



Paratransit Service Passenger Guide



Harris County Office Of Transit Services

Harris County Community Services Department
Office of Transit Services
8410 Lantern Point Drive
Houston, Texas 77054
832-927-4953
www.HarrisCountyTransit.com

(Updated: May 2022)

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FIXED ROUTE SERVICE

Harris County Transit (HCT) operates fixed route *Transit Buses* Monday Thru Saturday with regular frequency. You may be able to use one for some or all your trips! HCT operates in Baytown, La Porte, Crosby, Barrett Station, McNair, Highlands and Channelview, Cloverleaf and Sheldon Texas with connections to METRO at Gulfgate Center and Mesa Transit Center. If you are able to use the fixed route *Transit Buses* instead of the *Paratransit* service for trips, you will find several advantages:

- No need to call ahead for reservations! With the fixed route buses, we are ready when you are.
- Same day service is always available on the fixed route buses. Unfortunately, we cannot provide same day service on the *Paratransit*.
- No need to schedule a return trip. Just get on the next bus!
- Lower fares. \$0.50 per one way trip (*Paratransit* service is \$2.00 for each one-way trip).

For Fixed Route bus service information call 832-927-4953...press 4... or see our website at www.HarrisCountyTransit.com.

PARATRANSIT SERVICES

Section 223 of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) requires that public entities that operate non commuter fixed route transportation services also provide complementary paratransit service for individuals unable to use the fixed route system. ADA paratransit standards are provided for in 49CFR37.123 of the Code of Federal Regulations. The paratransit service is restricted to $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile on each side of the fixed route bus service routes. Verification of trip origin/destination eligibility will be made at the time of booking.

The Harris County Transit Paratransit service is provided to individuals with disabilities that are prevented from using the fixed route bus system for their particular trip needs.

Eligibility for complementary paratransit service is strictly limited to those with the inability to use the existing fixed route system due to their disability or other barriers.

The complementary paratransit service is an origin to destination service that operates within $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile along the bus routes. Drivers will assist eligible individuals to and from the curb of their driveway or sidewalk however door-to-door service is available upon request. The Paratransit service is only available for qualified individuals and a Personal Care Attendant. Any additional companion(s) may ride based on space availability and must pay full fare. **The one-way fare for this service is \$2.00 per person. For riders needing a Personal Care Assistant (PCA) to assist them in making the trip, the PCA will ride for free.**

CERTIFICATION / RE-CERTIFICATION

Interested paratransit riders must complete the Harris County Transit ADA Paratransit Program Application and receive approval before transportation will be provided. The maximum certification period is 3 years. However, eligibility periods may vary according to each individual's functional ability to use the fixed route bus system. Recertification is required for each paratransit participant. All re-certification material will be mailed to you the month prior to the expiration date.

OPERATING HOURS

Service Operating Hours: Monday – Friday..... 6:00 AM – 6:30 PM
Saturday 8:00 AM – 6:30 PM

Paratransit Office Hours: Monday – Friday..... 7:00 AM – 6:00 PM
Saturday 8:00 AM – 6:00 PM

(All reservations should be made A DAY IN ADVANCE)

SCHEDULING PARATRANSIT TRIPS

To schedule a trip, please call our office at least **1 Day in Advanced**

Paratransit Office Number: 832-927-4953

Appointments can be scheduled up to 15 days in advance but must be made *at least one day in advance* before the appointment. If you would like to make an appointment after office hours, please leave a message on the *HCT answering machine* and a representative will return your call as soon as possible.

On weekends and Holidays, you will not be able to make appointments. If you need to cancel a previously scheduled appointment you may do so by leaving a message on the *HCT answering machine*. For those with consecutive medical appointments (example: Dialysis) please notify Paratransit of any schedule changes due to holidays to accommodate your transportation needs. Cancellations must be made at least *two hours* before your scheduled appointment time (a 24-hour notice is appreciated).

When scheduling a trip, please provide:

- Your Name.
- If a personal care attendant, friend or family member will be traveling with you.
- Your full pick-up address (including building number and/or gate codes).
- The date you wish to travel.
- The appointment address & appointment time.

Passengers are requested to schedule a return trip whenever possible. In cases where it is difficult to determine the exact pick-up time such as a medical trip, the return trip can be schedule as a **“Will Call.”** This means the passenger Will Call when they are ready for pick-up. The passenger should allow plenty of time (as much as an extra hour) for the scheduled pick-up once the call is made. Will Call’s will be handled on a first come, first serve basis. Last call for a Will Call return trip must be made before 5:00 PM.

WHEN TO BE READY / DRIVER WAIT TIME

PICK UP WINDOW

The pickup window is defined as 15 minutes before the scheduled pickup time to 15 minutes after the scheduled pickup time. Riders must be ready to board a vehicle that arrives within the pickup window. The driver will wait for a maximum of 5 minutes after arrival for the rider to appear. For example, an appointment time of 10:00 AM may have a confirmed pick-up time of 9:00 AM and will have a pick-up window between 8:45 AM and 9:15 AM.

RETURN WINDOW

The Return window is defined as 0 minutes before the scheduled pickup time to 30 minutes after the scheduled pickup time. Riders must be ready to board a vehicle that arrives within the Return window. The driver will wait for a maximum of 5 minutes after arrival for the rider to appear. For example, a Return time of 10:00 AM may have a confirmed pick-up window between 10:00 AM and 10:30 AM.

DRIVER WAIT TIME

Paratransit drivers will wait 5 minutes for a passenger once they have arrived at the pick-up location within the pick –up window, be ready to board or the driver will leave after the 5-minute wait time, and you will be considered a **No Show**. A courtesy call may be made to the phone number provided on the application to alert you of your trip waiting. Please notify the reservations department if you will require additional boarding time so that a No Show will not be assessed. *NOTE: The driver will not take you to your appointment without the required fare. Eating, drinking, and smoking (electronic cigarettes included) are prohibited on the vehicles; however, a small snack or drink will be allowed for medical reasons.*

CANCELING TRIPS

To cancel a trip, please call our office no later than 2 hours before your scheduled appointment. A 24-hour notice is always appreciated.

Paratransit Office Number: 832-927-4953

All scheduled trips that are not canceled will be considered a **No Show** if you fail to board the vehicle at the scheduled pick-up time. Trips can also be canceled after hours during weekends and Holidays, 24hrs a day by leaving a recorded message.

WHEELCHAIR/MOBILITY DEVICES

Harris County Transit services will comply with ADA standards for transporting individuals with mobility devices. Individuals using any device that exceeds ADA standards and/or prevents HCT from providing transportation safely will not be denied service, however the mobility device may not be transported. **Before using this service, ensure that your mobility device is in good working condition, clean and safe. Mobility devices that are broken or do not have working brakes must be secured aboard Paratransit service vehicles.**

ALTERNATIVE ACCESSIBLE SERVICE

If a lift/ramp fails in service, and if the next accessible vehicle on route is more than 30 minutes away, Harris County Transit will provide alternative accessible transportation by paratransit or other special vehicle within a short response time (less than 30 minutes). When the bus operator encounters a passenger, he or she is unable to transport, the operator will immediately notify Harris County Transit to begin the process of alternative transportation.

OXYGEN/RESPIRATORS

Harris County Transit services will transport passengers with oxygen bottles as long as the devices can be secured to keep from moving inside the vehicle and if possible, turned off for the duration of the trip. Please be sure to have adequate oxygen supply or a backup unit. Respirators and concentrators are allowed at any time.

NO SHOW / LATE CANCELLATION POLICY

NO SHOW

A No Show occurs when a rider fails to appear to board the vehicle for a scheduled trip. This presumes the vehicle arrives at the scheduled pickup location within the pickup window and the driver waits at least 5 minutes.

LATE CANCELLATION

A late cancellation is defined as either:

- a cancellation made less than 2 hours before the scheduled pickup time,
- a cancellation made at the door or;
- refusal to board a vehicle that has arrived within the pickup window.

OPERATOR ERROR OR CIRCUMSTANCES BEYOND RIDERS CONTROL

Harris County Transit does not count as No Shows or Late Cancellation any missed trips due to our error, such as:

- Trips placed on the schedule in error
- Pickups scheduled at a location other than that which is requested by rider
- Drivers arriving and departing before the pickup window begins
- Drivers arriving late (after the end of the pickup window)
- Drivers arriving within the pickup window, but departing without waiting the required 5 minutes

Harris County Transit does not count as No Shows or Late Cancellations situations beyond a rider's control that prevent the rider from notifying us that the trip cannot be taken, such as:

- Medical Emergency
- Family Emergency
- Sudden illness or change in condition
- Appointment that runs unexpectedly late without sufficient notice

Riders should contact the Harris County Transit office as soon as possible to prevent a No Shows or Late Cancellations due to circumstances beyond their control.

POLICY FOR HANDLING SUBSEQUENT TRIPS FOLLOWING NO SHOW

When a rider is a No Show for one trip, all subsequent trips on that day remain on the schedule unless the rider specifically cancels the trips. To avoid multiple No Shows on the same day, riders are strongly encouraged to cancel any subsequent trips they no longer need that day.

SUSPENSION POLICIES FOR A PATTERN OR PRACTICE OF EXCESSIVE NO SHOWS OR LATE CANCELLATION

Harris County Transit verifies all No Shows and Late Cancellations to ensure accuracy before recording them in a rider's account. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, section 37.125(h) states that "The entity may establish an administrative process to suspend, for a reasonable period of time, the provision of complementary Paratransit service to ADA eligible individuals who establish a pattern or practice of missing scheduled trips." Harris County Transit has established the following points-based process to enforce its No Show and Late Cancellation policy.

POINTS SYSTEM

Based on the definitions in the Cancellations and No Shows section above, points are assessed for each occurrence of the following infractions:

- Advanced Cancellation: 0 points – Thank you!
- Same Day Cancellation: 0 points – If the trip is canceled more than 2 hours prior to scheduled pickup
- Late Cancellation: 1 point – If canceled less than 2 hours prior to scheduled trip
- No Show: 2 points

***NOTE:** Trips missed by the individual for reasons out of his or her control are not assessed points and are not used as a basis for determining if a pattern or practice of No Shows or Late Cancellations exists.*

VIOLATIONS

No Shows and Late Cancellations are recorded and accumulated each calendar month for purposes of enforcing the No Show policy. Harris County Transit reviews total points assessed during each calendar month and calculates penalties as follows:

- 6 points in a 30-day period: Warning Letter
- 8 points in a 30-day period: Two (2) Week Suspension
- 24 points in a 60-day period: One (1) Month Suspension

***NOTE:** The total number of points are tracked each year from January 1 through December 31. At the beginning of the new year, you start over from (0) points.*

To account for frequent ridership, penalties are NOT assessed if total No Shows and Late Cancellations for the period are less than 10% of the rider's total trips. Riders in violation of the Late Cancellation and No Show Policy will receive written notice of the violation including details of the pending suspension of service.

Riders will be given 15 days from the date of the notice to appeal the decision (see Appeals process) or to arrange for alternative transportation options during the suspension. Following the suspension period, riders will automatically be cleared to resume service.

Subscription service **will not** be automatically reinstated following a suspension. Please call Harris County Transit at 832-827-4953 to re-apply for subscription service.

POLICY FOR DISPUTING SPECIFIC NO SHOWS OR LATE CANCELLATIONS

Riders wishing to dispute specific No Shows or Late Cancellations must do so within 15 business days of receiving suspension letter. Riders should contact the Harris County Transit at 832-927-4953, Monday through Friday from 8:00 AM to 4:00 PM to explain the circumstance and request the removal of the No Show or Late Cancellation.

PROCESS FOR APPEALING PROPOSED SUSPENSIONS

All suspension appeals follow Harris County Transit appeal process:

- Riders wishing to appeal suspensions under this policy have the right to file an appeal request which must be in written by letter or via e-mail to:

Harris County Office of Transit Services
8410 Lantern Point Drive
Houston TX 77054

Or e-mail: **Transit@hctx.net**

- Riders must submit written appeal requests within 15 business days of the date of suspension letter.
- Riders who miss the appeal request deadline will be suspended from Harris County Transit service indicated in your appeal letter.
- Any service suspension imposed due to No Shows will begin five (5) business days from the date of notification of the sanction being imposed. The sanction is stayed pending the outcome of an appeal and transportation will be provided free to the appeals process.

PARATRANSIT TRANSPORT COST / PAYING FOR TRIPS

HCT charges \$2.00 for each one-way trip. A round trip is \$4.00. The \$2.00 charge is covered by purchasing Trips and swiping your RIDES fare card. Passengers should plan their transportation needs accordingly and order enough Trips to cover all inbound and returning trips. If you are traveling with a companion, an additional Trip will be charged to your account to cover both you and your companion. PCA (Personal Care Attended) are excluded and ride free.

Step-by-Step Guide:

- Ensure you have enough Trips on the account. Account balance can be checked by calling into Paratransit and providing your RIDES fare card number.
- Board the Taxi, swipe your RIDES fare card (enjoy the ride!)
- Leaving the Taxi, swipe your RIDES fare card again (thank you!)

***NOTE:** Without proper fare (BOTH passing Trip balance & RIDES fare card) your transportation will be denied. If your RIDES fare card is lost or stolen a replacement card can be purchased for \$5.00. Trips loaded onto the fare card are not refundable.*

To purchase Trips to load onto your fare card, or for a replacement RIDES fare card, please mail Harris County Transit a **money order** with the appropriate amount to:

Harris County Office of Transit Services
8410 Lantern Point Drive
Houston Texas 77054.

FAILURE TO PAY FARE/ PROVIDING TICKET

Harris County Transit's Failure to Pay Fare policy was developed to deal with passengers who consistently fail to pay for trips either by not purchasing Trips or swiping the RIDES fare card. Federal regulations allow such persons to have their service suspended for a reasonable length of time. This provision does not apply to trips that are not paid for due to reasons that are beyond the individual's control, and do not apply in cases of scheduling problems, late pickups, or other operational problems not within the control of the passenger. If a passenger fails to swipe the RIDES fare card or purchase enough Trips to cover the fare for the driver at the time of boarding, HCT may consider the act as a Failure to Pay Fare. HCT will take into consideration any reported lost or stolen fare cards and difficult appointments to re-schedule such as dialysis. During these circumstances, HCT will negotiate with passenger to arrange for reimburse of the trip owed. However, if a HCT does consider the incident as a Failure to Pay Fare, the following penalties will apply:

- 1st Incident— a written/verbal warning and program counseling.
- 2nd Incident—10 days suspension letter and program counseling.
- 3rd Incident— 20 days suspension letter and program counseling.
- 4th Incident — 30 days suspension letter and program counseling.

Before a Failure to Pay Fare is charged, the passenger will be contacted by HCT to determine the reason for the failure, to verify if the unpaid trip was a Failure to Pay Fare, and to ensure the passenger understands the policy. Any service suspension imposed due from a Failure to Pay Fare will begin five (5) business days from the date of notification of the sanction imposed. Passengers sanctioned for Failure to Pay Fare may appeal this decision in writing within 15 days of the notice of service suspension. The sanction would be placed on hold pending the outcome of an appeal. Transportation will be provided free to our offices to complete the appeals process.

ON-BOARD TRAVEL TIME

Under normal operating conditions, you should not be on-board the vehicle for more than 60 minutes.

GENERAL RIDING AND USE RULES FOR PASSENGERS

- Passengers must accept service as shared rides, and they must often share vehicles with other passengers.
- Passengers must present a valid photo ID when boarding.
- Passengers must wear seat belts, and passengers using wheelchairs or similar equipment must adhere to securement requirements. Failure to do so may result in the trip being canceled, and the trip charged as a No Show.
- Profanity, abusive language, or threatening or intimidating actions or words are not permitted and may result in suspension of service.
- Eating, drinking, and smoking are prohibited on vehicles.
- Drivers are not allowed to accept tips.
- Adult passengers must properly supervise all children and ensure they remain quiet and seated.
- Passengers must be very careful when boarding the vehicle to avoid tripping, slipping, or falling, especially watching for steps, curbs, and street gutters.
- No radios, music boxes, boom boxes, or other distractions are allowed.
- No open containers are allowed – Only spill proof containers are allowed inside the vehicle – Styrofoam “to go” cups, even with lids, are not considered spill proof.
- No person shall deface, damage, write upon, soil, and spit in or on the vehicle.
- No pets or animals are allowed on the vehicle other than a Service Animal accompanying a person with a disability, or an animal in a cage or approved standard pet carrier.
- No person shall possess any explosives or carry any corrosive acid or flammable liquid, gasoline or a gasoline container or any type of hazardous material while on the vehicle. (Respirators and portable oxygen supplies are permitted on and used on board by a person needing them for health reason).
- No prohibited weapons, explosives, flammable liquids, or hazardous chemicals on the bus or at bus stops.
- No laundry is allowed on board except in an enclosed bag.
- No person shall interfere with the driver’s operation of the vehicle.
- Vehicles may not be used as a forum for religious, political, or personal beliefs; and no printed materials, other than that specifically provided by or authorized HCT may be distributed on board.
- An adult must accompany children under the age of 12 years.

REASONABLE ACCOMMODATIONS

VISITORS

Persons that visit the Harris County Transit service area and are certified by another agency as ADA Paratransit Eligible or by statement that they cannot use the bus service will be provided reciprocal service for up to any combination of 30 days during a 365-day period beginning with the first day of service. Visitors will have the availability to schedule trips for the following day. If the individual plans on being in the service area longer than the 30 service days, the individual will be required to complete the certification process and be determined eligible before they may continue riding. The application will be mailed out upon receiving the first day of service. **Visitors must follow the scheduling process in the Scheduling Paratransit Trips section to book a ride.**

TEMPORARY ELIGIBILITY

Individuals who experience a temporary loss of functional ability that prevents them from using the fixed route service may apply for Temporary Eligibility. An application will be required to determine the duration of temporary service. If an extension of service is needed a review of the individual's functional ability will be scheduled before the expiration date of temporary service.

PACKAGES

Passengers may not bring on board any baggage or articles that, due to size or numbers, would restrict free movement of passengers. All items must be stowed securely, out of the isles of the vehicle, during the entire trip. Items must be stowed in such a manner that they do not become loose during travel, that they do not take up other passenger space if needed and they are not a tripping hazard to other passengers.

OTHER PASSENGERS AND PERSONAL CARE ATTENDANTS

Some passengers may require a Personal Care Attendant (PCA). If a PCA is required based on the passenger's disability, and the PCA performs an assistant role, the PCA may ride without fare, provided the passenger's ID card so indicates as approved by HCT. However, the passenger must notify HCT in advance of the need for a PCA, and the County has the right to verify that need. An appropriate need for a PCA includes immobility, disorientation, non-comprehension, or communication impairment. **Other than a PCA, other passengers accompanying the passenger are subject to space available and an additional Trip will be deducted from the RIDES fare card.** Children under the age of two years must have a car seat as required by State Law, and the passenger must provide the car seat. Passengers traveling with infants must provide an infant carrier approved for use in cars. The passenger is responsible for placing the infant into the carrier and properly securing the carrier with a seat belt.

SERVICE ANIMALS

When making reservations, please notify HCT if a Service Animal will accompany you on your trip

DOOR-TO-DOOR SERVICE

Drivers must maintain sight of the vehicle; therefore, they will not go beyond the driveway or ground level of any building. Drivers will assist with wheelchairs over one curb or up sturdy, safe, accessible wheelchair ramps.

The following are **NOT PERMITTED** in Door-to-Door Service

- Locking/unlocking doors or activating/deactivating house alarms.
- Entering beyond the door threshold.
- Loading and unloading personal items, packages, groceries, etc.
- Assisting passengers on unsafe or steeply inclined mobility ramps, steps, or stairs.
- Going beyond the main entry or first floor of a facility.

REASONABLE MODIFICATIONS OF SERVICE

Harris County Transit (HCT) understands that sometimes a passenger may need to modify an existing trip to use the service. A reasonable modification of service may be done by calling **832-927-4953** or in writing at any time. Please note you do not have to ask for a reasonable modification of service, just request that your trip be modified.

The following may be **PERMITTED** as Reasonable Service Modifications:

- Changing of pick-up times within the hours of service;
- Requesting a different entry at the same building for pick up;
- Changing a return trip destination within the service area;
- Mobility device users boarding separate from the device;
- Eating or drinking on the bus for medical reasons (post dialysis treatment; post day surgery, diabetes) or other medical conditions;

The following may **NOT PERMITTED** as Reasonable Service Modifications:

- Changing of pick-up times outside the service time hours (before service starts or after it ends);
- Requesting a destination outside the service area;
- Requesting a pick-up or drop off location that will endanger the passengers, driver or damage the vehicle (high traffic areas, high water locations, poor lighting and or reduced visibility of the bus);
- Asking the driver to handle or care for a Service Animal;
- Additional stops which would change the nature of the original trip;
- Unlocking dwelling doors, setting, or disarming alarm systems;
- Carrying groceries or packages through the threshold of the residence or a business;
- Requesting a specific driver to provide service;
- Requesting to be transported as the only passenger of a vehicle;
- Asking the driver to perform money handling, banking or other financial functions;
- Having a metered taxi, van or accessible vehicle wait for client at the destination while the passenger conducts business.

**For additional questions concerning Reasonable Modifications please call
832-927-4953**

CONTACT & FARE INFORMATION

HARRIS COUNTY TRANSIT OFFICE ADDRESS

Harris County Transit Office
8410 Lantern Point Drive
Houston, Texas 77054

OPERATING HOURS

Service Operating Hours: Monday – Friday..... 6:00 AM – 6:30 PM
Saturday 8:00 AM – 6:30 PM

Paratransit Office Hours: Monday – Friday..... 7:00 AM – 6:00 PM
Saturday 8:00 AM – 6:00 PM

(All reservations should be made 1 DAY IN ADVANCE)

SCHEDULING/CANCELING PARATRANSIT TRIPS

To schedule a trip, please call our office at least **1 Day in Advanced**. To cancel a trip, please call our office no later than **2 hours** before your scheduled appointment. A 24-hour notice is always appreciated. If calling after hours, please leave a message and we will return the call as soon as possible.

Paratransit Office Number: 832-927-4953

- Scheduling Questions
- Reservations
- Cancellations
- Complaints/Comments
- Certifications
- Recertification

TDD TELEPHONE NUMBER (HEARING IMPAIRED)

800-735-2988

TRANSPORTATION ASSISTANCE REGISTRY

Persons needing evacuation assistance must pre-register!

Dial 2-1-1

WEBSITE / E-MAIL

www.HarrisCountyTransit.com / transit@hctx.net

PARATRANSIT FARE RATE

Client.....	\$2.00 (each way) covered by RIDES fare card
Companion.....	\$2.00 (each way) deducted by RIDES fare card
Replacement RIDES fare card.....	\$5.00 (Money Order)
Personal Care Attendant (PCA).....	Free

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

Harris County operates its programs and services without regard to race, color, and national origin in accordance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act. Any person who believes she or he has been aggrieved by any unlawful discriminatory practice under Title VI may file a complaint with Harris County.

For more information on Harris County's civil rights program and the procedures to file a complaint, contact 713-578-2000, (TTY 1-800-735-2988); email transit@csd.hctx.net; or visit our administrative office at 8410 Lantern Point Drive, Houston, Texas 77054. For more information, visit www.harriscountytransit.com



If information is needed in another language contact, 713-578-2000