

# Orange County Transportation Rider's Guide



**OrangeCounty**  
PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

November 1, 2023

(919)245-2004

TDD/TYY (919)-644-3045

[www.orangecountync.gov](http://www.orangecountync.gov)

This information is available in an alternate format upon request.

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## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the Orange County Public Transportation (OCPT) services is to provide essential, feasible, safe, and convenient transportation for residents of rural Orange County. OCPT is open to all residents of Orange County. Each bus is equipped to accommodate disabled or special needs passengers. OCPT serves residents who live outside the Chapel Hill/Carrboro city limits.

OCPT provides transportation for qualified individuals who are involved or enrolled in Orange County Human Services programs such as Department of Social Services, Health Department, Orange Enterprises, and Department on Aging.

## SERVICES PROVIDED

Orange County Public Transportation, operating as Orange County Public Transit, provides a variety of public transportation services to the citizens of rural Orange County (excluding Chapel Hill/Carrboro city limits).

Transit options include public fixed bus routes, origin to destination service for the disabled and elderly, and transportation to senior centers. OCPT provides safe and efficient transportation to locations within Orange County limits and within a 5-mile radius of Orange County. The following detailed services will help you identify which service you qualify for or best fits your transportation service needs. Once an OCPT operator arrives at your location, the Operator will wait a maximum of 5 minutes. The 5-minute wait time starts either at the time of arrival, if in the 30-minute window that was given by our dispatcher or once the window starts if the driver arrives early.

### ELDERLY/DISABLED TRANSPORTATION (EDTAP)

Orange County Public Transportation offers Orange County elderly (60+) or disabled residents transportation from their residence to their destinations within Orange County. A certification form is required to qualify for this transit program. Non-emergency door-to-door transportation to area medical facilities in Orange and Durham Counties or to the closest provider can be arranged with a 2-day working notice. Special rates are available to the elderly (60+) disabled, or Medicaid eligible residents.

### SENIOR CENTER/NUTRITION SITE TRANSPORTATION

Daily transportation (Monday-Friday) is provided for seniors (60+) to Orange County nutrition sites and Senior Centers. OCPT serves two nutrition sites in Orange County:

Seymour Senior Center  
2551 Homestead Road, Chapel Hill, NC

Passmore Senior Center (Formerly Central Orange Senior Center)  
103 Meadowlands Drive, Hillsborough, NC  
[www.orangecountync.gov/aging](http://www.orangecountync.gov/aging)

### ADA COMPLIMENTARY PARATRANSIT SERVICE

ADA requires all federally funded public transit operators to provide a special service to eligible disabled individuals whose disabilities prevent them from using accessible public transit. This special service, called “paratransit service”, is required by the ADA to complement fixed-route public transit service. For this reason, it operates at similar times and in similar areas as fixed-route transportation.

ADA also requires transit operators to establish specific eligibility criteria for users of paratransit service and that there be no trip priorities given (e.g., medical versus recreation). ADA complementary paratransit service currently operates within the  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile corridor around the existing fixed bus routes. Please note that as with fixed route services, schedules can change between days of the week and hours of the day due to weather, holidays, or other factors.

### SHARED RIDE SERVICES

Although demand response transit provides a wonderful service to those in need, it does not work for everyone in every situation any more than a fixed route works for everyone. Due to the nature of the shared ride system, demand response passengers may be required to wait for pickup or arrive early at their destination. Flexibility is key for you as a transit rider. As it is a shared ride service, you will often have to make several stops enroute to your destination. Individuals requiring a direct trip to or from their destination are encouraged to consider other options such as OCPT MOD service, volunteer driver or taxicab.

### COST

The fare is between \$0.00 and \$2.00 on Orange County Public Transit fixed route depending on the route traveled. ADA paratransit eligible riders are charged \$ 0.00 for ADA paratransit services. EDTap, Senior Nutrition and all other Demand Response service riders are charged \$ 3.00. A personal care attendant (PCA) is permitted to accompany an ADA-eligible rider at no charge, and a companion may ride at no charge, and a companion may ride at the same fare charged the ADA rider only if they have the same origin and destination as the ADA eligible rider.

### DAYS AND HOURS OF OPERATION

Orange County Public Transit operates service Monday through Friday from 7:00 am until 5:00 pm. OCPT provides limited transit service on Saturdays and on holidays we service Carrboro Dialysis Center only.

### HOLIDAY SCHEDULE

Orange County Public Transportation is closed for the following holidays (serving Carrboro Dialysis Center only):

- New Year's Day
- Martin Luther King Jr. Day
- Good Friday
- Memorial Day
- Juneteenth
- Independence Day
- Labor Day
- Thanksgiving Day (and Friday)
- Christmas Eve
- Christmas Day

## ELIGIBILITY

### Process

You must first determine if you live within or can come within the service area. Our ADA service area is anywhere within the  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile corridor around the existing fixed routes. Our Demand Response Service area is the rural boundaries of Orange County.

The application that is submitted must be filled out completely to be considered for approval. OCTS has twenty-one (21) days from the date of receiving a completed application to get it processed and approved. You will be notified by mail if you are eligible.

Individuals who can access the regular fixed route bus service may not be eligible for OCPT ADA and/or Demand Response Services. Individuals applying for this service must be unable to access the fixed route services due to conditions which prevent them from getting to/from a fixed route bus stop and/or conditions which prevent them from being able to get on, ride, or get off an ADA accessible, ramp- equipped vehicle. Simply having a disability does not guarantee eligibility.

An individual for whom performing these tasks are inconvenient or uncomfortable is not a qualification for needing this service.

There are four (4) types of certifications granted to eligible OCTS clients:

- **Unconditional Certification**—the individual has a disability or health condition that always prevents the use of a fixed route buses and OCTS service is provided for all trips.
- **Conditional Certification**—the individual can use or learn to use fixed route buses, but their disability or health condition prevents some travel on the bus. Access may be provided on trips where the individual is unable to take the bus.
- **Permanent Certification**—the individual has a permanent disability and/or health condition that will not improve so they will not need to reapply.
- **Temporary Certification**—the individual has a specific short-term disability or health condition that prevents them from using a fixed route bus.

Eligibility for Orange County Transit Services is granted for a period not to exceed three years unless an individual is granted permanent certification.

To enable us to accurately determine your eligibility for this service, **please complete the application as completely and accurately as possible**. The application has two parts, and both must be completed and turned into the OCTS Administrative office. Incomplete applications will be returned to the applicant. The questions are meant to determine the circumstances under which you can use fixed route or Paratransit.

Upon request, this letter and application are available in large print, and other alternative formats.

Part “A” should be filled out by the applicant or the applicant’s representative. This should be completed and signed by the applicant or if the applicant is less than 18 years of age or unable to sign, the applicant’s guardian or anyone who assisted in completing the form.

Part “B” is the Professional Verification Form. The applicant should complete the authorization for release of information form and then send the release form and Part B to a professional familiar with the applicant’s disability. Professionals include, but are not limited to, the following:

Family Physician	Ophthalmologist	Case Manager/Social Worker
Independent Specialist	Occupational Therapist	Orientation & Mobility Therapist
Physical Therapist	Licensed Social Worker	Pediatrician
Rehabilitation Specialist	Psychologist	Neurologist
Psychiatrist	Registered Nurse	Nurse Practitioner

The selected professional must complete Part "B" and return the entire application either directly to the applicant or to the OCTS office.

The completed application will be processed within 21 days of receipt. You will then be notified in writing of your eligibility status. If we determine that you are able to use fixed route bus service and are therefore ineligible for OCTS, we will notify you of the reason(s) for this determination.

### APPEALS

Applicants can appeal any eligibility decision made by OCTS that limits your ability to use ADA Complementary Paratransit service. For example:

- You were found "Not Eligible" for ADA Complementary Paratransit
- You were found "Conditionally Eligible" and disagree with the eligibility conditions you were given, or you think the conditional status is wrong.

Appeals should be made within 60 days from the date of the letter notify you of the eligibility decision. All requests for an appeal can be made in writing and should be mailed to:

ADA Complementary Paratransit Appeals Board  
 Orange County Transportation Services  
 606 Highway 86 N  
 Hillsborough, NC 27278

### RECERTIFICATION

Recertification of eligibility is required every three years (or less with a temporary disability). We do, however, understand that some conditions do not change over time.

It is very important that you keep your eligibility information up to date to ensure emergency contact and other information is available. Please contact us if you have a change in the following:

- Your address
- Your telephone numbers
- The type of mobility device you are using

**\*Note: Even though an individual is certified under ADA complementary paratransit, if the origin or destination is outside the ADA service area (3/4 of mile of a bus route), this would be a demand response trip and would fall under the policies and procedures of demand response. If you would like a copy of the demand response ride guide, please go to our website at [orangecountync.gov](http://orangecountync.gov) or contact the OCTS office at 919-245-2004.**

## SCHEDULING A RIDE

### How to schedule a ride

You must schedule your rides in advance. OCPT will accept reservations no more than seven (7) days in advance. ADA reservations are 24 hours in advance by 5:00 p.m. Demand Response rides are two days in advance by 5:00 p.m.

Requests for service must be taken when administrative offices are open and during comparable normal business hours on days when administrative offices are closed if service is provided on the following day. Reservation may be made up to 30 days in advance.

- If your pick-up window starts before 9am on the following day, individuals will be called back by 5pm the evening before advising them of their pick-up window.

### Pick-up window

At the time you call, you will be given a range of time for pick up. This is called your pick-up window. This thirty (30) minute span is when you can expect your pick-up to occur. You are expected to be ready to board the vehicle within five (3) minutes when the operator arrives at any point within the window. Passengers should be ready to depart ten (10) minutes before their scheduled pick-up time and be available for travel when the vehicle arrives. Drivers are instructed to wait until the beginning of the scheduled pick-up time and will not leave before. Paratransit operators will wait 3 minutes for a rider to board the vehicle when arriving within the 30-minute ready-time window. If a rider does not board the vehicle within the 3-minute wait time, the operator will mark the rider as a No-Show and will depart the location. Paratransit is not required to call the rider when the vehicle arrives or before leaving the pick-up location; riders are expected to be ready to board the vehicle upon its arrival. When your vehicle arrives, you are required to present the exact fare or Umo card. Please note: The operator cannot take you to your requested destination without the required fare.

### Making reservations

When calling to schedule a trip, please be prepared to give the following information:

- Your name
- The day and date you would like transportation.
- Your appointment times.
- The exact address of where you are going.
- If you will have a personal care attendant (PCA) or companion going with you

### Please note:

- OCTS does not provide emergency trips or same day trips.
- Changes cannot be made to any trips on the day of your scheduled ride. This includes time of travel or changes to addresses.
- OCTS is a shared ride service and exact pick-up, and drop-off times cannot be guaranteed.
- OCTS is a shared ride service and does not guarantee that drivers will be able to wait on passengers to “drop-off” or “pick-up” something.

OCTS representatives will do their best to accommodate the times that you desire; however, alternate times may be offered. Early booking helps with our scheduling. If you book your trip early, you still may be contacted to adjust your pick-up window to accommodate other

riders. OCTS is an equal rights service, and it is against the law to give priority to one trip over another for any reason.

OCTS is a shared ride program, and representatives may negotiate the times of your trip by one hour. For example, if you would like to be picked up at 10:15 a.m. and that pick-up window is not available, we may offer you a trip where the pick-up window starts as early as 9:15 a.m. or as late as 11:15 a.m. You will never be given a pick-up window that will make you late for an appointment.

Once your trip has been scheduled, please do the following:

- Please write down the pick-up window you are given when you schedule your trip(s).
- You should get the name of the person to whom you spoke.

### CANCELLATION POLICY

Riders should contact OCTS to cancel their ride with as much advance notice as possible, but at least one (1) hour before the beginning of their pick-up window.

When trips are not canceled at least one (1) hour before the beginning of the pick-up window, the trip will be considered a late cancel (See no show policy).

Cancellations will be taken 6:30am-6pm, Monday-Friday.

If you are calling to cancel before 8:00am, Monday-Friday, you will only be allowed to cancel trips for the same day.

If you would like to cancel for multiple days, you would need to call back between 8am-5pm, Monday-Friday.

### EXCESSIVE CANCELLATIONS

Even when a scheduled trip is cancelled a day in advance or at least one (1) hour in advance of the established pick-up window, a pattern of excessive cancellations may often cause paratransit service to be unavailable at a time other passenger(s) may desire the service. In response to this situation OCTS has implemented the following to address a pattern of excessive cancellations:

Excessive cancellations are defined as: passengers that cancel more than 50% of their scheduled trips within any thirty (30) day period.

Actions resulting from pattern or practice of excessive cancellations.

#### **First Occurrence:**

- Passengers will receive a written warning that they have cancelled more than 50% of their scheduled trips.

#### **Second Occurrence within one year:**

- Passengers will be suspended for five (5) consecutive operating days.

#### **Third Occurrence within one year:**

- Passengers will be suspended for seven (7) consecutive operating days.

#### **Fourth Occurrence within one year:**

- Passengers will be suspended for ten (10) consecutive operating days.

#### **Fifth Occurrence within one year:**

- Passengers will be suspended for fourteen (14) consecutive operating days.

Individuals with excessive cancellations in violation of this policy will:

- Receive a written notice of the violations listing the trips scheduled, trips canceled, and trips taken over the specific time period of the violation and the proposed sanction.

### SUBSCRIPTION/STANDING ORDER

Subscription trips can be requested after 30 days of using OCTS. During the thirty (30) day trial, the client will not have any no shows, or late cancellations. Subscription trips will be given based on the client going to the same location, at the same time, on the same day every week for a minimum of 90 days. Once the 30-day period is over, a client may request a subscription and it will be considered based on existing subscription trips, available trip capacity and the ADA requirement that capacity be maintained for demand trips with no trip denials. Once a subscription trip has been set up, OCTS will automatically schedule your trip and pick you up without the need for you to make an individual reservation for that trip. It is important to remember when you have a standing ride or subscription to call and cancel if you will not be able to take your ride for any reason.

A subscription can be cancelled under the following circumstances

- If the trip is cancelled by the passenger for 14 consecutive days.
- If the passenger has excessive advance cancellations, late cancellations, and/or no shows within a 30-day period.

### USING OCPT

#### Vehicle arrival

When your operator arrives for your pick-up during your scheduled window, he/she will wait no more than five (5) minutes for you to begin boarding the vehicle. If you are not ready to leave within five minutes of the vehicle's arrival, the operator will be required to move on to their next pick-up and you will be given a no show for that trip.

#### Will-call

When you are not sure what time you will be ready for a trip, you can schedule a “will- call” trip. This means that you will contact the OCTS office at 919-245-2004 when you are completely done and ready to leave. The first available bus/van will be dispatched to do your return trip. OCTS has one hour to get passengers picked up when they call for a will-call return trip. Wait times can vary and will depend on previously scheduled trips, previously requested returns, time of day, traffic, location from which the passenger is calling, etc. Going to the store and having frozen foods or ice cream will not influence how long your return might take.

Please do not contact the office until you are **completely done and ready to leave**. Please do not contact the office again after your initial call unless you have been waiting at least 40-45 minutes on your return ride.

Drivers are not required to go inside past the first set of interior doors to look for passengers. Please be specific about your location and make sure you are where you can see the bus/van

and the driver can find you.

If you call for a will-call return trip and call back within the one (1) hour window to say you do not want the return or the driver arrives with the one (1) hour widow to get you and they cannot find you within five (3) minutes, you will be charged a no show.

### Trip length

OCTS is a shared ride program and travel time can vary depending on the number of trips being taken. Rides are scheduled to try and ensure that your time on board is no more than an hour. Usually much less time is required to complete the trip. Sometimes extenuating circumstances do occur where some trips may exceed this one-hour standard.

### Curb to curb

With curb-to-curb service, the OCTS bus/van stops at the curb of a passenger's residence or point of origin.

### Door to door

If requested, operators can provide assistance to an individual, to/from the door of their origin/destination, to/from the bus/van. Operators cannot provide "personal services" that exceed "door to door". Door service cannot be provided for those individuals whose pick-up or drop-off locations would cause the driver to lose sight of the vehicle. **Drivers may never enter a rider's residence.**

## PERSONAL CARE ATTENDANT/ COMPANIONS

Passengers who cannot travel independently or enter/exit a facility should be accompanied by a Personal Care Attendant (PCA). You may bring a Personal Care Attendant (PCA) to assist you. A PCA is someone designated specifically to help the eligible passenger with his/her personal needs. PCAs may always ride at no charge. The "personal needs" being met by the PCA may or may not involve any aspect of the eligible passenger's trip. The presence of a PCA shall not relieve the OCTS operator of their responsibility for the rider during transport. You must notify OCTS when you schedule your trip if you plan on bringing a PCA along on your trip(s).

You may also bring one additional rider along with you on your OCTS trip(s) if they are traveling to and from the same locations as the eligible passenger. This additional passenger does not need to be eligible for the service and is considered a companion.

Fares for companions are the same as for passengers. You must notify Access when you schedule your trip if you plan on bringing a companion along on your trip(s).

## CAREGIVER RESPONSIBILITY

An attendant or caregiver must be present at the pick-up/drop-off point for riders who cannot be left alone. If a responsible attendant or caregiver is not present when the driver arrives to pick-up or drop-off these passengers, it can seriously disrupt the driver's schedule. Continued absences of an attendant or caregiver can result in suspension and/or termination of service.

## RIDING THE VAN/Bus

### Carry on/bag policy

- Passengers will be allowed to transport 3 plastic bags that they can carry in **one trip** onto or off the bus/van.
- The bags must be able to be held in the passenger's lap or placed on the floor between their legs. If the bus/van is empty, the bags may be placed in an empty seat next to the passenger.
- If a passenger is using a wheelchair/scooter, the same policy applies. Bags that are placed on the mobility device cannot inhibit the driver's ability to safely secure the mobility device.
- Drivers are not required to carry bags onto or off the van. Passengers are allowed to have one person accompany them to assist with their bags free of charge. Passengers must notify OCTS when scheduling their trips if someone will be going with them.
- Passengers with too many bags can be required to find another way from their destination and the trip will be considered a no show.

### Inclement weather

- The decision if OCTS will run on a bad weather day is generally made early in the morning and is posted on channel 5 (WRAL) channel 2(WFYM Greensboro) channel 11 (WTVD) Spectrum News, Chapel Boro, the transit system website.
- If you are unsure if OCTS is running, you can call 919-245-2008 as early as 6:30 am, Monday-Friday.
- If OCTS operates and your pick-up/drop-off is closed due to weather, it is the passenger's responsibility to contact the office to cancel the trip(s). OCTS does not monitor closings of other locations.
- If service has already begun and the weather gets bad creating hazardous road conditions, OCTS can decide to stop service without guaranteeing passengers a return trip.
- If the path to the doorway is not clean of snow or ice that would create a hazard for the driver to maneuver, for safety reasons drivers will not come to the door.
- If you do not need transportation and you have a scheduled trip, please remember to call at least one (1) hour before your pick-up window to cancel. If you cancel your trip too late or not at all, it will be marked as a Late Cancel or No Show, respectively.

## BOARDING THE VAN/BUS

Any person who is not able to climb steps onto a bus may request to use the lift platform or ramp when boarding. For stability, handrails are provided on both the lift device and the steps.

### SEATBELT USE

Orange County Public Transit requires seat belts for all passengers regardless of age, disability, or location in the vehicle.

Each passenger must have his/her safety belt securely fastened before the vehicle will be permitted to begin movement.

Passengers seated in wheelchairs shall be secured via an approved four-point restraint system.

### TRANSPORTING CHILDREN

ADA eligible children may be certified for paratransit. They may ride OCPT independently (if their condition allows) and must pay the regular paratransit fare. Children under 8 years old and 80 pounds are required by law to use an appropriate child safety seat. An adult caregiver is responsible for providing such safety equipment and securing it and the child in the OCPT vehicle. Adult caregivers are required to make sure that child carrier seats or booster seats are buckled properly.

### FARES

The one-way fare for travel is payable at the time of boarding the van/bus. The fare is \$3.00 for EDTAP clients. \$12.75 for RGP each way. Operators are not able to provide change.

Elderly Disabled Transportation Assisted Program (EDTAP): Must be 60+ years old	\$3.00 each way
Americans with Disabilities (ADA): Primary care provider certified disabled medical condition	Mirrors Fixed Route Fare
Department of Social Services (DSS)	Fare paid by Medicaid
Nutrition Programs – Senior Center Programs	Fare paid through donations
Non- program Passenger Orange County Residents	\$12.75 each way

### PAYING ROUND TRIP

OCTS riders are expected to pay the required fare each time they board the OCTS vehicle. Passengers who have extreme physical or mental disabilities that limit their ability to handle paying fares will be permitted to pay for their round trip when they board the first vehicle. This should be set up with the office before the trip is taken.

### LOST AND FOUND

OCTS accepts no responsibility for personal items left on a vehicle. Passengers may call to find out about personal items they may have left on the vehicle. If recovered, OCTS will hold personal items for 30 days prior to disposal.

### LIFE SUPPORT EQUIPMENT

Passengers who need to use oxygen, respirators, or other life support equipment may do so as long it does not violate laws or rules related to transportation of hazardous materials. Your equipment must be small enough to fit into the vehicle and be managed by you or your Personal Care Attendant.

Once on board, the portable oxygen tank must remain upright and ride in a secure location, for example, in the passenger's lap or in front of the passenger on the floor between seats. Oxygen tanks may not be stored in vehicle aisles.

Passengers requiring medication or oxygen at regular intervals on board should be advised that travel time on the transit vehicle are subject to delays that may result in a customer's

onboard time being longer than anticipated. Transportation is subject to unpredictable conditions such as traffic delays and mechanical problems.

We cannot be held responsible for the administration of medications. The administration of medication when in a vehicle is the customer's responsibility. Any customer requiring assistance in the administration of medication or oxygen while on the vehicle must travel with a PCA or companion. Should the administration of medications or oxygen become necessary while on the vehicle, we will contact emergency medical assistance to administer the required medication at the customer's expense. Repeated incidents in which medication schedules disrupt or delay other passengers may result in the evaluation of the individual's suitability to use transit services.

#### SERVICE ANIMALS

A service animal is defined by the ADA as an animal that is individually trained to perform tasks for people with disabilities, such as guiding people who are visually impaired, alerting people who are deaf, pulling wheelchairs, alerting a person who is having a seizure or performing other special tasks. Service animals are working animals...not pets.

Service animals are welcome and ride free of charge. When scheduling a trip, passengers must notify OCPT that a service animal will be riding. A disruptive animal will be treated like a disruptive passenger. Passengers must always be in control of their service animal and must sit on the floor or in the passenger's lap. Service animals may not occupy a passenger seat.

#### CHANGE OF ADDRESS

Please contact the office, if your address, phone number and/or other personal information changes. If you do not change your address and a driver is dispatched to the wrong address, the trip will be considered a no-show and OCTS will not guarantee transportation from the new address on the same day.

#### GATED COMMUNITIES

If a pick-up location is within a gated community, it is the customer's responsibility to arrange entry for the vehicle. When you schedule a trip, please confirm the gate code. Any changes should be reported to the OCTS office.

If a vehicle is unable to enter the pick-up area or the customer fails to meet the vehicle outside of the community, the customer's trip will be designated as a no-show. Please note that some gated communities may have designated pick-up/drop-off location(s). Please check with OCTS office staff when you are scheduling a ride.

#### WHEELCHAIR/MOBILITY AID SECUREMENT

For your safety, your wheelchair will be secured to our vehicle via a four-point tie-down system. We may refuse to transport you if you will not allow your wheelchair to be properly secured or if you have items (groceries, boxes, etc.) that impair the driver's ability to properly secure your wheelchair. OCTS may refuse to transport the passenger if he/she will not allow their wheelchair to be properly secured prior to transport.

If the passenger uses a three- or four-wheeled mobility device or scooter, the vehicle operator may ask the passenger to transfer to a regular seat. This is for the safety and

protection of the rider; these devices are typically not constructed to withstand the rigors of being used as a seat in a passenger vehicle (especially if the case of an accident). If you are unable or unwilling to comply with this request, you may decline, and the operator will secure you in your mobility device.

### MOBILITY DEVICE CONDITION

For passenger safety, please be sure the wheelchair or other mobility device is properly maintained according to manufacturer's specifications. OCTS may refuse to transport any mobility device that is not properly maintained and/or could pose a safety, health, and/or wellness hazard to the rider, operator or to OCPT equipment.

### UNATTENDED PASSENGERS

Passengers determined as unable to be left unattended (based on age, cognitive limitations or request of responsible party) may schedule rides and ride unattended; however, arrangements must be made to have a responsible party meet the vehicle at each location.

The driver will only wait five (5) minutes for the responsible party to meet the vehicle. If no one arrives, the driver will notify the OCTS office, and staff will attempt to notify the emergency contact person for the passenger. If contact is made, depending on how long it will be before a responsible person arrives, will determine if the driver can wait or return to the drop-off location at the driver's earliest convenience. If no contact is made, the driver will continue their route with the passenger on board. It will be at the convenience of the driver, as to when the passenger will be returned to the drop-off location.

If there is no contact made with the responsible party once the driver has completed the route for the day, they will be returned to the bus yard (606 Highway 86 N Hillsborough, NC 27278). The responsible person will be required to pick up the passenger at the bus yard and must show proper identification.

The police may be notified to assist in locating a responsible party.

### EATING, DRINKING, AND SMOKING

OCTS requires that passengers refrain from eating, drinking, and smoking while on the vehicle. Exception: Passengers who have a medical condition which requires the intake of food or drink (i.e., diabetics) may eat or drink on board the vehicle if doing so is required to help prevent the onset of a serious medical condition.

### STRONG SCENTS

OCTS is a public transportation service, and there are many clients who use the service. For the comfort, safety, and well-being of all our passengers and drivers we must ask all clients and aids to maintain reasonable cleanliness in order to prevent health hazards.

Passengers are requested to not wear strongly scented personal care products while on board. This helps to ensure that vans/bus are accessible for all passengers especially those with chemical sensitivity or an environmental illness.

## BATHROOM ACCIDENTS

Many of us have had times in our lives where we became ill in public. At OCPT, we realize this kind of thing happens. Should it happen to you on board the vehicle, please discretely notify the driver of the situation so that they can plan to get you home quickly and return the vehicle to a clean state.

However, consistent problems of this nature cannot be accepted. If this should happen to you, OCTS will suggest steps be taken to control the situation.

OCTS vehicles are not permitted to make stops along your scheduled route of travel to allow you to use a restroom. Please take the proper precautions prior to departure to ensure you will be able to make your entire trip without incident.

In addition, OCTS service will be denied to any person who poses a potential public health threat. The existence of excrement on clothes or on hands poses the potential for the spread of diseases like shigellosis. Contact with other body fluids, such as blood or vomit, poses an HIV or hepatitis B or C threat. If the vehicle arrives for a pick up and the passenger or his or her clothing is soiled with feces, urine, vomit, blood or the passenger displays a draining sore or an open wound, which is not dressed in a manner that prevents seepage of bodily fluids, service will be refused.

In the case of a refusal of service, the driver shall seek prior approval from a supervisor or dispatcher before refusing service to any individual. If the supervisor or dispatcher determines that a potential threat to public health exists as described above:

Service will be refused, a No-Show will not be recorded, and the Supervisor for OCTS will give the person a letter explaining the reason for the refusal of service.

## REASONABLE MODIFICATION POLICY

In accordance with the requirements of Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), the Orange County Transportation Services (OCTS) Paratransit and Fixed Route services will not discriminate against individuals with disabilities based on their disability in its programs, services, or activities.

OCTS will generally, upon request, provide appropriate aids and services leading to effective communication for qualified persons with disabilities so they can participate equally in programs, services, and activities. This also includes qualified sign language interpreters, electronic documents or documents in large print, and other forms of communication accessible to people who have speech, hearing, or vision impairments.

OCTS will make all reasonable modifications to policies and programs to ensure that people with disabilities have an equal opportunity to enjoy all its services. For example, individuals with service animals are welcomed at OCTS offices; even where pets are generally prohibited.

Anyone who requires an auxiliary aid or service for effective communication or a modification of policies or procedures to receive services through the OCTS Paratransit

or Fixed Route services, should contact the Transportation Manager at **919.245.2004** or by e-mail: **jwiley@orangecountync.gov** within 7 days before the scheduled event or need.

The ADA does not require OCTS to take any action that would fundamentally alter the nature of its programs or services or impose an undue hardship. OCTS will not place a surcharge on individuals requesting auxiliary aids/services or reasonable modifications of a policy that is also not extended to persons without disabilities.

Complaints that a program, service, or activity of OCTS transit program is not accessible to persons with disabilities should be directed to the Transportation Manager at **919.245.2004** or by e-mail at **jwiley@orangecountync.gov**

Per federal guidelines as of July 13, 2015, the Orange County Transportation Services (OCTS) will consider requests for reasonable modifications as follows:

- The individual requesting the modification will describe what they need in order to use the service.
- The individual requesting the modification is not required to use the term "**reasonable modification**" when making a request.
- Whenever feasible, requests for modifications will be made and determined in advance before OCTS is expected to provide the modified service.
- When a request for modification cannot practicably be made and determined in advance (because of a condition/barrier at the destination of a Trans-AID or Fixed Route trip; of which the individual with a disability was not aware until arriving), operating personnel will make a determination of whether the modification should be provided at the time of the request.
- Request for modification of policies and practices may be denied only on one or more of the following grounds:
  - Granting the request would fundamentally alter the nature of OCTS services.
  - Granting the request would create a direct threat to the health or safety of others.
  - Without the requested modification, the individual with a disability is able to fully use OCTS services for their intended purpose.
  - In determining whether to grant a requested modification, OCTS will be guided by the provisions of the United States Department of Transportation 49 CFR Appendix E to Part 37.169

#### **COMMENTS AND COMPLAINTS**

OCTS personnel are available to assist customers/clients with scheduling, to resolve problems and to provide information about the service. Questions, compliments, suggestions, and complaints should be directed by phone, letter, e-mail, or via our online Customer Feedback Form at <https://www.orangecountync.gov/Transportation-Services> to OCTS. Phone inquiries can be made by calling 919-245-2004. Letters should be sent to:

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Orange County Transportation Services  
606 Highway 86 N  
Hillsborough, NC 27278

Complaints should be reported as soon as possible after the incident to ensure proper handling. When filing a complaint, please provide the following information:

- Explanation of incident or complaint
- Your name, address, and phone number
- Date, time and location of the incident
- The vehicle's number and/or driver's name

OCTS personnel will make every attempt to address your concerns. If you are not satisfied with the response given to you by OCTS personnel, you may speak with the Transit Manager at 919-245-2006.

**SUBJECT TO CHANGE DISCLAIMER**

The policies, regulations, procedures, and fees in this guide are subject to change without prior notice, if necessary, to keep transit system policies in compliance with State and Federal laws.

## **PASSENGER RESPONSIBILITIES**

*Passengers have a responsibility to:*

- Inform OCTS of address changes, phone number changes, or any other information regarding accessibility needs.
- Be ready and waiting at the beginning of your pick-up window. The vehicle is only allowed to wait five (3) minutes and passengers must be ready to board the van as soon as the driver arrives, within the window.
- Call to cancel unneeded trips to avoid “no-shows”.
- Provide the exact address for each destination, each time you call, to schedule a trip(s).
- Maintain wheelchairs or other mobility aids in safe conditions.
- Maintain acceptable standards of personal hygiene.
- Make sure you are completely done and ready to leave when you call for a return trip home. Be where you can see the van/bus, or the driver can find you.
- Not eat, drink, or smoke on the van.
- Not physically or verbally abuse another passenger or driver.

Passengers who violate these rules are subject to penalties up to and including termination of service.

## **OPERATOR RESPONSIBILITIES**

- Treat all riders with courtesy.
- Wear a uniform with a name badge.
- Operate the vehicle and lift in a safe manner, and safely secure wheelchairs on the vehicle.
- Collect the fare listed on their schedules.
- Go only to the destinations listed on the manifest or as notified by office staff.
- Offer assistance to riders including:
  - Go to the door to make sure you know they have arrived.
  - Offering passengers, a steady arm or other appropriate guidance or assistance.
  - Help individuals in wheelchairs maneuver onto/off the lift.
  - Ensure all riders are appropriately secured.
  - Assist you on and off the vehicle’s lift or steps.
  - Secure your wheelchair or scooter in the tie- down area.
  - Provide directions or act as a sighted guide to/from vehicle if you are visually impaired.
  - Fasten seatbelts (at request only).
  - Contact dispatch staff and 911 in case of emergencies.

### **OCTS Paratransit operators are not responsible for:**

- Assisting passengers in and out of buildings. If you need help, please make sure that someone is available to assist you at your pick-up and drop-off points.

- 
- Locking/Unlocking doors.
  - Booking and canceling trips – please call the office.
  - Operating or pushing your powered mobility device (for example, power wheelchair or scooter).
  - Operating or pushing your equipment or shopping cart up or down stairs or steep inclines.
  - Crossing residential thresholds
  - Lifting or carrying riders
  - “Bumping” passengers in wheelchairs down/up steps, and/or doorways.

**Note: Operators are responsible for assisting passengers, not carrying their belongings. Ex. if a passenger has a walker, with a duffle bag on it, the driver is responsible for getting the walker on/off the van and securing it. It is the passenger's responsibility to get their belongings off their mobility aid to the seat and off the van.**

**Please do not make these requests of drivers.**

## **THINGS TO REMEMBER WHEN USING OCTS**

- When calling to schedule trips, you should have the exact address to which you are going. Please let the person you schedule with know if an additional person(s) will be going with you.
- OCTS is a shared ride service and exact pick up or drop off times are not guaranteed. We do not guarantee that drivers will be able to wait on passengers beyond the five (3) minute waiting period.
- Passengers are not given a specific pick-up time but are given a pick-up window that is fifteen (15) minutes before or fifteen (15) minutes after the negotiated scheduled time. Drivers will only wait five (3) minutes for passengers after arriving within the window for a pickup or return.
- OCTS has one hour to get passengers picked up when they call for a will-call return trip. The wait time on will-call return trips will depend on previously scheduled trips, previously requested returns, the time of day the passenger calls for a return, and the location from which the passenger is calling.
- Drivers are not required to go inside buildings to look for passengers so please be specific on your location when calling for a return trip and be where you can see the vehicle and the driver can find you.
- Passengers should have an Umo card or ID badge when riding. Passengers should pay the \$3.00 fare to each driver individually per trip.
- Cancellations can be made between 6:30a.m.-5p.m. Monday-Friday. Cancellations cannot be made with the driver and need to be called into the office at (919) 245-2004 as soon as possible, but no later than sixty (60) minutes before the beginning of the negotiated pick-up window.
- Schedule changes can only be made between 8am and 5pm Monday-Friday.
- Schedule changes cannot be made to the same day. Schedule changes cannot be made with the driver; they must be called into the office at (919) 245-2004.
- OCTS does not make same day trips.
- When locations are closed like school, work, workshops, Adult Daycares, etc. it is the passenger/caretaker's responsibility to call and cancel scheduled trips.
- Passengers/caretakers are responsible for notifying OCTS of address and telephone number changes.
- In general, passengers are not allowed to eat or drink on vehicles. When bringing food on the vehicle to take to your destination, please make sure containers are secure and all trash is put in the trash can. Smoking on vehicles is never allowed.

# POLICIES

## Paratransit No Show Policy

Effective Date: November 1, 2022

The following represents OCTS No-Show policy. This policy was developed within the parameters of the American's Disabilities Act using examples of the best practices from other transit agencies. The purpose of this process is to deter and/or address chronic no-shows in order to improve OCTS efficiencies and effectiveness.

The American's with Disabilities Act states:

“The entity may establish an administrative process to suspend, for a reasonable period of time, the provision of complementary paratransit service to ADA paratransit eligible individuals who establish a pattern or practice of missing scheduled trips.”

In developing this policy, OCTS has attempted to present a policy which allows staff to continue to minimize the current no-show and cancellation rates, while balancing the needs of our passengers.

### Definitions:

**Advance Cancel:** When the passenger schedules transportation with OCTS and either notifies OCTS that the service is no longer needed or contacts OCTS to change the trip. The cancellation must be made on or before the day prior to the date of service.

**Same Day Cancel:** When the passenger schedules transportation with OCTS and either notifies OCTS that the service is no longer needed. The cancellation must be made at least one (1) hour prior to the beginning of the passenger's pick-up window.

**No Show:** When the passenger fails to board the vehicle when it arrives within the 30 minute pick up window and has waited 3 minutes to pick up a passenger, and the passenger decides not to use the service, does not come out ready to depart within the 3 minute waiting period or is not at the pickup site and has not called OCTS to cancel his or her trip at least one hour before the beginning of their pick up window.

### Emergencies

We understand emergencies do occur. Should you encounter an emergency/crisis situation, which causes you to miss your transportation appointment, you should contact OCTS as soon as possible to notify them of your serious circumstances.

Taking these proper steps may prevent your trip from being recorded as a “no show” and prevent any possible service suspensions. Missed trips which occur for reasons beyond an individual's control or are due to service-related problems are not considered "no shows".

If a passenger is assessed a no-show, and they feel it was assessed in error, the passenger may file an appeal by calling OCTS. The passenger should state why they feel the no-show determination is in error. The appeal will be reviewed, and a

decision will be rendered with-in five (5) business days. The passenger will be notified by telephone or in writing of the final decision.

## Consequences

Length of suspensions are limited to a reasonable period of time for ADA eligible individuals who have no-showed, late cancelled, or cancelled at the door **20 percent** of their scheduled trips for a 30-day period, within a minimum of 10 trips. For individuals who schedule 10 or fewer trips in a 30-day period; no-show, late cancel, and/or cancel at the door **40 percent** of the scheduled trips, the service will be subject to suspension. Initially the passenger will receive a warning letter to attempt to modify the behavior. If the problem continues, a progressive suspension length will be as follows:

- 1<sup>st</sup> suspension—7 days.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> suspension—14 days
- 3<sup>rd</sup> suspension—21 days
- 4<sup>th</sup> and all other suspensions—30 days

Before suspending service, the passenger will be notified in a letter proposing to suspend service. All suspensions will go into effect ten (10) calendar days from the date of the letter notifying the passenger of service suspension. Notice of suspension will include the dates of all valid no-shows. Service will continue to be provided while any appeal is pending. The information will also be documented in the passenger's file.

If a passenger no shows a pick-up and has made arrangements for additional trip(s) for the day, the additional trip(s) will **NOT** be automatically cancelled unless our OCPT staff is notified by the passenger or a representative of the passenger. If the additional trip(s) are not cancelled, and should have been, the passenger will receive a no-show for each additional trip.

If any customer gets two (2) consecutive no-shows' staff will automatically cancel all trips until contact is made with the customer to confirm service is still needed.

OCPT has created this no-show policy in order to continue to provide cost-effective transportation to the individuals who need and want it. No-shows waste limited resources and endanger Access's ability to provide public transportation.

Any questions regarding this no-show policy can be answered by calling OCTS at (919) 245-2004.

## RELATED TRANSPORTATION INFORMATION

- All reservations must be made by 5:00 pm the day before; you may request as far ahead as 1 week.
- Your passenger service representative will confirm your trip information with you. It is important to listen closely and verify that your trip information is correct.
- For both your and OCTS benefit, there is a 30-minute pick-up window. The pick-up window begins 15 minutes prior to your negotiated, scheduled time and extends 15 minutes after your negotiated, scheduled time. (Example: your negotiated, scheduled pick-up time is 9:00 a.m.; your window is from 8:45 a.m. to 9:15 a.m.). We ask that you please be ready and watching for your vehicle at the agreed pick-up location during this window.

Should you have any questions regarding this information, please feel free to contact an OCTS passenger service representative.

## PASSENGER'S RIGHT TO APPEAL AND APPEAL PROCESS

Anytime OCTS must suspend a passenger's service, that passenger has the right to appeal OCTS decision.

Should a passenger wish to appeal OCTS decision to suspend service, the following process must be followed by the passenger and OCTS:

1. Upon receiving OCTS letter notifying them that their service will be suspended, the passenger must complete a Service Suspension/Termination Appeal Form and return the form(s) within 5 business days. The appeal should be sent to Access ATTN: Appeals Board.
2. If a Service Suspension/Termination Appeal Form cannot be completed within the 5 days, the passenger must call OCTS staff at (919) 245-2004 and a staff member will complete this form over the telephone.
3. Upon receipt of the completed Service Suspension/Termination Appeal Form, OCTS, will respond to the passenger's appeal within 5 business days. All appeals will be reviewed by the Appeals Board. The passenger will continue to receive service while the suspension is under appeal, with the exception of issues of safety.



## Orange County Transportation Services Transit System Policy

### **OCTS Policy: Violent and Disruptive Behavior Effective November 1, 2022**

#### **SECTION 1. Purpose**

On occasion, behavior of certain passengers has been disruptive or even dangerous. For the safety and well-being of our passengers and employees, violent and/or disruptive behavior will not be tolerated on OCTS vehicles. Such conduct includes, but is not limited to offensive body odors, physical or verbal abuse; threats or fear of physical or verbal abuse; unlawful harassment, including unwelcomed verbal, nonverbal, or physical behavior having sexual or racial connotations; unauthorized use of equipment on the vehicle; voluntarily and repeatedly violating vehicle-riding rules, including smoking in the vehicle, eating or drinking without medical indication, or defacing equipment. All passengers are expected to control themselves in an orderly manner.

#### **SECTION 2. Suspension from Service**

Non-violent disruptive behavior by a passenger will result in the following periods of suspension from the use of the OCTS program.

##### **Occurrence      Suspension Time**

First	7 days
Second	30 days
Third	60 days
Fourth	Permanent Suspension

Violent behavior by a passenger will result in a minimum 30-day suspension of service for the first occurrence. Future violence will result in permanent suspension of service.

Actions of passengers with mental or cognitive impairments are given proper consideration. In the case of a passenger with a mental or cognitive disability we may suggest or mandate that a Personal Care Attendant accompany the passenger on each trip.

If the passenger's behavior warrants it, OCTS reserves the right to immediately and/or permanently suspend a passenger's riding privileges.

#### **SECTION 3. Notification**

OCTS users suspended from the program under this policy will be notified if possible by phone, letter, or in person depending on the occurrence, and given the opportunity to appeal the decision.

#### **SECTION 4. Appeals**

Anytime OCTS must suspend a passenger's service, that passenger has the right to appeal OCTS decision.

Should a passenger wish to appeal OCTS decision to suspend service, the following

process must be followed by the passenger and OCTS:

1. Upon receiving OCTS letter notifying them that their service will be suspended, the passenger must complete a Service Suspension/Termination Appeal Form and return the form(s) within 5 business days. The appeal should be sent to OCTS ATTN: Appeals Board.
2. If a Service Suspension/Termination Appeal Form cannot be completed within the 5 days, the passenger must call OCTS staff at (919) 245-2004 and a staff member will complete this form over the telephone.
3. Upon receipt of the completed Service Suspension/Termination Appeal Form, OCTS, will respond to the passenger's appeal within 10 business days. All appeals will be reviewed by the Appeals Board. The passenger will continue to receive service while the suspension is under appeal, with the exception of issues of safety.

OCTS users may appeal a suspension. A suspension remains in effect pending the appeal. Appeals must be presented in writing, postmarked no later than five (5) business days after receiving notice to

ADA Complementary Paratransit Appeals Board  
Orange County Transportation Services  
606 Highway 86 N  
Hillsborough, NC 27278.

Letters must state reason why suspension of service should be pardoned. The decision of the Appeals Board shall be made as soon as practical and shall be final.

## Title VI Notice to Public

Orange County Transportation Services hereby gives public notice of its policy to uphold and assure full compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and all related acts and statutes. Title VI and related statutes prohibiting discrimination in Federally assisted programs require that no person in the United States of America shall, on the grounds of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability be excluded from the participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be otherwise subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal assistance.

Any person who believes they have been aggrieved by an unlawful discriminatory practice regarding Orange County Transportation Services programs has a right to file a formal complaint with Orange County Transportation Services. Any such complaint must be in writing and submitted to Orange County Transportation Services Title VI Compliance Officer within one hundred eighty (180) days following the date of the alleged occurrence.

For more information regarding the civil rights program, please contact:

Title VI Compliance Officer  
Orange County Transportation Services  
606 Highway 86 N  
Hillsborough, NC  
(919) 245-2004

## If You Need an Interpreter

We provide free interpreter services to help you conduct your transit business. These interpreter services are available whether you talk to us by phone or in the transit office. Call us at (800) 514-9237 and state the language you speak. The customer service representative will put you on hold and an interpreter will be contacted to help with your call. If your business cannot be completed by phone, we will make an appointment for you at the transit office and arrange for an interpreter via telephone or in person at the time of your visit.