

**North Central Area Transit (NCAT)
Policy and Procedures for Compliance
with The Americans with Disabilities Act**



North Central Area Transit transportation services are compliant with The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) and the U.S. Department of Transportation's implement regulations at 49 CFR Parts 27 & 37. The policy is outlined below:

1. Type of Service:

North Central Area Transit (NCAT) operates curb-to-curb and door to door, demand-response public bus transportation service available to all of LaSalle County, IL. Demand-response service is an alternative mode of flexible passenger transportation that does not follow fixed routes or schedules. Riders call a scheduling/dispatching center to arrange pickup and drop-offs. Minivans or minibuses used to provide paratransit service are all equipped with a lift or ramp. Paratransit also can be known as demand-response service and/or dial-a-ride service. This type of service can be operated either as curb-to-curb or door-to-door. Door-to-door means that the driver will be permitted to assist (escort) the passenger from the main entrance door of the origin to the main entrance door of the destination. Drivers are to maintain a line of sight to the vehicle during the execution of their duties as public transit drivers.

2. Maintenance:

- A. All vehicles, lifts, ramps, and other equipment will be cleaned and maintained on a regular basis as suggested in operating manuals. It is the responsibility of the Transit Manager to schedule maintenance and oversee proper upkeep of equipment.
- B. All bus operators must include in their pre-trip inspection a check of all lift, ramps, inside and outside step lighting, interior lighting, and wheelchair securement devices. Any lift, ramp, and other equipment not operating properly must be reported to the Transit Manager immediately.

If a spare vehicle is available, the vehicle will be immediately removed from service until the problem is corrected. If a spare vehicle is not available, the vehicle can be used to pick up passengers that don't need the use of the lift. The vehicle will be pulled from service and repaired as soon as possible.

Each operator will understand how to operate the lift or ramp manually so if the need arises, the operator will be prepared to accommodate the passenger. Bus operators will call all malfunctions of equipment to dispatch so that the vehicle can be replaced. All malfunctions must be entered on the post-trip inspection.

- C. If a ramp or lift cannot be manually operated while on route to accommodate a passenger. The bus operator will then call Transit Manager for assistance, and the vehicle will be replaced if one is available.
- D. Transit Manager will then accommodate the passenger by sending out another bus to pick up the passenger.



3. General Training:

NCAT will ensure that all personnel are trained to proficiency. All bus operators will receive training that includes hands on instruction in the operation of each type of lift, ramp, and securement systems. *See Bus Operator Training Manual for details.*

4. Lift and Securement Use:

- A. All bus operators will be properly trained in the use of all lift, ramp, and securement equipment.
- B. Definition. Section 37.3 defines a wheelchair as *a mobility aid belonging to any class of three or more wheeled devices, usable indoors, designed or modified for and used by individuals with mobility impairments, whether operated manually or powered.*
 - a. If an electric scooter or other mobility device meets the physical specifications of a wheelchair as defined by the DOT's ADA regulations, it must be treated as a wheelchair.
 - b. Please note that Segways when used by a person with a disability as a mobility device is part of the broad class of mobility aids CFR 49 Part 37 intends will be accommodated (see for instance 37.5 and 37.165). In this way, a Segway occupies a legal position analogous to canes, walkers, etc.
- C. Lift capacity: Vehicle procurement over the past years has led to a variety of lift manufacturers and capacities. While newer models are equipped to handle heavier loads (up to 1000 pounds), most of our lifts' capacity is any device less 30 inches in width and 48 inches in length measured two inches above the ground and weighs less than 600 pounds when occupied. If you have concerns about lift capacity, please call 833.433.6228.
- D. Seat Belt Use. Under ADA law, passengers using wheelchairs or mobility devices cannot be required to use a seatbelt unless it is also required of all other passengers. It is NCAT policy that ALL passengers are required to be seated and wear a seatbelt secured around the waist while the vehicle is in motion. Any passenger refusing to wear a seatbelt will be asked to disembark from the NCAT vehicle. In the case of a medical exemption, a liability waiver and written letter obtained from a certified physician stating that the passenger is unable to wear a seatbelt due to health issues is to be filed with NCAT administration prior to the scheduled trip.
- E. Mobility Device Securement. All mobility devices are required to be secured via the securement system and straps included in each vehicle. If a passenger using a mobility device cannot be secured by the securement system, the operator must still transport the passenger. Dispatch must be notified of such an occurrence.
- F. Mobility Device Securement – Location. NCAT is not required to permit wheelchair users to ride in places other than the designated securement places in the vehicle. It is NCAT policy that all wheelchairs or other mobility devices be secured and must use securement systems to ensure that the user's chair remains in the designated securement

area.

- G. Mobility Device Securement – User. Operators are required to assist individuals with use of the securement system, lifts, and ramps. Passengers should never operate the lift/ramp or wheelchair securement system. Operators may assist with seatbelts, if the passenger requests assistance.
- H. Passengers using wheelchairs cannot be required to transfer to a regular seat. But may be advised that this is allowable.
- I. Load Direction. For the safety of our passengers, NCAT bus operators are to load wheelchair passengers on to lifts with their feet away from the vehicle. Although ADA law states that the passenger may be loaded either direction, and in some cases a passenger may insist that they be loaded onto the ramp facing away from the vehicle, NCAT feels that this is very dangerous, and the driver should encourage the passenger to use the lift facing away but cannot require them to do so.

There have been known cases of partial foot and toe amputation because the person's wheelchair was too close to the vehicle. This condition could happen by improper placement of the chair on the ramp, from loose brakes on a customer's chair or a customer moving an electric chair slightly forward after they were placed on the ramp. *If an operator has a customer who insists that their wheelchair be loaded onto the lift facing forward, the operator must notify Dispatch.*

Note: There was another transit agency that had passengers that were inexperienced using their electric wheelchair and have tried to go onto or off a lift too fast. One customer's toe was broken because they hit the end barrier too fast. Please exercise and encourage caution when using the lift/ramp equipment.

- J. Standees. Bus operators must permit individuals, including standees to use the lift/ramp to board the vehicle. This service should be offered if the operator notices someone having difficulty climbing the steps or upon request.
- K. Denied Use of Lift/Ramp. NCAT will permit a passenger using the lift/ramp to board or disembark at any designated stop, unless lift/ramp cannot be deployed at the stop because of the surrounding area, the lift/ramp will be damaged if it is deployed at the stop, or conditions preclude the safe use of the stop by all passengers.

5. Other Service Requirements:

- A. Priority Seating. Bus operators may not require an individual with a disability to use designated priority seats. However, if the priority seat is taken by non-elderly or disabled passengers, the operator may request that a seat be vacated for an elderly or disabled passenger.
- B. Oxygen Tanks & Respirators. Passengers will be allowed to travel with a respirator or

portable oxygen supply. The oxygen or respirator tank must be secured to the chair or to a seat while on board the vehicle and should not be left in the aisle of the bus.

- C. Boarding Time. Passengers with disabilities must be allowed adequate time to complete boarding or leaving the vehicle. Operators are required to offer and assist as needed.
- D. Service Animals. The operator must permit a person with a disability to board the bus with a service animal. A service animal is any animal described as *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*. Any passenger using a service animal should inform dispatch when scheduling the trip. Any animal not identified as a service animal (such as comfort or emotional support animals) is required to be transported in a pet carrier provided by the animal's owner/handler. Any mess the animal makes is the responsibility (including cleaning or repair fees) of the owner/handler. The following are some guidelines for service animals:
 - a. Most (but not all) service animals wear identification as a such. If uncertain the animal is a service animal, the operator can ask (1.) if the animal is a service animal and/or (2.) what tasks the animal has been trained to perform. The operator cannot require documentation for the service animal, demonstration of services, or ask about the person's disability.
 - b. The operator should make sure that there is adequate space for the dog near their owner on the bus out of the aisle.
 - c. The service animal is not required to be muzzled or leashed but should be under the control of the owner/handler at all times. The bus operator should never take charge of the service animal.
 - d. NCAT may exclude any animal, including a service animal from the vehicle when that animal's behavior poses a direct threat to the health or safety of others. Allergies or barking are not acceptable reasons for exclusion; the animal must show aggressive behavior.
 - e. If the animal is disruptive and uncontrollable on the bus, it may be excluded. Always call dispatch for assistance for all unusual occurrences.
- E. At no time will bus operators be responsible for assisting mobility device passengers up and/or down steps and/or stairs. Sidewalks, driveways, and ramps are to be cleared and prepped for use prior to scheduled pick-up/drop-off to ensure safety of the bus operator and passenger. Service and/or assistance may be denied if paths are not safe.

6. Personal Care Attendants:

Passengers with disabilities are allowed one (1) personal care attendant (PCA) or escort to travel with them at no charge. A PCA/escort is someone designated or employed specifically to help the eligible individual to meet his or her personal needs.

7. Companion Riders:

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Companion riders may accompany riders. Companion riders must pay the appropriate fare. If someone does not indicate use of a PCA/escort, then any individual accompanying him or her will be regarded simply as a companion and the companion must pay the appropriate fare for the trip.

8. Entering a person's home or private residence:

Drivers are strictly prohibited from entering the passenger's home or private residence under any circumstances.

9. Illinois Relay Service:

The Illinois Telecommunications Access Corporation (ITAC) administers and manages Illinois Relay on behalf of all local telephone companies in Illinois. The Illinois Relay Service makes it possible for people who are deaf, hard of hearing, or speech impaired to use a TTY to communicate with people who use standard telephones. A small fee included in your monthly telephone service charge funds Illinois Relay and is required by state and federal law.

The Illinois Relay Service provides a link called a Communications Assistant (CA) whose basic function is to voice exactly what the TTY user types. The relay operator speaks to the standard telephone user and types to the TTY user.

A standard telephone user calling a TTY user and a TTY user calling a standard telephone user, now has the option to dial a convenient three-digit number, 711, to reach Illinois Relay instead of the traditional 800 numbers. The system is open 24 hours a day and is free of charge.

TTY and Voice Users Dial 711

TTY Users 1-800-526-0844

Voice Users 1-800-526-0857

VCO (Voice Carry Over) 1-877-826-1130

Or.....

Speech to Speech 1-877-526-6690

ASCII 1-877-526-6680

Telebraille Users 1-877-526-6670

For more information about Relay, call ITAC at 1-800-841-6167 V/TTY

10. Accessible Formats:

In partnership with Illinois Valley Center for Independent Living (IVCIL), copies of NCAT materials may be made available in large print, braille, audio, and computer disk upon request.

11. Observing Privacy Rights:

The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996, or HIPPA, is a healthcare law that, among other things, prohibits the sharing of personal medical information with parties other than the direct individual providing the information.

As operators, we must know certain medical information about passengers to ensure the best service can be provided. As part of the registration process, potential riders are given the opportunity to share sensitive medical information. It is required and important that this information remain confidential! Therefore, schedulers, dispatchers, and operators must

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remember NOT to include any sensitive medical information (examples: cancer, epilepsy, down syndrome, autism, etc.) on printed schedules or manifests, or to broadcast such sensitive information over communication devices (push-to-talk cell phones or two-way radio devices). NCAT employees must never disclose passenger information to anyone outside of NCAT business procedures.