

Paratransit Rider's Guide

effective June 2023



Paratransit Rider’s Guide

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chapter 1:

Introduction

WTA's Mission is to Enhance our Community by:

- Delivering safe, reliable, efficient and friendly service.
- Offering environmentally sound transportation choices.
- Providing leadership in creating innovative transportation solutions.
- Partnering with our community to improve transportation systems.

WTA's Drivers

Drivers are specially selected and trained to assist riders with disabilities. WTA hires friendly, responsible and respectful people. All drivers pass regular drug and alcohol screenings as well as criminal background checks. They receive training in First Aid/CPR, disability awareness, rider assistance techniques and defensive driving.

About Paratransit Service

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) requires all public transportation agencies to provide fixed route service that is accessible to everyone, including people with disabilities. The role of paratransit is to serve only those whose disability makes them unable to access fixed routes.

WTA's paratransit service provides curb-to-curb and, if needed, door-to-door transportation to riders whose disability prevents them from riding fixed routes. Paratransit service is designed to be equal to—not better than—fixed route service. For this reason, paratransit's service area and hours of operation mirror those of fixed routes.

Like fixed route service, paratransit is public transportation. Grouping trips efficiently is essential for meeting demand. Because we schedule hundreds of trips every day, riders should expect to share their trips.

Riders can schedule paratransit trips for any type of trip; no trip purpose is more important than another.

Note: this Rider's Guide does not contain all WTA policies, and does not contain local, state or federal laws about paratransit.

Working Together

What you can expect from WTA:

- We will protect your safety
- We will respect your privacy
- We will keep you informed
- We will listen to your concerns
- We will treat you with respect

What WTA expects from you:

- To follow WTA's Code of Conduct (see page 35)
- To show courtesy to other riders and to WTA employees
- To provide feedback if you have a negative experience
- To provide feedback when we provide service that's better than you expected

If you are eligible for paratransit, you can ride Fixed Routes for FREE! See page 31 for more information.

Comparing Fixed Routes to Paratransit

Every WTA bus is accessible to people with disabilities. All are equipped with wheelchair lifts or ramps, and all drivers are professionally trained to work with riders with disabilities.

Fixed Route Bus Service:

- Is open to everyone
- Allows greater independence, spontaneity and predictability with no need for advance reservations
- In addition to having ramps, buses can kneel to the curb for easier boarding
- Drivers announce key stops to help those with visual and cognitive disabilities identify their location while riding
- Serves fixed stops according to a published schedule

Paratransit Service:

- Limited to eligible riders whose disabilities prevent them from using fixed routes
- Must be scheduled in advance
- Operates in the same service area as fixed route buses
- Operates during the same days and hours as fixed route buses
- Provides curb-to-curb service

chapter 2:

Who Can Ride?

You may be eligible to ride Paratransit if your disability prevents you:

- From getting to or from a fixed route bus stop
- Getting on or off a fixed route bus
- Riding or navigating the fixed route bus system

You are not automatically eligible to ride Paratransit based on the following:

- Your age
- Disability, even if verified by SSA, SSI or the VA
- Need for dialysis treatment
- A note from your doctor

The following are not factors in determining your eligibility to ride Paratransit:

- Lack of familiarity with the fixed route system
- Illiteracy
- Inability or limited ability to read or speak English
- Fear of crime
- Preference for paratransit due to scheduling, routing, or inconvenience of fixed route system

The role of paratransit is to serve only those whose disability prevents them from riding fixed routes. Everyone who rides paratransit must first apply for eligibility; requirements are established by the ADA. WTA adheres to ADA requirements during the eligibility application process (described on pages 10 and 11), and in the delivery of our service.

Eligibility is not based only on having a disability or medical diagnosis. It is based on whether or not your disabilities prevent you from riding fixed route buses.

Becoming Eligible

In order to apply for service, you must participate in an interview conducted by WTA eligibility staff—in person or over the phone.

You will be asked to provide specific information about your disability and how it prevents you from riding fixed routes. A friend, relative, or caregiver may, with your permission, answer questions on your behalf.

If more information about your disability is required, WTA's eligibility staff will need to talk to your health care provider. If this is the case, you must complete and sign a Professional Verification Release Form. This gives your doctor, social worker, or other social and health professional permission to talk with our eligibility staff about you. You may also be asked to participate in a capability assessment.

WTA will not consider your application for eligibility complete until all required verifications have been provided. Include all pertinent information with your application. WTA will return all incomplete applications to the applicant by mail.

Information collected during your application process will only be used to determine your eligibility for paratransit service or to provide service. WTA keeps this information confidential.

Once your application process is completed, WTA will let you know by mail (within 21 days) whether you are eligible for service. The letter will state your eligibility status as well as the date your eligibility will expire.

If you disagree with your eligibility status, complete the appeals form you received with your eligibility letter. You can appeal WTA's determination within 60 days of receiving your notification letter.



Types of Eligibility

- **Full** - Your disability always prevents you from accessing fixed routes either because you cannot travel to/from the bus stop or you are unable to independently navigate the system once onboard.
- **Conditional** - You are able to ride fixed routes for some trips, but your disability prevents you from using it for other trips. Your eligibility letter will outline the conditions of your eligibility.
- **Temporary** - You have a temporary disability that prevents you from using fixed routes.

Children

Disabled children age seven and under are not eligible for paratransit service. Paratransit does not provide transportation to and from school. See page 18 to learn about traveling with children.



Conditional Eligibility

If you can ride fixed route buses for some trips, but your disability prevents you from riding them for others, you may be conditionally eligible for paratransit service. Your eligibility notification letter will describe the trips you are eligible to make using paratransit.

Many riders who are conditionally eligible have to wait to schedule their trips until the day before they want to travel, due to the variable nature of their disability. Call by 5 pm the day before to schedule your trip.

If you are conditionally eligible, WTA staff will ask you during the scheduling process to clarify whether or not you are able to make your trip using fixed routes.

Travel Training

Travel training can help you learn how to ride fixed route buses. If you have questions, or would like to receive travel training, call (360) 733-1144. There is no cost for travel training. WTA staff will work with you directly, or assist you in finding another trainer. Potential trainers include family members, staff at residential facilities or staff at vocational agencies.

Using Paratransit Outside of Whatcom County

If you are eligible for paratransit in Whatcom County, you are also eligible when visiting other communities. You are eligible for 21 calendar days of service per calendar year in other communities, provided they offer ADA complimentary paratransit services. Take your eligibility notification letter with you when you travel as proof of your eligibility.

Visitors to Whatcom County

As a visitor, you can book rides on any 21 days during a 365-day period. The 21 days do not have to be consecutive. The 365-day period begins the first time you ride WTA paratransit. Unless your disability is apparent, you will need to provide proof of your paratransit eligibility. We will accept a letter that includes details of your level of eligibility or a paratransit ID from the transit agency where you live. Once WTA has received the documentation, you may schedule rides for the next day.

If you have not applied for ADA paratransit service from the transit agency where you live, or if you live in an area without ADA paratransit service, you can still request visitor status at WTA. In this case, we will ask you to provide other forms of documentation. Once we receive these, and we determine you are eligible, you can book ADA paratransit rides for the following day.

chapter 3:

How Does It Work?

Service Hours and Areas of Service

Paratransit operates during the same days and hours as fixed routes. The days and hours of service are different for different areas. For example, many Bellingham fixed routes have service seven days a week, with later evening service. For three quarters of a mile on either side of those fixed routes, paratransit would also operate seven days a week, with later evening service.

To find out if paratransit is available for a specific trip, call (360) 733-1144.

Outside of the paratransit service area, WTA offers “flex” service and “zone service.” See pages 46-49 for more information.

There is no WTA service on the following holidays:

- New Year’s Day
- Memorial Day
- Independence Day
- Labor Day
- Thanksgiving
- Christmas Day

What Kind of Trips Can I Take?

You may use paratransit for any kind of trip, other than a medical emergency.

Urgent medical situations require immediate help. Our drivers cannot transport riders who require urgent medical care.

In the case of a medical emergency, call 911.

Can Others Ride with Me?

Yes. Companions, Personal Care Attendants (PCAs), children, small pets and service animals can travel with you.

Companions

One companion can travel with you. If there's room on the bus you may travel with more than one. Let us know how many companions you'd like to travel with, when you schedule your trip. If you don't let us know you'll be traveling with others when you call to schedule your trip, they will not be allowed to board the bus.

Companions must get on and off with you. If your companion has special mobility needs, for example he or she travels with a wheelchair, we'll need to know this when you schedule your trip.

If you cancel your ride, WTA automatically cancels any rides scheduled for your companions.

Personal Care Attendants (PCAs)

Riders unable to travel independently can travel with a Personal Care Attendant (PCA). WTA drivers are not able to provide the level of assistance a PCA can, such as lending significant physical support to stand or walk, pushing riders using wheelchairs up inclines or uneven surfaces, or carrying packages into a rider's home. It is a rider's responsibility to provide a PCA when this kind of assistance is needed.

It's OK if you need a PCA for some trips and not for others. A PCA doesn't always have to be the same person. Whether or not you need a PCA will be covered in your eligibility determination.

Let us know that you will be traveling with a PCA, when you schedule your trip. We also need to know if your PCA has special mobility needs.

PCAs travel free on Paratransit. They must get on and off the bus with you.

PCAs can also ride with you on fixed route buses. In order for PCAs to ride free on fixed route, you need show the driver a special card, issued by WTA. The card will be issued to you, not to your PCA. For more information, call (360) 733-1144.

Service Animals and Pets

Your service animal, trained to assist you with your disabilities, can travel with you.

Small pets can travel with you if they're contained in a secure pet carrier.

Children

Children can travel with you as a companion. Some buses have internal child seats appropriate for older children who do not require a booster or standard car seat. All youth ride for free on WTA buses. Children 10 and under must be accompanied.

WTA does not provide car seats or booster seats. The child's parent or guardian is responsible for providing and using a car seat compatible with safety belts on our buses. Children must be secured in safety seats or wear safety belts appropriate to their age and weight.

Strollers

Children may not ride in strollers. You must remove the child and fold the stroller, storing it under or between seats. Strollers must not protrude into the aisle or create a tripping hazard. Grocery carts will be secured by the driver.

Reasonable Modification

WTA is committed to providing transportation to people with disabilities within our service boundaries. On a case-by-case basis we will make reasonable modifications to our policies and practices to ensure access to our public transportation services.

We will not make modifications if they:

- cause a direct threat to the health or safety of others
- fundamentally alter our service or vehicles
- are not essential for allowing a rider to access service
- result in an undue financial or administrative burden

To discuss a request for a modification, please contact the Reasonable Modification Coordinator by phone at (360) 733-1144, by mail at 4011 Bakerview Spur, Bellingham, WA 98226, or by email at RMC@ridewta.com. We appreciate as much advance notice as possible.

chapter 4:

How Do I Schedule a Trip?

To schedule a trip, call (360) 733-1144 during the following hours:

- Weekdays from 7:00 am to 5:00 pm
- Saturdays from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm
- Sundays from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm
- On holidays, call between 9 am and 5 pm and leave a message to request a trip for the following day.

Trips can be canceled on weekdays from 5:45 am to 10:30 pm, Saturday from 8:00 am to 10:30 pm, and Sunday from 9:00 am to 7:30 pm.

Riders should schedule their own trips when possible in order to avoid errors or confusion. If you want to authorize someone other than yourself to schedule your trips, we'll need to know in advance, in writing.

If your address or condition changes, or if you no longer need paratransit service, please call to let us know.

When You Call, be Ready to Provide

Personal Details:

- Your name
- The address of your pick-up point, including apartment number
- The address of your destination
- A phone number where we can reach you
- Whether you'll travel with a mobility aid or life support equipment
 - *Mobility aids include wheelchairs, canes, walkers, leg braces, etc.*
 - *Life support equipment includes portable oxygen, battery-powered respirators or ventilators, etc.*
- Whether you'll travel with a Personal Care Attendant (PCA), or a companion, children or a service animal
- Whether you'll travel with a grocery cart

Trip Details:

- Date of trip
- Requested time of travel
 - *Desired arrival time*
 - OR
 - *Desired pick-up time*
- Return trip time
- Details to help the driver, including:
 - *Which entrance to use*
 - *Where to find the wheelchair ramp (if you have one).*
 - *How to locate your home (if it's hard to find)*

Schedule your trip no later than 5 pm the night before you plan to travel. Fully eligible rides can schedule trips up to seven days in advance. Please give as much advance notice as you can; this helps us to schedule trips efficiently.

Choose Your Trip Type

Arrival-time Trip

This is best if you need to be at a destination before a specific time (e.g., you have a 9 AM doctor's appointment). Arrival-time trips don't guarantee a specific pick-up time. We'll confirm your pick-up window during the booking process. Your pick-up time may be earlier than you expect.

Departure-time Trip

Also described as a "30-minute pick-up window." This is best if you need to leave a location after a specific time (e.g., leaving work at 5 PM). Requested arrival and departure times must be at least 45 minutes apart.

Will Call Return

This trip is an open-ended return, allowable only when travelling home from a medical appointment. This trip is intended for situations when you cannot predict your return time in advance. Waiting for a will call may take longer than for a scheduled trip.

Subscription Trips

Subscription trips are those you make to the same place on the same day and at the same time every week. For example, if you meet friends at a restaurant every Thursday at noon, you can make one call to set up your trip for every Thursday.

If you don't need your subscription trip on a particular day, you must call to cancel it.

You can temporarily suspend your subscription trips, for example if you'll be out of town. But subscription trips are not meant to be suspended or changed repeatedly. Your subscription trip may be stopped if it is frequently canceled or changed.

Generally, riders who are conditionally eligible cannot schedule subscription trips.

Multiple Trips on the Same Days

If you need to schedule several trips on the same day, it will be important to allow enough time at your destination and between trips. Depending on your trip type, we may make recommendations regarding trip times.

Requested arrival and departure times must be at least 45 minutes apart. Drivers cannot wait for you to complete short errands, drop children off at day care, etc.

Trip Length

Expect your trip to take about the same time it would take on fixed route. (This includes the time to travel to and from bus stops and waiting to catch the bus.) We will probably pick-up or drop-off other riders en route to your destination.

Riders are enrolled in an automated call-ahead system. A call will be activated approximately 8 to 10 minutes before the bus arrives.

You're still responsible for being ready to go during your pick-up window, whether or not you receive the call-ahead.

Negotiating Trip Times

In order to serve people as efficiently as possible, we sometimes need to adjust pickup times. ADA rules allow us to negotiate an arrival time up to an hour before or after your requested time. Generally, if we need to negotiate we do this during your initial call, however sometimes we'll need to call you back. When this happens, please work with us to negotiate a time that meets your needs and allows us to group trips efficiently.

You'll often see several paratransit buses at major destinations, such as the hospital or the mall. While it may seem as though any driver should be able to pick you up, drivers' pickups are "dispatched" by WTA, in order to route trips most efficiently.



Preparing for Your Ride

Be Ready

When you book your trip we will let you know what time you should start looking for the bus. This is your pick-up time. You can wait inside, but be ready to gather your belongings and meet the bus when it approaches.

In order to keep on schedule, drivers must leave if you are not ready within 5 minutes of their arrival. A missed trip will be counted as a “no-show.” If this happens, you’ll have to reschedule the trip. We most likely will not be able to reschedule for the same day. For information regarding no-show penalties, see page 29.

Drivers cannot wait more than 5 minutes for you to be ready to leave.



Late Buses

Road construction, traffic congestion and other delays can cause buses to run behind schedule. If your bus has not arrived within 30 minutes of your requested arrival time at your destination, give us a call. For example, if you requested to arrive in time for an appointment at noon, and the bus has not arrived by 11:30 am, call (360) 733-1144.

Snowy or Icy Roads

WTA will limit or cancel service when road conditions are hazardous. If this happens, we'll call to let you know and work to reschedule your trip for when conditions improve.

If your trip isn't essential, consider canceling or rescheduling during adverse weather conditions. This reduces the chance for weather related delays or hassles, and helps us provide essential trips to riders that need them.

Changing or Canceling Trips

Change or cancel your trips by calling (360) 733-1144. Drivers are not able to change or cancel trips.

Call to cancel unneeded trips as soon as you know you won't need them. Advance notice helps WTA to schedule trips efficiently.

Call to cancel at least an hour before your earliest pick-up time. If you don't cancel, this missed trip will be counted as a no show.

Only schedule trips you intend to take. Don't schedule trips "just in case" you need them, then cancel them at a later time. We understand riders will at times have to cancel trips, for example for ill health, or unanticipated events.

WTA is unable to accept same day ride requests or make same day changes to rides.

Penalties for "No-Shows"

Failing to cancel a trip is called a **no-show** and occurs when:

- you're not at the requested pick-up address; or
- you're at the pick-up address, but decide not to go once the bus arrives; or
- you're at the pick-up address, but aren't ready to board within five minutes of the time the bus arrives; or
- you can't be left alone and are not met by a caregiver at your destination. In this case, public safety personnel may be called to assume custody; or
- you don't cancel your ride at least an hour before your earliest pick-up time.

A missed trip is not considered a no-show when:

- you miss a trip due to a WTA-caused error or delay; or
- an emergency or sudden change in your health prevents you from calling to cancel

If you no-show on a day when you have scheduled more than one trip, we will not automatically cancel your later trips. Please cancel each trip you don't need to avoid receiving multiple no-shows on a single day.

If you no-show three times or more (depending on how often you ride) in one calendar month, you can be suspended from service for seven days. If you continue to no-show after the first suspension, the next suspension can last 14 days. Further no-show suspensions can last 30 days.

How WTA Calculates No-Shows

1. WTA tracks No-shows and No-Show violations by calendar month and calendar year. At the beginning of a new calendar year, No-Show violation tracking starts with a "clean slate" for all riders. Violations from previous years do not affect riders' No-Show records in the new year.

2. WTA calculates violations by comparing the number of No-Shows to the number of actual trips riders receive each calendar month. Riders who travel less are charged with violations for fewer No-Shows than riders who travel more. Here's how it works:

- Riders who receive 0-19 trips in a month will be charged with a violation when three or more valid No-Shows are recorded during the month.
- Riders who receive 20-39 trips in a month will be charged with a violation when four or more valid No-Shows are recorded during the month.
- Riders who receive 40 or more trips in a month will be charged with a violation when five or more valid No-Shows are recorded during the month.

Riders can appeal a suspension before it takes effect. Call (360) 733-1144 to discuss your suspension with the Paratransit Manager, or to request a copy of our suspension policy.

chapter 5:

How Much Does It Cost to Ride?

Fares and Passes

The paratransit fare is \$1.00 per ride. If you ride often, a bus pass will save you money. Paratransit monthly passes are \$13; a quarterly pass is \$35. These “virtual passes” will be on file at WTA. This Pass on File is all you need. No physical pass is required. If you do not pay your fare, you will not be able to schedule future rides.

Riding Free

Paratransit

Riders 18 and younger and 75 or older ride FREE on Paratransit.

Fixed Route

If you are eligible for paratransit, but can ride fixed route buses for some trips, we provide you with a pass that allows you to ride fixed route buses for FREE.

Zone Service

The Zone Service fare is \$1.00 per ride. There are no free rides, and we do not accept bus passes for Zone Service.

Tipping is not allowed. Our drivers are paid public employees and cannot accept tips or gifts.

chapter 6:

What Are My Responsibilities?

Rider Responsibilities

- Make sure the address at your pick-up location is clearly visible from the street.
- Make sure there is safe and easy access to your pick-up and drop-off locations. WTA needs obstruction free access with enough space to deploy a lift or ramp and to turn the bus around. If you are not sure your desired location is accessible alert WTA well in advance of your first ride. WTA staff will conduct an access check and, if necessary, work with you to make an alternate plan. WTA will only provide paratransit service if it is safe to access your pick-up and drop off locations.
- Remain seated until the driver indicates he or she is ready to assist you. All riders, including PCAs, should expect to receive assistance getting on and off the bus.

Other Notes

- Drivers are not allowed to enter your home or to help you prepare to leave. Be ready with everything you need for your trip, so you can board the bus when it arrives.
- Cooperate with our drivers and staff. They are specially trained to facilitate a safe, efficient trip.
- Drivers are unable to assist you beyond the lobby or entrance of a facility or home, including internal stairs and elevators. Plan to travel with a PCA if you need extra assistance.
- Some ADA eligible riders have needs greater than WTA can meet. When this is the case, WTA will work with riders to try to find an alternate transportation solution.

If you're moving to a new home, call us beforehand. We can tell you what transportation will be available in your new neighborhood.



WTA's Code of Conduct

- No unruly or disrespectful behavior
- No profanity or derogatory statements, including racial, gender based, or religious slurs
- No intimidating, harassing or violent behavior
- No smoking, including e-cigarettes
- No eating (Riders with a medical need can request a Reasonable Modification (see page 19)
- No alcoholic beverages
- No flammable or corrosive items or liquids
- Cell phones and other devices must be used quietly so as not to disturb others
- Impersonating a transit employee or official is not allowed
- Do not block an aisle, or occupy extra seats
- Appropriate attire is required, including shirt and shoes
- Must pay fare

Assaulting a transit employee is a felony.

To review WTA's Rider Suspension Policy, call (360) 733-1144.

We “Share the Air” in our Buses

For everyone’s health, safety and comfort:

- Please don’t wear fragrances, or strongly scented personal products
- Cover your sneezes and coughs, using a tissue or your upper sleeve (not your hands)

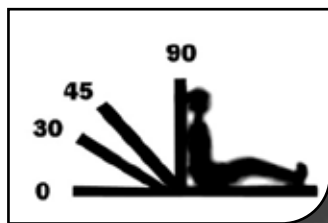
Safety Belts and Wheelchair Securements

All riders are required to use the safety belts provided in paratransit buses.

Riders using wheelchairs are required to use safety belts as well as the wheelchair securements (which are locked into position by the driver).

WTA highly recommends riders use a positioning belt when traveling in their wheelchair or powerchair. Unlike vehicle belts, positioning belts are designed to help keep riders upright and in their wheelchairs. Footrests are also highly recommended to help riders upright and in their wheelchairs. WTA may not be able to transport riders whose feet or footrests drag on the ground or floor.

Seatbelts are designed for riders who are seated in an upright position. Using a reclined position can make seatbelts less effective and potentially hazardous. WTA cannot transport riders seated at less than a 45-degree angle.



Riding with Mobility Aids, Wheelchairs or Life Support Equipment

Keep your mobility aid, wheelchair or life support equipment in good operating condition. Drivers may not be able to transport you if you have, for example, a manual wheelchair with parts that are loose, or with flat tires.

Drivers are not allowed to operate a rider's power wheelchair.



Other considerations regarding wheelchairs and scooters

If you are using a manual wheelchair and are unable to propel yourself, there may be situations where WTA cannot transport you:

- If you weigh more than 350 pounds (combined weight of you and your wheelchair)
- If you weigh less than 350 pounds but your travel includes slopes, gravel, or uneven terrain
- If your wheelchair is long or requires lifting to be positioned inside the bus
- In situations that require excessive exertion by the driver, such as pushing at an angle across a slope

If you can provide significant help with propelling your wheelchair there may be exceptions to the above examples. Using a PCA may also resolve the above issues.

If you use a manual wheelchair and have more than one step at your pick-up or drop-off location, you will need to arrange for someone to assist you (with your wheelchair) up and down the steps. WTA drivers are only allowed to assist you up or down one step by themselves. If this is an ongoing need, consider installing a ramp.

Power scooters are allowed on buses but you are strongly encouraged to transfer into a seat while riding in the bus. Drivers will secure your scooter and assist you to a seat.

Power mobility aids must be powered off on lifts, and prior to securement. Please comply with the Driver's directions during the securement process.

Special Health Conditions

- Bring along a snack in case you have a long wait or travel time.
- Be sure your oxygen supply will last until you return home.
- Make sure that batteries for your mobility equipment have sufficient charge to last throughout your travel day.
- Bring several layers of clothing if you are sensitive to weather conditions.
- WTA transport riders with portable medical equipment, such as oxygen, respirators, etc. However if you can't carry or operate it by yourself, someone will need to accompany you. Drivers cannot safely assist you and carry equipment at the same time. Drivers cannot administer oxygen or operate other life support equipment. You or your attendant must hold your equipment securely, or we must be able to secure it on the vehicle.

Special Health Conditions continued

- If you can't withstand long trips and wait times on public transportation, paratransit service may not be right for you.

What Can I Bring with Me?

Assisting you safely is WTA's first priority. Drivers can help you carry up to four packages or grocery-size bags, if it's safe for them to do so while assisting you.

The combined weight of the packages or bags can't be more than 35 pounds. WTA will decline to transport bags or items that exceed the number or weight limits.

Bulky or oversized items cannot be transported.

Drivers aren't allowed to bring bags into your home or to help move your personal belongings from one residence or facility to another.

Drivers are often unable to assist you safely while at the same time carrying your bags. If that is the case, the driver will first assist you to your door then to return with your packages.

A small, foldable cart is strongly recommended if you regularly travel with bags or packages. The driver can secure your cart without removing your items.

A small, foldable cart is strongly recommended if you regularly travel with bags or packages. The driver can secure your cart without removing your items.

WTA cannot accommodate wagons on Paratransit due to space constraints.

Communicating with Caregivers and Other Agencies

In certain cases we may need to speak directly with your caregiver, family member or others in your support network. This could happen as the result of an emergency, rider suspension, or a deteriorating health condition.

Lost and Found

WTA is not responsible for lost items. However we will attempt to locate them. Found items are stored for 14 days. If unclaimed, they are disposed of according to our Lost and Found policy. Call (360) 733-1144.

chapter 7:

What Will My Bus Look Like?

All of our buses, including fixed route buses, can transport riders using wheelchairs. Fixed route buses can also “kneel,” or lower, for those with difficulty climbing steps.

Paratransit Minibuses



Some of our minibuses are equipped with wheelchair lifts and look like this one.

Other are equipped with wheelchair ramps and look like this one.



Trips by Van or Taxi

When schedules are tight, we may provide your trip using a local van or taxi service, hired by WTA. The driver will know your name and your destination. The fare is the same as on paratransit—\$1 per ride. You can also use your bus pass for the ride. Drivers will know if you have a Pass on File. Do not tip the driver; they are providing a ride booked through WTA.

Only WTA dispatchers send vans or taxis for Paratransit trips. If you request a ride through a van or taxi company directly, you will pay the regular fare.

WTA does not accept requests specifically for vans or taxis. These are only used when WTA doesn't have enough drivers or buses for your trip.

The company providing this service is required to handle needs related to riders' disabilities. You can expect the same level of service and quality from the driver as you would from a WTA driver. Please call us at (360) 733-1144 if you experience unsatisfactory service.

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Other Types of Service

Fixed Routes

WTA encourages riders to use fixed routes whenever possible.

The advantages of fixed routes include:

- You don't have to call ahead for your trip
- You don't have to be ready for your bus 60 to 90 minutes ahead of time
- They run on predictable schedules
- They serve most major destinations in Whatcom County
- Riders eligible for paratransit ride fixed routes for FREE. (See page 31 for details)

Fixed route buses are equipped with ramps. Drivers announce bus stops. WTA drivers are professionally trained to assist riders with disabilities.

You can also combine service types, for example, by taking paratransit to one of our transit stations to connect with fixed routes. Traveling with a PCA could make it easier to ride fixed routes.

Riders who are eligible for paratransit can ride fixed routes without worrying about losing their eligibility.

Flex Service

Routes that offer flex service serve fixed bus stops along their route but can also “flex” off-route to pick up and drop off riders closer to their starting place or destination. Flexing occurs within a designated service area.

There are no eligibility requirements to ride flex service; anyone within the designated area can request a flex trip. Reservations are required. If you plan to use a wheelchair or other mobility aid, let us know when you call to reserve your flex pick-up or drop-off.

We offer Flex service on:

- Route 71X – Everson/Nooksack/Sumas to Cordata Station
- Route 72X – Kendall/Mt. Baker Highway to Bellingham Station
- Route 75 – Blaine/Birch Bay to Bellingham Station via Ferndale

You can combine flex service with paratransit service. For example, you can take flex service to a transit station, then use paratransit to reach your final destination.

Requesting Flex Service Trips:

You must request flex service trips at least one hour before the requested bus is scheduled to depart Bellingham Station or Cordata Station. Or for flex trips in the morning, you must call in your request by 5:00 pm the day before.

Since seating is limited, we recommend calling a day (or up to a week) in advance.

To request a flex trip, call (360) 733-1144.

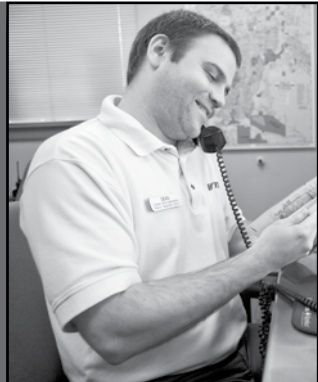
You can request trips during the following hours:

Mon-Fri.....7:00 am—5:00 pm

Sat-Sun..... 9:00 am—5:00 pm

Holidays.....Call to leave message

WTA staff can help you plan your trip on fixed route or flex service. Call (360) 676-7433 for personalized help regarding which bus to catch and when and where to catch it.



Zone Service

WTA offers limited service to the rural areas of Whatcom County, which WTA has divided into zones. Each zone is served one or two days per week. See the map on the back cover of this booklet for the zones and their service days.

Zone service is open to everyone. There are no eligibility requirements. Zone service can be combined with either paratransit (for eligible riders) or fixed routes. For example, you could schedule a zone service trip to one of our stations, then connect with a paratransit or fixed route bus from there.

Riders traveling to or from a zone service area frequently have longer wait times. In order to group trips most efficiently, we typically make up to two trips from a zone into town and up to two trips back to that zone.

All buses providing zone service are wheelchair accessible. Let us know if you use a wheelchair or mobility aid, when you call to request your trip.

Zone service operates from 8:30 am to 5:30 pm. As with paratransit service, we work to create efficient schedules to serve as many riders as possible.

The Zone Service fare is \$1.00 per ride. Bus passes are not accepted for Zone Service.

Requesting Zone Service Trips:

You must request your trip by 5 pm the day before your ride.

Seating is limited. We recommend calling a day (or up to a week) in advance.

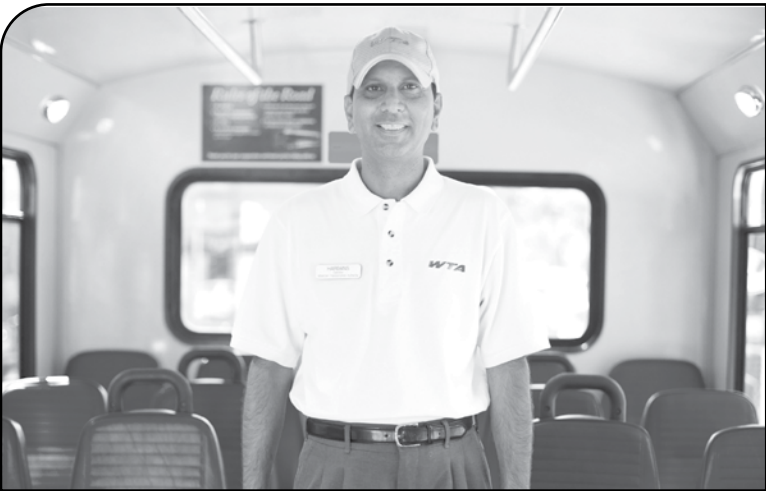
To request a zone service trip, call (360) 733-1144.

You can request trips during the following hours:

Mon-Fri.....7:00 am—5:00 pm

Sat-Sun..... 9:00 am—5:00 pm

Holidays.....Call to leave message



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Share your feedback with us

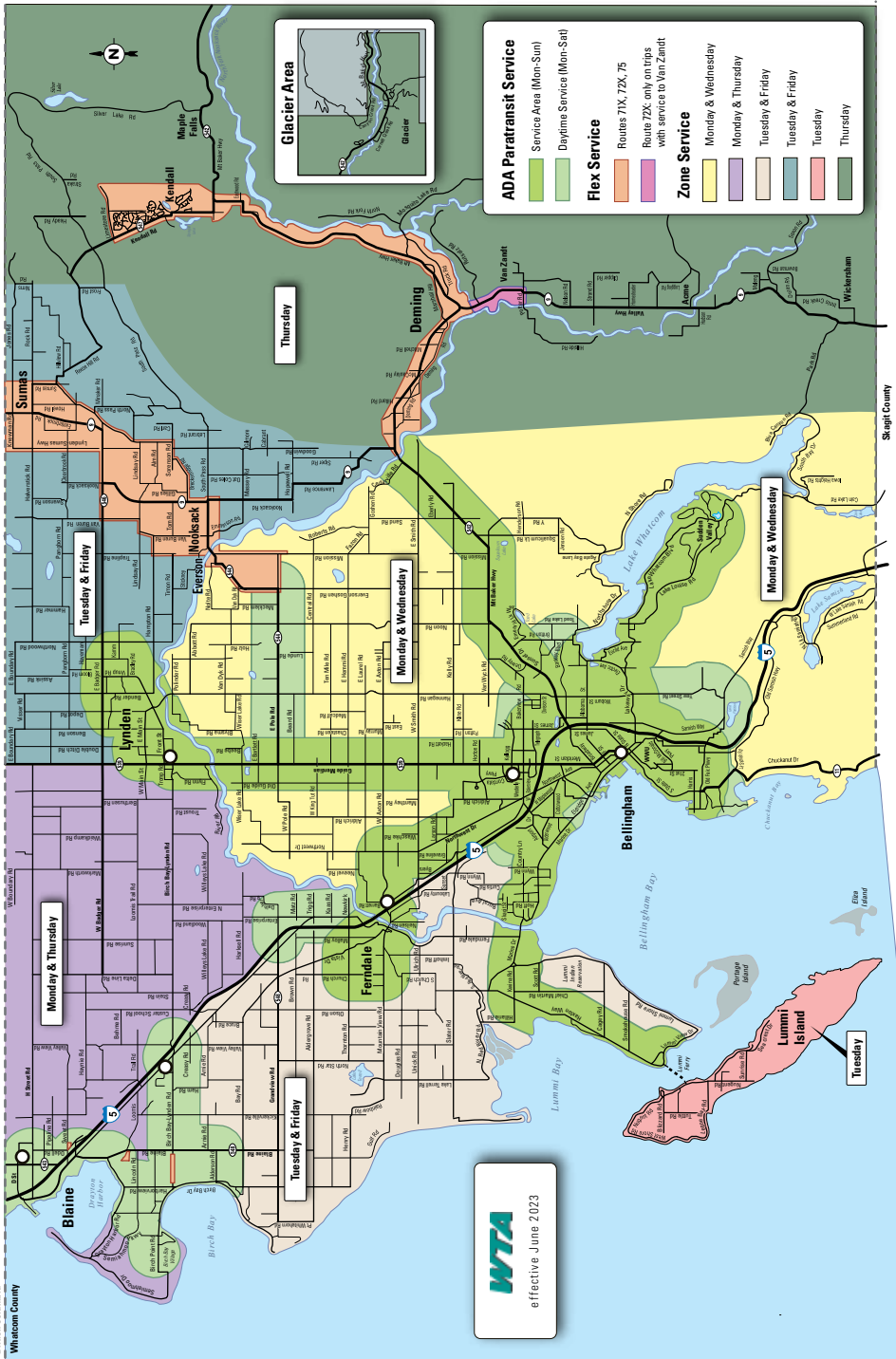
Feedback helps us improve our service. Please share your comments, complaints, compliments and suggestions.

- Comment cards are located on all buses. They are pre-addressed and postage paid. You can fill them out and mail them at no charge.
- You can leave a voice message at (360) 715-4500.
- You can email comments to:

customerservice@ridewta.com
- If you have a specific complaint regarding an incident, please contact us as soon after the incident as possible. Whoever takes your call will need to know the date of the incident, the bus number and the driver's first name. If you have some but not all of this information, call and provide as much information as you can.



Our Customer Comment Policy protects you from "retaliation." You can express complaints without fear of losing your privileges. If you file a complaint and are not satisfied with our response, or if you feel concerned about retaliation as the result of a complaint, call (360) 733-1144 and ask for the Manager of Paratransit.



WTA
effective June 2023

Paratransit Service at a Glance:

Contact Us:

For information, scheduling trips or questions regarding eligibility, call (360) 733-1144.

To request a Rider's Guide in an alternative format, call (360) 733-1144.

Contact Hours:

Monday through Friday7 am to 5 pm

Saturday and Sunday9 am to 5 pm

On Holidays call between 9 am and 5 pm and leave a message to request a ride for the following day.

Fares and Passes:

Fare \$1 per ride

Monthly Pass \$13.00

Quarterly Pass \$35.00

Riders 18 & under and 75+ FREE

See details on page 32.