



# **Elderly and Disabled Program CUSTOMER HANDBOOK**

Passenger Service Requirements

2017/2018

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Elderly and Disabled Program is designed to provide paratransit transportation services to persons with disabilities that meet the provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990. The ADA and its regulations require that ETHRA provide paratransit service to persons with disabilities.

This handbook is designed to help you understand the policies and requirements of ETHRA. Your cooperation and flexibility allows us to better serve you and other ETHRA passengers.

## **ELIGIBILITY**

Individuals who are interested in using the paratransit service must apply through a written application process. Paratransit eligibility is not automatic.

If you are 60 or older or believe you have a physical or mental disability that prevents you from independently providing transportation for yourself, write or call ETHRA at:

ETHRA  
9111 Cross Park Drive  
Knoxville, TN 37923  
(865)691-2551

Please let us know if you need an application in an alternative format. Hearing impaired passengers that are text telephone users 865-681-1990

In most instances, you will be notified if you qualify for certification within ten working days. During the certification process a supervisor from ETHRA may visit your address to ensure that the location is safe for boarding and alighting. We will notify you of any issues we may encounter during this inspection and will work with you to find a satisfactory spot.

## **SERVICE AREA**

Anderson County: Clinton, Oliver Springs  
Sevier: Seymour  
Blount: Alcoa, Maryville, Louisville  
Loudon: Loudon City, Lenoir City, Tellico Village  
Knox: Various areas of Knox please call for details

## **SERVICE DAYS AND HOURS**

ETHRA operates Monday through Friday 7:00 am-5:00 pm.

## **HOLIDAYS**

New Year's Day, Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday, President's Day, Good Friday, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Veterans Day, Thanksgiving Day, Day after Thanksgiving or Christmas Eve & Day.

## RESERVATIONS

ETHRA office hours are Monday through Friday 8:00 a.m. 4:30 p.m. and reservations may be made anytime during these hours by calling 1-800-232-1565.

To reach ETHRA Call Center:

Phone: 1-800-232-1565

FAX: 865-244-1711

Web Site: [www.ethrapublictransit.org](http://www.ethrapublictransit.org) or [www.ethra.org](http://www.ethra.org)

Hearing impaired passengers that are text telephone users should call 865-681-1990

### **When you call for a reservation, please have the following information ready:**

- Customer's name
- Date transportation is needed
- The time of your appointment or time you need to be at your destination
- The time you will need to be picked up from your appointment destination to complete your trip
- Detailed drop-off and pick-up location information
- Whether you will you be traveling with a personal care attendant, guest or service animal
- Any new information or changes concerning your status
- Whether there are any other special considerations or instructions for the customer to travel or for the driver

Reservations may be made TEN days in advance, but must be made no later than **three** days prior to your travel date. If you require a return trip it must be scheduled at the same time you book your pick up trip. Every effort will be made to accommodate your requested times, however, the ADA allows us to negotiate revised travel times that may be up to one hour before or after your requested pickup time.

All riders must be ready one hour plus travel time in advance of the time you need to be at your destination for your starting trip. Additionally, you must be ready at the time you are scheduled for a return pick up. ETHRA will arrive no later than sixty minutes after the scheduled pick up time.

Passengers must be ready to depart when the driver arrives at your location. You will be given adequate time to board the bus, but you must be prepared to begin the boarding process with the arrival of the bus. Drivers are permitted to wait only up to five minutes.

When you are making a reservation, you must tell the reservationist exactly where you will be waiting. However, at larger facilities, we may tell you to wait in a common pickup area that has been pre-arranged with the facility.

The driver will be given the same information that you supply to the reservations staff and will look for you there. Do not leave the area as you might miss your ride. If the driver is not able to find you within five (5) minutes of arriving, or if you did not cancel at least two(2) hours before your scheduled pick-up time, the driver will leave and you will be considered a no show.

NOTE: Trips may not be altered the day of the trip. The operator cannot change your pick up or drop off location the day of the trip.

### **STANDING REQUESTS**

A “standing request” is for customers who travel to the same place at the same time on the same day(s) of the week. If you have a regular appointment that you need to go to, you may want to ask the ETHRA staff to submit a “standing request” for service. Please remember, however, that you cannot change your standing request more than once per month, or this privilege may be revoked. If you have a standing request and will not be using it for one or multiple days, please contact us to cancel or suspend services to avoid having “No Shows” recorded in your file.

## CANCELLATIONS

ETHRA is a “shared ride” system that needs everyone’s cooperation to make it run smoothly. If you must cancel your reservation, it is imperative that you inform the ETHRA Staff at 1-800-232-1565 as soon as possible. Cancellations made less than twelve hours in advance will be considered a “No Show.”

## LATENESS AND NO SHOWS

Because you will be sharing your ride, it is important that you are ready to go when your vehicle arrives. ETHRA drivers will wait only five (5) minutes, because there are other customers either on board or waiting for their scheduled ride. If a vehicle arrives to pick you up and you are not there, or you do not board the vehicle as scheduled, you will be considered a no show. You will receive notification of a no show.

### Policy:

ETHRA will ensure that customers who habitually abuse transportation services by not canceling their transportation and not showing up for scheduled services will be put in a probationary status until they adhere to the guidelines for transportation services.

### IV. Procedure:

- When a customer is a “no show” or cancels at the door two times within thirty (30) days they will be issued a letter warning that one more “no show” or at the door cancellation will put them in a probationary status for transportation services. The letter will outline the following:
  - \* The No Show Policy
  - \* The dates on which the customer has no showed within the previous 30 day period.
  - \* Information for scheduling and canceling transportation services along with the telephone numbers for scheduling and canceling transportation services.
  - \* The restrictions that will be imposed on them if they continue to disregard the Policy.
- In the event that the customer disregards the warning and has an additional “no show” or cancels at the door; the customer will be placed in a probationary status for the next thirty (30) days.
- The probationary status will require a customer to confirm any scheduled transportation services 24 hours prior to the transport. Customers who fail to call the call center to confirm their appointments will have their transportation cancelled.

- If a customer who is in the probationary status abides by the no-show policy and does not no-show or cancel at the door, that customer would be removed from the probationary status after the appropriate probationary allotted time referenced above.
- Restricted customers would not be eligible for the use of standing orders for transportation and would be required to call and re-schedule (or have scheduled) such standing orders with the exception of dialysis or chemotherapy.

### **CHANGING RETURN TIMES**

Because so many people rely on this service, changes in the scheduled return time should be strictly limited. If you are ready to return more than two (2) hours earlier than originally scheduled, you may call and ask for an early pickup. ETHRA staff will do all we can to assist in these instances, but we are unable to guarantee that we will be able to honor the request.

If you will not be ready for your return trip within your scheduled pick up window, please contact our ETHRA Staff at 1-800-232-1565. Failure to contact ETHRA will result in a no show. If you still need to be picked up, you must contact ETHRA. We will dispatch the first available vehicle to pick you up; however, it may be up to 120 minutes before a driver is available.

### **BOARDING EARLY**

If your vehicle arrives before your scheduled pick-up window (e.g. ETHRA vehicle arrives at 9:40 for a pick-up window that runs from 9:45-10:45) and you are ready, you may board immediately. If you are not ready and the vehicle arrives early, the driver must wait five (5) minutes into the pick-up window before leaving. Using the example above, that means he will stay until 9:50 before leaving.

### **FARES**

**Qualifying riders will not be charged.**

## **PERSONAL CARE ATTENDANT (PCA)**

A personal care attendant is defined as a necessary part of an eligible individual's mobility. A personal care attendant does not have to be a certified professional, but may be a friend or family member who assists in your mobility. This is different from a guest who is traveling to accompany an eligible individual.

## **GUESTS**

On request, one guest will be allowed to travel with an ETHRA passenger. The guest must have the same origin and destination as the eligible individual.

### **Passenger Assistance**

The driver will provide door-to-door service only. Door-to-door service is defined as the exterior door of a residence or the public entrance of a building. Passengers will be responsible for entering and exiting their pick up or drop off location on their own. Drivers are not permitted to enter the home, or other destination, of a passenger. If a passenger needs assistance in addition to the door-to-door service provided, he/she must have a personal care attendant or guest.

## **TRANSPORTING PACKAGES**

Because the vehicle will be shared, baggage must be limited to what passengers can independently carry onto and off of the vehicle in one trip (no more than three (3)). Packages must be transported on your lap or under the seat. Drivers have a strict schedule and cannot assist with your packages.

For the safety of all riders, you may not transport explosives, acids, flammable liquids or other hazardous materials. Respirators, portable oxygen, and/or other life-support equipment may be transported as long as it does not violate laws or rules related to transportation of hazardous materials and will fit in the paratransit vehicle. The safety and use of this equipment is the responsibility of the passenger.

## **SERVICE ANIMALS**

ETHRA complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) which requires transit providers to "permit service animals to accompany individuals with disabilities in vehicles and facilities" (49 CFR 37.167[d]). A service animal is not a pet. A service animal is:

"Any guide dog, signal dog, or other animal individually trained to work or perform tasks for an individual with a disability, including, but not limited to, guiding individuals with impaired vision, alerting individuals with impaired hearing to intruders or sounds, providing minimal protection or rescue work, pulling a wheelchair, or fetching dropped items" (49CFR 37.3).

## **PETS**

Pets are not permitted on buses.

## **BOARDING WITH A MOBILITY DEVICE**

All vehicles are equipped with passenger lifts that meet ADA specifications. Our vehicles will accommodate most mobility devices that do not weigh more than 600 pounds when occupied, and do not exceed 30 inches in width and 48 inches in length measured at two inches above the ground. If the total weight or size of the passenger and their mobility device exceeds ADA standards, ETHRA will deem the combination of client and mobility device as non-transportable. Passengers and mobility devices that exceed these standards may only be transported when the individual and the device can be safely loaded separately.

## **ETHRA APPEALS PROCESS**

All appeals for denial of service need to be submitted in writing to ETHRA's Knoxville Office:

9111 Cross Park Dr.  
Knoxville TN 37923  
Suite D-100

## **SAFETY**

For safety, all riders are required to use their seatbelts and remain seated until the vehicle comes to a complete stop. All loose articles must be secured while riding ETHRA. Additionally, please be advised that your privileges may be

suspended for disruptive or abusive behavior. Disruptive behavior includes, but is not limited to:

- Intimidation or threats of physical harm to drivers or other passengers
- Verbal abuse of drivers, staff and/or other passengers
- Unlawful harassment having sexual, violent or racial connotations
- Unauthorized use of vehicle equipment
- Voluntary and repeated violation of riding rules including: smoking, eating and drinking on vehicles; refusing to remain seated; defacing equipment; treating staff, drivers or other passengers in a rude or discourteous manner; refusing to comply with other requirements specified in this guide

*If your disruptive behavior is due to a disability and is beyond your control, ETHRA may require you to travel with a Personal Care Attendant.*

*If your Personal Care Attendant cannot help to control your behavior, and/or a safety problem continues to exist, your service may be suspended or discontinued.*

## **RIDER RESPONSIBILITIES**

- Read and abide by all sections of ETHRA Handbook
- Be ready to depart at pickup location during your entire one-hour pickup window. Drivers may arrive anytime during that window. Trips for which the rider is not prepared to depart will be treated as a "No Show" and the driver will proceed on.
- Cancel unneeded ride's as soon as possible. Cancellations made less than six (6) hours prior to travel time will be considered a "No Show".
- Avoid distracting the driver or annoying other passengers with inappropriate, unsafe or discourteous behavior.
- Maintain wheelchair or other mobility device in a clean and safe condition.



- Expect to share the ride; others may be picked up after or dropped off before you reach your destination.
- Maintain acceptable standards of hygiene.
- No eating, drinking or smoking on board.
- Do not litter the vehicle.
- Do not use radios, cassette players, compact disc players, or other sound generating equipment without headphones.
- Treat drivers, office staff, and other riders with respect and courtesy, both through communication (in person or on the phone) and your actions

### **DRIVER RESPONSIBILITIES**

ETHRA drivers undergo an extensive training program which includes, but is not limited to: defensive driving; customer service; and sensitivity training. Our drivers must maintain a safe driving record, pass criminal background checks, pass Department of Transportation physicals and are subjected to drug and alcohol testing under the guidelines of the Federal Transit Administration.

ETHRA drivers are expected to: be courteous; drive safely; wear a seat belt; securely tie down mobility devices; wear an ETHRA badge; be properly groomed; and come to your door to let you know of their arrival.

Please be reminded that ETHRA drivers are not permitted to:

- Enter a rider's residence or go beyond the public entrance of buildings.
- Perform any personal care assistance for riders, including but not limited to, assisting riders to dress or tend to activities related to personal comfort or hygiene.
- Lift or carry riders.
- Assist riders, with or without mobility devices (wheelchairs, canes, etc.) up or down steps.
- Carry riders' packages or other personal belongings.
- Push mobility devices through grass or gravel.

### **UPDATING INFORMATION**

ETHRA uses information provided on your initial application. If you have any changes in address, telephone number, or mobility devices please be sure to notify ETHRA office prior to booking a trip.

### **CUSTOMER SERVICE**

All service inquiries and complaints should be directed to ETHRA at 865-691-2551 ext. 4203. The Agents at this number cannot accept or cancel your appointment, but can provide you with information on appointments that you have scheduled or the status of your ride. Please call us if you experience any problems or if you have any suggestions regarding our service. We strongly encourage you to communicate with us as your input assists us in providing you with the best possible service.

### **LOST ITEMS**

If you have lost a personal item and believe it may be in a ETHRA vehicle, please contact Customer Service at 1-800-232-1565 to inquire. ETHRA will not be held responsible for items left on the bus.



- Can travel 200 feet W/O assistance.

(Continuation of Section C)

In the space provided, please list any mobility aids that you would use while traveling on ETHRA buses: (i.e.: wheelchairs, motorized cart, and service animal):

\_\_\_\_\_

**SECTION D –AGE VERIFICATION**

Age Verification Document: *(Staff who saw documentation: \_\_\_\_\_)*

- \_\_\_\_\_ Birth Certificate    \_\_\_\_\_ Social Security    \_\_\_\_\_ Passport    \_\_\_\_\_ Medicare Card    \_\_\_\_\_ Driver’s License
- \_\_\_\_\_ U.S. Census Records    \_\_\_\_\_ School Record    \_\_\_\_\_ Employment ID Card    \_\_\_\_\_ Wedding
- \_\_\_\_\_ Military/Veteran’s ID Card    \_\_\_\_\_ Divorce Decree    \_\_\_\_\_ Self-Declaration Statement

**SECTION D- Health Care Professional Supporting Application**

*(This section MUST be completed by a Health Care professional)*

- The information provided by the customer on this application is true to the best of my knowledge.
- There is information provided by the customer on the application that is **NOT** true to the best of my knowledge. Please explain below.

\_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, St., ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Agency \_\_\_\_\_

License Number \_\_\_\_\_

**Profession:**

- Licensed Physician                       Licensed Optometrist                       Registered Occupation Therapist
- Licensed Physician Therapist                       Certified Psychologist                       Other ETHRA approved professional
- Certified Rehabilitation Specialist                       Licensed Podiatrist                       Certified Health Care Professional  
(i.e. Physician’s Assistant or Nurse Practitioner)
- Licensed Social Worker

**ATTENTION APPLICANT: Submissions of this application certifies that you have read and understand the attached ETHRA Elderly and Disabled Handbook and the above information is true and correct.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Customer Signature                      Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Health Care Professional Signature                      Date

**FOR OFFICE USE ONLY**

A) Date application received: \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_

C) Date application approved: \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_

B) Application completed?  YES  NO If no, list reason(s):

D) Date application disapproved: \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_ List reason:

\_\_\_\_\_