

CONNECT TRANSIT

Paratransit Service Program Passenger Guide



GULF COAST CENTER

Updated 2016

I. Service Provider as outlined in the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990

The Gulf Coast Center's Connect Transit Paratransit Service Program is offered as an ADA complementary service for eligible Galveston and Brazoria County residents. Service hours are 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., Monday through Saturday. The Connect Transit office is located at 4352 E.F. Lowry Expressway, Texas City. Office hours are 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Sunday through Friday.

II. Eligibility for Paratransit Service Program as outlined in the ADA

- Connect Transit Paratransit Service is eligible for individuals:
 - Who are unable, as a result of a physical or mental disability, to board or disembark from any vehicle on the fixed-route bus service;
 - Who require a wheelchair lift or other boarding assistance or cannot be accommodated because of the inadequacy of boarding or disembarking locations; and/or
 - Who are unable to travel to a fixed-route location because of an impairment or related condition.

III. Application for Service

- The applicant must complete the ADA Paratransit Service Application and the qualified healthcare professional must send in the attached form. The completed application must be accompanied by a certification from the qualified healthcare professional with their signature on letterhead or a prescription pad.
- Incomplete applications for service will not be accepted. If assistance is needed in completing your application for service, call (409) 944-4324. If eligibility is unable to be determined, Connect Transit staff will contact the qualified medical professional listed on the application for service or will ask the applicant to complete a functional assessment or in-person interview at no cost to the individual. All applicants will be notified of a decision in writing.
- Determination of eligibility will be made within twenty-one (21) days from receipt of the completed application. Connect Transit will review the application and provide notice in a timely manner. If the applicant has not received notice within twenty-one (21) days from receipt of the completed application, Connect Transit will provide the individual with complementary paratransit service until a determination is made.

- An application for service can be obtained by the following:
 - Picking up in person at the Connect Transit administrative office at 4352 E.F. Lowry Expressway, Texas City or at the Southern Brazoria Community Service Center at 101 Tigner, Angleton;
 - Calling Connect Transit at 1-800-266-2320 and requesting an application by mail; or
 - Visiting Connect Transit's website at http://www.gulfcoastcenter.org/connect_transportation.aspx.

IV. Description of Service

Connect Transit provides origin-to-destination service through the paratransit service program to ADA-eligible passengers. Service is provided over a $\frac{3}{4}$ mile radius of the fixed-route bus system throughout Galveston and Brazoria counties. Both the origin and the destination of the trip must be within $\frac{3}{4}$ mile of a Connect Transit bus route. Connect Transit **does not provide assistance over the threshold of any facility, nor do we provide assistance with bags, packages, personal items, or other items.** Connect Transit also provides a subscription service, as long as it does not impede any other scheduled trips, for individuals who work or have the same scheduled pickups as a routine.

Other Considerations for the Paratransit Service include the following:

- Passengers must be able to: **attend to their own needs; safely maneuver their mobility device if one is used; and count, gather, and place the correct fare in the fare box.** If the passenger is unable to perform these tasks, a Personal Care Attendant (PCA) must be present to assist. PCAs **must be indicated when scheduling a trip** with Connect Transit. The scheduled PCA may board **without paying a fare.**
- If you have a companion ride with you, this individual **must pay the same fare as the ADA passenger.** Please inform the dispatcher of any companions when making your reservation.
- **Visitors** to Galveston County or Brazoria County who are certified with their own local paratransit service will be provided service for up to twenty-one (21) days in a rolling calendar year (for 365 days from the first trip). If individuals are not certified and claim they are eligible, they will be presumed eligible and will be provided service for up to twenty-one (21) days, with documentation of their place of residency and the nature of their disability.
- Passengers may bring aboard **only three (3) bags or packages** and items cannot occupy another seat or block the aisle.

- There are **no restrictions or priorities** based on a trip purpose.
- Vans are shared with other passengers and a van may make a number of stops picking up and dropping off other passengers. Because your trip may not follow the most direct route to your destination, the trip may take longer than expected. **Schedule the trip to allow for adequate time to reach your destination.**
- In order to provide service to as many individuals as possible, it is essential that all passengers be ready at their scheduled time. **Pick-up time at the origin will be between 15 to 55 minutes prior to the appointment time.** Return trips will be provided between 15 to 55 minutes after the office has received notification of pick up, depending on traffic, weather, or other delays.
- **Vehicles wait only five (5) minutes after arrival time. No one will call or knock on the door.** If there is **no response** (passenger does not come out to the vehicle), **the vehicle will leave and will not return.** You will then be responsible for your own transportation.
- **Trips to and from all locations must be scheduled.** Have all the information ready for the dispatcher to register your trip. Be sure that you have sufficient time to conduct your business. The vehicle will arrive at your requested pick-up time.
- **If you finish earlier than your requested time, you will have to wait until your scheduled pick-up time.** The only exception is a late pick-up from a **doctor's appointment.**
- Drivers operate on an electronic schedule. They **cannot** change or deviate from their assigned routes and times.
- Cancellations must be received at least one (1) hour prior to scheduled pick-up times. **If no-shows make up twenty (20) percent of trip in one (1) calendar months, the rider will face suspension of service as long as the passenger takes 20 trips within the month.** A letter of notification will be sent to the passenger. The first violation in a calendar year triggers a warning letter but no suspension. Subsequent violations result in the following suspensions:
 - Second violation: Five (5) day suspension
 - Third violation: Eight (8) day suspension
 - Fourth violation: Ten (10) day suspension
 - Fifth and subsequent violations: Twelve (12) day suspension
- If you cancel your appointments, be specific with your request. **Failure to properly inform the dispatcher will result in a cancellation for the entire day.** Trips missed by riders for reasons beyond their control (including, but not limited to operator error, illness, failure of caregiver to show up, etc.) shall not be counted as a

missed trip. Riders will be allowed to contest the decision in a written statement within thirty (30) days of the letter being sent.

- For the comfort of all passengers, **smoking, eating, drinking, and radios are not permitted** on any Connect Transit vehicle.
- **Only service animals** trained to assist the disabled and under full control of their owner at all times will be permitted on a Connect Transit vehicle.
- Passengers exhibiting **violent, disruptive, or illegal behavior** will be suspended from the service.
- All passengers must wear **seatbelts** at all times while riding in a Connect Transit vehicle.
- All wheelchairs must be secured while on-board the van.
- Passengers may travel with life-support equipment, such as portable oxygen, provided such transport does not violate laws or rules related to transportation of hazardous materials. The safety and use of this equipment is the responsibility of the passenger.
- Connect Transit provides **reasonable modifications** to policies and procedures to customers with disabilities to ensure they can effectively use the agency's transit services. Individuals requesting a modification should make a request in advance, if possible by contacting Connect Transit at 1-800-266-2320.

V. Reservations

Reservations can be made up to seven (7) days in advance. Next day reservations can be made prior to 5:00 p.m. the day before. Reservations are taken from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Sunday through Friday. **Drivers do not take or make reservations. Passengers are responsible for making their own reservations.** To schedule a reservation, call 1-800-266-2320.

VI. Appeals and Complaint Process

- The appeals and complaint process will be used when an applicant wished to appeal the decision of Connect Transit staff regarding ineligibility of an applicant or for suspension of service. Service will be provided during the appeals process. **Any passenger dissatisfied with the results of an eligibility decision may appeal in writing within sixty (60) working days to Connect Transit.**
- An individual may file an appeal in writing, by contacting Connect Transit at 4352 E.F. Lowry Expressway, Texas City, 77591, within sixty (60) working days after the determination of ineligibility is made.

- Upon receipt of the appeal, Connect Transit staff will contact the individual within five (5) work days, to schedule an appointment for the individual to be heard in person and to present information and arguments. The appeals board of Connect Transit will conduct a hearing at the Connect Transit administrative offices. Within five (5) working days of the hearing, Connect Transit will notify the applicant in writing as to the result of the hearing.
- All such appeals will follow policy and procedures outlined by the Connect Transit ADA Paratransit Plan for complaints. Connect Transit will provide transportation for all appeals related to the hearings. Reservations for these trips will be made according to normal procedure.
- Complaints or complements can be filed in person at the Connect Transit administrative offices at 4352 E.F. Lowry Expressway, Texas City, 77591, in writing, or by calling (409) 944-4324, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Sunday through Friday.

Thank you for your patronage.