

ARK-TEX COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS
RURAL PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION PROGRAM
POLICIES & PROCEDURES

Ark-Tex Council of Governments (ATCOG) is designated by the State of Texas as the Rural Transit District (RTD) to operate the ATCOG Rural Public Transportation Program (TRAX) in Bowie, Cass, Delta, Franklin, Hopkins, Lamar, Morris, Red River, and Titus Counties. The mission of TRAX is to meet the transportation needs of residents in the nine county service region, thereby enriching their quality of life and independence. TRAX serves a large, diverse population of individuals with varying ages, physical challenges, economic and financial statuses, and ethnic backgrounds. TRAX will ensure that no person shall be excluded from the participation, be denied the benefits of, or otherwise be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity undertaken by the transportation program, solely by the reason of his/her race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, or any other characteristic protected by law. Program funds are received from the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT), the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and various local funding streams to operate the TRAX program.

TRAX services are available to all persons regardless of race, color, national origin or income as defined in the Texas Administrative Code, Chapter 380. TRAX provides public transportation to the general public and special needs transportation for the elderly and persons with disabilities. Demand response service rural public transportation is available Monday through Friday, 8:00 AM – 5:00 PM. Demand Response is any non-fixed route system of transporting people that requires advanced scheduling by the passenger. TRAX Demand Response service is not available within the city limits of Texarkana, Nash, or Wake Village. For intercity transportation, passengers must contact Texarkana Urban Transit District (T-Line).

Demand Response:

Riding TRAX is a privilege, not a right. Passengers who are disruptive, uncooperative or in any way interfere with the safe operation of a TRAX vehicle could lose the privilege of riding. The passenger should inform the dispatcher/scheduler of any special requests. Passengers requesting modifications should describe what modifications should be made and determined in advance of the scheduled trip. TRAX is a curb-to-curb transportation service. Vehicles will pull up to the curb or into the driveway and sound the horn upon arrival. Drivers will wait 10 minutes beyond the scheduled pick-up. Following the 10 minute wait, if the passenger does not board the vehicle, the passenger may be declared a no-show for the trip. The driver will note the no-show on his/her tablet, notify the dispatcher of the no-show and leave the passengers home. Drivers will not backtrack to pickup a passenger that was late. The passenger should be ready to board the vehicle at a predetermined time of arrival. Drivers are not permitted to enter the passenger's home to assist the passenger. Passengers should use the handrails to safely board the vehicle.

Seatbelts must be worn at all times by rural passengers and drivers. The vehicle will not be put into motion until all the passengers and the driver is buckled up. Drivers will exit the vehicle to open and close vehicle doors when passengers board or exit vehicle and provide necessary assistance, including, but not limited to, fastening seat belts and/or securing mobility devices in order to ensure safe boarding and exiting of the vehicle. Passengers with the inability to board or exit the vehicle independently and/or walk independently to the curb will be requested (but not required) by TRAX to provide an attendant. Passengers who need a Personal Care Attendant (PCA) may be accompanied by an adult and/or service animal on TRAX vehicles to provide mobility, personal or language assistance while being transported. When exiting the vehicle, passengers should make sure the vehicle comes to a complete stop and the doors are fully opened before exiting. Drivers are not permitted to assist the passenger into their homes nor carry packages for passengers. Passengers are not allowed under any circumstances to leave personal possessions on a vehicle when exiting at a destination.

Fare Structure:

A fare per each one-way trip shall be charged to all rural public transportation passengers under the age of 60. Fares are based on a one-way trip. This means that each time the vehicle is boarded, the fare must be paid by cash or check based on the fare schedule. Drivers cannot make change. All fares must be paid by exact change only. If a passenger must be transported to obtain exact change, then they will be charged the fare for that additional trip. An adult must accompany children under 16 years of age.

Fares:

0- 10 miles	\$1.00
11- 20 miles	\$2.00
21- 30 miles	\$3.00
31- 40 miles	\$4.00
41- 50 miles	\$5.00
51- 60 miles	\$6.00
61- 70 miles	\$7.00
71- 80 miles	\$8.00
81- 90 miles	\$9.00
91-100 miles	\$10.00

Passenger Rules:

It is the responsibility of the passengers of TRAX to be aware of and abide by the following:

All trips must be booked with the TRAX Dispatcher/Scheduler 24 hours in advance of the passenger's desired trip. Urgently needed medical trips will be scheduled on short notice if resources allows. Passengers will be considered to be in violation for cancellations less than 24 hours notice to prior scheduled trips.

- No eating, drinking or smoking allowed while on the vehicle, unless for medical reasons.
- Do not disturb other passengers and/or driver by engaging in loud, unruly, harmful or harassing behavior.
- Appropriate dress and proper hygiene are required while riding the vehicle.
- Remain seated until the vehicle comes to a complete stop.
- Seat belts must be worn at all times while riding on the vehicle.
- All wheelchairs must be secured in the designated area. Passengers are not required to remain in their wheelchairs, if they are able to ride in a standard passenger seat.
- Animals are prohibited except for service animals.
- Do not vandalize or litter the vehicle.
- Do not place feet or dirty objects on the seats.
- No swearing, profane language or obscene gestures.
- No spitting in or out of the vehicle.
- No drugs, alcohol or tobacco products allowed on the vehicle.
- No hazardous or flammable materials are allowed on the vehicle.
- No weapons of any kind are allowed on the vehicle.
- An adult must accompany children under 16 years of age. Passengers will be required to provide car seats and booster seats for their children.
- An attendant should accompany anyone requiring assistance, if possible.
- At the passenger's point of origin they are allowed no more than 5 grocery bags or 2 reusable TRAX bags. Bags are not allowed to occupy a seat on the bus. Passengers are not allowed to leave any personal bags on an ATCOG TRAX vehicle when departing the vehicle. Baggage Exclusion: Return trip with purchases made while utilizing an ATCOG TRAX vehicle such as grocery shopping. The number of packages may be limited at the discretion of the driver.
- Service may be refused if either pick-up location or the destination location does not provide safe passage for the vehicle or safe access to or from the vehicle by the passenger.

Lack of adherence to these rules will result in suspension of services as determined by TRAX drivers and administration.

Suspension of Services:

Passengers who do not follow the rules of the TRAX transportation program will be suspended from services. Passengers may be suspended after three “no-show” trips or after being consistently late three times. The offense shall be documented by the staff member whom observed the offensive behavior. Documentation shall be submitted to the TRAX coordinator and be retained on file. The offense shall be discussed with the passenger by the coordinator and the passenger informed of the suspension at this time. TRAX administration shall determine the suspension period according to the severity of the offense.

Passenger Complaints:

A complaint is defined as any expression of dissatisfaction regarding transportation provided by Ark-Tex Council of Governments (ATCOG) Rural Transit District (RTD) or their contractors that cannot be resolved through an explanation of policies and standard operating procedures. Anyone directly or indirectly affected by TRAX service may file a complaint. Instances where a problem initially appears to be a complaint but is genuinely resolved with a clarification of the standard operating procedures shall not be considered a complaint. Complaints may include but are not limited to: late trips, no-shows, client behavior, staff behavior, passenger discomfort, and/or dissatisfaction with vehicles or unexplained service denials.

The driver, for resolution, should initially refer anyone wishing to register a complaint to the dispatcher. The driver should document the complaint on an incident report. The individual may register the complaint by calling the dispatcher. Some complaints may be resolved while speaking with the individual and the dispatcher shall document the resolution. An individual wishing to seek further consideration of an alleged incident must file the complaint in writing to TRAX. The written complaint must include the date and a detailed description of the alleged incident, be signed by the individual or representative and include the complainant’s name, address and telephone number. Complaints may be submitted electronically or to the address listed below:

Ark-Tex Council of Governments
Rural Transit District
4808 Elizabeth Street
Texarkana, Texas 75503

TRAX staff will fully investigate the complaint by interview with the individual, driver, and any witnesses present at the time of the alleged incident. TRAX staff will make every effort to resolve the issue to the satisfaction of the complainant. In the event resolution is not reached between TRAX and the complainant, TRAX will refer the complaint to the ATCOG Executive Director. The Executive Director may make a decision to resolve this complaint. Complaints should initially be filed with TRAX. It is in the best interest of all parties involved that issues raised in a complaint be resolved at the local level. If failure to resolve the complaint by the any above-mentioned process does not resolve the issue to the satisfaction of the complainant, the complainant has the right to appeal the Executive Director’s decision.

In the event there is no resolution to the complaint at the RTD, the Rural Transportation Board and the ATCOG Executive Committee/ Board of Directors may be involved in complaint resolution. The decision of the ATCOG Executive Committee/Board of Directors will be considered the final resolution. A formal written complaint may be filed with these entities at the address listed below:

Rural Transportation Board
4808 Elizabeth Street
Texarkana, TX 75503

Ark-Tex Council of Governments
Executive/Board of Directors
4808 Elizabeth Street
Texarkana, Texas 75503

Passengers filing a complaint against the TRAX will be treated with respect and dignity at all times. TRAX will not tolerate retaliation or the appearance of retaliation by any ATCOG employee to any passenger filing a complaint. Any employee of ATCOG refusing to follow these rules is subject to discipline up to and including termination.

Child Safety Restraint Rules:

Passengers are required to furnish and utilize child safety and booster seats for children meeting the following procedures:

Texas law requires children less than four years old, or less than 36 inches tall, to ride in a child safety forward-facing seat and children under a year old or less than 20 pounds to ride in a rear facing seat. Children more than 36 inches tall and at least 4 years of age, but younger than 17, must be secured by a safety belt. Seat safety belts are designed for adults, not children. Passengers must use a booster seat to lift children up and prevent severe injuries in a crash. TRAX requires all children meeting the above criteria travel in an approved child car seat furnished by the person accompanying the child regardless of vehicle type. Failure to comply with this requirement will result in denial of service.

Passengers should adhere to the following procedures for proper seats for their children.

- Birth to 1 year or up to 35 pounds
 - Use a rear facing seat until baby reaches weight or height limit of the seat.
 - Secure the chest clip even with baby's armpit.
 - Fasten harness straps snugly against baby's body.
- 1 – 4 years, 20 to 40 pounds
 - Use a forward-facing seat as long as recommended by manufacturer.
 - Fasten harness straps snugly against child's body.
 - Secure the chest clip even with child's armpit.
 - Latch the tether strap to the corresponding anchor in the vehicle.
- 4 – 8 years, Over 40 pounds
 - Use a booster seat.
 - Fasten the lap belt across child's thighs and hips, not stomach.
 - Strap the diagonal belt across the chest to rest on the shoulder not neck.

Medical Oxygen Transport:

ATCOG passengers with disabilities who require oxygen are allowed to travel on TRAX vehicles with individual oxygen packs worn upon their person in a fanny and/or shoulder pack. TRAX drivers are not trained or permitted to operate or maintain oxygen for the passenger. Passengers are allowed to transport a concentrator which must be secured properly by the driver.

Service Animals:

Passengers requiring transport accompanied by their service animal will be accommodated. Advance notice from the passenger of this situation is required. Service animals are expected to sit or lie at the feet of the owner.

Scheduling:

All scheduling will be the sole responsibility of the dispatcher/scheduler. The dispatcher/scheduler will ensure that all passengers will be treated with dignity and respect when gathering the necessary information. Trips will be scheduled on a first come, first serve basis, there will be no priority transportation allowed. Locations of requested trips for rural Bowie County will be verified prior to scheduling due to the urban transit district boundaries.

Passengers must schedule rural transit trips 24 hours in advance. Same day trips cannot be guaranteed and will be made only if the schedule allows for the rural public. TRAX will try to accommodate trips that could not be prescheduled, but cannot guarantee service for unscheduled trips. The dispatcher will ensure the trips are provided within a timely fashion. Urgently needed medical trips will be scheduled on short notice IF resources allow. Trips may not be scheduled if origin or destination location cannot be accessed by the vehicle or if the location does not provide safe passage for the vehicle or safe access to and/or from the vehicle for the passenger. The driver shall attempt to make reasonable accommodations and if not possible then they shall immediately notify the dispatcher for instructions in such a case. Examples: steep driveways, deteriorated sidewalks, narrow lanes, etc. may result in the denial of a trip.

The passenger should be ready at least 60 minutes prior to the scheduled trip. Passengers will not be delivered to appointments prior to the time that the facility is open for business and no more than one hour prior to scheduled appointments. Return trips will be scheduled no later than 30 minutes from receipt of passenger's request for a return trip although dispatcher/scheduler will try to minimize the pick up window as much as possible. To increase efficiency, TRAX is a "shared ride" service; passengers must often ride while other passengers are picked up and dropped off.

Passengers should notify the TRAX office via phone or prior notification of return trip time. Drivers are not permitted to enter facilities to inquire about return trip time. It is appropriate if the passenger seems late for return for the driver to request the dispatcher to phone the passenger's destination location to check on passenger. Any question(s) about return trip time should be addressed to the dispatcher for resolution. The driver may wait

up to 10 minutes when picking up passengers. Following a five (5) minute wait, the driver must call the dispatcher to make them aware of the situation. The dispatcher will then try to contact the passenger. The driver will wait an additional 5 minutes for the passenger before he/she leaves. If the passenger does not board the vehicle, the passenger may be declared a no-show. The driver will try to be accommodating, but cannot make other passengers late in order to accommodate a tardy passenger. It is the passenger's responsibility to be ready at the appointed time.

Cancellations:

Cancellations should be made at least 24 hours prior to the scheduled trip being cancelled. A late cancellation occurs when a passenger cancels a trip on the same day of the scheduled trip. A no-show trip occurs when the vehicle arrives at a pick-up location and the passenger does not board the vehicle within 10 minutes. If passengers cancel a trip either by phone or upon arrival of the driver at destination on the same day scheduled, a \$2.00 fee will be charged. Passengers who cancel on the same day or is a 'no-show' three times in a thirty (30) day period will be suspended from service for fourteen (14) days. This policy applies to all passengers and priority will not be given to any passenger due to age or disability. Frequent cancellations and no-shows are costly and prevent other passengers from accessing the service.

Safety:

ADA accessible TRAX vehicles are available for elderly passengers and those with disabilities. TRAX vehicles are equipped with state of the art mobility devices for the passenger's convenience. Drivers are required to strap down mobility devices in the appropriate wheelchair location, utilize the proper 4 point restraint method and ensure the passenger is strapped in with a seat belt prior to the trip. Passengers utilizing scooters as a means of mobility must sit in a seat while riding TRAX vehicles to ensure the safety of the passenger. Failure to comply with this requirement will result in denial of service.

TRAX is responsible for providing seat belts for all passengers. The drivers must ensure usage of seat belts prior to startup of trip. Passenger's failure to comply with this requirement will result in denial of service. Proof of a physician's statement of a passenger's physical inability to wear a seat belt must be shown to waive this requirement.

The safety and comfort of the passengers is TRAX'S first priority. Passenger comfort needs will be considered by the driver. Drivers may refuse transportation to anyone with offensive body odor to ensure the comfort of the other passengers. Transportation to anyone who appears to be intoxicated, acts violently or abusively will be refused at the driver's discretion. No open containers, illegal drugs or weapons are allowed on any TRAX vehicle at any time. Failure to comply with this requirement will result in denial of service. TRAX has the right to refuse service to any passenger who is considered a threat to themselves, other passengers, drivers, or the safe operation of the vehicle. Should a passenger become disruptive, causing a threat to another passenger or the driver, law enforcement will be summoned, which may result in permanent removal from service.

Denial of Service:

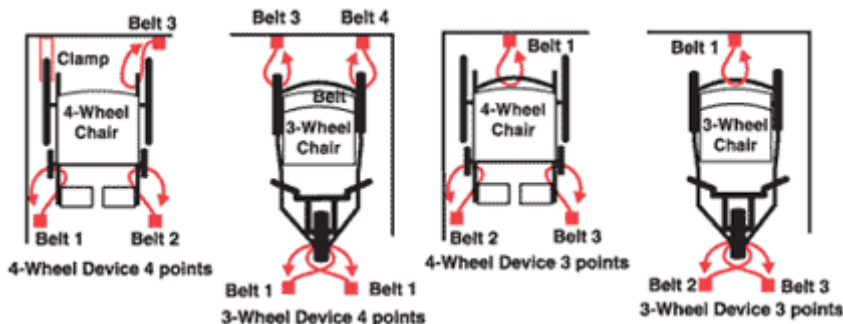
TRAX reserves the right to deny services to a passenger for the following reasons, but not limited to, for behavior that interferes with other passengers or the driver, refusal to pay for service, repeated failure to provide adequate notice of cancellation or no-shows, refusal to follow rules for riding the vehicle, carrying weapons or abusive language.

Mobility Devices and Securement Policy:

A wheelchair is defined as a mobility device that is no longer than 48 inches in length when measured two inches above the ground, no wider than 32 inches in width or if the total weight of passenger and mobility device is less than 600 pounds. TRAX drivers should not transport any passenger with a mobility device that does not meet the above criteria. Any passenger who utilizes a mobility device shall insure the brakes on the device are in working order before transportation can be provided. The driver should immediately inform the dispatcher of any passenger who does not meet these criteria. ATCOG requires that all common wheelchairs and/or mobility devices, along the passenger be secured with all the provided securement devices and seatbelts. All passengers are required to wear a seatbelt.

Passengers with a wheelchair or mobility device that cannot be secured will not be denied service. Instead if the passenger is physically able, they will be asked to transfer to a seat and utilize a seatbelt and any passenger who does not want their wheelchair secured but is physically able to transfer to a seat will be asked to do so and wear a seatbelt. A transfer board will be provided on TRAX vehicles to ensure the safe transfer of the passenger and prevent injury to the driver. The mobility device will be secured and placed in a position as to not allow freedom of movement while the vehicle is in motion. Any passenger with a common mobility device that can be secured but refuses to allow the device to be secured will have the potential hazards explained to them. The hazards may include, but are not limited to, those that could result in damage or injury to the passenger or the device from not being properly secured while in transit should an accident or incident occur. Federal regulations allow service to be declined for safety reason; therefore, it should be explained to the passenger that service will be denied to them for safety reasons in the future if the device is not secured properly.

The illustration below shows how different types of mobility devices should be secured:



TRAX will make every reasonable effort to accommodate various mobility devices available to passengers. However, due to the increasing size and weight of such equipment, some limitations may be necessary in order to insure the safety of the passengers and the operational equipment on the vehicle. TRAX Management Staff will determine if a mobility device can be safely transported. If the determination is positive, the non-conventional mobility device will be allowed only on the vehicles with the larger-sized lifts and appropriate tie-downs. Each TRAX vehicle is equipped with a lift or a boarding ramp. The low-floor vehicles have the boarding ramps that the driver can deploy upon request. Older vehicles and the larger busses are equipped with power lifts for anyone who cannot use the steps to board the vehicle. All TRAX vehicles are equipped with the proper securement straps to ensure the safety of the passengers.

NOTE: Drivers should never make the decision independently to carry an oversized mobility device which risks the passenger safety and may damage the vehicle.

Drivers will allow only passengers utilizing a mobility device to sit on the lift of the vehicle to gain access. The passenger must be seated in or on mobility devices to utilize the lift to enter the vehicle. A wheelchair passenger is allowed to sit in the wheelchair with the driver securing the wheelchair with the proper securement and a passenger safety strap. Drivers will not allow passengers utilizing a scooter as a means of mobility to sit on the scooter while riding an ATCOG vehicle. A scooter passenger must transfer to a vehicle seat and utilize seat belts while on a TRAX vehicle. Drivers may assist with transfer from scooter to vehicle seats. TRAX will provide slide boards to assist with the transfer. An attendant must accompany a passenger needing excessive assistance. Drivers are not permitted to physically pick up passengers to put into wheelchairs or onto scooters. Drivers must secure scooter(s) with wheelchair securement straps for the duration of the trip to prevent accidents. Drivers are not permitted to enter a passenger's home and/or any other facility to assist the passenger. Drivers will **never** allow a passenger to stand on the lift to gain access to the vehicle.

Passengers may bring a two-wheeled electric mobility device such as a Segway on TRAX vehicles if the device is used as a mobility aid for a disability. The device must be turned off when boarding, riding ATCOG vehicles and exiting the vehicle. The device must be secured safely and the passenger must sit in a seat and utilize a seatbelt.

Passengers with a mobility device should inform the dispatcher when scheduling the trip. This way the driver will know in advance to be prepared to deploy the ramp or lift which will save time. Passenger who need the ramp or lift, need to inform the driver. The driver will assist the passenger if needed to help guide a mobility device onto the ramp or lift. Backing a mobility device onto the lift can make it easier to maneuver into the securement area inside the vehicle. When a passenger is ready to exit the vehicle, the driver will remove the securement straps from the mobility device, stow the straps out of the way of the device and deploy the ramp or lift.

Drivers will inform the dispatcher of the need for an attendant for passenger(s) if applicable. The dispatcher will make the necessary contacts to the passenger, family, and/or health care providers.

Abuse Notification:

Drivers will immediately notify the dispatcher of any witnessing and/or suspected child/elder abuse and neglect. The dispatcher will immediately notify the TRAX Transportation Manager. The manager will notify the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services at 1-800-252-5400.

Accident/Incident Reporting:

Drivers will immediately report any accident or unusual occurrence during the course of their shift. Accidents include collisions of equipment with other objects (trees, signs) or vehicles (cars, other vehicles, etc.). Incidents include, but are not limited to, vandalism of vehicles or property, incidents involving passengers, (i.e., passenger slips down, seizures, etc.).