



# TRANSPORTATION POLICY

# Introduction

This Transportation Policy is based, in part, on (1) the “Topic Guide on Origin to Destination Service ADA Para-transit Guidance” from the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT). The Guidance explains the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) obligation for transit agencies when para-transit riders need assistance beyond the curb, due to their disabilities and on (2) “THE Bus Rider Code of Conduct”.

## SERVICE PARTICIPANTS

The Mattapoisett Council on Aging offers transportation services to the seniors of the Town of Mattapoisett, as well as persons with disabilities who also reside in the Town.

The Mattapoisett Council on Aging reserves the right to require a personal caregiver to accompany an individual. Participants riding the van must be fully capable of getting on & off the vehicle with only minimal assistance from the driver. Please note that our drivers are not allowed to attend medical appointments with clients; this is the responsibility of the client, family member or caregiver.

## ADVANCE NOTICE

- All passengers must provide notice of their request for a ride within the time identified on the promoted scheduled trip(s).
- ALL TRANSPORTATION IS PROVIDED BY APPOINTMENT ONLY by calling the COA.
- The COA must be advised of any changes or cancellations of appointments. After hours, messages can be left on the office answering machine.

## SERVICE CANCELLATIONS

In the event that the Old Rochester Regional School System and/or Mattapoisett Town Hall are closed due to inclement weather, the Mattapoisett Council on Aging is closed as well and transportation will also be cancelled. Transportation may also be cancelled if the driver judges the conditions to be too hazardous.

# Services

**MEDICAL TRIPS:** For Mattapoisett Residents. The area of service for medical appointments is Mattapoisett, Fairhaven, Marion, Acushnet, Wareham, Rochester, New Bedford, and Dartmouth. FISH (Friends in Service Helping) is the initial point of contact for medical appointments. The FISH program is a separate, fully volunteer program of citizens who bring residents to their medical appointments. FISH medical appointments are made through the COA and collaborated with the FISH volunteers. FISH cannot provide wheelchair service or service to any individuals who have any special physical restrictions. Further, FISH cannot provide service to rehabilitation appointments.

For those Mattapoisett residents who cannot receive FISH service, the Mattapoisett COA vehicle will provide the transportation (subject to the availability of a driver).

- Pick-up for Medical Trips is at the rider’s home or pre-identified origin.
- **Transportation WILL NOT be provided for any person who has been under local or any other form of anesthesia, or any person who may need medical assistance during transport.** Therefore, we may provide a trip TO the medical appointment, but not a return ride.

**SHOPPING TRIPS:** For Mattapoisett Residents. Shopping trips include grocery shopping and errands at local establishments. The COA may schedule shopping trips to nearby towns of Fairhaven and Wareham, and other nearby communities, as the services may be established.

- Pick-up for Shopping Trips is at the rider's home or pre-identified origin.
- On shopping trips, passengers are limited to four (4) bags per trip, which follows industry standards for safety and due to space restrictions
- Pharmacy transportation is provided for individuals. **COA staff does not pick up or deliver any medications.**

**DAY TRIPS:** Open to all, with priority to Mattapoisett Residents. Transportation services include day trips and other outings, as scheduled. Day trips and social outings are based on a "first-registered" basis, with Mattapoisett residents having priority.

- Pick-up locations for Day Trips are: Mattapoisett **Park & Ride** on North St., **Village Court** Housing Authority, and the **COA** at Center School. Home pick-ups are reserved for individuals who do not have access to a vehicle or who have a physical handicap.
  - o Day trip pick-ups are at general locations due logistics: The number of participants and the need to leave at a specific time. To have to pick up all participants at their homes would cause unneeded time and costs and may result in delay of service.

**AROUND TOWN:** For Mattapoisett Residents. Residents may call 48-hours in advance and request a ride to any location in Mattapoisett. Service is based on driver availability.

#### **IDENTIFYING PASSENGERS**

Drivers should get out of vehicle and help passengers to know that the vehicle is available, especially for riders with vision and cognitive disabilities, as well as other disabilities and in situations including inclement weather and low light that make it difficult to identify waiting vehicles. Reasonable assistance may be needed, on a case by case basis, to make the connection between vehicle operator and passenger, in addition to providing physical assistance.

#### **DOOR-TO-DOOR SERVICE**

The MATTAPOISETT COUNCIL ON AGING offers DOOR-TO-DOOR service, which means that the vehicle operator (driver) offers assistance from the rider's door to the vehicle, and comparable assistance at the destination. The U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) ADA regulation, 49 CFR sec. 37.129(a), provides that "complementary para-transit service for ADA para-transit eligible persons shall be origin-to-destination service." This term was deliberately chosen...to emphasize the obligation of transit providers to ensure that eligible passengers are actually able to use para-transit service to get from their point of origin to their point of destination. Drivers are to provide "**door-to-door**" service, but are not to exceed "door-to-door" (e.g. go beyond the doorway into a building to assist a passenger).

- Driver is not to lose effective control over the vehicle
  - o They cannot lose sight of the vehicle if passengers are on the vehicle
    - If there are no other riders on board and the driver can secure the vehicle, then the line of sight is not necessary

Drivers are not to go through any door, except for screened porches and other areas open to public view (although they can open public doors and announce their presence).

At public entrances, drivers may open the first exterior door to announce their arrival, and if the entrance has a second door nearby that leads to a waiting area, drivers may open the second door to announce their arrival.

**Situations that lie outside the policy may often be accommodated informally with riders, on an “as needed” basis and under the determination of the driver.**

**A. STEPS - RIDER USING WHEELCHAIR**

- a. Drivers will assist riders who use manual wheelchairs over one curb and/or step.

**B. STEPS – AMBULATORY RIDER WITH MOBILITY DISABILITY**

- a. Driver will assist rider up and down the steps of the vehicle, as well as steps going to and from the vehicle and to or from the rider’s door. Drivers have the discretion to refuse such assistance if doing so is a concern for the safety of the rider, the driver or both.

**C. CLEAR PATH OF TRAVEL**

- a. The Driver may perform actions such as moving one or two objects out of a path of travel. The Driver is not required to do extensive work to clear a path of travel, which would be a fundamental alteration of the service.

**D. DOORS AND RAMPS**

- a. If a rider needs it, the Driver should provide assistance opening the first exterior door to a location.
- b. However, pushing a person up an excessively steep slope that presents too great a risk of harm is not required.

**E. CARRYING PACKAGES**

- a. If a rider needs door-to-door service because of his or her disability, and is carrying packages that would be allowable on the fixed route service, then the Driver is required to carry a limited amount of groceries and other packages. Limited amount is based on a weight of packages that the driver feels safe carrying and may be limited to one trip from the vehicle to the door of destination.

**F. SNOW**

- a. In some situations, such as deep snow or very icy conditions, it may be a fundamental alteration or direct threat, and therefore, assistance is not required.
- b. Drivers are required to push someone in a wheelchair through the snow in circumstances such as one or two inches of snow, where the Driver can reasonably assist a person to reach the vehicle.
- c. Drivers are not required to shovel a rider’s driveway or walkway.

**G. DOORBELL**

- a. A Driver must go to the outside door of a building and either knock or ring the doorbell at the outside building door, as part of the door-to-door service, particularly if needed to communicate to the rider that the vehicle has arrived.

**H. LONG STEEP CURVED DRIVEWAY OR WALKWAY**

- a. If a rider has a long, steep, curved driveway or walkway and is too frail to walk down, the Driver may make a determination. Some conditions could be too dangerous to assist someone along. If the Driver contacts the dispatcher or calls the rider to see if there is someone who can assist the rider to where the driver can meet them.

**DRIVER’S ROLE**

- The Driver does not assume the role of a personal attendant. For example, a Driver should not wait with a rider inside the destination.
- The Driver is responsible for all aspects of service while performing his or her job. The driver may refuse service to anyone who is causing a disruption that may compromise the safety and well-being of all riders.

## **RIDER CODE OF CONDUCT**

The Town of Mattapoisett is concerned about the security and safety of the traveling public and its drivers. Every rider must refrain from inappropriate behavior/conduct, threats, violence and/or any activities that may provoke violence. Any time any inappropriate behavior is exhibited during any trip, either on the vehicle or at any location relevant to the ride service, the person(s) may lose the privilege of using the transportation service. Safety is everyone's responsibility and we require anyone that witnesses inappropriate behavior to report it to the COA and/or the Driver before or after boarding.

### **DEFINITIONS**

- **Violence.** Physical force employed so as to violate, damage, abuse, injure or strike in any manner.
- **Threat.** An expression or action showing intent to inflict harm; the giving of signs or warnings of violence or the announcement of violence as a possibility.
- **Inappropriate Behavior.** Any conduct that does not demonstrate respect for the safety and welfare of themselves and/or others or that interferes with the orderly provision of transportation services. The Driver may use his/her sole discretion in determining the level of violations for any/all other inappropriate behavior(s)/conduct that are not listed below. The following represents only a partial list of unacceptable behaviors and conduct, and is not intended to be all inclusive, which will not be tolerated in or around transportation service areas.

### **TYPICAL MINOR VIOLATIONS**

- Profanity and/or offensive language
- Talking too loudly
- Trying to distract driver's attention
- Pushing and jostling when getting on or off the vehicle
- Eating or drinking on the vehicle
- Loud music
- Discourteous treatment of passengers or drivers

### **TYPICAL MAJOR VIOLATIONS**

- Physical violence, intimidation and/or harassment toward another passenger or driver
- Participation in illegal activity
- Possession of weapon
- Sexual touch or inappropriate comment(s)
- Damaging or destroying Town property or the personal property of another passenger or the driver
- Drinking alcoholic beverages
- Language intentionally used to threaten or intimidate another passenger or the driver
- Use of racial slurs, racial/ethnic name calling, displaying racist behavior
- Throwing objects in vehicle or out of windows
- Use of tobacco or smoking on the vehicle
- Spitting
- Failure to follow direction from the Driver
- Public intoxication

**The Driver may use his/her sole discretion in determining the level of violation(s) and then applicable action taken against offenders in all situations of inappropriate rider behavior and/or conduct.**

## **PROCEDURE**

A range of consequences and/or actions will be used to address non-compliance with appropriate Rider Conduct. The COA is responsible for writing up an incident report and correcting inappropriate behavior on COA and Town facilities and properties. Drivers are responsible for preparing an appropriate incident report and correcting behaviors that occur on vehicles, with COA Director/Town direction/guidance.

Consequences and/or actions could include one or any combination of the following:

**First Offense:** Verbal warning by driver to correct behavior

**Second Offense:** The offender(s) will be put off the vehicle. If a passenger is put off the vehicle, the passenger is suspended from riding privileges on any COA vehicle for the remainder of the day. An incident report will be completed.

**Third and Subsequent Offenses:** Same as "first offense" under major violations.

### **Major Violations of Conduct Rules are handled as follows:**

**First Offense:** Riding privileges can be suspended from the COA transportation service at the discretion of the COA Director. When suspended, the offender(s) is not allowed to ride any COA vehicle. The driver will contact his/her supervisor with any/all major violations. Law enforcement may be called.

When a passenger exhibits inappropriate behavior on a vehicle inappropriate behavior on a vehicle or relevant properties/facilities, the Driver will complete an incident report. The incident report is given to a supervisor by the end of the working day.

The COA Director prepares a written letter of suspension for transportation privileges by the end of the next working day. The letter should state why the passenger was suspended, any documented history of disruptive behavior, and the length of the suspension. The letter of suspension will be reviewed for finalization by the Town Administrator.

**Second and Subsequent Offenses:** When a passenger returns from a suspension, the returning passenger's behavior will be closely monitored. If there is another documented incident of disruptive behavior, the passenger may be suspended for an additional period of time and/or have all transit riding privileges permanently terminated.

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