

Mini Bus **ADA Paratransit**

Ridership Policies And Guidelines

**Finney County Transit
FIT**

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**It is understood that FIT
passengers ride at their own
risk.**

**No liabilities will be
accepted.**

Effective May., 2011

Approved by the
Finney County Committee
on Aging, Inc.
05/17/2011

1. Eligibility: Persons who are certified under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) as having a disability that prevents them from riding fixed-route buses are eligible to use the Mini Bus Paratransit Service which operates within 3/4 mile either side of the City Link fixed routes. In order to qualify, the applicant and a health care provider must complete and both must sign the Mini Bus Paratransit application form. The applicant has 21 days from the date they first rode to submit a COMPLETED application. A decision will be made within 21 days of receipt of a completed application. Applicants will be assessed on their ability to complete a series of exercises to determine their ability to board and access the City Link fixed route bus service. Disability alone does not qualify passenger for paratransit service. If passenger is capable of riding fixed route and is over age 60 and/or has a medically documented disability he/she will receive a half fare City Link fixed route card and will not be approved for Mini Bus paratransit service. If a decision is not made within that 21 day period, the applicant will be considered as eligible until a decision is made. If an applicant is denied, the applicant will be given an explanation in writing explaining the specific reason as to why they were denied. Applicant also will be provided in writing the appeals process (see # 16). Application forms are available from the Finney County Transit (FIT) office or on-line at www.seniorcenterfc.com. The applicant will not be charged any "user fees" that cause an unreasonable burden upon the applicant, including doctor's fees and application fees. An ARNP is available at the Senior Center on a limited basis for no-cost consultation on the application and subsequent signature if verified by the ARNP.

2. Hours/Days of Operation: Hours are Monday through Friday (except Holidays) from 6:00 am -7:00 pm with the last call for return being 6:30 pm. Passengers outside Garden City city limits must call early enough to allow drivers to return to the FIT Center by 7:00 p.m. Passengers are asked to call by 7:00 p.m. the last work day before to schedule rides.

3. Fares: Per person per one-way trip inside the city limits-\$1.00 US. Monthly Pass (unlimited rides on all Mini Bus Paratransits) - \$40.00 (Must show Monthly Pass each time on boarding or pay \$1.00 fare) In case of are dispute, the passenger will pay the fare and report the circumstances to the FIT office. County Fare: outside of city limits and within 5 miles driving distance of city limits - \$2.00. Driver will calculate miles driven from city limits to pick up location. Children 5 and under are free with a paying passenger. A one-way trip is considered to be one-way service to a location from another location whether or not the person disembarks. Children 10 and under must be accompanied by a person 16 or older and have the same origin and destination. Children 11 to 16 must present picture ID to driver on boarding to ride alone.

4. Pickup times/wait policy: Pickup window: Passengers must be at the main entrance fifteen (15) minutes ahead of their scheduled pickup time. Drivers may also pick up fifteen (15) minutes after the scheduled pickup time; however, they will arrive as close to the scheduled pickup time as possible. Drivers will not wait more than **FIVE (5)** minutes for anyone to board the bus as long as it falls within the 15 minute window on either side of the scheduled pickup time. If not on board within five (5) minutes, the driver will leave and will not return that day. This will be considered a No Go and all other rides scheduled for that day will be cancelled. (See #5)

5. No Shows/Cancellations: A No Go occurs when a rider does not cancel a reservation at least two hours before the start of the scheduled pickup window (see #4) and does not take the trip. This includes failing to be ready to board the bus within 5 minutes of its arrival, during the pickup window and/or cancelling with the driver when the bus arrives. This is a serious infraction of FIT rules.

FIT will attempt to contact riders who are not at the pick-up location when the vehicle arrives to let them know they must go to the vehicle or they will receive a No Go. The person will be charged their normal fare for the untaken ride the next time they ride. If the rider cannot be contacted, a message will be left on an answering machine if available. If a rider No Go's the first half of a round trip, the second half will be cancelled unless the rider contacts FIT immediately to retain the second half of the round trip. FIT will make every effort to dispatch a vehicle to bring that customer home, with the understanding that it will be on a first availability basis to pick up that customer. Riders will receive a warning in writing after they receive four (4) No Go's within six months. After six No Go's within six months the rider will be sent a suspension letter resulting in a 30 day suspension of service. If a rider is suspended and then demonstrates a pattern of No Go's after the original suspension has ended, the rider may subsequently be suspended for longer periods. First Suspension: 30 days; Second Suspension*: 60 days; Third Suspension*: 90 days; Fourth Suspension*: Indefinite pending demonstration that the problem behavior can and will be changed with a minimum of 90 days. Riders are not penalized for No Go's that occur due to sudden emergencies which make it impossible for them to cancel. Because only two hour's notice is needed to cancel, it is anticipated that most riders will be able to cancel in a timely fashion. Riders are not penalized for being a No Go if the bus arrived late, that is, after the end of the pickup window, or if a reservation error was made by the dispatcher. Riders are encouraged to discuss their record with staff if they feel they have been No Go'd in error. Disputes regarding this policy will be referred to the FIT Committee through the grievance procedure as outlined in guideline #15 and appeals process #16.

*within 2 years of most recent suspension

6. Delays: Due to the number of rides provided, it is not always possible for buses to run exactly on schedule. It is important to allow extra time to ensure passenger's scheduling needs can be met.

7. Personal Assistance to Riders: Drivers may enter a commercial lobby to assist a rider to the vehicle but are not permitted to enter a residence. Drivers are permitted to assist passengers with activities directly related to boarding and de-boarding the bus. Drivers are permitted to assist special needs passengers with their packages up to the limits outlined in guideline #12 up to the door of the residence. One Personal Care Attendant (PCA) may ride with a disabled rider to assist them with their personal needs without charge. Only drivers will operate mobility aid lift/restraint system equipment. All medical equipment (oxygen tanks, walkers, etc.) will be secured by the driver for the duration of the ride. Drivers are permitted to assist in fastening/unfastening seat belts/shoulder restraints if requested by passenger. Child safety seats are available on all FIT vehicles for parents/guardians to use on a first come first serve basis.

8. Mobility Aids: Section 37.3 of the DOT's regulations implementing the ADA Act of 1990 (49CFR Parts 27,37 and 38) defines a "common wheelchair" as a mobility aid belonging to any class of three or four-wheeled devices, usable in doors, designed for and used by individuals with mobility impairments, whether operated manually or powered. A "common wheelchair" does not exceed 30 inches in width and 48 inches in length measured two inches above the ground, and does not weigh more than 600 pounds when occupied. Drivers may assist passengers using mobility aids. Drivers will not assist passengers using mobility aids up or down stairs. Passengers are responsible for either a ramp or someone other than the bus driver in getting in and out of their home, doctor's office, etc. where steps are present. Drivers are not permitted to assist individuals in transferring from a mobility aid to regular vehicle seating. Such riders must provide their own PCA to assist in their transfer. Drivers are not permitted to push mobility aids whose weight of combined

passenger and mobility aid exceeds 300 lbs. These passengers are responsible for their own movement or a PCA to push and maneuver the mobility aid onto the bus, into a forward facing position and in moving it out of and away from the bus when de-boarding. All mobility aids must be secured by the 4-Point Tie-down system. Power driven mobility aids must be in the "off" position while on the lift.

9. Conduct, Hygiene and Prohibited Behaviors: If at any time the driver feels they are in an unsafe situation the driver will have the right to exercise judgment and stop the vehicle and ask passenger to get off vehicle or call authorities if needed. Inappropriate conduct, including behaviors which present a danger to other passengers, will not be tolerated. These include, but are not limited to: intoxication, fighting, arguing, sexual harassment, threatening the driver or fellow passengers, use of foul or derogatory language including excessive conversation, playing loud audio devices or engaging in any type of business on the bus, legal or illegal, on the bus or at a bus stop. Anyone's behavior that poses a safety hazard to him/her or others caused by misplaced bodily fluids will be denied bus service. At the driver's discretion, a rider who engages in persistent inappropriate and/or dangerous behavior can be required to vacate the vehicle. No alcoholic beverages may be consumed on the bus. No other food or drink is to be consumed on the bus except for medical purposes as allowed by the driver. NO TOBACCO USAGE OR OPEN CONTAINERS, NO WEAPONS, AMMUNITION OR HAZARDOUS MATERIAL SUCH AS CAR BATTERIES, GASOLINE, PROPANE, ETC. ARE ALLOWED ON THE BUS. NO SMOKING is allowed within 20 feet of the bus or 50 feet of FIT main entrance. If a passenger is found to have aforementioned item, he/she will be asked to vacate the bus immediately and will not be allowed to ride anymore that day. If a person refuses to vacate the bus when requested to do so by the driver for any of the above listed reasons, the police will be called to escort him/her off the bus. A Second offense will result in a 30 day Suspension, a Third offense in a 60 day Suspension and a Fourth offense in an Indefinite Suspension pending demonstration that the problem behavior can and will be changed with a minimum of 90 days Sus-

10. Pets/Service Animals: The ADA rule defines "service animal" as a dog that has been individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability. The rule states that other animals, whether wild or domestic, do not qualify as service animals. Dogs that are not trained to perform tasks that mitigate the effects of a disability, including dogs that are used purely for emotional support, are not service animals. No animals other than service dogs are allowed on the bus for any reason.

11. Bad Weather Policy: In the event of inclement weather check local radio/TV for related closings. If USD 457 Schools close down, the Mini Bus also closes down. The Senior Center Director may override the school closing by announcing via radio/TV that the bus service will run. Additionally, if the management of the Mini Bus Service feels the weather is so severe it is unsafe to operate, then operations will cease for the day in question. Drivers have the right to exercise judgment as to whether he/she can safely drive on a particular roadway, driveway or highway. In the event of high wind warnings, high profile vehicles are not allowed to travel outside the city limits. Drivers will not push wheelchairs on ramps/walks/etc. that are not clear of snow and ice.

12. Limitations: Drivers will not carry or lift parcels/carry-on items greater than 20 pounds in weight. Drivers are limited to carrying bags up flights of steps no more than 7 steps high and are only allowed to make 2 trips to carry packages to the main entry door or lobby. Drivers are not permitted to transport furniture or appliances for passengers.

13. Emergencies: The Mini Bus is not designed for medical emergency situations (absent a natural disaster where vehicles may be used for evacuation). Transportation will not be provided in these instances. Persons having an emergency will be instructed to call 911 so an ambulance can transport them.

14. Evictions: Anyone who does not adhere to

these guidelines can and will be evicted from using the bus. **15. Grievance Procedures:** This grievance procedure has been developed to assure passengers of fair and equitable access to FIT Bus Service. In the event of suspension, information will be sent outlining the appeals process with the suspension letter. When a consumer has any problem, the following procedure should be followed to resolve the conflict: each passenger is expected to communicate in writing directly to the Transportation Director or his/her designee regarding ride-related actions, occurrences or attitudes perceived as unfair or inequitable. A passenger who believes he/she has suffered a grievance should communicate the matter with the Transportation Director or his/her designee within five working days of the occurrence of the alleged grievance in an attempt to arrive at a satisfactory solution. The Transportation Director or his/her designee will have five working days to respond, making every effort to resolve the grievance at this level. If a resolution is not reached, the grievance must be described in writing and submitted to the FIT Committee within 30 days for their review. FIT is Title VI Equal Opportunity and Civil Rights Compliant as posted in vehicles. Copies are available upon request.

16. Appeals: If the customer wishes to appeal the decision of the FIT Committee a written appeal must be submitted to the Finney County Committee On Aging, Inc. within 30 days. The board of directors will review the evidence presented by the party bringing the grievance and by the Transportation Director at their next regularly scheduled meeting and will provide a decision in writing within 30 days including specific reason for decision to all parties involved. If no decision is made within the 30 days, provisional services will be provided until a decision is reached. Board of Director's decision is final.

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