as follows:

- Staff of other agencies will be requested to assist customers whenever possible.
- Customers will be encouraged to request door to door service only when there is no other option available.
- Family members and caregivers will be required to provide additional assistance whenever possible.
- Drivers may not enter the home of a customer. Customers must be able to come out of the door to the driver.
- Drivers may not leave the vehicle and venture to a place where an obstacle may obstruct the driver's view of the transit vehicle. The Driver must be able to view the vehicle at all times.
- A path from the door to the bus must be clear for the driver and customer to navigate at both pick-up and drop-off locations.
- If any of the above makes the request impossible to be filled, the additional service will be denied. Drivers will help as much as they can.

By providing this service whenever a request is made, CAT will be compliant with the Origin-to-Destination guidance from the FTA found at [http://www.fta.dot.gov/12876\\_4058.html](http://www.fta.dot.gov/12876_4058.html)

## Customer Baggage Policy

Subject: Customer baggage amounts

Purpose: To establish guidelines for the above subject

Guidelines: Customers may bring along baggage with them if the baggage meets the following criteria:

- Baggage must be able to be carried by the customer or by their PCA independently
- Baggage must be able to be carried on to the bus in one (1) trip only
- Baggage must not take up other passenger's space and must be moved if another passenger needs the seat that the baggage is taking up
- Shopping carts (Walmart, Fry's, Safeway, etc.) are not allowed on the bus

If, for any reason the above limitations are broken, the operator will radio into dispatch to receive authorization to accept or deny the customer's ride. The customer will need to make other arrangements in the case of a denial. Customers may call dispatch, **in advance**, to see if modified arrangements can be made.

## Double amputee policy

Subject: How to assist a person that is a double amputee

Purpose: To form procedures for employees who may have the opportunity to assist a customer that is a double amputee. To make sure customers and employees are as safe as possible.

Guidelines: Persons that have both legs amputated have less weight in the front of their mobility device (wheelchair). Since there is significantly less weight in the front of their wheelchair than in the rear of their chair, the possibility of a wheelchair turning over backward is much more likely. Therefore the following guidelines are recommended for the safety of transit customers and employees.

Never pull the customer's wheelchair backward.

Always push a customer's wheelchair in a forward motion.

Direct the customer to go on to the wheelchair loading device (ramp/lift) forward facing and assist them by either pushing them up the ramp or by riding the lift with them.

## Hand To Hand Policy

Subject: Hand to Hand customer transfers

Purpose: To establish procedures for hand to hand customer transfers.

Guidelines: A hand to hand transfer is needed when a customer cannot be left alone. This would be for customers who have disabilities that prevent them from being capable of taking care of him/herself or that are easily confused. Parents, care providers, customers and the eligibility worker will help make a determination when a customer should have hand to hand transfer status. This must be communicated to dispatch in order that it can be placed on the driver manifest.

An example of how this kind of transfer would work is as follows:

A customer is picked up from their origin and taken to the van by someone in authority. The van operator accepts the customer and seats the customer in the van. When the van arrives at the customer's destination, the driver assists the customer off the van and delivers the customer to another person that is to receive the customer.

## Passengers with Open Wounds, Sores, Other Potential Hazards

When using the bus, passengers with disabilities who have health-related open wounds, sores, or other potential physical issues need to ensure that all wounds and sores are properly covered and that all physical needs are planned for (incontinence).

Passengers with disabilities who have open wounds and sores shall be transported unless their medical condition or personal hygiene presents a direct threat to other passengers. Any passenger, including passengers with disabilities, may be refused access to public transportation if visible body fluid leakage or dripping is occurring while at the bus stop. The passenger may also be requested to exit the bus if leakage or dripping occurs after they have boarded. Such leakage or dripping can create a biohazard to other passengers on the bus.

The existence of wounds and sores may limit securement on all securement points. The operator shall secure as many points as possible and transport the passenger.

## Ride with Us

- ❖ Reservations for next day service (24 hours) can be made by calling 928-634-2287 for CAT Paratransit 8am to 4:45pm Monday through Friday. Same day trips may be requested up to 1:00 pm and are honored on a space available basis.
- ❖ Trips requests may be scheduled up to 7 days in advance.
- ❖ “Will Calls” should expect to wait up to 60 minutes for a pick up from the time the call is placed.
- ❖ We may negotiate pick up times, but we will not require a trip to begin more than one hour before or after your desired departure time. (DOT ADA Regulations – Section 37.131)
- ❖ The trip fare is due at the time of your trip and must be in the exact change.
- ❖ A vehicle will usually arrive on time, but allow them 10 minutes either way.
- ❖ The driver will wait up to 5 minutes after they arrive. Please make sure your pathway or driveway is clear to get to the vehicle safely.
- ❖ CAT Paratransit provides “origin-to-destination” or “curb-to-curb” service. Additional assistance is provided in some situations if requested. Drivers may not go inside a building for a client.
- ❖ Be sure to let us know how many people will be riding when you set up your trip. Personal Care attendants may ride for free; Companions pay the same amount the client would pay.
- ❖ Eating, smoking, and consumption of alcohol are not allowed in the vehicle.
- ❖ Drinks are allowed in spill-proof containers only.
- ❖ Fighting, pushing and vulgar language will not be tolerated and will result in suspension.
- ❖ Clients may bring on board only what they can carry on in one trip into the bus. All items must be secured.
- ❖ Please remember to take all of your personal items with you when you arrive at your destination.



If you have any questions,  
Please feel free to stop by or call our CAT Dispatchers  
at  
928-634-2287  
340 Happy Jack Way Cottonwood AZ 86326