POlicies and Procedures of TPCG’S Paratransit Service

Service Area
Regulations require complementary paratransit service extend 3/4 mile on either side of each fixed route service. Terrebonne Parish operates 4 fixed transit routes in the Houma Urban area and 1 fixed route in the City of Thibodaux area. Only those ADA certified individuals who begin and end their trips within the service area are eligible for ADA paratransit service.

Hours and Days of Service
The TPCG Paratransit service is designed to complement the fixed bus routes; therefore, it operates on the same days, during the same hours, in the same areas, as the fixed route bus service. Generally, paratransit service is available between 6:00 AM to 5:30 PM, weekdays, and 8:15 AM to 4:00 PM, weekends, same as the fixed route services. Origins and destinations will not be scheduled in areas, and at times, where the fixed route services have stopped, or not yet begun, for the day.

TPCG Paratransit Identification Card
The TPCG Transit system will issue a Paratransit Eligibility Identification Card after an individual is certified as an eligible paratransit rider. The paratransit eligible rider must carry the identification card whenever riding a paratransit vehicle. The card will generally be honored by other paratransit systems in the United States.

The card will include the name, address, and phone number of the rider; identification number of the rider; and approved signature; TPCG Public Transit System’s phone number; expiration date of the individual’s eligibility, conditions or limitations on eligibility; and the use of a personal care attendant (PCA), if any.

Fares for Paratransit Riders
The fare for paratransit service is twice the published fare for regular (fixed route) bus service. The present paratransit fare is $2.00 for each one-way trip per zone corresponding to fixed route. For instance if a paratransit trip begins in the Grand Caillou Loop zone and ends in the North Bayou Route zone, the cost for the paratransit trip would be $4.00. Paratransit trips that begin and end in the same zone would cost $2.00. There is no DayPass available for paratransit service passengers; however, we do offer a pre-paid $20 value card. Paratransit riders must have the exact fare ready before boarding the bus. Failure to have the exact fare will result in the paratransit rider not being able to ride and will be considered a “no show”.

There is no charge for a personal care attendant traveling with a paratransit rider. Guests and visitors are charged the same fare as locally certified riders.
Visiting Policy
TPCG will honor certifications from other transportation systems. An individual who resides in another transit certification area, that requests service must present proof of his or her certification. A letter stating eligibility is acceptable. Documentation must include the name of the eligible visitor, the name of the certifying transit provider and telephone number of the provider’s paratransit coordinator, and expiration date, if any, and conditions or limitations on eligibility. If the individual has indicated a need or use of a personal care attendant, this must be noted.

If the visitor does not have certification but claims that he/she is ADA paratransit eligible, the TPCG Transit Manager will request proof of permanent residency and medical documentation. Without documentation, the TPCG Transit Manager will assume that the individual is eligible and allow him/her to ride the paratransit service for a period of 21 days. The person will be required to make a request for ADA paratransit eligibility certification if he/she plans to use the paratransit service for longer than 21 days. The individual will be allowed to ride during the period when the certification is being processed, provided that the period does not exceed the 21-day limit.

Next Day Service
The paratransit service does not provide same-day service. The further in advance you schedule your trip, the more likely we will be able to schedule the exact pickup times you want. Riders are encouraged to call in trip requests between the hours of 8:00AM and 5:00PM at least one workday before the day you desire to use the service; however, trip requests may be scheduled up to thirty days in advance.

Requests for next-day service cannot be made on Sundays and Holidays. However, by leaving a message requesting your pickup time and trip origin and a call back number on the recording device which we’ll receive your call, your trip can be schedule for the next day. A paratransit representative will return your call when the office reopens, to confirm your booking and pickup time at least one-hour before your scheduled pickup time.

Please be aware those pickup times, especially pickup times for next-day service requests may be scheduled up to one hour before or after the time requested, as other riders may already have service scheduled, and all trips are scheduled on a first come, first served basis.

Trip Purpose
Requests for all types of trip purposes will be accepted and handled on an equal basis. There are no restrictions on trip purpose. All trips including
medical trips, work trips, and recreational trips are handled on a first-come basis.

**Subscription Service**
Subscription service is the practice of calling in one time to schedule multiple identical trips over an extended period of time. For example, a person might call once a month to schedule routine trips to work or to a medical clinic. Call-in service is when a rider calls every time he/she requires paratransit service for a single trip.

Subscription service is permitted as long as it does not exceed 50% of the trips available at any given time of the day, unless there is excess non-subscription capacity.

**Driver Assistance Provided (Reasonable Modifications)**
TPCG paratransit service mode provides curb-to-curb service; however, we will provide assistance to those passengers who need assistance beyond the curb unless that assistance will result in a fundamental alteration or direct threat. The TPCG paratransit driver may accompany ambulatory riders from the vehicle as far as the first door of the destination. The driver may assist riders who are wheelchair users to the door only if there is a ramp. If a barrier such as steps is present, the driver may assist the wheelchair user from the van to the steps or other barrier.

The TPCG driver may provide assistance; however, the driver’s vehicle must remain visible to the driver at all times while the driver is providing such assistance. If the paratransit rider needs further assistance, the paratransit rider must make arrangements to provide for their needs on their own.

The TPCG paratransit driver will help load and unload the bags from the curb to TPCG paratransit vehicle only. TPCG drivers will not go into a store, office, building, or into a rider’s home. If assistance is required to move the rider’s possessions from the curb to the door of the rider’s destination, the rider must arrange for such assistance independently. TPCG drivers will not be required to lift bags or other objects weighing more 25 (twenty-five) pounds.

TPCG assumes no responsibility for any items lost or damaged as a result of being loaded or carried on a TPCG paratransit bus.

**Rider and TPCG Vehicle Wait Times**
Riders should be prepared for pickup fifteen (15) minutes prior to the scheduled time in the event the bus is early. After the bus arrives, the driver will wait up to five (5) minutes past the scheduled pickup time for the passenger to show up, and then leave. The driver will not telephone, knock on
a door, or search for the rider upon arrival. It is the rider’s responsibility to meet the bus, or make their presence known.

Capacity Constraints
Terrebonne Parish will make every effort to provide timely pick-ups, to serve all trip requests, and to avoid excessively long trips.

No-shows
“No-shows” occur when eligible riders miss a scheduled appointment without a reason that is beyond their control. “No-shows” reduce the number of trips that can be served and are very costly to the system.

A rider may be suspended for two weeks if the rider has three (3) “no-shows” within a three (3) consecutive month period.

After each “no-show”, the rider shall be sent a notice informing the rider that a trip was missed and the date and time of the trip. The notice will warn that continuing “no-shows” may result in suspension of service. The notice will offer an informal opportunity for riders to produce evidence, or explain how the missed trips were for reasons that were “beyond their control”. If riders are able to produce such evidence, or satisfactorily explain the reason the “no-show” was beyond their control, the “no-show” for that date shall be removed from their record.

Trip Cancellations
Riders shall be allowed to cancel a previously scheduled trip on any working day prior to the day of service by calling the transit office during office hours. The cancellation of trips after normal office hours, on the prior day if not a working day, or on the date of service shall be allowed to the extent that the bus has not yet been dispatched for the trip. Trips that are cancelled while the bus is traveling to the pickup point shall be considered a “no show”, even if the rider tries to cancel the trip before the bus actually arrives to the pickup location. This may be more than an hour before the pickup time in some instances.

Restrictions on Rider Behavior / Personal Belongings
Profanity or abusive conduct will not be permitted. Weapons will not be allowed on TPCG vehicles. Tape/radio/Compact Disk players must be equipped with earphones to be used on TPCG transit system vehicles. Eating, drinking and smoking will not be allowed on TPCG transit system vehicles.

- Depending upon available space, up to four (4) bags of groceries or other articles may be carried with a paratransit rider.
Companions and Guests
Riders who are ADA paratransit eligible will be allowed to travel with at least one companion, such as a family member. The fare for the companion will be the same as for the ADA paratransit rider. Additional guests accompanying the rider will be allowed on a space available basis only.

Personal Care Attendant (PCA)
A personal care attendant may be a friend, family member or a paid employee of an ADA paratransit eligible person. The personal care attendant serves as a “mobility aid” to the paratransit rider. The paratransit rider or the rider’s physician should indicate a need for a personal care attendant at the time of eligibility certification. No fare is required for the personal care attendant. A companion does not count as a personal care attendant unless the paratransit rider individual makes use of a personal care attendant regularly, and the PCA is someone whose services are required by the rider.

Lift and Securement / Seat belt Use
Riders are required to use seat belts and wheelchairs must be secured. Refusal to use seat belts or the securement system will result in the suspension of services. However, if a mobility device cannot be secured by the TPCG securement system, services will not be suspended.

Other Mobility Aids and Life Support Equipment
ADA paratransit riders may travel with service animals trained to assist them. Service animals include guide dogs used by persons with vision or hearing impairments, and dogs and other animals that provide aid to persons with mobility impairments. The rider must notify the dispatcher that he/she is traveling with a service animal when he/she schedules a trip.

Persons may also travel with respirators, portable oxygen or other life support equipment, provided that the equipment does not violate rules concerning the transportation of hazardous materials.

Refusal of Service
Service will be refused to riders who engage in violent, disruptive, or illegal conduct. Riders who refuse to comply may be returned to their trip origin, or may be immediately removed from the vehicle by law enforcement officers at any point in the trip.

Suspension of Service
If a rider violates a TPCG Transit Division policy that requires suspension of service, the rider will receive an initial notification in writing within ten (10) working days of the incident. The initial notice will describe the violation and the proposed suspension period. The individual will be given an opportunity
to be heard by the transit administrator and to present information and arguments.

If the individual does not respond to the notice and make arrangements for a hearing with the transit manager within 10 working days after receipt of the notice, TPCG Transit Division will make a default finding and impose the suspension proposed in the initial notification.

After a suspension of service is imposed, a final determination letter will be sent to the individual. The individual may then file an administrative appeal, which will stay the suspension until the appeal is heard. The individual has up to 60 days after the final determination letter is received to file an appeal.

**Administrative Appeal Process for Determination of Non-Eligibility**

The TPCG Public Transit Administrator will notify persons who are denied ADA paratransit eligibility in writing of the reasons for the denial and the procedures which can be utilized to appeal the decision. The individual who wishes to contest the decision of non-eligibility has sixty (60) days to make a written appeal with the Terrebonne Parish Transit Manager.

The individual making the appeal has the right to be heard in person and may be represented by an individual of his or her choice. The TPCG Transit Manager will make a complete investigation of the reason to deny eligibility and will notify the individual in writing of the basis of the determination within ten (10) days of the receipt of the appeal. The written notification will include the procedures which may be utilized to appeal the decision.

The individual may appeal the TPCG Transit Manager’s decision to the Terrebonne Parish Transportation Advisory Board. The individual must send a copy of the decision of non-eligibility along with the written findings of the TPCG Transit Manager to the Chairperson of the Terrebonne Parish Transportation Advisory Board within ten (10) days. The Terrebonne Parish Transportation Advisory Board will investigate the case and submit its decision to the TPCG Transit Manager for consideration. Within ten (10) days of the receipt of the Board’s decision, the Terrebonne Parish Transit Manager will notify the individual in writing of the decision reached.

If the individual finds the decision of the Terrebonne Parish Manager unacceptable, he or she may appeal to the Terrebonne Parish Council. The individual must send a written notice of appeal along with a copy of the written decision of the Terrebonne Parish Transit Manager within ten (10) days to the Council Chairperson (TP Council offices). The Terrebonne Parish Council will schedule a hearing to review both sides of the dispute. The council will make a decision at the hearing or within a reasonable time thereafter. The Council’s decision will be made in writing and will serve as the final administrative authority.
Service will not be provided while the appeal is heard. If a decision has not be made within thirty (30) days of the completion of the appeal process, presumptive eligibility will apply until a final decision has been reached.

**Appeal Process for Suspension of Service**
The appeal process is the same as that used for eligibility determination denials. Service will; however, continue while the appeal is heard for a suspension of service, unlike a determination of non-eligibility.

**Contacts for the Appeal Process**
Public Transit Administration  
Terrebonne Parish Consolidated Government  
Post Office Box 6097  
Houma, Louisiana  70361  
(985) 850-4616

Terrebonne Parish Transportation Advisory Board  
Department of Planning & Economic Development  
Senior Planner  
Post Office Box 6097  
Houma, Louisiana  70361  
(985) 873-6565

Terrebonne Parish Council  
Council Chairperson  
Post Office Box 6097  
Houma, Louisiana  70361  
(985) 873-6518