

# ASHLAND BUS SYSTEM PARATRANSIT PROGRAM

## INTRODUCTION:

The Ashland Bus System (ABS) Paratransit Program is designed to provide origin-to-destination transportation services to persons with disabilities that meet the provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ACT) of 1990. The ADA and its regulations require that ABS provide paratransit service to persons with disabilities that is comparable to the service provided by ABS to individuals who use regular fixed-route service.

ABS Paratransit Service provides for the individual transit needs of persons who, because of their disability, are unable to use ABS regular fixed-route service and promotes equality of mobility for all. ABS Paratransit operates specially modified vans and buses to transport riders with a range of disabilities including those who use wheelchairs.

## ELIGIBILITY:

In accordance with the ADA, paratransit service must be provided to individuals who meet the certification criteria of Section 37.123(e) ADA Paratransit Eligibility Standards. Eligibility is open to persons who qualify under the following guidelines:

- Persons who are unable to utilize the fixed route system and reside within  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile of the ABS fixed-route and have a destination within  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile of an ABS fixed-route.
- Paratransit service is complementary to the ABS fixed-route service. It is for persons whose physical or mental disability makes it impossible for them to use accessible fixed-route service.
- Paratransit service is provided only after a certification process which includes certification by a medical professional affirming an individual is unable to ride fixed-route service due to a disability.

**Note:** Age alone does not qualify a person to use Paratransit service.

If you believe you have a physical or mental disability that prevents you from independently using lift-equipped accessible fixed-route service, you may visit, write, call, or e-mail the ABS office for application information:

Ashland Bus System  
99 15<sup>th</sup> Street  
P. O. Box 1839  
Ashland Kentucky 41105  
606-385-3287  
[ashlandbus@ashlandky.org](mailto:ashlandbus@ashlandky.org)

Please let us know if you need an application in an alternative format.

In most instances, you will be notified if you qualify for certification within seven to ten working days, but no longer than 21 days. If you are certified to receive Paratransit services, you will receive an identification card and an introductory letter. The rider may be asked to present their identification at the pickup point for any trip. If after 21 calendar days a certification has not been awarded to the applicant, he will be treated as eligible and be provided service until certification is awarded or a denial is made.

In any instance when an applicant is denied service, he will be given a written notice specifically stating the reason for denial based upon the evidence in the matter to the eligibility criteria. The denied applicant has the right to appeal the decision within 60 days after written notification of the denial of service. An Appeals Hearing will be schedule whenever the Ashland Bus System becomes aware of the applicant's intent to appeal the denial of service. The hearing will be conducted by the Public Works Director and the Human Resources Director. The applicant will be notified of the scheduled time and location of the hearing and may appear in person or submit a written statement of appeal. A determination will be made within 21 calendar days and the applicant notified in writing stating the reason(s) for the final decision. Should the determination not be made within 30 calendar days, the applicant will be provided service until a final decision is made.

#### **SERVICE DAYS AND HOURS:**

ABS Paratransit operates the same days and hours as the fixed-route bus service. If the ABS fixed-route service is operating on snow routes, then the Paratransit service will be comparable to the snow route. Monday through Friday the ABS Paratransit hours of service are 7:00 A. M. to 6:30 P. M. Calls for return trips must be made prior to the office closing at 5:00 P. M. The Ashland Bus System does not operate on Saturday and Sunday.

#### **HOLIDAYS:**

ABS Paratransit service is not available on the following holidays: New Year's Day, Martin Luther King Day, Memorial Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, and Christmas Day. Regular fixed-route service does not operate on the listed holidays.

#### **RESERVATIONS:**

The Transportation Center's normal office hours, for all services, are Monday through Friday 8:30 A. M. to 4:30 P. M. at which time reservations will be accepted for 'next day' service. Paratransit customers may leave reservation requests on the telephone messaging machine after normal hours. Phone reservations left after office hours will be recorded as made the following business day. Reservations may be made as early as two weeks in advance but must be made at least one day prior, during normal business hours, to schedule a trip for the following day. Once certified, a person simply calls 606-385-3287 to make their request. The following information may be requested:

- Passengers name and complete address
- Time you need picked up and estimated time of return
- If the requested trip is for an appointment or casual purposes
- Complete address of destination
- If there will be a guest/companion with you
- If you will be using a mobility device such as a wheelchair, walker, or scooter
- If a service animal will be riding with you
- Any new information concerning your status
- Any special instructions for the driver

Passengers must be ready to depart when the driver arrives at the requested location. Drivers are only permitted to wait up to five (5) minutes. Passengers that are not ready when the Paratransit van/bus arrives run the risk of losing their scheduled trip. Paratransit service is not a taxi or limousine service, multiple passenger requests may have combined service. Every effort will be made to accommodate each request, but ABS reserves the right, per ADA regulations, to negotiate revised travel times that may be up to one hour before or after the requested pick up time. Drivers are not permitted to make trip changes.

**FARES:**

The fare for ABS Paratransit service is \$1.50 per one-way trip. All passengers must pay the fare or present a pass to the driver at the time of each individual one-way trip and should have their fare or pass ready upon boarding. No passengers may ride without first paying the fare or presenting a valid pass. Drivers do carry ten (10) Ride passes to sell. Guests must also pay a full fare. If you are certified to travel with a personal care attendant (PCA) the PCA does not pay a fare.

Passes may be purchased in person at the Transportation Center or by sending a check requesting a pass to:

Ashland Bus System  
 P. O. Box 1839  
 Ashland, Kentucky 41105

Customers are to have the exact fare ready when picked up. Drivers are not allowed to search purses, backpacks, or pockets for the fare. Drivers do not carry change.

**PERSONAL CARE ATTENDANT (PCA):**

A personal care attendant is defined as a necessary part of an eligible individual’s mobility. A personal care attendant does not have to be a certified professional, but may be a friend or family member who assists in the rider’s mobility. This is different from a guest who is traveling to accompany an eligible individual. Personal care attendants are not required to pay the fare.

**GUESTS:**

On request, one guest will be allowed to travel with an ABS Paratransit passenger at all times. The guest must have the same origin and destination as the eligible individual and is required to pay the fare. Guests must also return at the same time as the eligible rider.

**OUT-OF-TOWN VISITORS:**

The ABS Paratransit service does provide service to Out-of-Town visitors up to a maximum of twenty one (21) days within a one year period. ABS may request the visitor to apply for eligibility should he/she require the service more than the allotted time. Visitors may show their ADA eligibility documentation from another jurisdiction to receive service. If the visitor does not have ADA eligibility documentation, ABS may request proof of residency, and if the disability is not apparent, documentation of the visitor's disability. ABS will accept a certification from the visitor that he/she is not able to use fixed route service. The certification may be only the statement of the visitor that they are unable to use fixed route service.

**PASSENGER ASSISTANCE:**

The driver will provide curb-to-curb service only. The passenger must be able to meet the van/bus outside their home or the exterior door of a public building. Passengers will be responsible for entering and exiting their pick up or drop off location on their own. Drivers are not permitted to enter the home, or other destination, of a passenger but will provide assistance from the door to the vehicle or from the vehicle to the door. If a passenger needs assistance in addition to the curb-to-curb service provided, he/she must have a personal care attendant or guest. Paratransit drivers do assist the riders to board/exit the vehicle and lock/unlock their wheelchair. Drivers are not permitted to carry riders or wheelchairs up or down stairs.

**TRANSPORTING PACKAGES:**

Because the vehicle may be shared, packages must be limited to what passengers can independently carry onto and off the vehicle in one trip. Packages must be transported in the rider's lap or under the seat. Drivers have a strict schedule and cannot assist with packages.

For the safety of all riders, riders may not transport explosives, acids, flammable liquids, or other hazardous materials. Respirators, portable oxygen, and/or other life-support equipment may be transported as long as it does not violate laws or rules related to transportation of hazardous materials and will fit in the Paratransit vehicle.

**SERVICE ANIMALS:**

The ABS Paratransit service complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) which requires transit providers to "permit service animals to accompany individuals with disabilities in vehicles and facilities" (49 CFR 37.167(d)). A service animal is not a pet. A service animal is:

“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” (49 CFR 37.3).

They must be kept under the control of the passenger at all times. A service animal may be excluded if the animal is out of control and the animal's owner does not take effective action to control it or the animal poses a direct threat to the health or safety of others. Emotional support or comfort animals are not permitted. Public information is available in alternative formats upon request.

#### **PETS:**

Pets are not permitted on vans/buses unless the passenger can carry them in a portable kennel and they can be carried on the passenger's lap. Kennels must have a lid that closes and locks and must remain closed and locked while on the vehicle.

#### **BOARDING WITH A MOBILITY DEVICE:**

All vehicles are equipped with passenger lifts/ramps that meet ADA specifications. Our paratransit vans, per manufacture's rating, will accommodate most mobility devices that do not weigh more than 600 pounds when occupied. All ABS buses have lifts rated for 800 pounds. If the total weight or size of the passenger and the mobility device exceed these standards, they may not be transportable, unless the passenger and chair may be boarded separately. Drivers will not operate power wheelchairs or scooters. Riders will not be transported from their home in a powered mobility device that is not operating. If a powered mobility device becomes disabled while the paratransit customer is out in the community, the ABS office should be called and advised of the situation.

#### **CANCELLATIONS AND NO-SHOWS:**

In order to provide the most effective service for all riders, you must notify the ABS office of the need to cancel a Paratransit trip as soon as possible, but **no less** than two hours prior to your scheduled pick up time. Cancellations not made in accordance with the above will be treated as a “No Show”. Riders completely failing to cancel a trip will also be given a “No Show”. Cancellations are made by calling the same number (606-385-3287) as when making a trip request.

ABS has an administrative procedure to suspend paratransit services to individuals that exhibit a pattern or practice of missing scheduled trips. A pattern or practice involves intentional, repeated or regular actions, not isolated, accidental, or singular incidents. ABS suspension policy is tailored to ensure that suspension is only imposed for a true pattern or practice of missing trips. Suspensions are to be of a reasonable period of time. Consideration is to be given to the frequency or rides as compared to ‘No Shows’. When determining what frequency of ‘No Shows’ constitutes a pattern or practice of abuse, ABS will consider the overall ‘No Show’ rate for all riders for the last quarter and adjust upward, so as not to penalize riders with average ‘No Show’ records. For ABS the upward adjustment will be five times the

average of all riders. The riders 'No Show' frequency would only be reviewed once he/she has missed more than three scheduled rides in a month. The first action imposed for a 'No Show' pattern will be verbal counseling. As a pattern or practice of 'No Show' continues or escalates the severity of the suspension will increase but will always be reasonable and never more than thirty (30) days even for the most extreme cases. Only 'No Shows' that are under the rider's control will be counted against the rider. Missing a ride due to illness, accident, emergency, or other event outside the rider's control will not count as a 'No Show'.

Riders return trips are not automatically cancelled when there has been a 'No Show' on an outbound trip. If the rider can be contacted the return trip may be confirmed as needed or not. If no contact can be made with the rider or a reliable source familiar with the rider's travel needs, the return trip will not be cancelled. ABS will not impose a mandatory financial penalty on any rider due to a suspension. As with any determination by ABS, the suspended rider may appeal the suspension and ask for a review of the factors that lead to the action. The appeal shall begin with the ABS Superintendent and if not resolved forwarded to the ABS Director for final resolution.

#### **CARD EXPIRATION, RECERTIFICATION AND ELIGIBILITY CONDITIONS:**

The Ashland Bus System grants certification on either a permanent or temporary basis. The eligibility of a person granted a permanent certification will not change unless there is a change in the person's disability. Those granted temporary certification will have limited eligibility based upon the information contained on their application. If a temporary certification expires and an attempt is made to schedule an appointment, the person will be given a thirty-day extension on their certification. During that time period they will be sent a new application, which must be completed and returned to the office for re-certification of their temporary need for paratransit service. If an updated application is not received within the thirty-day extension period, privileges will be revoked until the re-certification has been completed.

#### **PROHIBITED:**

Smoking, eating, or drinking in the van/bus is prohibited at all times.

#### **SAFETY:**

For safety, all riders must use their seatbelts and remain seated until the vehicle comes to a complete stop. All loose articles must be secured while riding. Additionally, please be advised that your privileges may be suspended for disruptive or abusive behavior. Disruptive behavior includes, but is not limited to:

- Intimidation or threats of physical harm to drivers or other passengers
- Verbal abuse of drivers, staff, and/or other passengers
- Unlawful harassment having sexual, violent or racial connotations
- Unauthorized use of vehicle equipment
- Voluntary and repeated violation of riding rules including: smoking; eating and drinking on vehicles; refusing to remain seated; defacing equipment; treating staff, drivers, or other

passengers in a rude or discourteous manner; refusing to comply with other requirements of the Ashland Bus System Paratransit Program.

If the disruptive behavior is due to a disability and is beyond passenger's control, ABS may require travel with a Personal Care Attendant. If the PCA cannot help to control the disruptive behavior, and/or a safety problem continues to exist, service may be disallowed.

#### **RIDER RESPONSIBILITIES:**

- Abide by all ABS Paratransit rules.
- Be ready to depart at pick up location and requested time. Trips for which the rider is not ready will be treated as a "No Show" and the driver will move on.
- Cancel unneeded rides as soon as possible. Cancellations made less than two hours prior to travel time will be considered a "No Show".
- Pay the correct fare in cash or pass. A fare must be paid each time a rider boards the vehicle.
- Avoid distracting the driver or annoying other passengers with inappropriate, unsafe, or discourteous behavior.
- Maintain wheelchair or other mobility device in a safe condition.
- Expect to share the ride; others may be picked up after or dropped off before you reach your destination.
- Maintain acceptable standards of hygiene.
- No eating, drinking, or smoking on board.
- No riding while under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs.
- Do not litter the vehicle.
- Do not use radios, cassette players, compact disc players, or other sound generating equipment without headphones.
- Treat drivers, office staff, and other riders with respect and courtesy, both through communication (in person or on the phone) and with your actions

#### **PLEASE BE REMINDED THAT DRIVERS ARE NOT PERMITTED TO:**

- Enter a rider's residence or go beyond the public entrance of buildings.
- Perform any personal care assistance for riders, including but not limited to, assisting riders dress or tend to activities related to personal comfort or hygiene.
- Lift or carry riders.
- Carry riders, with or without mobility devices up or down steps.
- Carry riders' packages or other personal belongings.
- Drivers do not go through a drive-thru for food or banking.

#### **UPDATING INFORMATION:**

The ABS Paratransit Program used information provided on your initial application. If you have any change in address, telephone number, or mobility devices please be sure to notify the ABS office prior to requesting a trip.

**CUSTOMER SERVICE:**

All service inquiries, complaints, or compliments should be directed to ABS at 606-385-3287. Please call us if you experience any problems or if you have any suggestions regarding our service. We strongly encourage you to communicate with us as your input assists in providing you with the best possible service. We may also be contacted by fax at 606-385-3292 or e-mail at [ashlandbus@ashlandky.org](mailto:ashlandbus@ashlandky.org).