

# **Chittenden County Transportation Authority Paratransit and Demand Responsive Service “Failure to Board” Policy**

## **I. Purpose**

Chittenden County Transportation Authority (CCTA) provides paratransit services through third-party contractors to eligible customers for access to locations off of the basic route alignment of fixed-route transportation services.

The purpose of this policy is to minimize repeated failure to board incidents in order to make the best use of scarce transportation resources and maintain high quality service.

Scheduling a ride and then failing to use the service without properly cancelling causes serious transportation and scheduling problems for staff, and customers, and utilizes public resources that could have been otherwise deployed for other members of the public. Cancellations made at least two hours prior to a scheduled pick-up time provide more service opportunities for all customers.

This policy addresses passengers who demonstrate a pattern or practice of “Failure to Board” the transport vehicle within five minutes of the vehicle arrival (assuming the vehicle arrives within the “on-time pick-up window”), by exhibiting intentional, repeated or regular actions; it is not directed toward isolated, accidental or singular unavoidable incidents.

## **II. Policy**

If a passenger schedules a demand-response ride with CCTA’s contracted Paratransit Service Provider and cannot meet the vehicle, s/he must cancel the scheduled ride at least two (2) hours before the scheduled pick-up time.

If a customer exhibits a pattern or practice of repeated “Failure to Board,” that customer will have their travel privileges suspended for an appropriate period of time. The travel privilege suspensions for “Failure to Board” are as follows:

1. First occurrence – warning letter and Failure to Board policy sent to customer explaining the requirement to cancel at least two hours in advance of the scheduled pick-up time. The first recorded “no show” shall not be a chargeable event. The letter will also ask the individual to contact CCTA, if they believe the failure to board should be a non-chargeable event, e.g. was recorded in error or caused by a situation beyond the passenger’s control.
2. When customers reach a specific threshold, as defined below, a second letter will be sent listing the recorded failures to board by date and time and advising them that their travel privileges will be suspended. The letter will restate the option to contact the Paratransit transportation provider if they believe any of the listed failures to board should be considered non-chargeable events. The letter will also explain the appeals process for the proposed suspension.

The specific suspension thresholds are as follows:

- **Threshold for Travel Privilege Suspension**

Following either the fifth (5<sup>th</sup>) Failure to Board event or the event that constitutes 20% of their scheduled trips during a 30 day period in which the Failure to Board events are recorded, whichever is higher, travel privileges will be suspended for seven (7) days if the customer does not call to explain why any of these events should not be chargeable. The letter will also inform them of the right to appeal the suspension and explain the process to request an appeal. The letter

will indicate that the start date of the proposed suspension will be 17 days from the date the letter is sent. Letters will be sent registered mail.

- If there are no valid mitigating circumstances, the suspension of travel privileges will go into effect, subject to the appeal process described below.
- **Repeat Suspensions**
  - Customers who have their travel privileges suspended a second time within the subsequent thirty (30) day period, will incur a 14 day suspension.
  - Customers who have their travel privileges suspended a third time within the next thirty (30) day period, will incur a 21 day suspension.

Cancellations of scheduled rides must be made by calling:

- Chittenden County Transportation Authority's (CCTA) complementary paratransit service provider Special Services Transportation Agency at **802-878-1527** as soon as possible, but not less than two (2) hours before the scheduled pick-up time.

If a customer fails to board the transport vehicle for a scheduled trip, an attempt will be made to reach that customer by telephone before any subsequent trips scheduled for the same day are cancelled. If the customer cannot be reached, and if there is no information from the rider or a responsible party knowledgeable of the rider's schedule indicating the subsequent trips should be cancelled, subsequent trips will remain on the schedule. Failure to board these subsequent trips may be considered chargeable events.

### **III. Appeals**

Before any suspension from the service goes into effect, the customer has the opportunity to appeal. The customer will be provided by CCTA or its paratransit service provider with a list of recorded "Failure to Board" events and be invited to dispute or explain verbally or in writing any of these occurrences. If the customer disputes any, and the suspension is still proposed, he or she would then have the opportunity to invoke a formal appeal and the suspension would be stayed until the appeal is heard. Failure to Board events during the appeals process shall continue to be recorded and chargeable in compliance with the language contained in this policy.

Appeals or request for appeals shall be forwarded in writing to CCTA, Grants Manager, 15 Industrial Parkway, Burlington, VT 05401 within 17 days of the date the notice of suspension is mailed. If the appeal is not submitted in writing, appeals shall be presented in person by appointment made through the CCTA Grants Manager subsequent to a written request for an appeal. Appeals will not be taken over the phone. CCTA will respond to all appeals in writing within seven business days of receipt.

The CCTA representative deciding the appeal shall not be anyone who was involved in the initial decision to suspend or in the review of the rider's claim that the occurrences were beyond their control. In addition, the CCTA representative hearing the appeal shall not be in a direct line of authority (supervisor or subordinate) with the staff member that made the initial decision to suspend.

If a customer chooses not to appeal, the suspension will become effective on the date included in the notice letter. If an appeal is requested and the appeal upholds the proposed suspension, the start of the suspension will be stated in the written appeal decision letter from CCTA and will be set to start 10 days from the date the letter is sent. Appeal decision letters will be sent by registered mail.

This policy supersedes all previously issued No Show, Late Cancellation and Deviation policies adopted by the CCTA Boards of Directors.

### **IV. Definitions**

**Failure to Board** is defined as a failure by the passenger to cancel the trip request at least two hours before the scheduled pick-up time followed by a failure to board the vehicle within five minutes of vehicle arrival, as long as the vehicle arrives within the on-time pick-up window.

**On-time pick-up window** is defined as ten (10) minutes before and up to twenty (20) minutes after the time when customers are to be ready for pick up. Drivers that arrive within this timeframe are considered on time. This window also defines the maximum change in time between the agreed on and scheduled pick-up times that can be made without notifying the customer.

**Scheduled pick-up time** is the pick-up time indicated by the transportation provider. The actual scheduled pick-up time may vary slightly from the requested pick-up time as long as it does not violate the on-time pick-up window.

**Vehicle wait time** is defined as the maximum time that drivers are required to wait for customers after they have arrived, which is five minutes for purposes of this policy.

**Chargeable event** is a Failure to Board without providing a reasonable explanation that qualifies under the definition of a non-chargeable event.

**Non-chargeable event** occurs when the customer calls CCTA's demand-response service provider and presents a verbal explanation for a failure to board such as:

- (a) there was an emergency situation beyond the customer's control;
- (b) there was a scheduling error on the part of the transit provider that prevented the passenger from boarding the vehicle (driver went to the wrong entrance, arrived at the wrong time or failed to arrive within the designated pick-up window)
- (c) for reasons other than a scheduling error, the vehicle arrived outside of the on-time pick-up window so that the passenger could not arrive at his or her destination at a reasonable time.

**Demand response service** is considered complimentary paratransit service that deviates up to three-quarters of a mile off of a fixed route in the case of ADA service or does not follow a fixed route, where passengers can request transportation from a specific location to another specific location at a certain time.

**Route deviation** is a transit service that operates on a fixed route but will make deviations from the route to make scheduled pick-ups and drop offs.

Revised by the CCTA Board of Commissioners on July 27, 2011.

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