











## Meeting Our Customers' Travel Needs

### Fixed Route Bus Service

CAT is committed to providing transportation services that can be used by all of our customers. All of our “fixed route buses” (larger buses that operate on set routes) have lifts or are low-floor models with a kneeling feature to better serve riders who use wheelchairs or who have difficulty getting up and down the bus steps. Our fixed route buses are 100% wheelchair accessible.

These buses have reserved spaces with tie down straps, and our operators are trained to provide a safe and secure ride for customers who use wheelchairs. There are also a number of seats usually available near the entrance of the vehicle for persons who have difficulty standing while the bus is moving. For everyone's benefit, the operator or a pre-recorded message announces major stops, intersections, and transfer points to help customers recognize their bus stop or point of transfer.

CAT issues reduced-fare cards for senior citizens and passengers with disabilities. This card allows an eligible individual to travel at a discounted rate when traveling on CAT's fixed route services. The Paratransit ID card also qualifies as a reduced-fare card when riding on fixed route bus and rail services. We encourage our customers with disabilities to take advantage of the flexibility, independence and reduced cost that our fixed route bus services provide.

For route and schedule information, or any questions you may have about using CAT's fixed route bus services, visit our website at [www.catchacat.org](http://www.catchacat.org) or call the Customer Service Ride Line at (912) 233-5767.









transportation will be provided free of charge. An application will be mailed to you along with a reminder of your appointment.

### **Application & Assessment**

The application form needs to be completed by you or for you and brought with you to the interview. The application is designed to gather information from the applicant regarding his/her disability and the applicant's own assessment of his/her environment and functional ability to use CAT's fixed route bus services.

The interview will be held at a designated assessment center. The person who interviews you as part of the eligibility process will review your application with you and discuss your travel abilities and needs in more detail. You can also ask any questions you have about the service. At the interview, you may be asked to take an actual bus trip. This part of the interview will be supervised by appropriate medical personnel and serves as a physical functional assessment, showing your ability to board and ride an accessible fixed route bus service. It may include negotiating various inclines/surfaces/curbs or curb-cuts and crossing streets. This trip can take about 45-60 minutes and will give us a better idea of your travel abilities. If you are traveling to the assessment center with a group of people or are coming in from outside the Chatham County area, you might want to bring a snack as the time will take longer for groups. Please dress appropriately for any outdoor portion of the assessment.

### **Eligibility Notification**

After the completion of the application process, you will be notified in writing of your eligibility status within twenty-one (21) days.

- If you are determined eligible for paratransit services, you will receive a Paratransit eligibility card. Your Paratransit



eligibility card will also allow you to use CAT's fixed route bus services at a reduced cost.

- If you are not eligible for Paratransit services but your disability qualifies under CAT's reduced fare program, you will receive a reduced fare card.
- If a decision is not made within 21 days of a completed application process, paratransit service will be provided until a final decision is made.

Once you receive your eligibility notification, if you do not agree with the decision that is made, **you can appeal the decision** to the ADA Paratransit Eligibility Coordinator by following the information outlined in your eligibility letter. Also see the section in this Ride Guide entitled 'Eligibility & Service Suspension/Termination Appeal Process.'

To begin the eligibility process, call CAT Paratransit at (912) 354-6900.

## **Who is Eligible for Paratransit Service?**

The ADA regulations provide that a person may be eligible for Paratransit services under one of the following three categories:

### 1. Unconditional Eligibility

The first category of eligibility includes those persons who are unable to use fully accessible fixed route bus services. Included in this category is:

*“Any individual with a disability who is unable, as a result of a physical or mental impairment (including a vision impairment), and without the assistance of another individual (except the operator of a wheelchair lift or other boarding assistance device), to board, ride, or disembark from any vehicle on the system which*



*is readily accessible to and usable by individuals with disabilities.”*  
*[Section 37.123(e) (1) of the ADA regulations]*

This applies to an individual who cannot independently negotiate the fixed route bus system (board, ride or disembark from a bus or trolley).

2. Conditional Eligibility until the fixed route bus system is fully accessible

**Note: Since all CAT fixed route vehicles are fully accessible, this ADA category does not apply.**

3. Conditional Eligibility

The third category of eligibility includes:

*“Any individual with a disability who has a specific impairment-related condition which prevents such individual from traveling to a boarding location or from a disembarking location on such system.”* [Section 37.123(e) (3) of the ADA regulations]

This applies to an individual who, because of his/her disability, cannot access a bus stop to board the fixed route bus and cannot access his/her final destination after disembarking from a fixed route bus. Two important qualifiers to this category are included in the regulations. First, environmental conditions and architectural barriers not under the control of the public entity do not, when considered alone, confer eligibility. Second, inconvenience in using the fixed route bus system is not a basis for eligibility. Eligibility is determined on a trip-by-trip basis for conditionally eligible customers.

### **Temporary Disabilities**

Temporary eligibility is provided to customers who have a non-permanent disability that prevents them from using the CAT bus system. Eligibility will be provided for the expected duration of the



disability, e.g., for the time expected to recover from a temporary impairment, or as a transitional period under specific circumstances. Customers must notify Paratransit if additional time is needed.

### **Service for Visitors**

Visitors to the Savannah area can use Paratransit for up to 21 days a year by providing documentation that they have been determined eligible for similar ADA paratransit services by a transit agency in another part of the country. Visitors who do not have this kind of eligibility because they live in areas without public transit service might be asked for documentation of their health condition or disability.

### **Eligibility for Children Six (6) Years of Age and Under**

Paratransit eligibility for children six (6) years of age and under will be considered with an adult. Eligibility will view the child and accompanying adult as one to determine the functional ability of the child/adult.

### **Recertification of Eligibility**

Each Paratransit customer must be recertified upon reaching his/her eligibility expiration date. Recertification may also become necessary from time to time if the condition of the disability changes or if the terms governing the program change. Typically, eligibility extends for three (3) years from certification. A customer's Paratransit ID Card will indicate his/her paratransit eligibility expiration date. It is the customer's responsibility to reapply for services (30) prior to his or her eligibility expiration date. If a customer fails to renew paratransit eligibility, he/she will be ineligible for service until he/she is determined eligible in the certification process.





## Scheduling Rides on Paratransit

**Please Note: All telephone calls to CAT's paratransit service are monitored and may be recorded for quality assurance purposes.**

### When to Reserve a Ride

You can reserve your paratransit ride from one (1) day to seven (7) days in advance of your trip. Reservationists take trip requests from 8:00am-4:00pm Monday through Sunday. On holidays when CAT offices are closed, you will be able to leave a **NEXT DAY ONLY** reservation for the day after the closed holiday on a voicemail thru the automated system. The system will instruct you to Press 1 to leave your day after the holiday only reservation. A Transit Ambassador will return your call the next morning to confirm your reservation for that day. Reservations can be one-way or round-trip, and you will need to provide all of the following pertinent information:

- Your Name
- Time of Your Appointment
- Address where you need to be Picked Up
- Address you are Traveling To
- Time you want your Return
- Return Trip Pick-up Address
- Return Trip Destination
- Phone Number where you can be reached (you may call back to confirm your ride time)
- Any accompaniment (PCA, guess, service animal, etc.)



- Special notification request, for example, asking for the operator to beep upon arrival if your disability affects your vision.

Please do not schedule a trip several days in advance if you are not sure that you will go or if you are not sure of the time you want to go. Reserving rides that are later cancelled or that result in a No-Show causes the vehicles to be less efficient, can significantly increase the cost of the service, and can lead to suspension of your Paratransit service.

Scheduling Tip: During the busiest scheduling times of the day (mid-mornings and late afternoons), you may be placed on hold until there is a reservationist who can assist you. During these busy times, hold times can be 5 minutes or longer. If you are able, you may want to place your trip requests during the middle of the day when the phone lines are often open.

## **How to Reserve a Ride**

All paratransit trips are scheduled through CAT's Paratransit office. To request a ride, call CAT Paratransit at 912-354-6900.

Scheduling Tip: Keep a calendar or journal to record the date of call, time of call, and the person you spoke with. Having pen and paper handy will also allow you to write down information from the reservationist, and your notes could assist both you and us in researching any scheduling concerns that may arise.

The reservationist will guide you through the process of scheduling a ride. Please note, if you are traveling from or to a gated community, you will need to provide the gate code when making your reservation. If you do not provide a code and the operator



cannot get in the community to pick you up, it will be marked as a No-Show.

The reservationist will always ask for the following information, so make sure you are ready to provide:

1. Your first and last name
2. The date and day of the week you need to ride
3. The time you would like to arrive (your appointment time), if applicable
4. Exact street address where you need to be picked up
5. Exact street address where you are going and any point of reference that might help the operator. If you will be going to a large facility that has several entrances (such as a mall or large medical facility) you will be taken to and picked up from the Main Entrance unless a Paratransit service point\* has been established. If there is a Paratransit service point at the location, you will be picked up and dropped off at the service point.
6. The time you will be ready for a return trip, if applicable
7. Whether or not a Personal Care Attendant or companion will be traveling with you
8. If a service animal will be riding with you
9. Any other details or information you feel we should know in order to safely and comfortably serve you.

The reservationist will enter this information into our scheduling system, determine if you are eligible for the trip, and identify a vehicle that is available to serve you. The reservation agent may sometimes need to put you on hold while the best travel option is identified or may take your contact information and call you back. The reservationist will repeat what they understood your request to





be. Please pay close attention to what is repeated back to you to make sure it is correct.

### **Call-Back Notification**

The day before your next scheduled trip you will receive an automated call for you to confirm or cancel your scheduled trip for the next day. You must listen to the entire recording in order to confirm or cancel, the system will make three (3) attempts, and if you do not respond your trip information will not change. However, if you wish to cancel you will need to notify the paratransit office at (912)354-6900.

**\* Service Points – CAT reserves the right to establish service points based on safety concerns from the operator or customer. CAT Paratransit will notify the customer of the service point location, and unless there is an immediate safety concern, will implement the change no sooner than three (3) days from that notification.**

Scheduling Tip: Consider your requested times carefully. It is difficult to know ahead of time exactly when you will be ready for your **return** trip, but it is very important to schedule the time as realistically and accurately as possible. Give yourself some extra time if you are not sure.

If you are going to a doctor's office or other appointment, allow some extra time to get from the paratransit vehicle to your destination. For example, if you have an appointment at 9:00am, you might want to tell the reservationist you would like to arrive no later than 8:45am. Similarly, include time to get to the place where the paratransit vehicle will pick you up for your return trip. For example, if you work until 5:00pm, you



might want to ask the reservationist for a 5:15pm pick-up.

Also if your trip is for an appointment, let the person who is making your medical appointment know you will be using CAT's Paratransit service and ask them how long the appointment will take. This will help you to set your return time with Paratransit.

If you are scheduling a return and cannot be picked before a certain time (for example, you cannot be picked up from work until 6:00pm), let the reservationist know this.

If you do not have a specific appointment time and can be flexible about your travel times, let the reservationist know this.

If you know that another Paratransit customer who lives near you will be traveling to the same place at the same time and you would like to travel with them, mention this when you call to request your ride. The reservationist can check to see if your rides can be combined; please note, however, that this may not always be possible.

It is very important for you to keep us updated on new phone numbers. From time to time it can become necessary for us to change a pick-up time to prevent multiple vehicles being sent to the same location or to better group customers on the same bus. If this occurs, we will notify you of the time change either by speaking directly with you or by leaving a message for you about the time change. Calls may be made up to 7:00 PM the night before your ride.

In case your pick-up time is given using military time, the following picture of a military time clock has been included for



















If a No-Show is incorrectly attributed to you (for example, if our operator shows up outside the Ready Window), or if you feel that the No-Show or late cancellation was beyond your control, please call our Customer Service Ride Line at 912-233-5767 immediately. Our Transit Ambassadors will research the scheduling records for accuracy. If you are able to provide specific information on the date/time you scheduled your trips and who you scheduled them with, we will be better able to research your dispute; but we will investigate any matter brought to our attention, relying on the data we have to determine the validity of the error. You may be requested to provide documentation, the purpose of which is to provide a fair and consistent policy for all.

### ***No Show Notifications***

Riders will be notified of No Shows in writing, and will receive a written warning after three (3) NO SHOWS. The written correspondence will list the total number of No Shows and the percent of No Shows in reference to the total number of trips booked in the period. Specific dates, times and locations of each No Show in the period will be provided in writing upon request.

### ***Pattern and Practice of No Shows***

Riders may be suspended from Paratransit Service when they show a “pattern and practice” of No Shows, which occurs when:

- a. A rider has six (6) or more No Shows in a calendar month and;
- b. The number of No Shows represents more than 15% of the trips booked by the rider in a calendar month.



The following are examples of what would and would not constitute a pattern and practice of No Shows:

Example 1: A rider books 20 trips in a calendar month and misses five trips. This rider *has a pattern and practice* of No Shows because (a) the rider had five No Shows, and (b) those No Shows represent 25% of the total trips booked;

Example 2: A rider books 10 trips in a calendar month and misses four trips. This rider will not have a pattern and practice of No Shows because the rider did not have five or more No Shows in the calendar month. (Note that because there were not at least five No Shows, the fact that the rider missed 40% is irrelevant for purposes of determining whether there has been a pattern and practice of No Shows.)

A rider who shows a pattern and practice of No Shows may be subject to a suspension of service, as shown in the table below

### ***Suspension Accumulation***

- Customers who disrupt the scheduling process for this shared-ride service will be assessed violations towards suspension in the following manner: Late Cancellation – Cancelling your ride less than two (2) hours prior to the scheduled pick-up window. Late cancellations will be treated as No Shows.
- Cancel at Door – When the vehicle arrives at the location designated for a specific scheduled trip within the 30-minute pick-up window and the rider (or the rider's representative) notifies the driver at that time that they no longer need the scheduled trip. These are considered No Shows.







Some examples of No-Show situations:

- If you No-Show on the first leg of your trip, no bus will be sent back to pick you up for that trip. However, if you have scheduled a return trip, then the return pick-up will not automatically be cancelled.
- If you take one trip and then No-Show on the return (i.e., if we took you to the location), we will make efforts to schedule another return trip upon request and as resources permit.
- If your only scheduled trip is a pick-up from a location that we did not take you to and you No-Show that pick-up, we may make efforts to send another vehicle.

Failure to cancel rides that are no longer needed will result in the assessment of points from the current No-Show policy. Each No-Show trip is assessed independently in accordance with ADA regulations. Riders will be assessed points for each trip they No-Show regardless of whether the trips occur in the same day.

If a schedule delay, bad weather, or breakdown causes Paratransit to be late and you decide to find another way to your appointment after waiting until the end of the Ready Window (15 minutes after your scheduled pick-up time), please let us know that you found another ride so we do not send the bus or assess points for a No-Show.

## **How to Ride**

### **Ready For Pick-up**

You are expected to be ready to ride when the vehicle arrives. The CAT Paratransit operator will stop the vehicle at the curb in front



of the pick-up address you provided unless something is preventing them from doing so. If there is an obstacle, then they will park as close as possible to the location. You are expected to be at the curb so you can identify/be identified by the bus operator. ***Remember, the vehicle might arrive up to 15 minutes before your Ready Time and up to 15 minutes after your Ready Time.*** Please be ready to go when the vehicle arrives so that the operator can stay on schedule for all customers. The operator is not permitted to honk the horn to let you know the vehicle has arrived (unless previously authorized through CAT's Control Center). Wait in an area where you can see or hear the vehicle arrive or where the operator will be able to see you.

**Please note that the vehicle may arrive any time within the 30 minute Ready Window. Operators can only wait for you for five (5) minutes after they have arrived. If you are not ready, the operator will have to leave to avoid inconveniencing other customers.**

*EXAMPLE:* You are scheduled for a trip that has a 9:00 AM Ready Time. This means you should be ready for the vehicle to arrive anytime between 8:45 AM and 9:15 AM (the Ready Window). If the vehicle arrives at 9:05, the operator will wait for you until 9:10. ***If the vehicle arrives at 8:40, the operator will wait until 8:50 before departing since the Ready Window doesn't begin until 8:45.*** If the vehicle arrives early, you do not need to come out to board until the beginning of the Ready Window. However, if you are ready to go when the vehicle arrives, we encourage you to board early to assist the operator in maintaining their schedule.

Please make sure that your address is clearly visible from the street, especially at night. If you are being picked up at a large building, make sure to tell the reservationist when you schedule your ride which entrance you will be at. Carry any necessary medication with you in case of delays that extend the time of the trip. If you use oxygen, bring an adequate (extra) supply. If you are



diabetic or hypoglycemic, please bring a small snack with you in case the trip takes longer than expected.

### **Operator Assistance**

Paratransit is an origin-to-destination service. Operators are not permitted to leave the vehicle or other customers unattended due to safety and security concerns, so if you need assistance getting to the curbside or from the vehicle to your destination, please notify the reservationist of this when you schedule your trip or arrange to have someone there to assist you. Upon request, operators will provide assistance as needed, provided it will not pose a safety risk to the operator and/or other passenger's aboard vehicle. Operators will operate the wheelchair ramp or lift and will assist customers with the securement of wheelchairs and mobility aids and with seat belts. To ensure the safety of our passengers, we ask that you limit the number of carry-on items to three (3). Once onboard, you must be able to keep the packages secure. See "Packages and Personal Items" section for more detail.

**IF YOU BRING MORE THAN THREE (3) BAGS/GROCERIES THAN CAN BE CARRIED ON OR OFF AND YOU DELAY THE DEPARTURE OF THE VEHICLE BEYOND FIVE (5) MINUTES, YOU WILL BE ASSESSED A NO-SHOW.**

### **Paying Your Fare**

Fares must be paid when boarding the vehicle.

If you do not pay the correct fare, the operator may refuse to provide the ride and you could have a No-Show marked on your record. Operators do not carry cash for safety reasons and will not be able to make change.





If you have scheduled a round-trip and pay for both pick-ups at the beginning, be sure the operator lets the Control Center know you have already paid for your return by calling Customer Service.

### **To Check on Your Ride**

Unexpected delays can arise from road construction, traffic conditions, or bad weather, or on occasion mechanical problems with the vehicle. If a CAT Paratransit vehicle has not arrived by the end of the Ready Window (15 minutes after your scheduled pick-up time), call Customer Service at 912-233-5767 for where's My Ride? Assistance. Our Control Center will radio the operator and give you an update on your trip. Stay within sight of the pick-up location if at all possible, in case the vehicle arrives while you are calling.

### **After-Hour Emergencies**

Should an emergency arise after regular office hours (after 5:00 PM); call 912-233-5767. You will get a recorded message, so stay on the line and follow the directions. This is strictly for emergencies or to inquire about a ride if your vehicle is more than 15 minutes late for a pick-up. Trip reservations and schedule changes must be made during regular business hours.

### **Personal Care Attendants**

A Personal Care Attendant (PCA) is someone you may bring with you to assist you while traveling or with personal care or activities. **A PCA may ride for free when traveling with you, but you must be registered with us as needing a PCA.** This is done as part of the eligibility process. A PCA must get on and off the bus at the same places and times as you, and you must tell us that your PCA is traveling with you when you schedule your ride. This ensures that there will be room on the vehicle for you, your PCA, and other



scheduled riders. Operators cannot add riders who do not have a reservation, so if you do not make a reservation for your PCA, they will not be allowed to ride with you.

## **Guests/Companions**

A guest or companion is someone you want to bring along to share the trip, not someone you bring to assist you. Guests/companions must pay a fare when accompanying you and must get on and off the vehicle at the same place and time as you.

You may schedule only one (1) companion to travel with you, and you will need to tell the reservationist when you schedule trips that you will be traveling with a guest/companion. This ensures that there will be room on the vehicle for you, your guest/companion, and other scheduled riders. Operators cannot add riders who do not have a reservation, so if you do not make a reservation for you guest/companion, they may not be allowed to ride with you.

Additional guests/companions may be accommodated if there is enough space on the vehicle. To schedule additional guests, you may call the day before your ride to see if there is enough space on the vehicle.

## **Children**

All children under six (6) years of age must be accompanied by an adult. **They cannot ride unattended.** CAT policy allows two (2) children under six to ride for free with an eligible fare-paying adult. An adult accompanying a child on any CAT vehicle (including Paratransit) is responsible for the child and for providing the appropriate car seat. Operators will not secure a child restraint or car seat, will not assist with strollers, and are not permitted to carry children on or off of the vehicle for you. Operators can, however, assist with securing the child's seatbelt. If



you will need assistance with the child, please bring someone else along to help you.

Children under six (6) years of age who are being considered for Paratransit eligibility will be assessed based on the functional ability of both the accompanying adult and child (as a team) to use fixed route bus service. When a child and adult team is found eligible, the adult serving as a Personal Care Attendant will ride free. The eligible child will have to pay the regular Paratransit fare.

### **Wheelchairs and other Mobility Devices**

Paratransit vehicles are designed to accommodate most wheelchairs and mobility aids. We highly recommend using the lap belt in addition to the wheelchair securements for your safety. It is CAT's policy that we cannot transport any mobility device that exceeds the capacity of the vehicle's equipment dimensions as defined by the ADA.

### **Scooters**

Some three-wheeled scooters are difficult to secure on CAT Paratransit vehicles. Some scooters also come with a warning from the manufacturer that they should not be used as seats on moving vehicles. Because of this, the operator may recommend that you transfer to a vehicle seat if you can. While the operator may not require you to transfer, we strongly recommend that you do so we can provide you and other customers with the safest ride possible.

### **Wheelchair Securement and Seat Belt Policy**

It is the operator's responsibility on any CAT vehicle (including Paratransit) to ensure that all mobility devices are properly secured. Wheelchairs and scooters are required to be secured into the four-point securement system at all times during the ride. CAT requests that riders also allow operators to secure the lap belts and shoulder belts to ensure the customer's safety. "Secure Here" stickers may



be made available for riders to place on their mobility device. This will assist operators in knowing where you request the securement straps be placed. Contact CAT's Customer Service to inquire about sticker availability.

## **Safety Belts**

Although not required, our community requested that seat belts be installed on the paratransit vehicles. For your safety and security, CAT strongly encourages you to use a safety belt and remain seated while riding on CAT Paratransit vehicles.

## **Packages and Personal Items**

You may bring grocery bags, luggage, or other packages or (legal) personal items with you on CAT Paratransit. Please do not bring more than **three (3) bags** with you and/or the assistant who is traveling with you can manage without delaying the vehicle. However, Operators are not required to assist with loading and unloading of packages and personal items. Delaying the vehicle occurs when you bring more items than you can carry on the vehicle at one time and you keep the vehicle from being able to move on after five (5) minutes. Delaying the vehicle will result in a No-Show being assessed to your record.

Additionally, please keep in mind that this is a shared-ride service and space is limited. Grocery store carts are not permitted on vehicles, but you may bring packages on-board in a personal two-wheeled, collapsible cart. If you are bringing a cart with you, let the reservationist know when you request your transportation so we can schedule an accessible vehicle that will best accommodate the collapsible cart. Packages may not take up seats on the vehicle and must be safely stowed out of the aisle, either under your seat or on your lap.



**Remember, if you bring more than three (3) bags/groceries than can be carried on or off and you delay the departure of the vehicle beyond five (5) minutes, you will be assessed a No-Show.**

### **Respirators and Portable Oxygen Equipment**

Portable oxygen equipment and portable respirators are permitted on all CAT vehicles. The operator will assist you in securing this equipment on the vehicle. Operators are not permitted, however, to assist you in using this equipment. If you need assistance with portable life support equipment, please arrange to bring someone who can help you.

### **Service Animals**

Customers may travel on any CAT vehicle with a service animal. Service animals include guide dogs, signal dogs, and other animals trained to work or perform tasks for persons with disabilities. If you are traveling with a service animal on CAT Paratransit, be sure to inform the reservationist when you are scheduling a ride. If you have an allergy to animals (not including pet dander) please notify CAT Paratransit when scheduling your reservation. This will aide in assisting that you are not placed on a vehicle with a live animal to which you have an allergic reaction.

You are responsible for maintaining control of your animal while on board the vehicle. If you are planning on Catching a CAT (including Paratransit) with a service animal, please follow these guidelines:

- Keep the animal on a leash or in a container when boarding, while riding, and when exiting the bus.



- Birds, reptiles, amphibians and rodents must be kept in an enclosed carrier/container.
- The animal must remain at your feet or on your lap. The animal may not sit on a vehicle seat.
- The animal must not be aggressive towards people or other animals.
- You are responsible for any damage or soiling caused by the animal.
- The animal must be clean and well-groomed.

## **Pets**

Animals that are not service animals may ride on Paratransit vehicles only if they are properly secured in a cage or kennel. For safety reasons, operators are not permitted to carry cages or kennels on or off the paratransit vehicles. If you need assistance with a pet, please arrange to travel with someone who can help you. If you have an allergy to animals (not including pet dander) please notify CAT Paratransit when scheduling your reservation. This will aide in assisting that you are not placed on a vehicle with a live animal to which you have an allergic reaction.

## **Emergency Procedures**

In the event of an accident or emergency, please remain calm and follow the operator's instructions.

A customer who becomes ill, or who notices another customer who may be ill, should immediately inform the operator.

If a customer is to be met when they are dropped off, due to their disability, and the person meeting them is not there when the operator arrives, the customer will be transported back to the CAT office (or to another safe location). The customer's guardian or caregiver will be notified and will be required to come to pick up



the customer or to make other transportation arrangements. Respite care charges may be assessed to the customer if this occurs. If we are unable to make contact with the guardian or caregiver, the proper authorities will be notified.

## **Inclement Weather**

CAT reserves the right to suspend, modify or cancel service during times of hazardous weather conditions that may jeopardize the safety of our customers, our employees, or our vehicles. On bad weather days, please listen to the school closure reports on the radio or television because paratransit service announcements may be included with school closure information. You can always call the Paratransit office to find out whether service will be cancelled, but the phone lines may be tied up if everyone calls at once.

If your trip is for dialysis, chemotherapy, or another life-sustaining purpose, call CAT Paratransit at 912-354-6900 to make sure you can get where you need to go. Every effort will be made to deliver life-sustaining and essential trips using Paratransit or by arranging other emergency assistance.

Travel is sometimes suspended in areas with lower elevations during heavy rains, hurricanes, and at times when there are flood warnings. If you are planning to travel to these areas at times when inclement weather is predicted, take into considerations the problems you may have in getting a return ride should service be suspended. Also, if you are traveling during inclement weather, please be prepared for longer ride times. For example, bring any medication you may need; if you use oxygen, bring an adequate (extra) supply; and if you are diabetic or hypoglycemic, bring a small snack with you in case the trip is longer than expected due to the weather.





## **Community Disaster Emergency Procedures**

During a community disaster, CAT will make every attempt to transport our Paratransit customers as scheduled. Due to the nature of the disaster, it might be necessary to establish pick-up points that either requires us to walk in to the area to get you or to have you get assistance from someone at your location to bring you to the vehicle. Through coordination with the local disaster control center, we will make every attempt to establish these locations to minimize your travel to and from them.

If you are at home when a disaster occurs, you should stay home. If we took you to a location and you make other transportation arrangements due to the emergency, please let us know so that we can account for all of our customers who have scheduled trips

### **In the event of a community disaster, CAT will:**

- “Freeze” our system. This means all vehicles will hold at their current or at a nearby safe location until contacted by the Control Center.
- Conduct an inventory of vehicles and passengers on board.
- Conduct an inventory of passengers delivered in the system.
- Hold off on any additional passenger pick-ups until we have been able to determine whether we can safely proceed.
- Determine whether it is necessary to drop off passengers already on vehicles at established shelters.
- If a vehicle is out of contact with the Control Center when a community disaster occurs, the operator will proceed according to pre-established protocol:
  - o Determine whether it is safe to proceed.
  - o Assess any passengers on board.





- o Make their way to a CAT facility while continuing to try to contact Control.

By keeping our customer records as up-to-date as possible, we feel we will be able to provide a better service to our customers in times of an emergency. As part of our preparation for an emergency, we may from time to time request your emergency contact information, including a telephone number—preferably your cell phone—as well as the name of a person to contact on your behalf and their phone number. If you have common places that you travel, please provide us with telephone numbers to those locations as well. Make sure we have at least one emergency contact person or location on file for you.

If the nature of the disaster requires that you need your Paratransit trip earlier than originally scheduled, contact the office and we will attempt to meet your scheduling needs. Keep in mind that our ability to respond immediately is limited to the nature of the disaster. You can also call CAT Paratransit if you have not yet been picked up for your trip or to confirm that we are able to safely get you where you need to go.

In the event that our internal phone system is not functional, listen for emergency news announcements.

If it is unsafe for CAT to travel into a disaster area, we reserve the right to suspend, modify, or cancel service without notice.

### **Rider Courtesy and Conduct**

CAT has a list of common-sense rules to ensure the safety of all customers, operators, and others on the road. We ask that all customers, their personal care attendants, and any companions traveling with them observe the following Rules of Conduct:

- Customers shall maintain appropriate, reasonable level of personal hygiene. It is not CAT's objective to enforce



personal hygiene standards on the public, but in order to maintain a clean and safe environment to all who use CAT's vehicles and property, passengers who may contaminate an area due to blood, urine, fecal matter, or other body fluids may be refused transportation. This includes those whose body odor is so offensive that others would be reasonably expected to complain and vacate the immediate area.

- Shirts and shoes or other footwear (if ambulatory) must be worn.
- Smoking shall be kept off of and away from the vehicle.
- Eating or drinking shall be done before entering or after exiting the vehicle, unless required for health reasons.
- Illegal drugs and open containers of alcohol shall not be permitted on the vehicle.
- Abusive, threatening, or obscene language or actions will not be tolerated towards the operator or other customers.
- Please be respectful of service animals and refrain from petting them without the permission of the owner.
- Use of electronic equipment (music, games, etc.) shall be with headphones and kept at a low enough volume so as not to be heard by and disturb other passengers.
- Operation of vehicle equipment is to be left to operators and other CAT employees; tampering can result in accidental injury.
- Trash shall be disposed of properly both on and around the vehicle.
- Baby strollers shall be folded and stowed to avoid blocking the aisle or causing injury to persons on the vehicle.
- Parents/accompanying adults shall make sure their children behave.



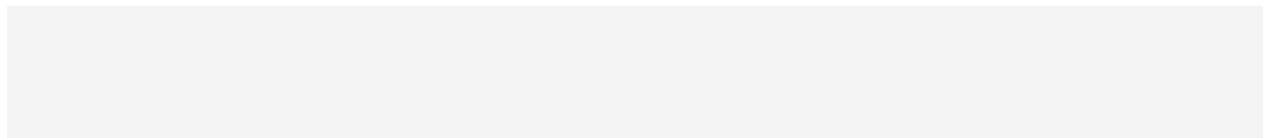
- Head, arms, and other body parts must be kept inside the vehicle.
- Objects may not be thrown from the windows.
- Federal regulations prohibit the transportation of flammable or explosive materials on transit vehicles.
- Dangerous weapons are prohibited on CAT vehicles.
- Deliberate fare evasion may result in loss of services.
- Passengers must depart the transit vehicle upon demand of any authorized CAT representative, including the operator.

Customers, their Personal Care Attendants, or their companions who violate rules of courtesy and conduct may be subject to penalties up to and including suspension of that customer's service.

Customers, their Personal Care Attendants, or their companions who engage in physical abuse or cause physical injury to another customer or the operator, or who engage in other illegal activities, may be subject to **immediate and permanent suspension** from receiving Paratransit service. They may also be subject to criminal prosecution, which may include fines.

Customers, their Personal Care Attendants, or their companions who engage in an activity that disrupts the safe or effective operation of Paratransit services may be subject to a suspension of that customer's service. If a customer on their own is disruptive to CAT service, CAT reserves the right to require that a Personal Care Attendant travel with the customer as an alternative to service suspension.

Any customer who is suspended from service will be notified in writing and will be given an opportunity to appeal the suspension.



## Appeals

### ADA PARATRANSIT APPEAL PROCESS

The ADA requires that transportation providers establish a process to appeal decisions if they are denied access to paratransit service. Chatham Area Transit Authority (CAT) has established an appeals procedure for persons whose applications for paratransit eligibility are denied or for persons who have received suspension notices for other reasons.

An individual may file an appeal when CAT denies paratransit service for any of the following reasons:

Denial of Eligibility

Suspension resulting from excessive No-Shows or Late Cancellations

Suspension for Seriously Disruptive Behavior

CAT will inform an applicant or current customer of a decision to deny eligibility status or to suspend service by letter. Individuals have sixty (60) days from the date of the letter informing them of an eligibility denial or service suspension to request an appeal. Requests for an appeal must be sent in writing to:

Chatham Area Transit Authority  
ADA Paratransit Eligibility Coordinator  
900 E. Gwinnett St  
Savannah, GA 31401

Once the request for an appeal is received, a 3-member Appeal Committee will convene. The Appeal Committee consists of the ADA Coordinator, Chatham County; Director of Residents Service, Housing Authority; one transit using individual person with a disability from the public. The Appeal Committee will issue a final written decision within 30 days of the appeal hearing. CAT will not provide service to individuals who are pursuing an eligibility appeal. However, if the Appeal Committee has not made a decision within 30 days after the



hearing, temporary service will be provided. This temporary service will continue until a decision on the appeal is reached.

Upon appeal for a No-Show suspension, paratransit service will be provided pending the appeal; suspension of service will not begin until the appeals process is complete. If the decision is not made within 30 days of the completion of the appeal hearing, the individual appealing the suspension shall be granted service until a final decision has been reached.

Persons requesting an appeal will be notified in writing of the time, date and location of the appeal hearing. Individuals are encouraged to attend the appeal hearing although attendance is not mandatory. If individuals requesting appeals cannot attend, they may have another person(s) represent them at the hearing. If the individual or a designated representative is not present at the appeal hearing, the Appeal Committee will base its decision on the documentation submitted by CAT.

Passengers who exhibit behavior that CAT documents as being seriously disruptive will be suspended from receiving paratransit services until the Appeal Committee reviews the suspension. The ADA does not require a transportation provider to offer an appeal process if a customer is suspended because of seriously disruptive behavior.

Passengers who exhibit behavior that is violent or illegal will be denied paratransit services. The Appeal Committee will review an incident of violent or illegal behavior upon request, but will only act to verify that such behavior occurred. Verification of violent or illegal behavior will result in denial of paratransit service.

## **Eligibility Appeal Process**

### **STEP 1: FILING AN APPEAL**



Applicants must file an appeal within sixty (60) days from the date of the eligibility determination letter or notice of the suspension.

Appellants may write a letter that includes the pertinent information or complete the Appeal Form included in Part III. Appellants are urged to include any additional medical or other documentation in support of their appeal.

An appeal must be signed, dated, and contain: the name of the individual who was denied ADA eligibility certification or served with a notice of suspension of service, the nature of the disability, and an explanation or additional information describing the basis for the appeal. An appeal must include a return address and telephone number. An appeal that does not include the required information is incomplete and will be returned for completion.

### **Receipt of Appeals**

Upon receipt by the ADA Paratransit Eligibility Coordinator, appeals will be date-stamped. Appeals that are received after the 60-day time period will be returned to the sender. If the appeal is timely, the ADA Paratransit Eligibility Coordinator will review it to ensure that enough information is included.

The ADA Paratransit Eligibility Coordinator may contact the appellant for missing information. Appeals without the necessary information will be returned for completion.

## **STEP 2. REVIEW/DECISION BY THE APPEAL COMMITTEE**

The ADA Paratransit Eligibility Coordinator will forward the completed appeal to the Appeal Committee. At this point in the review, the Appeal Committee may:



- reverse a determination of ineligibility or revise conditions of eligibility
- cancel or modify a suspension of service, or
- uphold the decision and forward the package to the ADA Paratransit Eligibility Coordinator, who serves as staff to the Appeal Committee.

## **Preparing for the Hearing**

In the event that the Appeal Committee upholds the decision denying eligibility or the Suspension, the ADA Paratransit Eligibility Coordinator will review the appeal for completion, schedule the hearing, and forward documentation to members of the Appeal Committee.

## **Scheduling the Hearing**

The ADA Paratransit Eligibility Coordinator will schedule the hearing with the Appeal Committee. The Appeal Committee will hear appeals on a monthly basis as needed. The hearings will be held at Chatham Area Transit, 900 East Gwinnett St. The day and time of the hearings will be decided by the members of the Appeal Committee. Appellants will be notified of the date in writing at least seven (7) business days prior to the hearing.

The ADA Paratransit Eligibility Coordinator will notify the appellant of the date, time, and room number for the hearing and advise the appellant of the necessity of producing all documentation and/or witnesses at the time of the hearing. The ADA Paratransit Eligibility Coordinator will also inquire whether the Appellant needs any accommodations for the hearing or transportation to the hearing.





## **Documentation**

For appeals of eligibility determinations, the ADA Paratransit Eligibility Coordinator will, at least seven (7) business days prior to the hearing, provide the Appeal Committee and other applicable staff with copies of the following:

- Original application submitted by the appellant
  - Professional medical verification
  - Reports of interview and functional assessment evaluation
  - Additional information submitted by the appellant in filing the appeal
- Appellants have the right to review all pertinent documents used by the Appeal Committee in determining their eligibility.

## **STEP 3. APPEAL COMMITTEE HEARING**

At the formal hearing, the appellant will be provided an opportunity to address the Paratransit Appeal Committee and present testimony, documentation and additional evidence. The hearing will not be open to the public; however, appellants may be accompanied by a personal care attendant and/or other representatives or witnesses who can provide pertinent testimony. Proceedings of the hearing will be recorded. In the formal hearing, the Appeal Committee shall hear and consider:

- Information provided in the appeal letter or on the appeal form
- Statement(s) of the appellant, his/her representative, or witnesses
- Report by ADA Paratransit Eligibility Coordinator
- Information from CAT staff (as needed)
- Other relevant information





## **STEP 4. APPEAL COMMITTEE DECISION**

After reviewing and considering the information presented as part of the appeal process, the Appeal Committee shall render its decision by majority rule. Appeal decisions will be forwarded to the ADA Paratransit Eligibility Coordinator

***The Appeal Committee must render and inform appellant of its decision within 30 calendar days of the appeal hearing.***

If the decision is not made within thirty (30) days, presumptive eligibility applies until the decision is rendered and the appellant is informed.

Members of the Appeal Committee are strictly prohibited from discussing the details of the appeal, the name of the appellant, or any other information about the appellant with any person not directly involved in the appeal process.

### **Notice of Appeal Determination**

The ADA Paratransit Eligibility Coordinator will prepare a letter to the appellant informing him or her of the determination of the Appeal Committee and forward a formal copy of the decision to CAT. The letter will specify in detail the reasons for the maintenance, modification, or reversal of the matter of appeal.

***The decision of the Appeal Committee serves as the final decision for the Chatham Area Transit Authority.***

Within three (3) days of the decision, all Appeal Committee copies of appellants' applications and supporting information will be returned to the ADA Paratransit Eligibility Coordinator.



## Appellants' Next Steps

If there is a change regarding the disability, appellants may re-apply for Paratransit eligibility.

Appellants who disagree with the decision of the Appeal Committee have the right to file a formal complaint. Appellants should mail formal complaints to the following address:

A customer who disagrees with their eligibility decision may request an appeal. The appeal request must be made in writing and must be received by CAT within sixty (60) days of the eligibility determination. Send written requests to:

**Appeals Committee  
Chatham Area Transit Authority  
900 E. Gwinnett St.  
P.O. Box 9118  
Savannah, GA 31412-9118**

A written copy of the appeal process may be obtained by calling the Chatham Area Transit at 912-236-2111.

### **Service Suspension/Termination Appeal Process**

Notification of suspension or termination of Paratransit service will always be sent in writing so that customers have the opportunity to discuss or perhaps appeal the circumstances. **You must follow the process outlined in your written notification.** Failure to follow the process described by the dates listed in the letter will result in the service suspension being upheld.



## Suggestions and Comments

We welcome all feedback, suggestions, and comments about our Paratransit service. Call our Customer Service Ride Line at 912-233-5767, e-mail [info@catchacat.org](mailto:info@catchacat.org), and visit our website to fill out an online feedback form at [www.catchacat.org](http://www.catchacat.org), or mail a letter to:

Paratransit Customer Support  
Chatham Area Transit Authority  
900 E. Gwinnett Street  
P.O. Box 9118  
Savannah, GA 31412-9118

To allow us to follow-up on your suggestions or concerns, please be specific and provide us with the following information:

- Your name, address, and phone number.
- The date, time, and location of the incident.
- If your concern involves a scheduling issue, we will need the name of the employee you spoke with and the time of your conversation with them.
- A detailed description of the incident or suggestion.

To assist us in researching a scheduling concern, we encourage you to keep track of the date, time and reservationist who schedule your rides on a calendar or in a date book.

We commit to you that we will log and follow-up on each comment received with contact information, and we will contact you by phone or in writing to discuss our findings. Due to the investigation process, please allow us 5-7 days to complete our research once you have submitted your information.



***Does CAT's Paratransit service have public participation in determining policies?***

***CAT receives public comments through the Coastal Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (CORE MPO) Advisory Committee on Accessible Transportation (ACAT). Effective January 2004, ACAT meets four times each year beginning in February. Effective June 2009, the meetings are held at 1:00p.m. on the fourth Monday of the month at the Joe Murray Rivers, Jr., Intermodal Transit Center, 610 West Oglethorpe Ave. The public is encouraged to attend ACAT meetings. To verify exact dates, times, and location, please call Chatham Area Transit customer service at (912) 233-5767.***



*Handbook revisions: May 14, 2003, August 18, 2004,  
August 20, 2008, October 15, 2008, December 23, 2008,  
February 2, 2009, May 7, 2009, January 15, 2013,  
September 10, 2014, February 11, 2016, January 2, 2017,  
October 23, 2018*

*Thank you for your patronage. All of us at CAT are proud to  
provide Savannah-Chatham County with the accessible mobility  
options our community needs to get around and to come together.*



