



Gastonia Transit ADA Paratransit Operating Policy

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) requires that public entities provide equivalent public transportation to individuals that are unable to independently use our fixed route bus service. Inability to utilize the system may be all the time, temporarily, or only under certain circumstances.

Gastonia Transit ADA Paratransit Service provides a safe and reliable shared-ride public transit service for eligible persons with disabilities. The ADA Van Service only operates within the City limits of Gastonia. To be eligible for the service passengers must submit an application for eligibility. Forms can be obtained on the City's website, www.gastonianc.gov/ada-paratransit, via mail by calling Bradley Station at (704) 866-6855, or in person at Bradley Station, 121 N. Oakland Street, Gastonia NC 28054.

I. Eligibility

The ADA paratransit service program is restricted to eligible persons under the rules of ADA. Eligible persons include, but are not limited to, persons:

- Living within the program service area;
- Unable to navigate the fixed-route system; and
- With disabilities (mobility, cognitive and visual) that make it impossible to travel to/from the nearest ACPT public transit stop or independently travel using the fixed-route system.

II. Application Process

All applications are confidential. Persons may request an application by phone or mail or may download the form by visiting www.gastonianc.gov/ada-paratransit. Should an applicant need an application in an alternative format, please contact Bradley Station to request the required format. Applicants may request in-person or telephone assistance to complete an application.

Application review may: (1) prove eligibility, (2) prove eligibility for some but not all trips, or (3) prove ineligibility based on a person's capacity to use the fixed-route system. Approved applicants remain eligible for the program a specified period (temporary or up to a maximum of three (3) years). When the 3 period of approval ends, Gastonia Transit may request re-evaluation to determine continued eligibility.

A determination of eligibility will be made within ten (10) business days from receipt of the completed application. Approval will not be granted to incomplete applications. All requested information must be provided to determine eligibility.

The determination of eligibility may require professional verification. If this is the case, a *Request for Professional Verification* will be sent to the individual identified on page 3 of the *Request for Certification of Eligibility* form.

III. Appeal Process

If an application is denied, the individual will be notified via US Mail. The individual may appeal the decision. Appeals will be accepted for up to 60 days after receipt of notification of denial. A decision on the appeal must be made within 30 days of receipt of the notice of appeal. All appeals should be directed to the Division Manager of Fleet Services at the contact information listed below.

Cindy Forrester, Division Manager of Fleet Services
City of Gastonia
PO Box 1748
Gastonia, NC 28053
(704) 836-0039
cindy.forrester@gastonianc.gov

IV. Service Days & Hours

The City of Gastonia's ADA Paratransit Service operates from 5:30 am to 6:30 pm, Monday through Friday. Saturday service operates from 8:00 am to 6:00 pm.

There is no ADA service on the following holidays:

New Year's Day
Memorial Day
Independence Day
Labor Day
Veterans Day
Thanksgiving Day
Christmas Day

ADA also does not operate on inclement weather days when fixed route bus service is suspended. Notices are posted on www.gastonianc.gov, local news stations, and the City's Facebook page.

V. Fare & Service Area

The fare for the ADA Paratransit service is \$2.50 per trip. Companions may travel with the certified passenger on a space available basis and will be charged \$2.50 per trip. Personal Care Attendants (PCA) can ride at no cost and must have the same origin and destination as the passenger. Exact change is required; Transit Drivers do not have the capability to provide change. There will be no billing or purchase orders accepted, fare is expected at the time of service. 10-ride ticket books may be purchased at Bradley Station for \$25.00.

Gastonia Transits ADA Paratransit Service operates only within the Gastonia City limits.

VI. Scheduling

Passengers must call (704) 866-6855 to schedule a ride. Trips may be scheduled between the hours of 9:00 am and 5:00 pm Monday through Friday, and Sundays passengers can leave message regarding their desired trip. Trips cannot be scheduled on Saturdays. If you do not speak to a staff member leave a voice mail and someone will return your call.

Trips must be scheduled at least one (1) day in advance but no more than fourteen (14) days in advance. Trips are scheduled on a first come first served basis. No consideration will be given for the type of trip (medical, pleasure, or school). Unconfirmed trips will not be honored.

Passengers must schedule both the originating and the return trip at initial time of scheduling. Passengers on a medical trip will be allowed to call in for the return trip pick-up and do not need to schedule the return trip at the time of scheduling the initial trip.

Due to demand, advance scheduling is recommended. If your requested time cannot be accommodated you may be asked to change your requested pickup time to accommodate your request for a reservation. ADA allows Gastonia Transit to negotiate a revised pickup time with you that may be up to one hour before or one hour after your requested pickup time.

VII. Subscription Service

Subscription service will be available to passengers making the same trip three (3) or more times in one week. With this service, the passenger will not be required to call and schedule the trips on a daily basis. The no-show policy applies to subscription service rides.

The City of Gastonia's ADA Paratransit Service will allow up to 50 percent subscription trips; once this threshold is reached passengers desiring subscription service may call periodically to see if space has become available.

VIII. No Show Policy

"No shows" – cancelling at the last minute, refusing a ride when the vehicle gets to the pickup location, or failing to appear at the pick location can adversely affect the schedule of ADA Paratransit services and other passengers.

A passenger receiving three (3) no-shows in a 30-day period will be suspended from using the service for 30 days. Continued no-shows may result in suspension of service. Clients must not engage in activities which misuse the system, unnecessarily using capacity that could otherwise go to clients who need transportation, and increase service costs.

A suspension will be imposed as described below for a documented pattern within any 30-day period of misuse of system capacity within the client's control. A documented pattern is based on a percentage 30% or more of trips untimely cancelled, no showed or late when there are 10 or more trips scheduled in a rolling 30-day period. A sudden personal emergency, sudden or worsening illness, inability to reach Gastonia Transit's phone lines, or a late driver shall not be considered within the client's control. Clients will be provided an opportunity to explain the reason for each occurrence in a call or letter initiated by Gastonia Transit. After the third incident (and if the client cannot be reached after three attempts via telephone or postcard), Gastonia Transit will issue a written warning notice that the next violation will result in a denial of service. Prior to any suspension, a written warning of the proposed suspension period and the reason(s) for it will be provided to the client. Clients who appeal the proposed suspension may continue to ride pending a decision on the appeal. (See No Show & Suspension Appeal Policy)

Suspension for Untimely Cancellation Notice, No Shows, and Lateness

- First Suspension 7 days
- Second Suspension 14 days
- Third (and subsequent) Suspensions 30 days

IX. No Show & Suspension Appeal Policy

A customer (or a customer's representative) may file a written appeal for an individual no show or suspension issued by contacting Gastonia Transit in writing within fourteen calendar days (14) of receipt of the notice of "no show" and/or suspension.

Written appeals should be submitted to:

Cindy Forrester, Division Manager of Fleet Services
City of Gastonia
PO Box 1748
Gastonia, NC 28053
(704) 836-0039
cindy.forrester@gastonianc.gov

Gastonia Transit staff will review the information provided by the customer (or the customer's representative) and make a decision to either uphold the individual no show or to excuse it within ten (10) business days of receipt of written appeal.

If the No Shows have accumulated to a point where a suspension will be activated, the customer (or the customer's representative) may file a written appeal for a review of all No Shows by contacting Gastonia Transit. If a decision has not been made within (10) business days, the customer will be allowed to ride until a decision has been rendered.

If the customer is not satisfied with the review by the Division Manager, they may request in writing a formal review by the Director of Public Works. A review will be scheduled and a decision made within twenty-one (21) days of receiving the written request.

Dale Denton, Public Works Director
City of Gastonia
PO Box 1748
Gastonia, NC 28053
(704) 866-6028
dale.denton@gastonianc.gov

X. Assistance Limitations

Passenger assistance will be from origin to destination. Drivers are not permitted to go into residences or other facilities to assist or look for passengers. Drivers are not permitted to load or unload packages; packages are limited to what the passenger can load onto the van at the time of boarding. Drivers are not permitted to take wheelchairs up or down stairs.

XI. Personal Care Assistants

A Personal Care Assistant (PCA) is someone designated or employed specifically to assist the passenger in meeting their needs. Personal care attendants who assist passengers on trips are supplied by the family or agency of the passenger and are not supplied by Gastonia Transit. At times our vans carry multiple passengers from different locations therefore the drivers are not able to provide personal care to passengers. The PCA can ride at no cost and must have the same origin and destination as the passenger. Space for a PCA must be reserved at the same time the passenger reserves his/her ride.

XII. Service Animals

Service animals are allowed to accompany passengers with disabilities. A service animal is any animal 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.

XIII. On Time

The van may arrive up to five (5) minutes before or fifteen (15) minutes after the scheduled pickup time. This will be considered on time. The van will wait for up to five (5) minutes for a passenger before proceeding on route and classifying the trip as a no-show.

XIV. Onboard Policies

Smoking, eating or drinking will not be permitted on the vehicles. Animals, except for service animals, will not be permitted on the vehicles. Passengers violating these policies could be removed from the service for a period of 30 days. Continued violation of policies may result in further suspensions of service and cancellation of eligibility.

XV. Visiting Passengers

Under Department of Transportation (DOT) Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) regulations at 49 C.F.R. Section 37.127, each public entity required to provide complementary paratransit service must make the service available to visitors as provided under the section. The transit entity must provide service to visitors who present documentation that they are ADA paratransit eligible in the jurisdiction in which they reside, under the criteria of 49 C.F.R. Section 37.125. If a visitor with a disability does not present such documentation, the transit entity may require documentation of the individual's place of residence and of his or her disability, if the disability is not apparent.

Gastonia Transit allows each visitor service for 30 days during a 365-day period, after that, the visitor may be required to apply for eligibility through the same processes established for residents as outlined in this policy.