



Accessible Services Guide for Paratransit Users



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Vision Statement	4
COTA’s Commitment to Passengers	6
Welcome to COTA’s Mainstream Transportation Service	7
Fixed-Route Service	7
Travel Training for Fixed-Route Service	7
Fixed-Route Emergency Service	8
COTA Mainstream.....	9
Who Can Use COTA Mainstream?.....	9
When and Where Does COTA Mainstream Operate?	9
How Does COTA Mainstream Provide Service?.....	10
How Do I Apply for COTA Mainstream?	10
What Type of Eligibility Do I Have and What Does It Mean?	11
How Do I Appeal My Eligibility Decision?	12
When Would I Need to Reapply for My Current COTA Mainstream Service?	13
Mainstream Orientation	13
How Do I Schedule a Trip?.....	14
When Can I Call to Schedule a Trip?	14
What Information Do I Need When Calling to Schedule a Ride?	15
Pick-Up Time Vs. Appointment Time	16
What If I Need To Go To More Than One Place During My Trip?.....	17
What Is the Pick-Up Window?	17
How Do I Change My Scheduled Ride?	18
How Do I Check On My Ride?.....	19
How Do I Cancel a Scheduled Ride?	19
What If My Appointment Is Running Late?	20
What If I Go To The Same Place Every Day/Week?	20

TABLE OF CONTENTS (CON'T)

How Much Are My Trips?22

Can I Tip The Driver?23

What Do I Do When The COTA Mainstream Vehicle Arrives?24

What Is a Personal Care Attendant (PCA)?.....25

What Is a Companion?26

Do I Need to Bring a Special Seat for my Child?27

Are There Any Weight or Size Restrictions for Mobility Devices?27

Do I Have to Wear the Safety Seat Belt?.....28

Does My Wheelchair Need to be Secured?28

Can I Bring My Pet, Comfort or Emotional Support Animal?.....28

What About Traveling with a Service Animal?29

Can I Bring Packages and Personal Items?30

What If I Think I Lost Something on the Vehicle?31

What If I Lose My COTA Mainstream ADA ID Card?.....31

What Emergency Procedures Are in Place in case Something Happens
when I am on the Bus?.....31

Will The Bus Still Pick Me Up During Bad Weather?32

Tips for Dialysis Riders and Others Using COTA Mainstream for transportation
to Medical Treatments32

How Can I Keep My Records Up-to-date?.....35

COTA Mainstream No Show Policy35

Are There Other Rider Rules That I Need to Know?.....39

Disruptive Conduct41

Helpful Information for Mainstream Users42

Mobility Roundtable with Accessible Transportation Advisory Committee46

ADA Compliance47

Reasonable Modification48

Vision Statement

Vision

The Central Ohio Transit Authority will be the region's transportation leader.

Mission

The Central Ohio Transit Authority is committed to excellence in serving our stakeholders-customers, employees and taxpayers. We will deliver quality transportation services and conduct business courteously, safely, ethically and reliably. We will demonstrate leadership that is fiscally responsible and environmentally conscientious.

Appropriate Behaviors

We practice integrity, respect, civility, teamwork, trust, directness, accountability, being receptive to other viewpoints and committed to the success of others. We not only model these behaviors, we encourage and coach others to adopt them.

Customers

We work to meet and exceed the needs and expectations of our customers, both internally and externally. Our fundamental mission is to serve the transportation needs of the public...our customers.

Safety

We will not compromise the safety of our employees, customers or the general public.

The Accessible Services Guide for Paratransit Users was prepared to familiarize customers with COTA's accessible services and answer questions about COTA's complementary paratransit services.

See page 42 to find important numbers or to request this document in an accessible format.

COTA's Commitment to Passengers

COTA and all partners will:

- Treat each passenger with respect and courtesy in every aspect of our operation.
- Assist passengers, upon request, from their door or first area of reception to the door of their destination without losing sight of the vehicle; this includes maneuvering a wheelchair over the curb or up and down one step.
- Provide additional driver assistance; all requests for additional driver assistance (e.g., seatbelt extension) must be made when the trip is requested.
- Provide reliable and timely transportation in clean and well-maintained vehicles.
- Safely operate all vehicles according to the traffic laws of the City of Columbus and surrounding areas.
- Make every reasonable effort to meet the passenger at the scheduled pickup location.
- Provide proper securement devices on the Mainstream vehicles for safety, including wheelchair lifts and designated securement areas.
- Advise passengers who use scooters for mobility to transfer to a passenger seat to improve customer safety, if necessary.
- Assist customer with no more than two large paper bags or four small plastic bags per trip.
- Accommodate all requests for ADA-mandated trips.
- Address customer concerns within three days of receipt, making every reasonable effort to resolve the issue.
- Provide an appeal process for service eligibility or suspension of service.

Welcome to COTA's Mainstream Transportation Service

Fixed-Route Service

All eligible paratransit customers are permitted to ride fixed-route buses at no charge with their COTA Mainstream ADA ID card. All COTA fixed-route buses provide:

- Ramps or lifts to accommodate wheelchairs and other mobility devices
- A “kneeling function” which lowers the front of the bus for easier boarding
- Audible and visual announcements for all stops, so you know the next bus stop
- Service animals are welcome
- Your Personal Care Attendant (PCA) boards free. Just show your valid COTA Mainstream ADA ID card marked “YES” for the PCA free ride.

Travel Training for Fixed-Route Service

Travel Training is a personal service focusing on the customer's needs. Travel Training is free and available to those seeking independence by using public transit. The goal of the Travel Training program is to maximize each individual's ability to travel safely and independently on COTA's fixed-route bus service.

COTA Travel Trainers are friendly and respectful. They customize individual training sessions to fit each customer's needs. After working with a Travel Trainer, customers will feel confident and comfortable about riding the fixed-route bus.

Travel Trainees will learn the following:

- Plan a trip using the easiest and safest route
- Reach specific destinations on fixed-route
- Read and understand route maps and schedules
- Locate and transfer to other buses
- Board the bus safely with a mobility device
- Travel to and from the bus stop
- Recognize bus numbers, bus stops and landmarks
- Pay fares and purchase passes
- Board and exit the bus safely
- Know where and how to safely cross the street
- Travel independently and confidently by COTA fixed-route buses

To get information regarding Travel Training contact COTA's Travel Trainer at (614) 308-4355.

Fixed-Route Emergency Service

Mainstream will provide emergency back-up services in the event a fixed-route bus customer with a disability cannot be otherwise accommodated.

COTA Mainstream

COTA Mainstream is a complementary demand-response, shared-ride public transportation for individuals who qualify under the ADA. The service is designed to provide safe, clean and reliable transportation for those individuals who do not have the functional ability to ride fixed-route bus service.

Who can use COTA Mainstream?

- You must complete the application process and be certified as eligible before scheduling any COTA Mainstream rides.
- COTA Mainstream service is available to people who have a disability that prevents them from functionally using COTA fixed route buses for some or all of their rides.
- Trip origins and destinations must be within COTA's service area. Visitors with current eligibility status for transportation services through another public transit agency similar to COTA can use up to 21 days of rides a year before being required to become COTA Mainstream eligible.
- COTA will notify you when it is time to recertify your eligibility.

When and Where Does COTA Mainstream Operate?

Mainstream ADA Service

The ADA qualified service area is defined as being within $\frac{3}{4}$ mile distance around an operating fixed-route bus line. Hours of operation for both the origin and destination locations are the same as the hours of operation for fixed-route service. Only ADA eligible trips are guaranteed.

Mainstream Non-ADA Service

Any origin or destination location more than $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile from an operating fixed-route bus line or trips made outside of the fixed-route hours of operation in any area is considered non-ADA. Non-ADA service is provided upon space availability and is not a required service mandated by the Americans with Disabilities Act.

How Does COTA Mainstream Provide Service?

- Using small buses
- Rides are scheduled by advance reservation
- The driver must remain within sight of the vehicle at all times
- Due to the nature of a shared ride service, vehicles may stop and travel in other directions during your ride
- Travel time will vary depending upon the trip distance and stops made to accommodate other riders.

How Do I Apply for COTA Mainstream?

To apply for COTA Mainstream, an application must be completed. You may obtain an application by calling Mobility Services at (614) 275-5828 and request the application be mailed, faxed or emailed or download an application from our website at <http://www.cota.com>.

Once you receive the application, part 1 needs to be completed. A specialist that oversees your current functional limitation(s) that prevent you from using the fixed- route bus must complete part 2 of the application. When both parts have been completed you can call (614) 275-5833 to schedule an appointment to attend an interview/functional assessment. All applicants must bring their completed application with them at the time of their appointment. All assessments are conducted at the Mobility Services Facility located at 1330 Fields Ave., Columbus, OH 43201.

All new applicants and recertifying customers must bring their current valid photo ID at the time of their interview assessment appointment.

Applicants must bring the mobility aid that they normally use when traveling (cane, walker, etc.).

It is important to note when recertifying, an applicant may experience a lapse in service if they do not keep their assessment appointment or fail to complete the entire process by their expiration date.

What Type of Eligibility Do I Have and What Does it Mean?

Your type of eligibility is determined by the COTA Mobility Services Eligibility Administrator and is based upon the result of your functional assessment. When you are certified as a COTA Mainstream customer, you will receive a letter from COTA

Mobility Services. The determined eligibility is written in your certification letter. There are three types of eligibility:

- Unconditional Eligibility: No trip restrictions
- Conditional Eligibility: Trips are limited to the specific conditions which prevent an individual from riding fixed-route bus service
- Temporary Eligibility: Given to individuals with short term conditions. Trips are provided for the duration of time during which the individual is unable to use fixed-route bus service

Please read your eligibility determination letter to find your specific eligibility condition. If you have questions about your letter, please contact Mobility Services at (614) 275-5828.

How Do I Appeal my Eligibility Decision?

If you have been found to be conditionally eligible or ineligible for COTA Mainstream, you may appeal the decision. You must file your appeal within sixty (60) days of notification of your eligibility status. If you have questions about the Eligibility Appeal process, please contact the Manager, Mobility Special Programs at (614) 275-5905.

When Would I Need to Reapply for my Current COTA Mainstream service?

COTA notifies applicants two months prior to their certification expiration date and provides the opportunity to reapply for the service if desired. All applicants must complete a COTA Mainstream application to be recertified for the service.

Mainstream Orientation

COTA's Mobility Services Department conducts orientation sessions to assist customers with learning how to ride the service. Attendees will learn:

- The difference between an ADA and Non-ADA trip
- How to make a reservation correctly
- Pick-up time vs. Appointment time
- Fares and children on Mainstream
- Pick Up Window
- No Shows, Late Cancellations & Cancels at Door
- Plus much more...

Orientation sessions are for one hour. New and existing customers may attend an Orientation session. Orientation is **NOT MANDATORY**; however, it will be informative and customers will learn how to optimize all the services COTA offers. Customers must register for the session prior to attending by calling 614-275-5833.

How Do I Schedule a Trip?

All rides are scheduled through the COTA Mainstream Reservations department. To schedule a ride, contact the Reservations Department at (614) 272-3033 or TTY at (614) 272-3030. All calls to the Reservations Department are recorded for quality assurance.

When Can I Call to Schedule a Trip?

You can schedule your rides no later than a day before and up to 7 days in advance. **Same day trips cannot be accommodated.**

The following are ways all qualified COTA Mainstream riders may schedule their trips:

- Calling the Reservations Department at (614) 272-3033 or TTY at (614) 272-3030. Reservation hours are Monday – Friday, 7:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m., Saturday and Sunday, 8:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.
- *Email trip reservations – trips@cota.com
- *Faxing trip reservations at (614) 272-3018

*Please note: If you are scheduling a trip for next day service, emailed and faxed trip reservations must be received ½ hour prior to the Reservations Department close of business hours.

What Information Do I Need When Calling to Schedule a Ride?

The Reservations Department will guide you through the process of scheduling a ride. When calling to schedule a trip, please have the following information available:

- Your first and last name
- The date and day of the week you need a ride
- Pick-up or appointment time
- If pick-up is not from home, provide address and a contact phone number
- If pick-up is from a building, provide the name of the complex, business, suite number and building number or letter
- State where the vehicle should wait at the pick-up or drop-off location (front door, side door, etc.)
- Provide a working cell phone number, if available
- State if a Personal Care Attendant (PCA) will ride
- Give number of companions that will ride or if there are any children age six and under traveling
- State if a lift will be needed
- State if a mobility device will be used
- State how fare will be paid

The reservationist will repeat the day, date, time and address for each pick-up location and destination to ensure it is correct. **Please verify that all trip reservation information is correct and write the information down.**

Door to door service is provided only upon request. If you require assistance to or from the door beyond the Mainstream vehicle, you will need to let the reservationist know when scheduling your trip(s).

Please specify if the person who may be traveling with you will be using any mobility aids, i.e., motorized wheelchairs or scooters, walkers, canes, etc.

At times, a vehicle will not be available at your requested trip time. All transportation providers experience high volume at certain times of the weekday, generally from 7:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. and again from 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. when people are traveling for work or school. To accommodate you, it may be necessary to offer you a different trip time. The reservationist can offer you a trip up to an hour before or after your originally preferred time. Or if possible, schedule your appointments at non-peak times to assist us in finding a trip closer to your request.

Pick-up Time vs. Appointment Time

Provide the reservationist with a **pick-up time** if the trip involves traveling to a destination where a specific drop-off time is NOT necessary. For example: trips to the grocery store, pharmacy or to visit a friend.

Provide the reservationist with an **appointment time** if the trip involves traveling to a destination where a specific drop-off time **is** necessary. The best way to ensure that riders get to appointments on time is to schedule trips based on the stated

appointment or desired arrival time. For example: trips to work or to doctor's appointments.

What If I Need to Go to More Than One Place During My Trip?

Three round trip reservations or six one-way trips can be made per phone call, email request and fax request. Consecutive trips may be scheduled; however, at least two hours between the first pick-up and the next pick-up time must be maintained.

Operators are permitted to stop only at the location designated in the reservation. Travel arrangements with more than one destination will be scheduled as separate trips and will require a separate fare. Schedules are designed to keep vehicles moving; therefore, we cannot wait on a customer who expects to be at a destination a brief amount of time. You will need to schedule a return trip no less than one hour after arrival at the destination. Remember to allow yourself plenty of time at your destination before your return trip is scheduled.

What is the Pick-up Window?

The reservationist will give you a scheduled pick-up window. All COTA Mainstream trips are scheduled with a thirty-minute time frame. This means that the COTA Mainstream operator could arrive any time between the scheduled pick-up time and 30 minutes after the scheduled time. For example:

Scheduled time:	10:00 a.m.
30-minute pick-up window:	10:00 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.
Customer should be ready by:	10:00 a.m.
Driver is late:	10:31 a.m.

The vehicle can arrive anytime during the pick-up window. Customers must be ready to leave. A courtesy phone call will be attempted in an effort to locate the customer. The driver will wait five (5) minutes for the customer before departing to their next destination.

How Do I Change My Scheduled Ride?

COTA Mainstream cannot change pick-up times or pick-up/drop-off locations on the same day of your ride. You can change a scheduled ride up to 6:00 p.m. on weekdays/weekends and up to 5:00 p.m. on holidays on the day before your ride. Tell the reservationist that you would like to change a ride that has already been scheduled. They will ask:

- Your first and last name
- The date and time of the ride you are calling to change
- The new time you would like to schedule, or other changes you need to make

Staff will always try to accommodate your needs, but changes to your original ride request may result in adjustment to your pick-up times.

How Do I Check on My Ride?

Unexpected delays can happen because of road construction, traffic conditions, bad weather or many other reasons that could impact service. If the COTA Mainstream vehicle has not arrived after your pick-up window (30 minutes after your scheduled pick-up time), contact the Dispatch office at (614) 272-3007. The dispatcher will give you an update on your ride.

Stay within sight of the pick-up location if at all possible in case the vehicle arrives while you are calling.

How Do I Cancel a Scheduled Ride?

A trip cancelled at least one day prior to your scheduled pick-up time is considered an advance cancellation. For all advanced cancellations, you must call the reservations department at (614) 272-3033.

A trip cancelled at least 2 hours prior to your scheduled pick-up time on the day of your trip is considered a same day cancellation. For all same day cancellations you must call the dispatch office at (614) 272-3007.

No penalty will be enforced for advanced and same day cancellations. In order to prevent a late cancel, you must call at least 2 hours in advance to cancel. You are encouraged not to schedule trips if you are not certain the trip will be needed.

Late trip cancellations cause COTA Mainstream service to be less efficient and can inconvenience other customers. **(see no show policy on page 35).**

What If My Appointment Is Running Late?

If your appointment is running later than you expected and there is a chance that you will not be ready for your scheduled return trip (or if you have missed the bus), contact the dispatch office as soon as possible. Every effort will be made to adjust your return trip pick-up time and assign another vehicle.

Because schedules are set the day before, there may be a delay of an hour or more before another vehicle is available to accommodate your request.

Remember: Allow extra time for medical appointments or other appointments that may take longer than expected. This will reduce the chance of you having to wait until another vehicle is available. If a bus is sent and you are not ready or if you call to change your appointment because you are running late, your record may be given points in accordance with the “No Show Policy” (see page 35).

What If I Go To The Same Place Every Day/Week – Do I Need to Call Each Time?

If you need a ride to the same place, at the same time, at least once a week, “Subscription Service” may be a good option for you. This service allows for current eligible customers to make

regular trips without having to schedule trip reservations on a daily basis.

Customers requesting subscription service must demonstrate travel to their destination consistently over a 30-day period before subscription service can begin. Consistent travel means customers must complete travel to the same destination, with similar pick-up and drop-off times, at least once a week, for a 30-day period. Individuals who have schedules that change frequently are not eligible for subscription service.

As capacity allows, subscription reservations may be made for the following trip types:

- Life sustaining medical trips such as dialysis
- Work trips (where employment provides the primary means of support)

If you are receiving “Subscription Service”, it is important to let us know immediately if you don’t need a ride on a particular day. For example, if you have a “Subscription Service” for a ride to work each weekday, keep us updated on holidays when your work is closed. This will help you avoid unnecessary rides, missed connections or No Show penalties.

Subscription trips are automatically cancelled on the following holidays:

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

You can put your subscription on “hold” for up to 4 months (120 days). When you are ready to have your subscription taken off “hold”, contact the reservations department 7 days in advance to reinstate the service. If you need to put your rides on “hold” for a longer period, we may ask you to call back and request a new subscription service when you need it again.

When any request is made to change the trip origin, destination or time, the change will be considered as a new subscription service request and you must meet the 30-day travel demonstration requirement before subscription service can begin.

How Much Are My Trips?

- ADA trips - \$3.50 per one way
- Non-ADA trips - \$5.00 per one way

Acceptable payments for COTA Mainstream trips include:

- Cash (exact change)

- COTA Mainstream ticket (valued at \$3.50 per ticket)
- COTA Mainstream monthly Pass (\$105.00 per month)

COTA Mainstream tickets and COTA Mainstream Monthly Passes may be purchased at COTA's Administrative Building in the Pass Sales Department located at 33 N. High Street or by calling (614) 228-4123 or (614) 228-4125.

Please have exact fare ready when boarding the vehicle. Drivers do not carry change. Customers who do not have the fare will not be transported.

Mainstream Customers who have an Ohio State University BuckID card, Capital University ID card or Columbus College of Art & Design (CCAD) ID card pay no fare but must present their current student ID.

Mainstream Customers who have a Columbus City School student ID pay no fare during approved times throughout the year. Blackout dates and times do apply. Contact Columbus City Schools to verify those blackout dates and times.

Can I Tip the Driver?

No. Operators are not permitted to accept tips. If you would like to compliment the operator for service provided, please contact COTA's Customer Service department at (614) 228-1776.

What Do I Do When the COTA Mainstream Vehicle Arrives?

Upon arrival to your pick-up location, if the driver does not see you waiting for the vehicle, the driver will knock on your door and/or ring your doorbell to inform you of their arrival. Drivers are not allowed to enter a private residence.

Please remember that the vehicle may arrive anytime within the 30 minute pick-up window. It is important to be ready when the vehicle arrives so that the driver can stay on schedule for all riders. Wait in an area where you can see or hear the vehicle arrive or where the driver will be able to see you.

The driver will wait five (5) minutes upon arrival to your pick-up address. If you are not at the destination address within the 30 minute window, the driver will notify dispatch that you cannot be found. Dispatch will try to contact you to verify the pick-up address and let you know that the driver is outside waiting. If dispatch is unable to contact you by phone, the driver will have to leave to avoid inconveniencing other riders and you will be charged with a No Show after five minutes.

Rider Tips: Make sure your address is clearly visible from the street, especially at night. If you are being picked up at a large building, make sure when you schedule your ride to tell the reservationist the entrance where you will be waiting. Carry needed medication with you in case we are delayed or ride takes longer than expected. If you use oxygen, bring an

adequate (extra) supply. If you are diabetic or hypoglycemic, please bring a small snack with you in case the ride is longer than planned.

COTA Mainstream is “shared ride, public transportation”, which means that more than one customer may be scheduled with you on the vehicle. A customer may not refuse to ride with other customers. You must ride in the vehicle sent for you.

Drivers can assist riders up or down a maximum of one step.

A step is defined as a platform where both the rider and the assisting driver can stand before encountering another step.

Drivers will not move electric-powered wheelchairs or scooters up or down steps. Drivers cannot clear an accessible path to the vehicle obstructed by ice, snow, or other physical barrier.

If a customer requires assistance to or from the door, or up or down one step, it must be safe for both the driver and rider.

Customers who require additional assistance are encouraged to apply for authorization to travel with a Personal Care Attendant (PCA).

What is a Personal Care Attendant (PCA)?

A Personal Care Attendant (PCA) is a person who assists the eligible customer either in leaving their trip origin location, boarding and disembarking from the vehicle, while traveling to or upon arrival at the destination, or whose assistance is

required in completing the trip purpose. The PCA must have the same origin and destination as the customer. Eligibility for a customer to travel with a PCA will be determined during the eligibility application process.

You must tell us that your PCA is traveling with you when you schedule your ride. This ensures that there will be room on the vehicle for you, your PCA and the other scheduled riders. You may schedule only one (1) PCA and they may ride for free when traveling with you. Drivers cannot add riders who do not have a reservation, so if you do not make a reservation for your PCA, they will not be allowed to ride with you.

Customers are required to provide their own PCA. COTA does not provide PCAs.

What is a Companion?

A companion is someone you want to bring along to share the ride. Family members and friends not designated as a personal care attendant to you are considered companions.

Companions must pay the full fare when accompanying you and must get on and off the vehicle at the same place and time as you.

You will need to inform the reservationist when you schedule rides that you will be traveling with a companion. This ensures that there will be room on the vehicle for you, your companion and other scheduled riders.

Other additional individuals accompanying the customer shall be provided service, only if:

- Space is available for the person
- Transportation of additional individuals will not result in a denial of service to other eligible individuals

Do I Need to Bring a Special Seat for My Child?

All child restraint laws apply to children riding COTA Mainstream vehicles. It is the responsibility of the parent or guardian to comply with all regulations.

If riders want to use a child safety seat, they are required to secure the child and the seat. Children must be removed from strollers and the strollers must be collapsed to fit between the seat and the rider. A child that is either (or both) less than four years of age or under forty (40) pounds must be properly secured in a child restraint safety seat. In addition, children less than eight years of age and less than 4'9" in height must be transported in a booster seat meeting federal motor vehicle safety standards.

Are There Any Weight or Size Restrictions for Mobility Devices?

A COTA Mainstream vehicle lift can accommodate mobility devices with the dimensions of 33" wide by 49" in length with a weight, when occupied by the applicant, of no more than

800 lbs. The mobility device must be fully operational and must be operated solely by the user of the device or their designated personal care attendant.

Do I Have to Wear the Safety Seat Belt?

For your safety and security, it is required that you use a safety belt and that you remain seated while riding in COTA Mainstream vehicles.

Does My Wheelchair Need to Be Secured?

It is the operator's responsibility to ensure that all mobility devices are properly secured. Operators can assist you with fastening and unfastening seat belts. You must have your seatbelt fastened before the vehicle leaves.

Riders with wheelchairs and scooters can expect the operator to attach wheelchair securements, a lap belt, and a shoulder harness and set the wheel brakes before the vehicle leaves. When a customer chooses to independently transfer onto a vehicle seat for the trip, the operator must secure the unoccupied wheelchair or scooter.

Can I Bring My Pet, Comfort or Emotional Support Animal?

Animals, to include comfort and emotional support animals that are not service animals can be taken on the COTA Mainstream vehicles when they are transported in a pet carrier that zips or latches, which prevents the pet from getting out of the carrier.

For safety reasons, operators are not permitted to handle pet carriers on or off the vehicle.

How Many Pets, Comfort or Emotional Support Animals are permitted per trip?

One pet, comfort or emotional support animal per trip is permitted to travel with rider.

What About Traveling with a Service Animal?

If you are traveling with a service animal, be sure to inform the reservationist when you are scheduling your trip. This ensures there will be room on the vehicle for you and your service animal, along with other scheduled riders.

If you are planning on riding COTA Mainstream with a service animal, please follow these guidelines:

- You are responsible to maintain control of your animal while on board.
- The animal must remain at your feet or on your lap. The animal may not sit on a vehicle seat.
- The animal must not be aggressive towards people or other animals.
- You are responsible for any damage or soiling caused by the animal.
- The animal must be clean and well groomed.

The same policy for service animals apply to pets, comfort and emotional support animals.

Can I Bring Packages and Personal Items?

Carry-on packages must be comfortably handled by the customer, PCA and/or companion. Operators only help with packages when a customer is getting on or off COTA Mainstream vehicles. All carry-on items must be taken to and from the vehicle in one trip. The driver will assist with two (2) large paper bags or four (4) small plastic bags per trip. Simply ask the driver to assist you. No more than two (2) large paper bags or four (4) small plastic bags per trip will be allowed. Drivers must keep their vehicle in sight at all times. COTA Mainstream will allow one (1) small personal shopping cart, filled to normal capacity, per certified customer. The cart must be secured. Large commercial grocery carts are not permitted on the vehicle.

If this policy is not followed, your trip will be considered a No Show. Riders abusing the policy will receive one (1) warning letter. A second occurrence could result in suspension of COTA Mainstream transportation.

Please be kind to our drivers and understand that COTA Mainstream is a shared-ride service, the vehicle has to keep on moving!

What If I Think I Lost Something on the Vehicle?

Be sure to collect all of your belongings before leaving the vehicle. COTA Mainstream assumes no responsibility for items left on board the vehicle. Items found on the vehicle will be stored at COTA Mobility Services Facility located at 1330 Fields Avenue. Items will only be held for 7 days. Items not claimed will be disposed of after 7 days. To check if your item is in lost and found, please contact the Dispatch office at (614) 272-3007.

What If I Lose My COTA Mainstream ADA ID Card?

If you lose your COTA Mainstream ADA ID card, please contact the COTA Pass Sales Department at (614) 228-4123 or (614) 228-4125. There will be a \$10.00 replacement fee.

What Emergency Procedures Are in Place in Case Something Happens When I am on the Bus?

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

- Personal Medical Issues – a rider who becomes ill, or notices another rider who may be ill, should immediately inform the driver. Because drivers are not trained to provide medical assistance, they are required to notify the dispatch office for instruction.

- If a driver determines that a rider could threaten the health or safety of other riders, the driver may deny service. Prior to denying service, the driver will contact the dispatch office. A dispatcher will then contact a supervisor to coordinate a response.

Will the Bus Still Pick Me Up During Bad Weather?

During inclement weather COTA will make every attempt to continue to provide service.

Tips for Dialysis Riders and Others Using COTA Mainstream for Transportation to Medical Treatments

The same rules and procedures apply to all COTA Mainstream riders. There is no special service for those using COTA Mainstream to go to medical treatments. Please read through the following tips on how to help make your ride to the clinic go smoothly.

1. Consider setting up “subscription” service for your trips.

Those riders using COTA Mainstream for life sustaining medical trips on a regular basis may want to consider setting up Subscription Service (see page 20). Sometimes the exact appointment time is not available, but we will do our best to set up a schedule that works for you.

Know the pick-up time for both your trip to treatment and your return trip home.

COTA Mainstream has a 30-minute pick-up window and you must be ready to go at the start of that window. The vehicle could arrive at any time in the 30-minute window. Drivers have to follow a schedule because they have other riders to pick-up and drop-off.

2. Be sure the driver can find you.

Drivers cannot enter buildings beyond the first point of entry. If your residence or clinic has more than one entrance, make sure that you inform the reservationist when making your trip, what entrance you will be using. Wait where the driver can see you without going past the door.

3. Allow ample time for all medical appointments.

Plan for the unexpected. If you need extra recovery time, you may miss your scheduled return ride. If you are not ready when the driver comes, you must contact the dispatch office to arrange for another ride. Do not ask the driver to return. The driver has a schedule to follow and must proceed on his/her route.

COTA Mainstream cannot transport you if you have body fluids on you. If you are found to have body fluids after departure from the clinic, the driver may request

emergency personnel (911) who are equipped to handle medical emergencies.

4. Pack a Snack

Some riders may need to eat soon after their dialysis treatment. If you bring a little food, you will be prepared if your vehicle is delayed or if other riders need to be dropped off first. We do our best to avoid unnecessary delays on return trips; but no rider can be guaranteed a direct trip home. Please note that snacks must be eaten before you board COTA Mainstream. Eating and drinking are not permitted on the vehicles.

5. Call us if your ride has not arrived within your 30-minute pick-up window.

If your vehicle has not arrived within your scheduled window, contact the dispatch office at (614) 272-3007 to check on your ride.

6. Let us know as soon as possible if your treatment schedule changes.

If you have a subscription service and the schedule of your treatments changes, you must contact the Reservations Department immediately. If we send a vehicle for you based upon your old schedule, and you are not available for the ride, you will be considered a “no show”. Also, if

you are going to be missing treatments for a few days, (for example, while in hospital), you must call 614-272-3033 to place your trips on hold (see page 20). If we send a vehicle and you are not there, you may be no-showed multiple times and possibly penalized.

On holidays, your clinic may operate on a different schedule. Check with your clinic staff before a holiday.

How Can I Keep My Records Up-To-Date?

By keeping your records up-to-date, we will be able to provide a better service to our riders in times of emergency. Please remember to keep your telephone number and mailing address current in our records. If there is a change, be sure to inform the COTA Mobility Services staff at (614) 275-5828 that you are making a permanent contact information change.

COTA Mainstream No Show Policy

When an individual no shows for a scheduled ride, it is very expensive and takes away the opportunity that a ride could have been scheduled for someone else. There are consequences when riders have a pattern of either not being ready, late canceling rides or simply not showing up to take their scheduled ride.

What is a No Show?

A no show trip is when the customer is not available and the vehicle arrives for pick-up within the 30-minute window.

If a customer is a no show for the first half of a trip, he/ she is responsible for calling the dispatch office to cancel the return trip if they will not need it. Otherwise, he/ she will be charged with a second no show.

What is a Cancel at Door?

A trip is considered a cancel at door when the vehicle arrives on time within the 30-minute window and a customer (or the customer's representative) cancels a scheduled trip during the pick-up window.

If a driver arrives to pick up a customer before the start of the customer's 30-minute window and the customer is not ready to be transported, the customer is not required to board the vehicle. The customer may board if they are ready and does not oppose to departing early. The customer will not be charged a no show (or cancel at door) should they decide not to board the vehicle early.

What is a Late Cancel?

A trip is considered a late cancel when the customer (or the customer's representative) cancels less than two hours before the beginning of the pick-up window.

COTA’s No Show, Cancel at Door and Late Cancel policy is designed to identify those customers who have a pattern and practice of violating the policy based on their frequency of use and percentage of trips missed. No shows, cancel at doors and late cancels will be tracked on a rolling six (6) month cycle.

Customers who have accumulated five (5) penalty points with a combination of no shows, late cancels and cancels at door in a calendar month will trigger a review of their trip history:

- No Show = 1 penalty point
- Cancel at Door = 1 penalty point
- Late Cancel = 1 penalty point

Penalties for suspension of Mainstream service will be determined by utilizing a 15% and pattern of abuse rule. A customer’s number of trips and their pattern of trips along with their total number of violations will be taken into consideration when determining if the customer is considered for suspension. If a customer’s penalty points exceed 15% of their scheduled trips, this would be considered a violation month.

Examples

Non-Penalty Month	Events	Penalty Points	Scheduled Trips
Late Cancels	1	1	
No Shows	4	4	
Total	5	5	40
		12.5%	

Penalty Month	Events	Penalty Points	Scheduled Trips
Late Cancels	1	1	
No Shows	4	4	
Total	5	5	14
		35.7%	

The length of a customer’s suspension will adhere to the following schedule:

Violations	Penalties
First violation exceeding 15% of scheduled trips	Warning letter, copy of suspension policy; education
Second violation	7 days suspension (1 week)
Third violation	14 days suspension (2 weeks)
Fourth violation	21 days suspension (3 weeks)
Fifth and subsequent violations	28 days suspension (4 weeks)

With each consecutive no show, cancel at door and late cancel, the percentage will be recalculated monthly. If the percentage is greater than 15% within a rolling six (6) month period, further violations of this policy will result in suspension, per the above schedule.

COTA will work with a customer to reduce a customer’s no shows, cancels at door and late cancels prior to suspending a customer’s Mainstream service. Prior to sending a warning or suspension letter, COTA will review all no shows, cancels at door and late cancels to ensure that the process was followed properly and an accurate count is represented. Any no shows, cancels at door or late cancels that are found to be in error will be removed from the customer’s record.

What if I Disagree with my No Show suspension?

A written copy of the COTA Mainstream Suspension Appeal Process may be obtained by contacting Mobility Services at (614) 275-5828. COTA will give you advance notification of a service suspension. A customer whose service is to be suspended has the right to an appeal. Contact Mobility Services immediately upon receipt of your letter. Failure to follow the instructions in your notification letter will result in your Mainstream service suspension.

Does COTA Automatically Cancel my Later Rides/Return Trips if I No Show a Trip?

No. Later trips and return trips for that day will not be automatically cancelled when you “no show” for a ride. It is your responsibility to cancel rides that are no longer needed. Failure to do so will result in a no show penalty.

Are There Other Rider Rules That I Need to Know?

COTA and its partners will not make exceptions to the Americans with Disabilities Act or following COTA policies:

- Customers must comply with safety policies and regulations, including passenger, wheelchair and securement requirements; wheelchair brakes must be locked in position when on the lift and when the vehicle is in motion.

- Customers cannot transport any item that may pose a threat to the health or safety of the driver and other customers.
- Mainstream will not transport customers who fail to control their conduct or pose a threat to the health and safety of the driver, other customers or the vehicle.
- Passengers must pay the required fare - \$3.50 per one way trip for ADA trips or \$5.00 per one way trip for Non-ADA trips.
- Passengers must show their current Mainstream ADA I.D. card when boarding the vehicle.
- Customers may only transport 2 large paper bags or 4 small plastic bags per trip. Customers may transport 1 small personal shopping cart filled to normal capacity when boarding the vehicle.
- Smoking, eating, drinking, carrying illegal weapons or playing electronic devices without headphones while on the vehicle is prohibited.
- Passengers must pay the required fare when boarding the vehicle.
- Drivers will not make unscheduled stops along a route.
- Travel training is available to help customers learn how to use COTA's fixed-route service.

Disruptive Conduct

Customers who engage in violent, seriously disruptive, or illegal conduct will be refused service. A customer whose behavior threatens, or has threatened the safety of any COTA personnel, service provider personnel or other customers may be denied service. Customers who engage in violent, threatening or illegal behavior may lose the privilege of riding COTA's services.

For the safety and comfort of all Mainstream customers and employees, COTA has established the following definitions and consequences to address inappropriate customer conduct:

Hazardous misconduct is defined as any customer act which creates the potential for injury or death to any customer, vehicle operator or the general public.

Abusive misconduct is defined as any verbal or physical act that is generally offensive, invades the privacy rights of others or involves touching another person in a rude, insolent or angry manner. Hazardous or abusive misconduct may result in a service suspension:

- A first offense may result in a suspension of service of up to sixty (60) days
- A second offense within a one (1) year period may result in a suspension of service for up to one (1) year. At the end

of the suspension year, a customer must reapply for Mainstream service.

Unintentional misconduct is defined as any act that would qualify as hazardous or abusive misconduct, but is the direct and immediate consequence of the customer's disability.

Consequences of Unintentional Misconduct:

- A customer may be required to ride with a Personal Care Attendant
- A customer may be subject to any reasonable accommodation that will ensure safety. This accommodation may last for a time period sufficient to allow the customer to learn appropriate behavior, or the accommodation may be permanent if the conduct is beyond the customer's control.

Helpful Information for Mainstream Users

Mainstream Mobility Services

1330 Fields Ave.

Columbus, OH 43201

(614) 275-5828 Voice

(614) 272-3018 Fax

(614) 272-3030 TTY

Email: paratransit@cota.com

Reservations and Advance Cancellations for Mainstream Trips

(614) 272-3033

Email: trips@cota.com

(614) 272-3030 TTY

Reservation Hours

Monday – Friday 7:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.

Saturday – Sunday 8:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.

Holidays 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

- Due to high call volume, customers should remain on the line for assistance. Calls will be taken in the order they are received.
- Email and fax requests are handled by Reservationists throughout the day.
- Email and fax requests must be received at least one hour prior to each day's close of business.

Mainstream Dispatch Office

(614) 272-3007 Voice

(614) 272-3030 TTY

Dispatch Hours

Monday – Saturday 4:30 a.m. – 1:00 a.m.

Sunday and Holidays 6:00 a.m. – 9:00 p.m.

Hours for Lost and Found

Monday – Friday 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Call the Mainstream Dispatch Office to:

- Inquire about pickup status – “Where’s My Bus?”
- Cancel same day trips
- Inquire about Lost and Found items

COTA Customer Service

William J. Lhota Building

33 N. High St.

Columbus, OH 43215

(614) 228-1776 Voice

(614) 275-5878 TTY

(614) 228-4106 Fax

Email: customerservice@cota.com

Hours

Monday – Friday 6:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m.

Saturday – Sunday 8:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.

Holiday Schedule 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Call Customer Service to:

- Verify COTA fixed-route and Mainstream service areas
- Report safety issues
- Submit compliments for exceptional service
- Submit suggestions or concerns about service
- When calling in a compliment or concern, remember to mention the date, time, pickup and drop off location of the event

Pass and Ticket Sales / ADA Identification Cards

(614) 228-4123 or (614) 228-4125 Voice

(614) 275-5878 TTY

(614) 228-4118 Fax

Email: customerservice@cota.com

Pass and Ticket Sales Hours

Monday – Friday 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

ADA Identification Cards Hours

Monday – Friday 9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Call or visit Pass and Ticket sales to:

- Purchase fixed-route bus passes, day passes and monthly passes
- Purchase Mainstream tickets or monthly passes
- Apply for and obtain a COTA Key card (for persons with disabilities who ride the fixed-route bus)
- Obtain a replacement ADA ID Card. Replacement cards are \$10.00 each.

Note: The COTA Key card and ADA ID Card are NOT fare passes. Customers must present a valid COTA Key Card or ADA Card along with their passenger fare (cash, ticket, pass, etc.) each time they board a COTA vehicle.

MOBILITY ROUNDTABLE WITH ACCESSIBLE TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE (ATAC) MEETINGS

The purpose of the Mobility Roundtable with ATAC is to bring together a group of individuals to discuss concerns, compliments and solutions to COTA's transportation services and mobility services within Franklin County. The Mobility Roundtable with ATAC meet quarterly for one hour from 7:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m. at COTA's William J. Lhota Building, 33 N. High Street, Columbus, OH 43215 in the WGPorter Board Room. For more information on attending a meeting, please contact (614) 275-5833.

ADA COMPLIANCE

The Central Ohio Transit Authority (COTA) is committed to complying with the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in all of its programs and services.

The ADA prohibits discrimination against an individual with a disability in connection with the provision of transportation service.

Any person who believes he or she has been discriminated against on the basis of a disability may file a formal complaint with COTA no later than 180 calendar days after the alleged discrimination occurred by filling out COTA's ADA Complaint Form and forwarding the completed form by email or mail service to:

Central Ohio Transit Authority
Customer Service, Attn: ADA Coordinator
33 North High Street
Columbus, OH 43215

Complaints may also be taken by phone at (614) 228-1776, 6 a.m. - 8 p.m. Monday-Friday, and 8 a.m. - 6 p.m. Saturday-Sunday.

If you have any questions regarding COTA's ADA policy you may contact COTA's ADA Coordinator by email or by phone at (614) 308-4338, or at 33 N. High St., Columbus, OH 43215, Attn: ADA Coordinator

REASONABLE MODIFICATION

The Central Ohio Transit Authority (COTA) provides reasonable modification to policies and procedures to customers to ensure they can effectively use the agency's transit services.

Individuals requesting a modification should clearly describe what they need in order to use COTA bus and paratransit services. To make a request, please contact

COTA Mobility Coordinator

Email: PullinsTL@cota.com

Phone: (614) 275-5833

Mail: Attn. Mobility Coordinator
Central Ohio Transit Authority
1330 Fields Avenue
Columbus, Ohio 43201

Please note, COTA may deny a requested modification if:

1. The modification will fundamentally alter the nature of service, program, or activity;
2. The modification will result in a direct threat to the health and safety of others;
3. The individual is able to use the service, program or activity for its intended purpose without the requested modification, or;
4. The modification will result in undue financial or administrative burden on COTA.

