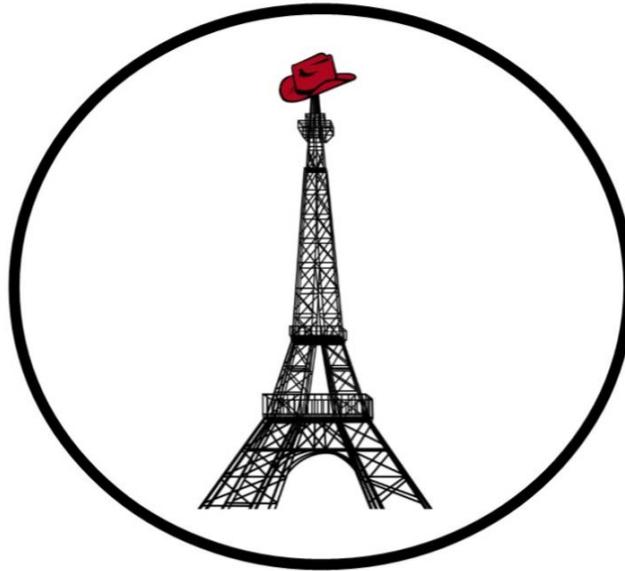


Paris Metro



Ark-Tex Council of Governments

ADA Complementary Paratransit Service Plan

240 10th Street SE Bldg. 5

Paris, Tx

844-437-7497

www.gotrax.org



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ADA Complementary Paratransit Service Policy & Procedures

I. General

A. Goal

It is the goal of the Ark-Tex Council of Governments (ATCOG), through its ADA Complementary Paratransit Service, to design, implement and maintain an efficient and effective transportation system for persons with disabilities who are “ADA Paratransit Eligible.”

B. Policy

It is the policy of ATCOG that no otherwise qualified person shall, solely by reason of his/her disability, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or otherwise be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity undertaken by ATCOG that receives or benefits from financial assistance.

C. Purpose

The ADA Complimentary Paratransit Service was developed to provide safe and efficient transportation comparable to that provided by the fixed route system within the City of Paris to persons with disabilities who are “ADA Paratransit Eligible.”

D. Objectives

The specific objectives of the ADA Complementary Paratransit Services are:

1. To provide demand-response, door-to-door transportation on specially equipped vehicles designed to accommodate persons with disabilities.
2. To maintain a trained staff for the operation and control of the service.
3. To provide on-going mechanisms for persons with disabilities to provide input on ADA Complementary Paratransit Service, policies and procedures.
4. To provide all public information tools on ATCOG services in accessible formats.

E. Plan Description

Paratransit service exceeds ADA requirements in these areas:

- Reservations are taken earlier in the morning and later in the evening than required. ATCOG utilizes a message machine for reservations that are made outside the normal reservation hours. Clients who call between 5pm and 8am will be added to the day's reservation list.
- Clients within the "loop" in the City of Paris but outside the $\frac{3}{4}$ mile service will be eligible for Paratransit Service.
- Return trips guaranteed to their point of origin after hours, due to appointment delays, if they were picked up by ATCOG.
- Same day trips can be scheduled provided there is availability.

Paratransit Service for the City of Paris commenced simultaneously with the Paris Metro Fixed-Route service starting.

F. Service Description

The Paratransit service commence with the start of the Paris Metro Fixed-Route Service. The service area for the Paratransit service goes beyond ADA requirements of $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile from any route that the fixed route buses regularly operate and will serve any passengers within the Loop in Paris. The Paratransit routes are structured to enable any person who has difficulties using the fixed route service to have door-to-door service. Days of operation are the same as the fixed routes which is Monday thru Friday, 6:30am till 6:30pm. The fare is \$1.00 per trip and Personal Care Attendants ride free to assist the passenger to alight and depart the bus and to help carry groceries and packages. The Paratransit service serves the populous within the "Loop" in the City of Paris.

G. Contact Person

Nancy L. Hoehn, Transportation Manager
903-255-3553
903-792-3014 (fax)
nhoehn@atcog.org
4808 Elizabeth Street
Texarkana, TX 75503

H. Service Area

Below is a map showing the area of service for the Paratransit service.



Outlined in black is the approximate service area for the Paratransit service.

ATCOG's paratransit services go "above and beyond" ADA requirements of serving the population within the $\frac{3}{4}$ mile area of all our fixed-route services and serves all residents with the Paris "Loop". The majority of paratransit passengers are located in various retirement residences which are all located within ATCOG's service area.

ATCOG has a fleet of three (3) fixed route buses and one (1) Paratransit bus. All buses are ADA compliant with lifts and/or ramps for easy access. ATCOG has spare vehicles through the rural transportation service, which can be utilized to assist with Paratransit service. All vehicles with the ATCOG fleet are 100% ADA accessible. Below is a chart of the accessibility of the fixed-route service in Paris. With this being a newly launched service, efforts are ongoing to improve accessibility, including the installation of shelters and benches.

Fixed Route Bus Stop Inventory

	Number of Stops	Sidewalks @ Stops	Wheelchair Ramps	Shelters	Benches
Route 1	43	31 (72%)	11 (26%)	0	0
Route 2	46	46 (72%)	9 (20%)	0	0
Route 3	50	21 (42%)	9 (18%)	0	0
Route 4	35	21 (60%)	15 (43%)	0	0
TOTAL	174	106 (61%)	44 (25%)	0	0
OVERALL	174 Stops	61% Sidewalks	21% WC Ramps	0% Shelters	0% Benches

II. Operations

A. General

ADA Complementary Paratransit Service is provided in accordance with the six service criteria established by the Federal Transit Administration for ADA Paratransit operations including days and hours of service, service area, response time, fares, trip purposes and capacity constraints.

B. Days and Hours of Service

The ADA Complementary Paratransit Service shall operate from 6:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. Monday through Friday. No Saturday or Sunday service is provided.

Service is not offered on the following holidays:

New Year's Day Memorial Day Independence Day Labor Day

Thanksgiving Day Day after Thanksgiving Christmas Eve Christmas Day

ADA Complementary Paratransit Service shall be provided to all origins and destinations within the Paris "Loop".

C. Response Time

ADA Complementary Paratransit Service shall offer origin to destination, demand response transportation service to certified passengers. Two types of service will be available, subscription and reservation.

Subscription service will be offered for any trip that occurs every week, originates and terminates at the same scheduled location and at the same hour each day. Requests for subscription service must be made at least the day prior to the first trip and may be made up to 14 days in advance. The number of subscription service trips accepted shall not exceed 50% of the total trips scheduled by all passengers.

Reservation service shall be available for any trip. Requests for reservation service may be made up to the close of business the day prior to the desired trip time and may be made up to 14 days in advance.

Requests for service for the next operating day will be accepted up the close of business the previous business day of requested trip. All return trips must be scheduled regardless of whether the passenger knows the exact return time or not. Passengers should estimate the return time and call the office as soon as possible if they will not be ready at the scheduled time. When ATCOG is closed before the next service day, an answering machine will be available to accept the Paratransit trip requests.

Trips will be scheduled within one hour of the requested pick-up time. The trip shall be scheduled so as to arrive at the pick-up location within a 15- minute time frame. For instance, if a passenger needs to be at a medical appointment at 2 p.m. and the estimated drive time is 20 minutes, the passenger may be told to expect the driver between 1:10 – 1:40 p.m.

D. Fares

The sum of \$1.00 per one-way trip shall be charged all Paratransit certified passengers. Payment of the \$1.00 must be in cash and in the exact amount as the drivers carry no change. Fares shall be paid at the time of boarding.

ATCOG operates a total of four (4) half hour fixed routes. These four (4) routes service the City of Paris. The fixed route fare is \$.50 and must be paid upon entering the bus. Transfer slips are free and are used to complete any given trip. Transfers are only good at the Transfer Station and are only good for thirty (30) minutes once the bus arrives at the Transfer Station.

Personal Care Attendants (PCA) ride free with passengers who require assistance while boarding, riding or alighting from a vehicle. Passengers must state the need for a Personal Care Attendant on the ADA Paratransit Eligibility Certification Application and make the reservationist aware that a PCA will be riding as well.

Paratransit passengers are guaranteed a seat for at least one accompanying guest. Additional guests will be scheduled on a space-available basis. Guests pay a fare of \$1.00 per one-way trip.

Tickets are available for purchase at a cost of \$1.00 each. One free ticket is issued for every 10 tickets purchased for \$10.00. It requires 1 tickets for each one-way trip. Tickets can be purchased at the ATCOG Transit Center.

Note: Any person qualifying and approved for ADA Paratransit Service will be able to ride the Fixed-Route Bus for FREE.

E. Trip Purpose

Trips for any purpose within the Paratransit service area will be accommodated and will not be prioritized by trip purpose. Passengers will not be asked to provide information regarding their trip purpose.

F. Capacity Constraint Monitoring

ATCOG will not constrain capacity by restricting the number of trips an individual will be provided: by maintaining waiting lists for access to the service: or by providing a service which has a substantial number of significantly untimely pick-ups for initial or return trips, trip denials missed trips or trips with excessive trip lengths.

Performance data will be collected and reported for the purpose of establishing whether capacity constraints exist. The ATCOG Board of Directors has established the following performance criteria for the purpose of making such a determination.

Missed Trips – 99% of all trips scheduled will be provided as scheduled

Late Pick-Ups – 95% of all pick-ups will be on time (within or no more than five minutes past the 15 minute scheduling window)

Late Drop-Offs – 95% of all drop-offs will be on time (at the time of the passenger's appointment or at the scheduled time of drop-off)

Denials – 0% of request will be denied

Ride Time – 99% of ride times will be one hour or less

G. Complementary Passes

Whenever ATCOG, or its service contractor, makes an error that greatly inconveniences a passenger, a complementary pass, good for one free ride, may be issued to the passenger. Circumstances that may warrant the issuance of a complementary pass include:

- Vehicle arrival more than 10 minutes beyond the 15 minute scheduling window;
- Passenger was inadvertently left off the schedule;
- Passenger was stranded on broken vehicle; or
- Other incidents as approved by the ATCOG Public Transportation Manager.

H. Inclement Weather

In the unlikely event of service cancellations due to inclement weather, ATCOG personnel shall attempt to contact all scheduled passengers at the telephone numbers listed on the ADA Complementary Paratransit Service Eligibility Application.

I. Lost and Found

Neither ATCOG nor its service contractor will be responsible for items left on vehicles. However, if found, the item(s) will be held for thirty (30) days. If the item(s) is not claimed within thirty (30) days, it may be donated to a local charitable organization.

Passengers attempting to locate lost items should call the ATCOG office (903)739-2444 or 903-255-3530. If the passenger's item has been located, every effort will be made to return the item to the passenger on his/her next scheduled trip.

III. Eligibility and Certification Procedures

A. General Eligibility

To receive ADA Complementary Paratransit Service, individuals must be certified "ADA Paratransit Eligible." The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 defines "ADA Paratransit Eligible" as:

1. Any person with a disability who can use an accessible vehicle, but for whom any desired trip cannot be made because the fixed-route service he/she needs to use is not yet accessible. This category includes persons who use wheelchairs, walkers or braces and others whose disabilities prevent them from utilizing an inaccessible vehicle or facility.
2. Persons, who because of the nature of their disabilities, cannot navigate even a transit system that is otherwise accessible. This category includes persons who because of their disability cannot independently board, ride or disembark from an accessible vehicle. This is based on the assumption the individual will not and need not to be able to operate a boarding system such as a wheelchair lift, ramp or securement device. The presence of a traveling companion does not affect this eligibility.
3. Persons with impairment-related conditions which prevent them from getting to or from a boarding or disembarking location. This relates to an individual's particular functional disability. This eligibility requires functional evaluation of its application to a particular system and a particular trip. Examples of eligibility under this category include severe, chronic fatigue related to HIV infection and AIDS, heat sensitivity due to cardiovascular disease and hypothermia due to quadriplegia.

Generally, the following four tests are applied when determining an applicant's eligibility:

1. Does the individual's disability prevent him/her from getting to and from a bus stop at point of origin or destination?
2. Can the individual board, utilize and disembark the vehicle at the bus stop?
3. Can the individual recognize the destination and disembark the bus?

4. If the passenger's trip requires transfers, are the paths of travel between routes accessible and navigable by the individual?

B. Trip-By-Trip Eligibility

While there are some passengers who are eligible to ride ADA Complementary Paratransit Service for all their transportation needs, most passengers are certified for service on a trip-by-trip basis. In other words, passengers who may normally be able to ride ATCOG's fixed-route service may be eligible for certain trips on the Paratransit service. Examples include:

1. An impairment-related condition severely sensitive to cold or hot temperatures;
2. A person unable to maneuver a wheelchair through snow or mud;
3. An individual with cognitive disabilities who must use a route other than the one he/she has learned or been trained to ride;
4. An individual who must travel an alternative route due to circumstances, where this alternate route is inaccessible to persons with disabilities.

C. Eligibility for Visitors and Out-of-Area Residents

Visitors to the Paris area, who have been certified by another transit provider, are automatically presumed eligible for ATCOG's ADA Complementary Paratransit Service for up to twenty-one (21) days. Should the visitor need service beyond the twenty-one (21) day period, he/she is required to become certified for the ATCOG's service through the normal certification process.

D. Application Process

Applications are available at our Transit Center Office or by visiting www.gotrax.org. If assistance is needed with this process please call our Paris Transit Center at 903-739-2444 and staff will provide assistance. Applications are available in accessible formats on request.

The applicant shall return the completed ADA Paratransit Application to the ATCOG Transit Center Office. To be considered complete, all of the information requested on the application and the application must be signed by the applicant. In addition, the Medical Professional Verification Section must be completed and signed by a qualified licensed professional.

ATCOG staff will attempt to make a determination from the information included in the ADA Paratransit Application. Should the staff be unable to make a determination based upon the information provided, they may request clarification from the applicant or the qualified professional who completed the Medical Professional Verification Section.

If a determination still cannot be made, ATCOG may require applicants to submit to a functional assessment to determine if they can use the regular fixed-route bus service. ATCOG will pay the cost of the functional assessment as well as provide transportation to and from the appointment.

ATCOG staff will make a determination regarding eligibility within 21 days of receipt of a completed ADA Paratransit Application. Should the staff fail to make such a determination within the 21 day period, the applicant will be “presumed eligible” until such time a determination has been made.

When applications are approved, applicants will be notified that they have been certified to use ADA Complementary Paratransit Service for one year if they are permanently disabled or for a shorter, specified time if their disability is temporary. Certified passengers may begin using service immediately following notification.

At the renewal time of a passenger’s one year certification, ATCOG staff may require the certified passenger to submit a new ADA Paratransit Application if there is sufficient cause to believe the passenger’s condition has changed making the person no longer “ADA Paratransit Eligible.” Otherwise, ATCOG staff will automatically renew the one year term.

Applicants who are deemed ineligible for ADA Complementary Paratransit Service may appeal by following the procedure established in Section VII, Appeal Procedures. Applicants denied service may reapply for service at any time.

All passenger information will be kept confidential by the ATCOG staff unless the release is required by law or court order.

E. Estimate of Demand for Comparable Paratransit Service

Demand for Paratransit Service for Paris Metro Service has been estimated at 10-14 trips/day. This demand has been estimated using data from current demand response ridership.

F. Timetable for Implementation

Complementary Paratransit service in Paris, TX was fully operational the same day that the fixed-route service was launched and runs concurrently with the fixed-route service from that date forward.

G. Budget for Comparable Paratransit Service

The budget to provide Comparable Paratransit Service in Paris, TX is estimated to be \$137,500 for 2017 with a 5% escalation/year for operations (\$144,375 FY18, \$151,593 FY19, \$159,173 FY 20, \$167,132 FY21). This assumes that demand stays at a level that can be served by 1.5 FTE’s). Capital budget is expected to be \$75,000 FY17, \$75,000 FY18 and \$10,000/year for FY19, FY20 & FY21.

IV. Passenger Responsibilities

A. General Passenger Condition

All passengers must be able to sit in a seat or wheelchair in order to be transported.

Any passenger whose medical condition is such that the passenger is incoherent or requires immediate medical attention to sustain life will be denied service. ADA Complementary Paratransit Service is to be considered a “common carrier” and does not perform ambulance or emergency service.

If the driver reasonably believes a passenger’s physical condition or conduct is hazardous or if a passenger possesses weapons, instruments or equipment that are reasonably believed to be dangerous, service may be terminated immediately. The passenger will be notified of their right to appeal the termination. The appeal can be filed in the usual and customary manner outlined in Section VI-B.

All passengers must be attired appropriately so that all private areas are adequately covered. Any passenger attempting passage without such appropriate attire may be refused service and that trip recorded as a “no show” or cancellation.

B. Requesting Service

A request for service may be made up to the close of business the day prior to requested trip or up to 14 days prior to the desired trip time. In order to schedule a trip, one must speak (either in person or via telephone messaging) with ATCOG staff who will require the following in scheduling a trip.

1. Name
2. Phone Number
3. Pick-Up Address
4. Destination Address
5. Desired Pick-Up Time
6. Desired Drop-Off Time (Appointment Time)
7. Number of Passengers
8. If Round Trip, Approximate Time of Return Trip

Passengers can schedule service by calling the ATCOG phone number 844-437-7497 or 903-739-2444.

C. Riding ADA Complementary Paratransit Service

ADA Complementary Paratransit passengers shall be ready no later than the designated pick-up time. However, due to variations in timepieces, it is recommended passengers be ready fifteen minutes before their pick-up time when possible.

When drivers arrive at the pick-up location, they are **not** required to wait more than ten minutes past the time of arrival unless they arrive early. In the event the drivers arrive

early, they will not leave the pick-up location until ten minutes past the designated pick-up time.

Service may not be rendered if the vehicle cannot access origin or destination location or if the location does not provide safe passage for the vehicle or safe access to the vehicle by the passenger. The driver shall immediately notify the dispatcher for further instructions in such case.

Drivers are not permitted to enter a passenger's home under any circumstance.

Drivers are not permitted to maneuver a wheelchair up or down more than one step. This rule is provided for the safety of the passenger and the driver.

Drivers are not permitted to lift passengers.

Passengers must pay their fares upon boarding the bus. Failure to do so may result in no service for that trip and the recording of a "no show" or cancellation (see Section IV. E. "No Shows and Cancellations").

Profanity or abusive conduct shall not be permitted and may result in suspension or termination of service.

Eating or smoking is not allowed on ATCOG or contractor vehicles. Drinking of non-alcoholic beverages is permissible only from a container with a snap-on lid. Note that passengers may eat or drink to avoid adverse health consequences.

D. Transportation of Children

The minimum age for a child to travel alone aboard ADA Complementary Paratransit Service is twelve (12) years of age. Children under the age of twelve (12) must have an adult accompany them during transport. Only the ATCOG Public Transportation Manager may grant exceptions.

E. "No Shows" and Cancellations

If passengers are unable to keep the scheduled appointment time, they should notify ATCOG the day prior to the trip and in no instance later than 2 hours prior to pick-up time. Failure to do so may result in the recording of a "no show." A record of all "no shows" will be maintained at the ATCOG office.

Operators will utilize the following guidelines concerning a person's failure to meet the ATCOG bus. ATCOG will work with passengers in a positive way to reduce No-Shows.

1. For trips scheduled with a requested pick-up time, the ATCOG operator will not wait longer than ten (10) minutes from the arrival time for clients to board the vehicle. If the bus arrives within the thirty (30) minute window (fifteen (15) minutes before and fifteen (15) minutes after the scheduled pick-up time), the client must board the bus within five (5) minutes of arrival.

2. For trips scheduled with a requested drop-off time, the bus may arrive anytime within one (1) hour prior to the drop-off time. If the bus arrives anytime within one (1) hour prior to the requested drop-off time, the client must board the bus within five (5) minutes of arrival.
3. Failure to meet the bus within five (5) minutes from the time of arrival will constitute a no-show, unless it is beyond the passenger's control.
4. Passengers or their associates should not ask operators to delay the five (5) minute interval under any circumstance; this is to assure the timely pick-up and transportation of all ATCOG clients.
5. ATCOG scheduler will not hold or otherwise detain the ATCOG bus because a passenger is late for a scheduled pick-up. The scheduler will facilitate an alternative pick up time with the passenger and then relay it to the operator.

Cancellations

A trip cancelled from two (2) hours up until the scheduled time will be recorded as a late cancellation. A trip cancelled at least two (2) hours before the scheduled time will be recorded as an advance cancellation, and will not be penalized. Passengers are requested to cancel trips the day prior to the trip to allow for other passengers to be scheduled at that time.

No-Show Penalties

A pattern of successive no-shows may result in service suspension. No-shows by type shall be tracked through a program in conjunction with the computer dispatch software utilized to schedule Paratransit trips. This program will be used to track cancellations as well as no-shows. ATCOG reserves the right to suspend service to a Paratransit passenger who engages in violent, seriously disruptive or illegal conduct on a Paratransit vehicle or to a paratransit driver.

No Shows are EXCUSED when the trip is missed for reasons beyond the customer's control. Trips missed that are beyond the passenger's control will be carefully monitored and tracked through the dispatch software by the Paratransit scheduler.

Although no shows will not be issued for reasons beyond the customer's control, the customer (or the customer's advocate) should ALWAYS make every effort to cancel scheduled trips in a timely manner. It is the customer's (or the customer's advocate) responsibility to provide the reasoning for not canceling a trip. Contact should be made with ATCOG as soon as reasonably possible. Lack of any contact will result in a No Show being issued. Any patterns or practices of excessive volume of unexcused No Shows will be reviewed for appropriate action.

The following table indicates the volume of No Shows that may be accumulated per month before action will be taken:

Trips Booked per Month and not cancelled in advance	Maximum Number of No Shows per Month
1 - 14	2
15 - 39	4
40 - 59	6
60 - 79	8
80 - 99	10
100 or more	12
<p>Please do not consider this guideline as a justification for not calling when a trip is not needed.</p>	

Consequences for an Established Pattern/Practice of No Shows as defined in the table above:	
1st Violation	2 Day Suspension
2nd Violation	14 Day Suspension
3rd Violation	30 Day Suspension
<p>Violation history covers a 6 month floating period.</p>	

F. No-Show Appeals Process

ATCOG has established the following administrative appeals process through which a passenger who has service suspended due to excessive No-Shows or behavior can obtain review of the suspension:

Appeal of the decision to suspend service to a passenger must be filed within 10 days of the notification to suspend services.

Passengers who have been suspended from ADA Complementary Paratransit Service may file an appeal whereas a decision can be based solely upon the information provided by the applicant and/or his/her representative or additional information may be obtained.

A passenger who wishes to appeal a suspension may appeal, in writing, to the Public Transportation Manager. The passenger shall also be entitled to be heard in person and to have necessary support, such as a sign interpreter or may choose to be represented by another person. The passenger will be notified in writing of the Manager's decision upon completion of the appeals process and the reasons for it. It will normally take less than 10 days for the Manager to render a decision from the date the appeal is filed.

Passengers aggrieved of the decision of the Public Transportation Manager may appeal to the Executive Director. The Executive Director shall fully investigate the suspension, the appeal and render the final resolution.

Passengers appealing service terminations or suspensions will continue to be scheduled for ADA Complementary Paratransit Service trips during the entire period of time the Executive Director is considering the appeal. The termination or suspension, if upheld, will not become effective until such time as the Executive Director has rendered a final decision.

Persons filing an appeal to ATCOG will be treated with respect and dignity at all times. ATCOG will not tolerate retaliation or the appearance of retaliation by any ATCOG employee to any person filing an appeal. Any employee of ATCOG refusing to follow these rules is subject to discipline up to and including termination.

G. Accommodation of Mobility Devices

ATCOG will carry a mobility device and passenger if the lift and vehicle can physically accommodate them unless doing so it is inconsistent with legitimate safety requirements. Legitimate safety requirements must be based on actual risks to the health and safety of the passenger or others. Any passenger who utilizes a mobility device will not be denied service because particular devices are problematic to secure.

H. Personal Care Attendant (PCA)

ATCOG allows a personal care attendant to accompany a passenger at no additional charge when such an attendant is required to utilize the service. Such required assistance is established in the certification process. Reasons for a personal care attendant may include, but are not limited to the following:

Immobility – The passenger is unable to provide self-mobility or self-mobility is possible but a great risk of falling or physical injury exists.

Disorientation – The passenger, due to a visual or mental impairment, is unable to properly orient him/herself and navigate to reach a particular destination.

Non-Comprehension – The passenger, due to mental impairment, is unable to adequately perform those mental processes necessary to handle common occurrences or is unable to effectively control his/her own actions.

Communication Impairment – The passenger is unable to effectively transmit or receive communication due to sensory or mental problems.

Personal care attendants are required to specifically assist the passenger. This assistance includes, but is not limited to, the following duties:

- assisting the passenger from his/her door to the bus/van and back again:
- opening doors:
- pushing wheelchairs:
- assisting with boarding:
- carrying packages, and
- communicating with driver (if passenger is unable).

If the personal care attendant does not perform some type of assistance for the passenger, that individual will be considered a guest and may be charged the \$1.00 fare.

I. Service Animals & Accommodation of Animals

Animals other than service animals as described below are allowed to ride only if they are in a secured pet travel carrier.

It is the policy of ATCOG to allow service animals to accompany their owner without restraint. Under the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, a service animal means a guide dog, signal dog or other animal individually trained to work or perform tasks for an individual with a disability.

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 allows for the imposition of legitimate safety requirements that are necessary for the safe operation of ADA Complementary Paratransit Service.

J. Carry-On Packages

Drivers will help passengers take lightweight items off the vehicle and set them on the curb. If additional assistance is required, best effort to assist will be provided by the operator.

V. Public Involvement

- **Outreach**

ATCOG is committed to providing on-going mechanisms to involve the public in decisions regarding its services, policies and procedures. Toward that end, ATCOG shall solicit participation in the development of its plan by the widest range of persons qualified to utilize the service. ATCOG is developing contacts, mailing lists and other appropriate means of notification of opportunities to participate in the development and subsequent revisions of the Paratransit Plan.

- **Consultation with individuals with disabilities**

ATCOG maintains ongoing contact with individuals with disabilities and groups representing them in the community. Consultation began in the early stages of the Paratransit Plan development and continued through Plan adoption. Following adoption the continued involvement is assured through their participation in the Paris Metro Steering Committee that meets quarterly to review service and recommend changes as necessary. All information from the planning process are available to the general public in the form of public notices, agendas, minutes and rosters from all meetings, as well as, the actual plan adopted.

- **Opportunity for Public Comment**

Prior to the finalization of the Paratransit plan, a series of Steering Committee meetings were held followed by a Public Hearing where the draft plan was available for review and comment. This meeting, held at the Paris City Hall, was well attended with much input and questions regarding all aspects of the service. The plan is available at the Paris Transit Office and on-line at www.gotrax.org. Upon request the plan will be provided in accessible formats.

- **Public Hearing/Public Meetings**

ATCOG held a Public Hearing on March 22, 2016, prior to the adoption of the Paratransit Plan. This meeting was advertised through local media outlets in Paris, TX as well as through the agencies representing individuals with disabilities (and seniors). Attendance at the meeting was sizable with individuals with disabilities attending (and ATCOG providing free transportation), representatives from agencies servicing individuals with disabilities, other health and human service agencies, government officials, staff and members of the general public. A representative from Disabilities Rights, TX was even conferenced into the meeting from his Dallas office to give comments. His primary questions centered on what the fares would be for service and understanding the service area. He was pleased that ATCOG is going above and beyond ADA requirements of $\frac{3}{4}$ mile from the fixed-route and providing Paratransit service to anyone within the Loop of Paris.

- **Ongoing Requirement**

ATCOG fully recognizes the need for the continued input and participation in evaluating and modifying the Paratransit service. Toward that end, the Paris Metro Steering Committee meets quarterly. Members of the committee ride both the fixed-route and Paratransit service to interact with the passengers and seek their input. Additionally, survey forms will be distributed at least one time each year to all certified ADA Complementary Paratransit Service passengers. These surveys, available in accessible formats on request, will measure customer satisfaction with aspects of ATCOG services including prompt telephone answering, scheduler courtesy, ability to get requested pick-up times, timeliness of pick-ups and drop-offs, response time for return trips, amount of time traveling, courtesy of drivers, level of assistance by drivers, safety of service and general satisfaction with service. The results of these surveys will be compiled and reported to the Public Transportation Manager, Executive Director and the ATCOG Board of Directors.

- **Public Participation Description**

Starting in 2013 ATCOG held a series of Public Meetings in Paris to prepare a “Fixed-Route Plan”. Part of planning this new service was the complementary Paratransit service. Over 100 people attended the public meetings for the plan. This included many advocates for Individuals with Disabilities (such as Disability Rights TX, Lone Star Legal Aid, Red River Valley Down’s Syndrome Society, Lakes Regional MHMR). Additionally, members of that population also attended and became Steering Committee Members. The entire plan for the fixed-route and accompanying Paratransit was devised with these parties at the table, having a voice and a vote. Both on-line and hard copy surveys were distributed widely in Paris, utilizing websites and Facebook pages of supporting agencies to spread the word. Over 400 responses were received. Additionally, petitions to offer the fixed-route and complementary Paratransit services were circulated. Over 550 signatures were returned. On March 22nd a Public Meeting was held at the City Hall in Paris to present the draft Paratransit Plan. Four attendees were Individuals with Disabilities (2 of them are Steering Committee Members). Many advocates for Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities attended as well. As stated earlier, an attorney from Disability Rights TX was conferenced into the meeting to give input.

Questions raised during the public participation process were generally regarding how this would all work, due to the unfamiliarity with Paratransit service. Concerns were raised regarding the distance to bus stops. ATCOG has adopted the policy when reviewing Paratransit applications to take into consideration the distance and the conditions of the roads/sidewalks when making a determination. Conditional Paratransit eligibility was also explained. Several attendees expressed the desire to ride the fixed-route bus to improve their independence but were unsure of their ability to do so. ATCOG explained that Travel Training is available to anyone interested. This has proven to be a valuable service.

- **Steering Committee**

As stated previously, the Steering Committee formed during the planning and development of these services will continue to function going forward. It is made up of persons with disabilities and representatives from agencies serving the needs of persons with disabilities will be held on a quarterly basis to deal with specific service and policy issues that require in-depth discussion. The Steering Committee continues to meet quarterly to discuss the service.

- **Coordinated Services**

There are no overlapping or contiguous complementary Paratransit services within the Ark-Tex Council of Governments service area.

VI. Appeals

ATCOG is committed to providing due process for any person with a disability who has been denied eligibility for ADA Complementary Paratransit Service.

Applicants who have been denied eligibility for ADA Complementary Paratransit Service may file an appeal whereas a decision can be based solely upon the information provided by the applicant and/or his/her representative or additional information may be obtained.

The following administrative procedure has been established to insure prompt and equitable resolution of appeals of any applicant with a disability that has been denied eligibility for ADA Complementary Paratransit Service.

An applicant who wishes to appeal an eligibility determination may appeal, in writing, to the Public Transportation Manager. The applicant shall also be entitled to be heard in person and to have necessary support, such as a sign interpreter or may choose to be represented by another person.

The applicant will be notified in writing of the Manager's decision as soon as possible. It will normally take less than 10 days for the Manager to render a decision from the date the appeal is filed.

If failure to resolve the appeal by the above mentioned process does not resolve the issue to the satisfaction of the applicant, the applicant has the right to appeal the Manager's decision to the Executive Director. The decision of the Executive Director will be considered the final resolution. For persons appealing ADA Complementary Paratransit Service no service will be provided during the period of time the appeal is being considered. However, if an appeal has not been decided within 30 days from the date the appeal is received by the Executive Director, presumptive eligibility will apply and ADA Complementary Paratransit Service will be provided until such time as a decision is rendered.

Persons filing an appeal to ATCOG will be treated with respect and dignity at all times. ATCOG will not tolerate retaliation or the appearance of retaliation by any ATCOG

employee to any person filing an appeal. Any employee of ATCOG refusing to follow these rules is subject to discipline up to and including termination.

VII. Plan Adoption

The Paratransit Plan was formally adopted at the Ark-Tex Council of Governments Executive Board Meeting held April 28, 2016.