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METRO MCALLEN PARATRANSIT HANDBOOK

POLICY and GUIDELINES

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Metro McAllen Paratransit Handbook -- Policy and Guidelines (Revised September 05, 2009; Updated June 10, 2011)
For additional assistance, please call our MMP office at (956) 681-3535.

Please read the information in this handbook thoroughly. Keep this handbook as a reference in case a question arises.

*We ask for **YOUR** cooperation by following the procedures outlined in this handbook to ensure the most efficient transportation service possible for you and **ALL** Metro McAllen Paratransit participants.*

≧ **WHAT IS PARATRANSIT?**

Paratransit means comparable transportation service required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) for individuals with disabilities who are unable to use fixed route transportation systems. To fulfill this requirement, the City of McAllen operates Metro McAllen Paratransit (MMP), a reservation-required, shared-ride, origin-to-destination public transportation service.

Transportation is origin-to-destination, with additional assistance between the door of the starting point or destination and the paratransit vehicle will be provided if requested in advance. To provide assistance, drivers may not leave their vehicles unattended for a lengthy period of time, nor lose sight of the vehicle. Assistance is always provided to help board and exit vehicles.

Provisions of ADA require that service "mirror" the standard Metro McAllen fixed route service in terms of areas and available times. Service will be provided only if both the starting point and the destination of a trip are located within McAllen city limits not more than $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile from a Metro McAllen fixed route. Paratransit transportation is provided only during hours when the fixed routes are operating.

≧ **WHO QUALIFIES FOR PARATRANSIT?**

Metro McAllen Paratransit (MMP) is designed to serve only those persons whose severity of disability prevents use of public transportation. Under ADA provisions, disability or age does not automatically qualify a person to use paratransit services. Neither inconvenience nor reluctance to use the fixed route system is a consideration in determining paratransit eligibility. Eligibility is not based on a medical diagnosis of disability. Eligibility is based solely on the inability of the individual to use the available fixed route system. A person must be functionally unable to use the Metro McAllen fixed route transportation.

In accordance with federal regulations, the following categories of persons are eligible for paratransit services:

- Persons who are unable, as a result of a physical or mental impairment, to board, ride, or disembark from an accessible vehicle (bus, trolley, van, etc.) without the assistance of another individual (other than the operator of a wheelchair lift or other boarding device).
- Individuals able to board, ride and disembark from an accessible vehicle with the assistance of a wheelchair lift or other boarding device, but a wheelchair lift-equipped bus is not available on the necessary fixed route, or the route is not accessible, or the lift cannot be deployed at the particular stop along the route being accessed by the individual. (Please note: All Metro McAllen fixed route buses are wheelchair lift-equipped.)
- Those who have a specific impairment-related condition which prevents traveling to a boarding location or from a disembarking location (a bus stop or shelter) on the fixed route system, or those persons with mental or visual impairments who, as a result, cannot "navigate" the system.

At least one of the above eligibility conditions must be met to qualify for paratransit service.

≧ **HOW TO APPLY**

If you believe you meet the eligibility guidelines, then you must fill out an application to be considered for the service. This application is called the MMP (Metro McAllen Paratransit) Application. The application contains questions about your abilities and limitations of using the fixed route service.

Application Process

- Request an application from the MMP office. The applications are available in person or by mail.
- Fill out the application thoroughly. An incomplete application will delay the application processing and review.
- Sign the release of information form which is included in the application.
- Have your doctor or other medical/health professional who is familiar with your disability complete the Professional Certification form that is attached to the application.
- Request the Professional Certification form back from your medical/health professional.
- Sign that the information given is correct.
- Submit the completed application (with Professional Certification form included) by either mail or drop off at:

Metro McAllen Paratransit
1501 West Hwy 83, Suite 110
McAllen, TX 78501

- During the application processing and review, you may be contacted for more information or to arrange an assessment interview with MMP staff.
- A written determination of eligibility will be made within 21 days following the submission of the completed application. MMP will notify you by mail either of certification and a conditional, unconditional or temporary eligibility status; or denial of paratransit service.
- After the 21 days, if a decision has not been reached, paratransit service will be provided until a determination is made. If you are found eligible, you will continue to receive service. If you are found ineligible, service will cease.
- If your application is approved and it is determined you are entitled to paratransit service, you will be issued an ADA paratransit picture identification card.
- If you disagree with the eligibility decision or you are dissatisfied with your eligibility status, you may appeal the decision within 60 days after receiving written notification of the determination. (*see Appeals section on page 15*)

≡ ELIGIBILITY STATUS

With a determination of eligibility, your eligibility status will be classified in one of three categories – unconditional, conditional or temporary service.

Unconditional Service

“Unconditional” service means that you have met the ADA paratransit eligibility standards for all trips within MMP’s service area and operating hours’ guidelines.

Conditional Service

Eligibility may be approved on a “conditional” basis, which means service will be provided only for those trips in which ADA paratransit eligibility standards have been met. If you have a conditional eligibility status, you are able to use the fixed route system for some of your trips, but due to your disability, are not able to use the fixed route system for other trips. A simple rule to remember when you are approved on a “conditional” basis is: *If I am able to take the trip on the fixed route system, then I must take the trip on the fixed route system.* Any restrictions will be noted in your determination letter and will be part of your record.

When scheduling a trip, staff will help you determine if your ride qualifies for paratransit service. You will need to use the fixed route system, or find alternative transportation, for trips that are not deemed ADA paratransit eligible.

Temporary Service

“Temporary” service is granted for a limited time span for a short-term disability.

⊇ SERVICE AREA

MMP will provide service within McAllen city limits to origins and destinations within corridors with a width of three-fourths of a mile on each side of each fixed route. The corridor shall also include an area with three-fourths of a mile radius at the ends of each fixed route. Origins and destinations in small areas within the core service area that are not inside any of the corridors, but which are surrounded by corridors, shall also be serviced.

⊇ TRAVELING OUTSIDE THE SERVICE AREA

If you plan to travel outside of the McAllen service area, your MMP identification card allows you to schedule paratransit trips with transit agencies throughout the United States for a maximum of 21 days as a visitor.

⊇ IDENTIFICATION CARDS

Your MMP identification card is needed when scheduling trips, and when boarding the paratransit vehicle. Your identification card can only be obtained at the MMP office. The initial picture identification card is free; replacement picture cards are \$3.00 each.

Certification and identification cards will expire 2 years after date of issue. Before the expiration date on your picture identification card, you must recertify (*see Recertification section on page 4*).

If your MMP identification card is lost or stolen, please notify the MMP office immediately at (956) 681-3535.

⊇ VISITORS

Individuals who do not reside in McAllen but meet criteria for paratransit eligibility may use MMP as visitors for up to twenty-one (21) calendar days per year. If a visitor needs to use MMP after twenty-one calendar days, they must apply for the service. MMP may request proof of a visitor’s permanent address. To obtain a temporary identification number to make reservations, visitors should contact MMP at least three days in advance of the date they need to use MMP.

⊇ CHANGE IN ABILITY

It is the passenger’s responsibility to advise the MMP office of any change in ability to use the fixed route system, or if there is no longer a need to use paratransit services. As your functional abilities change, your eligibility status may also change.

⊇ RECERTIFICATION

Eligibility for paratransit services must be renewed every 2 years. Recertification for services will be required of each paratransit participant at least 21 days prior to expiration of current eligibility period. It is the participant’s responsibility to reapply for service before eligibility expires. If you do not reapply before your eligibility expires, your name will be placed on our inactive list and paratransit service will cease until your renewal application is received and processed, and recertification is complete.

Recertifying paratransit participants are assessed to identify any change in limitations, or improvement in ability to use fixed route transportation.

Recertification Process

- Call the MMP office for a recertification application and Professional Certification form.
- Return completed paperwork to MMP office before current certification expires.
- You may be contacted for more information or to set up an interview with MMP staff.
- During the recertification process and review, MMP will assess any changes in your abilities in using the fixed route system.
- After the assessment, MMP will notify you by mail either of recertification and a conditional, unconditional or temporary eligibility status; or denial of paratransit service.
- If you are denied eligibility to continue paratransit service or are dissatisfied with your eligibility status, you may appeal within 60 days of receiving written notification of the determination. (*see Appeals section on page 15*)

⊇ **TRIP RESTRICTIONS/CAPACITY CONSTRAINTS**

MMP will not impose restrictions or priorities based on trip purposes or limit the availability of complementary paratransit service to ADA paratransit eligible individuals.

⊇ **URGENT NEED**

MMP does **NOT** provide emergency medical transportation. If you have an urgent medical need, please call **911** for ambulance transportation to the medical facility of choice.

⊇ **HOW TO SCHEDULE A TRIP**

Casual Services

A casual trip is defined as a requested ride to and from a specific location on any given day. These trips are taken on different days to different locations and at different times of the day. There are no restrictions on trip purpose or priority.

Reservations must be made at least one day, but not more than fourteen days, in advance of the desired travel date.

To request a casual trip, call the MMP office at (956) 681-3535 between the hours of 6:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. Reservations will be accepted by telephone, telecommunications device for the deaf (TTY), or mechanical means (answering machine). Next day trips must be requested by 6:00 p.m. the previous day. Same day trip requests may not be accepted. (*see Same Day Scheduling section on page 6*)

Please do not schedule a ride simply to reserve space on a vehicle for possible use, and then cancel or alter the ride. Be considerate of other passengers needing transportation.

MMP trips may begin as early as 6:15 a.m.; the last return may end as late as 9:30 p.m., Monday through Saturday. On Sundays, trips may begin at 8:15 a.m. and may end as late as 6:30 p.m.

When requesting a trip, provide the following information:

- MMP identification card number
- Travel date(s) and time(s)
- Complete origin and destination addresses
- Gate or security code and any other special instructions

- If you will be traveling with a mobility device
- If you will be traveling with a service animal
- If a personal care attendant (PCA) will be accompanying you
- Whether you will be traveling with a companion(s) other than a PCA (including children). *(see Personal Care Attendants (PCAs) and Companions section on page 7)* Advise MMP staff if your companion(s) will be traveling with a mobility device or service animal.
- If additional assistance will be needed between the door of the starting point or destination and the paratransit vehicle.

Scheduling Suggestions

When scheduling your trips, please follow these suggestions:

- Please accept flexibility in pick-up and drop-off times. MMP may offer to schedule your ride from 1 hour before to 1 hour after your requested pick up and return times.
- Be aware of opening and closing times at destination.
- Allow extra time for the pick-up and drop-off of other passengers before reaching your destination.
- Allow adequate travel time to reach your destination.
- Allow sufficient time to finish appointment in order to meet the vehicle at your requested return time.
- Allow for traffic conditions and weather delays.

Requested Travel Times

Even though we make every effort to accommodate requested pick-up or return times, it may not always be possible to schedule your trip at the exact time you wish. Your exact trip time may not be available due to high demand at certain times of the day. MMP can offer travel times 1 hour before or 1 hour after the requested travel time as established under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 service criteria. MMP will attempt to negotiate an alternate pick-up time with you. Passengers have the option of accepting or declining the alternate time that is offered.

Paratransit services are not designed to follow a direct route between pick-up and drop-off locations. Pick-up and drop-off locations are taken into consideration when trips are scheduled. Since MMP is a community transit system and not a taxi service, passengers should be prepared to share rides with other clients and accept flexibility in pick-up and drop-off times. Trips must be scheduled to allow for adequate travel time between stops.

One-Way Trips

At times, a paratransit passenger may need transportation to a specific location, but not a return trip. Customers must let MMP know at the time reservations are made that the request is a "one-way" trip.

Multiple Trips

At times a passenger may need to go several places in one day. If this happens, you will need to schedule a separate trip for each pick-up location to each drop-off location. Each trip is a separate fare. Please allow sufficient time between trips. The driver will not be able to wait for you at your drop-off location while you conduct business.

Trip Confirmation

If possible, trips will be confirmed at the time you schedule your trip. At times, due to excessive incoming calls, immediate confirmation may not be possible. At such times MMP office staff will

take your trip request information along with your contact number and submit your request to the MMP scheduler. This is not confirmation of your trip request. The MMP scheduler will then contact you to confirm your trip reservation or to negotiate best available times.

The MMP scheduler will do the utmost to contact you and confirm your trip request as soon as possible. The scheduler being unable to reach you will result in your requested time(s) not being scheduled. If when the scheduler attempts to reach you, an answering machine is encountered, trip details will be left with the answering machine. This will be considered a confirmed trip.

≧ **PREMIUM SERVICES**

Premium services are not required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 and are, therefore, not subject to the provisions of the ADA. Same day scheduling, subscription services, and "will-call" return trips are considered premium services. Implementation and/or continuation of premium services are at the discretion of MMP. MMP does not accept "will-call" (open-ended) return trip requests.

Same Day Scheduling

Trips requested on the same day that transportation is needed ("same day scheduling") will be allowed provided that the addition of your trip does not interfere with or in any way hinder or cause delays for passengers already scheduled for that day. Not being able to accommodate same day scheduling will not be considered a service denial.

Changes made to scheduled trips on the same day constitute "same day scheduling." Pick-up and drop-off locations are taken into consideration when trips are scheduled. Destination changes made on the same day as the scheduled trip will not be accepted. MMP reserves the right to accept or deny other same day changes to scheduled trips depending on several factors, such as available time and trip load. Not being able to accommodate same day scheduling changes will not be considered a service denial. Please plan your rides carefully.

Subscription Services

Subscription service may be available for recurring trips taken at least three days a week from the same place, to the same location, at the same time, on the same day(s) of the week. Once scheduled, subscription trips are automatic; additional telephone calls are not necessary.

Waiting lists or other capacity constraints, and trip purpose restrictions or priorities for participation do apply to subscription services. These limitations apply only to subscription services. Subscription services will be restricted to the following trip purposes:

- Medical treatment
- School
- Work

Subscription service is subject to availability. Most requests for subscription services cannot be accommodated immediately. Once the maximum level of subscription rides are being provided, new subscription requests are put on a waiting list until subscription space becomes available. All subscription service requests are reviewed by MMP staff and approved at their discretion based on existing travel patterns and levels of trip demand.

If you would like to be considered for subscription service, call the MMP office at (956) 681-3535 between the hours of 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday.

It is the responsibility of the subscription service passenger to notify the MMP office in advance of any change in a regular scheduled subscription trip, such as school holiday or day off from work. Any modification to the trip, such as a move or time change, may result in the cancellation of subscription service.

Subscription service is reviewed every sixty days. After review, subscription service may be adjusted or withdrawn by MMP staff. Customers will be notified if their service is adjusted or withdrawn. If subscription service is withdrawn, trips that had been scheduled will be cancelled. Customers will then have to call at least one day in advance, but no more than fourteen days, to reschedule those trips.

The subscription service passenger is subject to procedure and violation consequences as is the casual paratransit passenger. Subscription riders will automatically lose subscription service privileges if pattern of recurring or frequent "no-shows" develops and does not improve. Trips that had been scheduled will be cancelled. Requests must then be made at least one day in advance, but no more than fourteen days, to reschedule trips. A subscription passenger who loses subscription service privileges may not reapply for the subscription service again until 6 months after the service was suspended. (*see "No-Show" Definition section on page 13, and "No-Show" Policy section on page 13*)

≧ **PERSONAL CARE ATTENDANTS (PCAs) and COMPANIONS**

MMP will provide service to individual(s) accompanying the paratransit passenger on a scheduled trip. *For purposes of this section, in order to be considered as "accompanying" the eligible individual, the other individual(s) shall have the same origin and destination as the paratransit passenger.*

Accompanying individuals fall into two categories as follows:

Personal Care Attendants (PCAs)

- As defined by the ADA, a Personal Care Attendant (PCA) is someone designated or employed to help the paratransit passenger meet personal needs during the ride or at the destination.
- During the initial eligibility certification process, MMP requires that the applicant indicate whether travel will be with a Personal Care Attendant (PCA).
- To prevent abuse of this provision, the ADA provides that an individual (friend or family member) does not count as a Personal Care Attendant (PCA) unless the paratransit passenger indicated use of a PCA during the certification process and the individual is actually acting in that capacity.
- If the paratransit passenger did not indicate the use of a PCA, then any individual accompanying the passenger will be regarded as a Companion and must pay the appropriate fee.
- PCAs will ride with the paratransit passenger for free.
- Each time you schedule a trip, advise MMP staff if a PCA will be accompanying you.

Companions

- MMP will provide service to one other individual (Companion), in addition to a PCA.
- A family member or friend will be regarded as a Companion, unless the family member or friend is acting in the capacity of a Personal Care Attendant (PCA).

- Additional guests wishing to accompany the paratransit passenger will be provided service, only if space is available on the paratransit vehicle, and that transportation of the additional guests will not result in a denial of service to other ADA paratransit eligible individuals.
- If the Companion is under the age of 5, and less than thirty-six inches in height, a child's safety seat must be provided, and the child properly secured in it. Once on the paratransit vehicle, the driver will provide assistance, if necessary, to strap the safety seat to the vehicle seat. Additional children may accompany the paratransit passenger only if space is available. Children cannot be transported in strollers and two or more children are not allowed to occupy one seat. Children cannot ride on customers' laps.
- Companions will pay the same fare as the paratransit eligible individual.
- When scheduling your trip, inform MMP staff if you will be traveling with a Companion.
- Advise MMP staff if Companion will be traveling with a mobility device or service animal.

If you require greater assistance than our drivers are allowed to provide, we encourage that a PCA or Companion travel with you.

Supervision at Destination

MMP is unable to alter or modify procedures or policies in order to provide specialized services to passengers who need services beyond the minimum assistance guidelines. If a passenger cannot be left alone at a destination, or if the passenger must be under constant care or supervision, MMP may require the passenger to travel with a personal care attendant. MMP will not be responsible for passengers that cannot be left alone at their destination without care or supervision.

If a MMP passenger needing care or supervision is delivered to a destination where a caregiver is not available to assume responsibility, MMP will transport the passenger to the McAllen Central Station located at 1501 West Highway 83, Suite 110. It will be the responsibility of the family or caregiver to pick up the passenger at the McAllen Central Station upon being notified. MMP reserves the right to contact the proper protective and regulatory service in cases where appropriate care has not been provided by responsible parties.

⊇ SERVICE ANIMALS

In accordance with federal law, a service animal is defined as any animal trained to work or perform tasks for an individual with a disability. The need for a service animal must be indicated on your eligibility application.

When scheduling a trip, please inform MMP staff if a service animal will be accompanying you on the trip. Service animals ride at no additional charge, but must be properly controlled. Service animals may not use vehicle seats. Riders in charge of service animals are responsible for the behavior and hygiene needs of service animals. Service may be refused or discontinued if a service animal is seriously disruptive. Drivers are not permitted to handle service animals.

⊇ PASSENGER AND WHEELCHAIR SECUREMENT

All passengers are requested to wear seat belts at all times while being transported.

MMP will transport all wheelchair types as defined by ADA regulations and as long as they are not excessively large that could not be placed on the vehicle lift.

MMP vehicles are equipped with four point tie-down restraint systems to accommodate common wheelchairs. All wheelchair users are required to use available security restraints. It is required that wheelchairs be restrained and remain in the designated securement areas at all times while on the vehicle. Failure to cooperate with safety-related policies may result in a loss of services.

MMP will not deny transportation if we cannot safely secure or restrain the mobility device to our satisfaction. In such instances, it is strongly recommended that the rider transfer to a seat whenever possible. It is the rider's choice to transfer or remain in the mobility device.

MMP recommends, but does not require, that wheelchairs be equipped with a personal lap belt in order to prevent passenger from falling out of the wheelchair during transport. It is also recommended, but not required, that a manual wheelchair have attached footrests.

For your safety, please be sure that your wheelchair or other mobility device is properly maintained in accordance with manufacturer's specifications.

Wheelchair Lift Use

Metro McAllen Paratransit drivers are trained in providing assistance when loading and unloading passengers using the wheelchair lift. For your safety while using the lift:

- Please wait for the driver's assistance and follow instructions.
- Wheelchair brakes should be locked while on the lift.
- Wheelchair electric power must be turned off until the driver instructs the passenger to re-engage.

Ambulatory passengers who prefer to board the vehicle using the lift should ask the driver to assist them. Customers who stand on the lift must be able to stand without assistance and to hold the rails with both hands.

≧ ON TIME VEHICLES

Although MMP vehicles will usually arrive within one or two minutes of the scheduled times, sometimes the vehicles may arrive early or late due to light or heavy traffic, adverse weather or unforeseen circumstances.

MMP does not require passengers to board the vehicle if it is early; however, in the interest of providing efficient service, we encourage passengers to promptly board the bus when it arrives.

MMP vehicle will be considered on time if it arrives no more than twenty (20) minutes after the agreed upon pick up time.

If the MMP operator is more than twenty minutes late, customers may call the MMP office to get an estimated time of arrival. *Please do not call until after the twenty minutes have passed.*

The passenger may decide to decline the trip due to the anticipated late arrival of the vehicle. A declined trip by the passenger because of the vehicle's late arrival will not count against the passenger.

⊃ PASSENGER RESPONSIBILITIES

Customer Readiness

MMP provides curb-to-curb paratransit services, unless additional assistance is requested. It is important to be *ready and waiting* for your transportation at the scheduled pick-up time. MMP customers are expected to be ready to board a MMP vehicle when the vehicle arrives. When your vehicle arrives, present your MMP ID to the driver. Exact fare is required.

An operator will wait only five (5) minutes for the customer to prepare to board the vehicle. Please do not ask the driver to wait longer than the five minutes. This limited interval is to assure the timely pickup and transportation of all MMP passengers. Individuals will be allowed adequate time to complete boarding or disembarking from the vehicle.

MMP does not require customers to board the vehicle if it is early; however, in the interest of providing efficient service, we encourage customers to promptly board the bus when it arrives. If the operator arrives early, the five-minute wait time will not begin until the agreed upon pick-up time.

If the customer is not present or is not ready to board the vehicle after five (5) minutes, the operator will leave and the trip will be recorded as a "No-Show." (see "No-Show" Definition on page 13 and "No-Show" Policy on page 13)

Paratransit is not required to call the rider when the vehicle arrives or before leaving the pick-up location; riders are expected to be ready and waiting to board the vehicle upon its arrival.

Where to Wait

Passengers should be waiting at the sidewalk, or at another safe waiting area in front of, or as close as possible to, the entrance of the pick-up location, unless additional assistance has been requested. To provide assistance, drivers may not leave their vehicles unattended for a lengthy period of time, nor lose sight of the vehicle.

Operators will wait for the passenger at the curb of a public street, in front of, or as close as possible to, the designated pick-up location. The operator cannot enter the passenger's residence or pick-up location to assist riders. Alley pick-ups and drop-offs are not allowed. In case of inclement weather, curbside waiting may be modified to compensate for weather conditions.

The passenger will be dropped off at the sidewalk of the designated drop-off location; or at another waiting area next to the curb or public street, in front of, or as close as possible to the requested location, *determined by the driver* as a safe drop-off spot, unless additional assistance has been requested.

If the passenger cannot be left unattended (as a result of disability or impairment), a companion or personal care attendant is required to receive the passenger upon the vehicle's arrival at the designated drop-off location.

Fare

The driver will *not* take you to your requested destination without the required fare. Please provide the exact current fare. Drivers will not provide change nor will money be refunded in excess of the fare. If a customer pays at pick-up for the return trip also, but does not take the return trip, the money will not be refunded for the missed trip.

Deliberate fare evasion will not be tolerated. If discovered, passenger may face immediate suspension of services and/or prosecution.

There will be no charge for PCAs, but Companions must pay the same fare as the ADA passenger. *(see Personal Care Attendant (PCAs) and Companions section on page 7)*

Advance Pay Card

For your convenience, MMP has an "Advance Pay Card" available for purchase that is valid for 20 one-way rides or 10 round trips. The card is presented to the driver when boarding the vehicle. The driver hole-punches and dates the card once for each trip. Contact the MMP office at (956) 681-3535 to make arrangements for purchase.

If card is lost or stolen, please notify the MMP office immediately at (956) 681-3535.

Packages and Equipment

Carry-on packages are limited to 4 bags or packages with a combined weight of 25 pounds or less that can be carried in one trip to the paratransit vehicle. Drivers may assist with packages. Packages should not weigh more than what you can carry and hold in your lap or that can be placed under your seat. Packages must not interfere in the movement of fellow passengers during transport.

If you require more assistance than the driver may provide, we encourage that a personal care attendant travel with you.

MMP allows traveling with a respirator or portable oxygen supply.

Medical Assistance

Drivers are not trained to provide medical assistance. In case of medical emergency during transportation, the driver will contact dispatch who in turn will contact the appropriate medical emergency services.

≡ REVISING A RESERVATION

If your plans change and you need to revise your trip reservation, it is very important to notify MMP as soon as possible. To change your reservation, such as time, origin or destination, please call the MMP office at (956) 681-3535 between 6:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. at least the day before the agreed pick-up date.

Drivers are not authorized to make changes in trip times or pick-up or drop-off locations. All requests for changes must be made through the MMP office.

Changes made to scheduled trips on the same day constitute "same day scheduling" and may not be possible to accommodate. Since pick-up and drop-off locations are taken into consideration when trips are scheduled, destination changes made on the same day as the scheduled trip will not be accepted. MMP reserves the right to accept or deny other same day change requests to scheduled trips depending on several factors, such as available time and trip load. Not being able to accommodate same day scheduling changes will not be considered a service denial. *(see Same Day Scheduling section on page 6)*

Please plan your rides carefully. Do not schedule a ride simply to reserve space on a vehicle for possible use, and then cancel or alter the ride. Be considerate of other passengers needing transportation.

≧ **CANCELLING A RESERVATION**

The intent of the next three sections is to encourage customers to only schedule trips they need and to properly use MMP services.

Paratransit service is a vital community resource and has limited public funding to support it. Cancellations are a major contributor to service costs and system inefficiency. A ride that is cancelled too late to schedule another trip in its place results in wasted expense and capacity that goes unused. Passengers can help by making sure they only schedule rides they plan to take.

If cancelling a reservation, please be considerate of others who would like to use that time and call at least the day prior to your scheduled trip. If absolutely necessary, call to cancel at least two hours before your scheduled trip. Please note that all calls are answered by the answering machine on Sunday.

Cancellations made less than two hours in advance will be recorded as a “*No-Show*.” Failure to cancel with enough advance notice so that rides can be reassigned impacts the system and can lead to suspension of services.

MMP depends on efficient scheduling in order to deliver the maximum number of rides to our passengers with the resources that are available. When a passenger schedules a trip and then cancels without proper notice, other passengers are inconvenienced and scheduling problems occur for MMP. Remember every trip that is scheduled, but then cancelled, equals one less ride available for another passenger.

≧ **“NO-SHOW” and “LATE CANCELLATION” POLICY**

It is very important that a passenger notify MMP as soon as it is known that a scheduled ride will not be needed. Failing to notify MMP that a scheduled trip will not be used causes the vehicle to be dispatched unnecessarily. For MMP to provide on-time performance, the number of “No-Shows” and “Late Cancellations” must be kept to a minimum. Developing a pattern or practice of missing an excessive number of scheduled trips (“No-Show”) and/or failing to cancel trips in a timely manner (“Late Cancellation”) may lead to suspension of paratransit service.

Definitions

A “*No-Show*” is defined as:

- Failure to appear to board the vehicle within the 5-minute wait time during the 20-minute ready-time window.

The driver is not obligated to go back for you immediately if your initial pick-up is a “No-Show.” Only if the other passengers on the day’s schedule will not be inconvenienced will another trip be “added-on” for you at a later time in the day (see Same-Day Scheduling section on page 6). If we “add-on” another pick-up for you, the “No-Show” may still be counted as a penalty point.

We will not strand you away from home if your return trip is a "No-Show," but the driver may not be able to immediately go back to pick you up. You may have to wait until a convenient time becomes available for your return trip. Even if we provide the return trip, the "No-Show" may still be considered as a penalty point.

Subsequent trips will remain on the schedule for passengers who requested a round trip or multiple trips but are a "No-Show" at the initial pick-up. Passenger must call MMP office to cancel remaining trips.

A "Late Cancellation" is defined as:

- A trip cancellation received within two hours of your scheduled trip.
- Cancelling with the driver after the vehicle has arrived.
- Calling the MMP office to cancel after the vehicle has arrived during the 20-minute ready-time window.

Trips missed due to MMP error such as those listed below will not count as penalty points against passenger:

- Trips placed on the schedule by mistake
- Pickups scheduled at the wrong location
- Drivers arriving and departing before 20-minute ready-time window begins
- Drivers arriving after the end of the 20-minute ready-time window (late)
- Drivers departing without waiting the required 5-minutes for passenger to appear

A trip missed due to medical emergency, family emergency, sudden illness, or change in condition which prevents the passenger from notifying MMP that the scheduled trip cannot be taken will not count as a penalty point against passenger.

Frequency

Developing a pattern or practice of missing an excessive number of scheduled trips ("No-Show") and/or failing to cancel trips in a timely manner ("Late Cancellation") may lead to suspension of paratransit service. All trips are reviewed and verified before being counted toward suspension. Trips missed due to circumstances beyond passenger's control or MMP error are not used for determining pattern or practice.

Each verified "No-Show" or "Late Cancellation" as defined on page 13 counts as one (1) penalty point.

A passenger will be subject to suspension only if both of the following conditions are met:

- ❖ Accumulate seven (7) penalty points in a calendar month
- ❖ "No-showed" or "late cancelled" at least 30% of trips scheduled within the calendar month

MMP will notify passenger by telephone once three (3) penalty points are accumulated in a calendar month. The passenger will be advised of the conditions which may lead to suspension. The phone call will include dates the verified "No-Shows" and "Late Cancellations" occurred.

The first violation in a calendar year will not result in suspension, but the passenger will be notified by letter of the dates the verified "No-Shows" and "Late Cancellations" occurred.

The second violation in a calendar year results in a suspension of 3 days, and the third violation will result in suspension of service for 7 days. The fourth violation in a calendar year will result in suspension for 14 days. The fifth and any subsequent suspensions will be for 30 days.

Suspension of service will begin the second Monday after the date the notice of suspension and of the appeals process was sent to the passenger.

Any person who is suspended from ADA paratransit services has the right to appeal in writing within one day prior to when the suspension period is to begin. (see Appeals section on page 16)

The subscription service passenger is subject to procedure and violation consequences as the casual paratransit passenger. The subscription passenger will lose subscription service privileges after the third violation in a calendar year. Trips that had been scheduled will be cancelled. Requests must then be made at least one day in advance, but no more than fourteen days, to reschedule trips. A subscription passenger who loses subscription service privileges may not reapply for the subscription service again until 6 months after the service was suspended. (see Subscription Services section on page 6)

⊇ **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PASSENGERS**

Riders are asked to follow these recommendations while aboard the paratransit vehicle to ensure the safety and comfort of all passengers and the driver:

- Cooperate with the driver at all times and follow instructions.
- Remain seated once on board.
- Wear seat belt at all times during transport.
- Carry medication and a sufficient supply of oxygen, in case trip is delayed.
- Limit unnecessary conversation with driver while the vehicle is in motion.
- Do not disclose personal information to the driver.
- Avoid distracting the driver.
- Refrain from eating or drinking, with the exception of those persons who have a medical need.
- Hold to proper standards of personal hygiene.
- Perfumes and aftershaves may trigger allergic reactions resulting in distress for other passengers. Please consider not using these items before boarding the paratransit vehicles.
- Radios, cassette tape players, compact disc players or other sound generating equipment may be played aboard the vehicles only when used with headphones.

⊇ **RULES OF CONDUCT FOR PASSENGERS**

These rules of conduct are significant in nature and must be followed to provide a safe secure ride for ALL passengers. Violations of these rules are subject to penalty, and/or immediate suspension.

- Absolutely no physical abuse of another rider or the operator. Violation will result in immediate suspension of service and/or prosecution.

- Deliberate fare evasion will not be tolerated. Passenger will face immediate suspension of services and/or prosecution.
- Absolutely no riding under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs. Violation will result in immediate refusal of service.
- No abusive or threatening language or actions.
- Profanity will not be tolerated.
- Refusing proper securement of a wheelchair is not allowed.
- Disruptive behavior, such as refusing to exit a vehicle, will not be tolerated.
- Inappropriate behavior toward or derogatory comments about other passengers or the driver are unacceptable.
- Engaging in any behavior having a racist or sexual connotation with the driver or other passengers is unacceptable.
- No smoking while on board.
- No littering in or from the paratransit vehicle.
- No discharge of bodily fluids or open wounds.
- No tampering with any vehicle equipment while on board.
- No firearms, explosive devices, knives, or other dangerous weapons will be allowed.

Riders who violate the RULES OF CONDUCT FOR PASSENGERS are subject to penalties as follows:

- One or more violations of the rules of conduct by passenger during any calendar month may result in suspension from MMP service for a period of seven days.
- One or more violations of the rules of conduct by passenger during any subsequent calendar month may result in suspension from MMP service for a period of fifteen days.
- One or more violations of the rules of conduct by passenger during any third calendar month may result in suspension from MMP service for a period of 30 days and loss of subscription service, if applicable.

Riders who engage in physical abuse or cause physical injury to another rider or the driver are subject to immediate and permanent suspension, and possible criminal prosecution.

⊇ **REFUSAL OF SERVICE**

Violent, seriously disruptive or illegal conduct by MMP customers or persons associated with MMP customers, during the course of MMP activity, is prohibited. MMP will refuse to provide service to an individual if that individual engages in violent, seriously disruptive, or illegal conduct. However, MMP will not refuse to provide service to an individual solely because the individual's disability results in appearance or involuntary behavior that may offend, annoy, or inconvenience employees of MMP or other persons.

⊇ **SUSPENDED SERVICE**

Suspended service means that MMP will not accept new requests, and will cancel any reservations that had been made beyond the date of suspension. The suspension period will be scheduled in advance to allow customers adequate time to make other arrangements and to appeal the suspension. In the letter of notification, a full written explanation of the suspension and appeals process will be provided.

⊃ **APPEALS**

MMP applicants or customers have the opportunity to appeal any decision made by MMP whether concerning their initial eligibility for MMP service, eligibility status, recertification denial, or suspension of services for "No-Show" or rules of conduct violations.

Application/Recertification Appeals Process

Any person who is determined to be ineligible for ADA paratransit services will be allowed to appeal within 60 days, to:

MMP Eligibility Appeal
1501 West Hwy 83, Suite 110
McAllen, TX 78501

- The time limit for appeals will be based on the date of receipt of the letter stating the reasons for a finding of ineligibility.
- The individual should request an appeal by stating that the decision not to certify/recertify was in error. Immediately upon receipt of such an appeal, MMP management will set a date for the hearing of the appeal.
- The date for the hearing of the appeal will be no later than twenty-one (21) days after the date of the letter requesting the appeal.
- MMP will offer the individual who was denied eligibility the opportunity to present his/her case and receive and enter into the record every relevant piece of evidence and/or testimony from any person who can support him/her.
- Appeals will be heard by the Appeals Committee of MMP, composed of the Transit Director, Transit Manager, and Transit Operations Supervisor. The persons who handle the appeal will be different than the persons who made the initial determination of eligibility/ineligibility.
- In all cases, determinations will be made in writing and full documentation will be retained.
- MMP will make a final determination on the appeal within thirty (30) days of the appeals hearing.
- If after 30 days there has been no decision on the appeal, the individual shall receive eligibility and may use paratransit services until the resolution of the appeal.

Suspension Appeals Process

Any person who is suspended from ADA paratransit services will be allowed to appeal in writing within one day prior to the suspension period is to begin. A request for an appeal should be made to:

MMP Suspension Appeal
1501 West Hwy 83, Suite 110
McAllen, TX 78501

- The time limit for appeals will be based on the date of receipt of the letter stating the reasons for the pending suspension of services.
- The individual should request an appeal by stating that the disciplinary action was in error. Immediately upon receipt of such an appeal, MMP management will set a date for the hearing of the appeal.

- The date for the hearing of the appeal will be no later than twenty-one (21) days after the date of the letter requesting the appeal.
- MMP will offer the individual who is to be disciplined the opportunity to present his/her case and receive and enter into the record every relevant piece of evidence and/or testimony from any person who can support him/her.
- Appeals will be heard by MMP staff.
- In all cases, determinations will be made in writing and full documentation will be retained.
- MMP will make a final determination on the appeal within thirty (30) days of the appeals hearing.
- Individuals who are pending suspension of services, except for those who engaged in physical abuse or caused physical injury to another passenger or the driver, will continue to receive paratransit services until the final determination regarding the suspension is made.
- If an individual does not appeal within the allotted time, MMP may make a default finding and impose the proposed sanctions. Suspension of service will begin 15 days after the date the notice of suspension was sent to the passenger.

⊃ **CHANGE OF ADDRESS**

The MMP office must be notified of any changes that occur in address, phone number or contact information. After three attempts to contact the customer by mail without a response, the customer's name will be placed on the inactive list, and no trip requests will be accepted, until current address is verified. MMP may request proof of permanent address.

⊃ **DRIVERS' RESPONSIBILITIES**

Drivers must:

- Provide safe and timely transportation for all passengers. The driver and MMP staff will decide the safest, most efficient route to designated locations for each passenger.
- Abide by all Texas Motor Vehicle Laws, and the City of McAllen Code of Ordinances.
- Treat passengers with the utmost courtesy and respect.
- Assist passengers to board and exit vehicles.
- Provide assistance to passengers using the wheelchair lift to board or exit the paratransit vehicle.
- Ensure that mobility devices are properly secured.
- Keep to the assigned schedule for the convenience of all riders.
- For safety reasons, maintain "line-of-sight" of vehicle at all times.
- Adhere to the same standards of personal hygiene as those required of riders.
- Be in proper uniform, and display a proper City of McAllen ID badge.
- Keep in contact by 2-way radio with MMP office at all times.
- Report any misuse of the paratransit service or abuse of this policy to the MMP Coordinator.

Drivers are NOT permitted to:

- Converse with passengers while driving.
- Hold discussions of a personal nature with passenger.
- Disclose information about other passengers or MMP staff members.
- Relate work-associated information or incidents to passengers.

- Make any changes to scheduled trips. Any deviation in the day's schedule may inconvenience other passengers. Drivers will not schedule another trip for you. All changes to the schedule or trips requests must be made with MMP office staff.
- Enter the residence of a passenger for any reason.
- Perform any personal care assistance for any rider, such as assisting with dressing or furnishing medicine or oxygen.
- Lift or carry a passenger.
- Carry packages or baggage for the passenger.
- Handle service animals.
- Wait at a stop for a passenger to conduct business.
- Perform errands for passengers, such as picking up prescriptions or groceries.
- Use a personal cell phone while driving.
- Play loud music while driving.
- Wear headphones while on duty.
- Smoke in the vehicle.
- Eat in the vehicle.
- Accept tips or any other gratuity, or gifts of any kind, including food or drink.

⊇ **OBSERVED HOLIDAYS**

MMP does not provide paratransit service on the following holidays:
Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day, New Year's Day, Easter Sunday

⊇ **LOST AND FOUND**

Passengers are responsible for all personal items. Passengers may contact MMP at (956) 681-3535 to ask about any personal items that may have been left on a paratransit vehicle. MMP will hold personal items for 30 days prior to disposal.

⊇ **COMPLIMENTS, SUGGESTIONS, COMPLAINTS, CONCERNS**

Our goal is to consistently provide courteous high quality service for all who use MMP. If any staff member has been particularly helpful, or has provided special assistance or exceptional customer service, contact MMP at (956) 681-3535, so a notice of commendation can be issued and placed in the employee's personnel file. Suggestions how to improve our service are always welcome.

Please call the MMP office at (956) 681-3535 regarding any questions or concerns that you may have pertaining to Metro McAllen Paratransit services. Complaints may be filed either by telephone or in writing. If filing a complaint, provide us with as much information as possible, such as dates and times, so that we may research the matter, and reach a resolution.

⊇ **COMPLIANCE**

The policy and guidelines defined in this MMP Handbook will be strictly enforced. We ask for your cooperation by following the procedures outlined in this handbook to ensure the most efficient transportation service possible for you and all Metro McAllen Paratransit participants.

≡ **CONTACT INFORMATION**

Metro McAllen Paratransit
McAllen Central Station
1501 West Highway 83, Suite 110
McAllen, Texas 78501
(956) 681-3535

The City of McAllen, Metro McAllen, and Metro McAllen Paratransit do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, religion, political affiliation or disability in access to its transportation services or programs.