



2017

Reasonable Modifications for Persons with Disabilities for Fixed Route & Paratransit Services

Reasonable Modifications

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Winston-Salem Transit Authority

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Introduction

Civil Rights Protections

The Winston-Salem Transit Authority (WSTA) is committed to operating transportation programs and services without regard to disability, race, color or national origin, in accordance with applicable federal statutes: Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act and Title VI of the Civil Rights Act.

Requests for Reasonable Modifications of Policies and Procedures

WSTA is committed to ensuring a reliable, accessible experience for all customers. If, due to a disability, you are not able to fully utilize WSTA's programs and services (including (describe services provided, e.g., demand response, subscription) because of a policy or procedure that WSTA has established, you may submit a request for a modification of the policy or procedure. To request a modification, complete a Request for Modification of Policy/Procedure Form, available online at www.wstransit.com or by calling Customer Service at 336.727.2000 and TTY NC Relay at 1.800.735.8262. All requests for reasonable modifications to WSTA's policies or procedures will be considered on an individual basis. Please note that WSTA may be unable to accommodate requests for modifications which would: (1) result in a fundamental alteration to the nature of the service; (2) create a direct threat to the health or safety of others, and; (3) create an undue financial or administrative burden. Requests for modifications might also not be granted if WSTA determines that the service can be fully utilized without the requested change. In the event that a barrier to access exists, but the requested modification cannot be granted, WSTA will, to the maximum extent possible, assist in determining other possible actions that might be taken to provide access to its programs and services.

Reasonable Modification of Policies and Procedures

Individuals with disabilities may ask WSTA to modify a policy or procedure if they feel the policy or procedure is discriminatory or prevents them from fully utilizing WSTA's services. WSTA will review these requests and will modify policies unless it finds that:

- The person can fully utilize the service without the requested modification (i.e., it is for convenience only).
- The change would create a direct threat to the safety of others.

- The change would fundamentally alter the nature of the service.
- The change would cause an undue financial or administrative burden.

WSTA encourages passengers to request such modifications in advance when possible. To request a modification of a policy or procedure in advance, complete the Request for Modification of Policy/Procedure Form, ([provide link that would take reader directly to form](#)) which is available online www.wstransit.com or by calling Customer Service at 336.727.2000 and TTY NC Relay at 1.800.735.8262.

If WSTA denies a request, it will consider other reasonable actions or approaches that might be able to meet the passenger's needs.

WSTA has designated its ADA Office to coordinate the acceptance and review of requests for reasonable modifications of policies. This policy will be communicated to the public on the WSTA website and in WSTA's public information.

The following are examples offered as guidance when making reasonable modification determinations.

Snow and Ice

Except in extreme conditions that rise to the level of a direct threat to the operator and others, a passenger's request for a WSTA operator to walk over a pathway that has not been cleared of snow and ice should be granted so that the operator can help the passenger with a disability navigate the pathway. If snow or icy conditions at a stop make it difficult or impossible for the passenger with a disability to get to a lift or for the lift to deploy, the driver should move the bus to a cleared area for boarding; if such is available within reasonable proximity to the stop.

Multiple Entrances

For pickup and drop off locations with multiple entrances, a Trans-AID passenger's request to be picked up at home; but not at the front door, should be granted as long as the requested pickup location does not pose a threat. In the case of frequently visited public places with multiple entrances (schools, malls, employment centers, hospitals, airports), the Trans-AID operator should pick up and drop off the passenger at the entrance requested by the passenger; rather than meet them in a location that has been pre-determined by WSTA assuming that doing so does not involve a direct threat.

Private Property

When accessing private property, even if it requires authorization, WSTA will make every reasonable effort to gain access to such property. However, the operator is not required to violate the law or lawful access restrictions to meet the passenger's request. A public or private entity that unreasonably denies access to a WSTA vehicle may be subject to a complaint to the U.S. Department of Justice and U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development for discriminating against services for persons with disabilities.

Obstructions

A passenger's request for an operator to position the vehicle to avoid obstructions to the passenger's ability to enter or leave the vehicle at a designated location (such as parked cars, snow banks, and construction) should be granted so long as positioning the vehicle to avoid the obstruction does not pose a direct threat. To be granted, such a request should result in the vehicle stopping in close proximity to the designated stop location. WSTA is not required to pick up passengers with disabilities at non-designated locations.

Fares

A passenger's request to handle their fare media when the passenger with a disability cannot pay the fare by the generally established means should be granted in the situation where a passenger cannot reach or insert a fare into the fare box. WSTA personnel are not required to reach into pockets or backpacks in order to extract the fare media.

Eating and Drinking

If a passenger with diabetes or another medical condition requests to eat or drink aboard a vehicle or in a transit facility in order to avoid adverse health consequences, the request should be granted; even though WSTA has a policy that prohibits eating or drinking on vehicles. An example is a person with diabetes who needs to consume a small amount of juice in a closed container or a candy bar in order to maintain blood sugar levels.

Medications

A passenger's request to take medication while aboard a WSTA vehicle or in a transit facility, should be granted. An example would be allowing individuals to administer insulin injections and conduct finger stick blood glucose readings. WSTA staff will not provide medical assistance as this would be a fundamental alteration of their function.

Boarding Separately from Wheelchair

A passenger who utilizes a wheelchair requests to board a WSTA vehicle separately from his/her device when the occupied weight of the device exceeds the design limit of the vehicle lift will generally be granted.

Dedicated vehicles or special equipment in a vehicle

A WSTA passenger's request for special equipment (such as installation of specific hand rails or a front seat in a vehicle for the passenger to avoid nausea or back pain) can be denied so long as the requested equipment is not required by the Americans with Disabilities Act or the USDOT's rules. Likewise, a request for a dedicated vehicle can be denied. The USDOT views meeting the requests for a dedicated vehicle as involving fundamental alterations of WSTA's services.

Exclusive or Reduced Capacity

A passenger's request for an exclusive Trans-AID trip may be denied as a fundamental alteration of WSTA's services. Trans-AID is a shared-ride service.

Outside the Service Area of Operating Hours

A passenger's request for service may be denied when honoring the request would require travel outside of WSTA's service area or to operate outside its operating hours. This request is not a reasonable modification because it would constitute a fundamental alteration of WSTA's service.

Personal Care Attendants (PCA's)

While PCA's may travel with a passenger with a disability, WSTA is not required to provide a personal care attendant or personal care attendant services to meet the needs of passengers with disabilities. For example, a passenger's request for WSTA's operators to remain with the passenger who; due to his/her disability cannot be left alone without an attendant upon reaching his/her destination, may be denied.

Intermediate Stops

USDOT views granting a WSTA passenger's request for an operator to make an intermediate stop where the driver would be required to wait, as optional. For example, a passenger with a disability arranges to be picked up at a medical facility and dropped off at home. On the way, the passenger with a disability wishes to stop by a pharmacy and requests the operator to park outside of the pharmacy, wait for the passenger to return, and then continue the ride home. While this can be a

very useful service for the passenger, and in some cases can save WSTA time and money, such a stop in the context of a shared ride system is not required. Since Trans-AID is by nature a shared ride system, requests that could disrupt schedules and inconvenience other passengers could rise to the level of fundamental alteration.

Payment

A passenger's request for the operator to provide the transportation service when the passenger with a disability cannot or refuses to pay the fare may be denied; with approval from dispatch. Since WSTA charges payment to ride, to provide a free service would constitute a fundamental alteration of WSTA's services.

Caring for Service Animals

A passenger's request for the operator to take charge of a service animal may be denied. Caring for a service animal is the responsibility of the passenger or PCA.

Opening Building Doors

For Paratransit services, a passenger's request for the operator to open an exterior entry door to a building to provide and/or alighting assistance to a passenger with a disability should generally be granted as long as providing the assistance would not pose a direct threat or leave the vehicle unattended or out of visual observation for a lengthy period of time. A request for "***door to door***" service generally would need to be granted because it could rise to the level of a fundamental alteration.

Exposing Vehicles to Hazards

If the passenger requests that a vehicle follow a path to a pickup or drop off point that would expose the vehicle and its occupants to hazards; such as running off the road, getting stuck, striking overhead objects, or reversing the vehicle down a narrow alley, the request can be denied as creating a direct threat.

Hard to Maneuver Stops

A passenger may request that a Trans-AID vehicle navigate to a pickup or drop-off point to which it is difficult to maneuver a vehicle. A passenger's request to be picked up in a location that is difficult, but not impossible or impractical to access, should generally be granted as long as picking up the passenger does not expose the vehicle to hazards that pose a direct threat.

Specific Drivers

A passenger's request for a specific operator may be denied. Having a specific operator is not necessary to afford the passenger the service provided by WSTA.

Luggage and Packages

A passenger's request for an operator to assist with luggage or packages may be denied (with dispatch approval) in those instances where it is not the normal policy/practice or is outside the normal policy/practice to assist with luggage or packages.

Request to Avoid Specific Passengers

A Trans-AID passenger's request not to ride with certain passengers may be denied. Trans-AID is a shared-ride service. As a result, one passenger may need to share the vehicle with people he or she would rather not.

Navigating on an Incline or Around Obstacles

A Trans-AID passenger's request for an operator to help him/her navigate an incline (such as a driveway or sidewalk) with the passenger's mobility device should generally be granted. Assistance in traveling a difficult sidewalk (such as one where tree roots have made the sidewalk impossible for a wheelchair) should generally be granted; as should assistance around the obstacles between the vehicle and a door to a passenger's home or destination. These modifications would be granted subject to the provision that such assistance would not cause a direct threat or leave the vehicle unattended out of visual observation for a long period of time.

Extreme Weather Assistance

A Trans-AID passenger's request to be assisted from his/her door to a vehicle during extreme weather conditions should generally be granted so long as the operator leaving the vehicle to assist would not pose a direct threat or leave the vehicle unattended or out of visual observation for a long period of time. For example, in extreme weather a person who is blind or visually impaired or an older adult may have difficulty safely moving to and from a building.

Unattended Passengers

Where a passenger's request for assistance means that the operator will need to leave passengers aboard a vehicle unattended, Trans-AID should generally grant the request; as long as accommodating the request does not involve direct threats to the health and safety of the passengers. It is important to keep in mind that just as

an operator is not required to act as a Personal Care Attendant (PCA) for a passenger making a request for assistance, an operator is not intended to act as a PCA for other passengers in the vehicle; such that he/she must remain in their physical presence at all times.

Need for Return Trip Assistance

A passenger with a disability may need assistance for a return trip when he/she did not need the assistance on the initial trip. For example, a dialysis patient may have no problem waiting at the curb for a ride to go to the dialysis center, but may require assistance to the door on his/her return because of their condition. To the extent that this need is predictable it should be handled in advance; either as part of the eligibility process or Trans-AID's reservation process. If the need arises unexpectedly, then it would need to be handled on an as needed basis. Trans-AID should generally provide such assistance, unless doing so would create a direct threat or leave the vehicle unattended or out of visual observation for lengthy period of time.

Notification of Arrival Calls

A passenger's request for a telephone call 5 minutes (or another reasonable interval) in advance or at a time of vehicle arrival generally should be granted. As a matter of courtesy, such calls are encouraged as a good customer service model and can prevent "no-shows." In situations where automated systems are not available and Trans-AID operators continue to rely on hand-held communication devices (MDT's and radios), operators should comply with any State or Federal laws related to distracted driving.

Hand Carrying

Except in emergency situations, a passenger's request for an operator to lift the passenger out of his/her mobility device should generally be denied because of the safety, dignity, and privacy issues implicated by hand carrying a passenger. Hand carrying a passenger is also considered a PCA service; which is outside the scope of the operators' duties; hence a fundamental alteration.