City of Asheville and Mountain Mobility

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

Paratransit Guidelines

828.250.6750 • mountainmobility@buncombecounty.org • 339 New Leicester Hwy, Suite 140 – Asheville, NC 28806

OVERVIEW

ADA Paratransit service is provided by the Asheville Redefines Transit (ART) system, in partnership with Mountain Mobility. We provide a shared-ride, public transportation service for people with disabilities who are unable to independently use the ART fixed route system. ART provides next-day complementary paratransit service to people with disabilities within ¾ mile of bus routes and City-wide. Service is provided during equivalent hours to ART routes. Eligible recipients can use paratransit to attend medical appointments, go to work or school, go shopping, run errands or go to any other activity.

ELIGIBILITY

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Paratransit services are available to anyone who is unable to use the fixed-route bus system due to a disability that is covered by the ADA. To begin using the service, you must submit a **complete** application to Mountain Mobility; incomplete applications will be returned. Part of the application is a Required Verification Letter from a certified medical or social service provider. For more information on the verification letter, see Part 5 of the **Paratransit Eligibility Application**. You can submit your application a number of ways:

By email:
mountainmobility@
buncombecounty.org

By mail:
LOSRC/Mountain Mobility
339 New Leicester Hwy, Suite 140
Asheville, NC 28806

Or by phone:
(828) 250-6750 (extension 5)

Please note that if you complete your application over the phone, the verification letter must still be sent to Mountain Mobility by mail or email. If you choose to submit the letter by email, it must be emailed by the certifying professional's office, not by you. If you choose to submit the letter by mail, it must either be mailed by the professional's office with their return address **or** it can be mailed by you, as long as the letter is on the professional's letterhead and is in an envelope that was sealed by the certifying professional.

Re-Certification

If you are certified as permanently eligible, you will need to go through a very simple re-certification process every 5 years. You will **not** need to fill out the application again, or re-

submit the verification letter. You will simply be contacted to ensure your contact information is the same, that you are still using the same mobility device, etc.

If you are certified as temporarily eligible, you will have to go through a full re-certification every six months to determine that you are still eligible. You will need to complete the application and submit an updated verification letter at that time.

YOUR OPTIONS

If you are able to use the regular bus system in Asheville, there are many advantages to doing so. These include:

- **Lower fare**. Paratransit journeys with Mountain Mobility are $2.00 one way. Compare that to $1.00 one way for the bus, or 50¢ if you qualify for one of ART's many discounts.
- **More flexibility**. Paratransit service requires you to call and schedule a trip at least one day in advance. ART's routes operate on a fixed schedule and most operate every hour, so you can plan your trips ahead or on the spur of the moment, no reservation required.

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FARES

The fare is $2.00 for a one-way trip. Official Personal Care Attendants (PCAs) travel free with an ADA passenger. A companion/escort is charged the same fare as the ADA passenger. Please have the exact fare ready, as drivers do not make change or accept checks. Fares must be paid at the time of boarding a vehicle. Unpaid fares will result in suspension of paratransit service and collection procedures will be initiated. Payment of all legal fees incurred to collect unpaid fares are the responsibility of the rider.

RESERVATIONS

Reservations can be made seven days a week between the hours of 8am and 5pm by calling Mountain Mobility at 250-6750 (extension 4). Reservations must be made no later than 5 p.m. the day before the requested day of travel and can be made up to 30 days before the requested day of travel. Reservation requests for Saturdays, Sundays and holidays must be made by calling 250-6750 and leaving the following information on the answering machine:

• Your name

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- The day and date of your trip
- The exact street address building or facility name, including the apartment, building or suite numbers, for both pick-up and drop-off locations, and if you have it, a phone number for your destination
- What type of mobility aid(s) you will be traveling with
- The number of people traveling - will you be taking a companion or PCA?
- The time you need to be at your destination and the time you need to be picked up from your destination for your return trip
- A phone number where you can be reached if there are any questions about your reservation

Reservation requests omitting any of the above information will not be able to be processed for a next business day trip.

ART's Paratransit service is a shared-ride service. Our customer service representatives will do their best to accommodate your trip request with as direct a route possible. However, since other trips must be coordinated to offer the most cost effective transportation as possible, we ask that you be ready to be picked up one (1) hour prior to your requested drop-off time and the van will arrive sometime within that hour to take you to your destination.

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SUBSCRIPTIONS

Subscription service is available for trips that are scheduled to the same destination at the same time, two or more times within the same week for at least two weeks. Once an initial reservation is made, there is no need for additional reservation calls. To cancel a subscription trip or end an established subscription service, please call 250-6750 (extension 2).

TRAVEL

Arrivals and Late Arrivals

Passengers should be ready to depart when the vehicle arrives. The drivers are instructed to wait no longer than five (5) minutes. Vehicles arriving within 15 minutes before or 15 minutes after the scheduled pick-up time are considered within the window for service.

While Mountain Mobility strives to provide on-time service, many factors may result in a delayed pick-up. If your vehicle has not arrived within the window for service, please call the Dispatch office, open during all service hours, at 250-6750 (extension 1). Please do not call until after the 15-minute window has expired as the vehicle may arrive while you are on the phone.

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Shared-Ride Rules and Guidelines

Since ART's ADA Paratransit Service is a shared-ride service, please be courteous to other riders. In order to assure a pleasant trip for all, please observe the following rules:

- No eating or drinking is allowed on the vehicle.
- Smoking is prohibited on the vehicle.
- Proper attire, including shirts and shoes are required on the vehicle.
- Music devices are allowed with headphones **if** the sound is not audible to others.
- Please do not distract the driver while the vehicle is in motion.
  Due to the shared-ride nature of the service, riders who require medication or oxygen at regular intervals should be advised that their travel time could be up to 90 minutes depending on trip distance.

Destinations

A destination may not be changed once the passenger has boarded the vehicle. Travel arrangements with more than one destination will be treated as separate trips and must be scheduled as separate trips.

Vehicles and Drivers

Mountain Mobility operates 36 paratransit vans that are equipped with lifts to aid passengers using assistive devices. All vehicles are well maintained and are thoroughly cleaned on a regular basis. All of Mountain Mobility's drivers receive thorough training in defensive driving, passenger assistance and sensitivity, first aid, adult and infant CPR, ADA requirements and other areas. Each driver is experienced and properly licensed, has a good driving record and is familiar with the City of Asheville's roads and highways. All drivers must have clean criminal background checks and must pass ongoing drug and alcohol screenings.

No-Shows

In order to keep our service cost-effective and convenient for all riders, no-shows must be kept to a minimum. Always call Mountain Mobility to cancel **at least two hours** in advance if you know you will be unable to travel. Otherwise, your failure to appear for your trip may be counted as a no-show.

After 3 no-shows in a calendar month, riders will be sent a warning letter notifying them about excessive no-shows. If a rider accumulates 3 more no-shows in the next calendar month, they will receive a phone call which will serve as a second and final warning. After 3 more no-shows in the third calendar month, the rider will be suspended from this service for 30 days.

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Suspensions and Appeals

Riders who violate certain rules, including those related to no-shows and unpaid fares, are subject to suspension of ADA paratransit service. All persons affected by this policy are entitled to request an appeal relating to the imposition of sanctions under the adopted policies of ART. The imposition of sanctions under the terms of this policy is stayed pending the outcome of the appeal. In addition, Mountain Mobility has its own suspension policy which is enforced for disruptive, unsafe or unruly behavior.

Gated Communities

If a pick-up is within a gated community, it is the passenger's responsibility to arrange entry for the vehicle. When signing up for ART ADA Paratransit services you will be asked to provide an entry code for the vehicle. Any changes should be reported to the Mobility Manager at 250-6750, extension 5. If a vehicle is unable to enter the pick-up area or the passenger fails to meet the vehicle outside of the community, the trip will be designated as a no-show.

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POLICIES

Wheelchairs and Mobility Devices

All passengers who require an accessible vehicle with securements and a lift are guaranteed a ride in an accessible vehicle. However, it is the passenger's responsibility to ensure that there are adequate sidewalks and ramps to get from their home or pickup location to the paratransit vehicle. Drivers will assist passengers in boarding and de-boarding the vehicle as needed, but are prohibited from lifting or carrying riders. All mobility devices such as wheelchairs, scooters and walkers must be secured in the vehicle.

For passenger safety and comfort, Mountain Mobility requires that passengers wear seatbelts unless medical certification is provided stating the passenger cannot use them for medical reasons. Passengers using three-wheel scooters are strongly encouraged to transfer out of their scooter into the seat of the paratransit vehicle whenever possible. Mobility devices that are broken or damaged to the extent that they pose an immediate safety threat cannot be transported.

If your condition changes in a manner that requires you to use an assistive mobility device or change the type of mobility device used during your initial eligibility review, the change be reported to Mountain Mobility within 15 days. Please note that we cannot provide service to persons whose overall weight with a mobility device is over six hundred (600) pounds.

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Service Animals

Service animals are welcome and ride free-of-charge. Service animals are subject to the same behavioral expectations as passengers. Service animals must sit on the floor or on the passenger's lap. They may not occupy a passenger seat.

Other Animals

Animals at a passenger's residence must be restrained prior to Mountain Mobility drivers providing any assistance. A driver who is unable to access a passenger's home due to a loose animal may notify the dispatcher. If the dispatcher is unable to make contact with the passenger, or the passenger does not board, the trip will be recorded as a no-show and the return trip will be canceled. At this time, non-service animals are not allowed onboard Mountain Mobility vehicles.

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Children

A legal guardian must sign an authorization form for the provision of transportation to children before a child will be permitted on board the vehicle. Children under 18 years old must be accompanied by a responsible party. Children under 8 years old or who weigh less than 80 pounds must be secured in an approved child safety seat provided by Mountain Mobility. Child safety seats provided by the rider may not be used. Strollers must be collapsed to fit between the seat and the rider. Non-collapsible strollers are prohibited. Under no circumstances may a child sit on an adult's lap.

Personal Care Attendants (PCAs)

PCAs ride free when accompanying an individual certified as requiring a PCA. The need for a PCA will be determined through the eligibility process. One additional companion is also permitted to ride for $2. Let the customer service representative know at the time the reservation is made if you will be traveling with a companion or PCA.

Unattended Passenger Policy

Passengers certified as unable to be left unattended (based on age, diminished mental capacity, or special request of the responsible party) may schedule rides and ride unattended. However, these passengers must make the necessary arrangements to be met by an attendant at each location.

The driver will only wait five (5) minutes for an attendant to meet the passenger who requires attending. If no one arrives, the driver will notify the dispatcher on duty and continue on their route. The dispatcher on duty will attempt to reach the emergency contact person. If the passenger is not met by the end of the route, they will be returned to the Mountain Mobility offices. The passenger will not be left unattended and the police will be notified to assist in locating a responsible party. Passengers who must continue on a route beyond their scheduled destination may be subject to suspension of services.

Carry-on Bags

Due to space limitations and safety concerns, passengers are only permitted to bring or purchase what they, themselves can carry and travel with in their lap on paratransit vehicles. If a passenger brings more than the allowable packages, it will be the passenger's choice on whether to board with only what they can carry and travel with in their lap and find alternative transportation to carry the remaining packages, or decline the trip. *A PCA or companion is not permitted to carry additional packages*. Shopping carts or any type of equipment used to assist with transporting packages, groceries, clothing or other items the passenger is unable to physically carry are not permitted.

Disruptive Behavior Policy

Mountain Mobility reserves the right to refuse transportation or service to anyone whose conduct is or has been known to be obnoxious, offensive, intimidating, violent, disorderly, or hazardous, and could result in the disruption of vehicle operations or serious impairment to the health and safety of others.

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ANY QUESTIONS?

We want to hear from you. Please contact Mountain Mobility at 250-6750 (extension 6) to ask a question or leave us your comments, complaints, suggestions or commendations. Or, if you prefer, you can write to:

LOSRC/Mountain Mobility
339 New Leicester Hwy, Suite 140
Asheville, NC 28806

You can also email us through our system website at: mountainmobility@ buncombecounty.org.

When making a comment, try to provide as much detail as possible so we can properly address your concern. For example, if you're reporting a situation involving a paratransit vehicle, the exact date, vehicle number and estimated time are all helpful.

SERVICES

Driver Services

Drivers will assist passengers who are unable to maneuver themselves from their door to the vehicle provided it is safe for them to do so.

Drivers are allowed to:

- Maneuver your manual wheelchair if you need help from your door to the vehicle.
- Lend a steady arm if you need assistance.

Drivers are not allowed to:

- Maneuver your electric mobility device (i.e. electric wheelchair or scooter)
- Maneuver or push you, your equipment or shopping cart up or down stairs, steep inclines or driveways
- Enter residences
- Lift or carry riders
- Carry packages or other items

Drivers are specifically prohibited from the above activities. Please do not make these requests of your driver.

Door-to-Door Service

Mountain Mobility provides "door-to-door" service whenever possible. The driver will come to your door to let you know the bus has arrived. However, there will be some locations and/or situations where it is not possible for the driver to leave the vehicle. If you are able to wait at the curb or at the designated pick-up location, please do so.

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OTHER PROGRAMS

R.I.D.E.

R.I.D.E. is a program coordinated by Mountain Mobility to afford Buncombe County's older adults and citizens with disabilities the opportunity for increased independence by offering a discounted "$10 off coupon" for use with various taxi and paratransit companies within the county. For more information on the Taxi Voucher program contact the Mobility Manager at 250-6750 (extension 5).

Senior Pass Program

The Senior Bus Pass Program provides a monthly ART bus pass to eligible seniors at no cost to them. If you are able to use the bus system, contact Mountain Mobility and ask for this

program. There are a limited number of free passes, and they will be distributed on a first-come, first-served basis. If the supply of free passes runs out, you can choose to go on the waiting list to receive a pass as they become available.

CONTACT

To sign up for services (extension 5), make a reservation (extension 4), or inquire about scheduling (extension 2), call (828) 250-6750. Mountain Mobility will be glad to assist you in providing information on other transportation services available in the community.

If you require Telecommunications Relay Service (TRS) to reach us, please dial **7-1-1** from your TTY phone or other device.

Additionally, a free 24-hour information and referral service providing non-emergency information on all health and human services available in Asheville and Buncombe County is available by calling:

2-1-1 or **252-HELP**

2-1-1 is a partnership of United Way, Buncombe County and Ingles Markets, Inc.

For transit in Henderson County, contact Apple Country Transit at (828) 698-8571 or by email: transit@hendersoncountync.org . For transit on the fixed-route system in Buncombe County, contact ART by phone at (828) 253-5691, by e-mail at iride@ashevillenc.gov or find information online at www.ridetheart.com.

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