

RURAL TRANSPORTATION PROGRAM POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

TEL: (985) 868-7703

**OFFICE HOURS: MONDAY TO FRIDAY 6:30 A.M. - 5:00 P.M.
SERVICE HOURS: MONDAY TO FRIDAY 6:00 A.M. – 5:00 P.M.
RESERVATION HOURS 6:30 A.M. - 3:00 P.M.**

Eligibility Criteria:

- **Must reside in a rural area of Terrebonne Parish**
- **Passengers 16 or younger must be accompanied by an adult**

Terrebonne Council on Aging's (TCOA) Rural Transportation program operates a *CURB to CURB* transportation service, meaning passengers will be picked-up from and dropped-off at the curb, *NOT* from inside their homes.

If a passenger is unable to get to the curb by himself/herself, a family member or friend must help the passenger to and from the bus. TCOA drivers are *NOT ALLOWED* to enter the passenger's home. Passengers may submit a request for an exception to the Curb to Curb rule. All request for an exception will be reviewed by Transportation Supervisor or Executive Director for approval.

All appointments must be scheduled with Rural Transportation **no later than 12 noon the business day before scheduled appointment**. TCOA does not accept same day appointments. Appointments must be scheduled accordingly. When your appointment is completed, contact Rural Transportation to inform you are finish and ready to go home. The dispatcher will dispatch a bus as soon as possible. Wait times for a return ride home will vary, depending on clientele, prepare for an extended wait time. All clients must be ready by 5:00pm for a return ride home. If at an appointment later in the day contact the dispatcher of TCOA by 3:00 p.m. to insure a return trip. Any passengers calling after 3:00 p.m. will **not** be guaranteed a return trip.

Passengers must be ready at least an hour before their scheduled appointment and must be prepared to board the bus when the driver arrives. Boarding time will be limited from five (5) to fifteen (15) minutes. Vehicles are equipped with a fully functioning lift. All passengers needing mobility assistance are permitted to use the lift upon boarding or de-boarding.

Passengers who find a ride home, are required to notify the Rural Transportation Department by calling (985) 868-7703.

FARE POLICY

Terrebonne Rural Transportation fares are \$1.00 per passenger per one-way trip. Passengers must have the exact fare available at pick-up. Drivers are not allowed to make change. Fares will be collected upon boarding. Not providing the required fare will result in denial of your transportation trip. Fare policy is posted on the fare box in all TCOA vehicles.

SAFETY

For efficient and safety operation, all TCOA buses are equipped with 2-way radio communication that is in contact with the dispatcher at all times.

Global Positioning Systems (GPS) and Video Surveillance are also installed in all buses. These systems allow for a safer environment for the benefit of both the driver and the passengers.

Drivers are trained in Defensive Driving skills and Passenger Assistance techniques for wheelchair-bound and mobility impaired passengers.

All passengers must wear seat belts while the bus is in motion. If there are medical reasons why a passenger cannot wear a seat belt, the passenger must present a doctor's statement that wearing the seat belt and harness is medically unsound.

Wheelchairs and scooters must be properly secured at designated locations in the bus. If unable to properly secure wheelchair/scooter, a passenger should transfer into a permanent passenger seat.

Wheelchair seat belts must be worn at all times for any wheelchair client who is unstable during transporting (i.e. sliding out of chair, falling forward in chair, etc.).

For safety reasons, children should never sit on an adult's lap. Children passengers, under age nine (9) must abide by Louisiana Child Passenger Safety Law.

Any child who is under the age of two must ride in a rear facing child seat and will ride in such a child seat until they reach the height and weight limits of that seat. At which point they must transition to a forward-facing seat with an internal harness. Once they turn four, and outgrow the forward-facing seat, they must transition to a booster seat. When the child turns 9 or outgrows the booster seat, they can sit in the back seat, with proper seatbelt restraint. TCOA does not provide a child restraint seat. Passengers are required to provide an approved child restraint seat based on the Louisiana Child Passenger Safety Law.

Strollers must be collapsible & stowed under the passenger's seat.

Roller blades and skates must be removed before entering the bus and must be stored safely in a container under the passenger's seat.

Passengers should not engage in conversation with drivers.

For health reasons, shirts and shoes are required at all times. No swim suits allowed.

Passenger's personal items must not block the aisle of the bus.

All items brought onto the bus must be removed upon de-boarding including all papers, magazines, and all other personal belongings. TCOA is not responsible for any personal items left on the bus.

No laundry is allowed on board unless such items are in an enclosed bag.

The following items are **prohibited** on all Rural Transportation buses:

- Weapons and ammunition
- Sharp objects without a sheath
- Items that cannot safely be stowed
- Hazardous materials: Flammables, corrosives, explosives, etc.
- Fishing poles with hooks attached
- Use of cigarettes, cigars, e-cigarettes, vapes, and/or chewing tobacco
- Non-prescription medication or street drugs
- Alcohol

Passengers and drivers are not allowed to **eat, drink, or smoke** in Rural Transportation buses.

For safety considerations, driver and passenger must ensure that ramps, sidewalks, and driveways are free of obstructions before boarding and de-boarding.

Drivers will not physically lift passengers or wheelchairs.

Wheelchairs and scooters must be properly secured at designated locations in the bus.

Wheelchairs should have fully functional brakes and must be in the locked position while passenger is on the lift and while the bus is in motion.

Wheelchairs should have functional foot rest.

All power chairs must be powered off while on the lift and while the bus is in motion.

ALL passengers must remain seated until the bus comes to a complete stop and driver gives instructions to de-board.

The driver is required to assist each elderly or disabled passenger while boarding and de-boarding. Terrebonne Rural Transportation **will not be responsible** for any passenger that de-boards the bus without assistance from the driver.

SAFETY	
S -	Stay seated while the bus is in motion.

A -	Arms and other extremities should be kept inside the aisles of the bus.
F -	Food or drink, if open, is prohibited on our buses.
E -	Have the exact change ready. Many falls occur while passengers are looking in purses and billfolds for their fare.
T -	Take your time while boarding and de-boarding the bus.
Y -	Your safety is our concern!

PASSENGER ASSISTANCE

Drivers will provide physical assistance to elderly and disabled passengers entering and exiting the buses and will secure all wheelchairs within the bus. Due to the size of the buses and the number of potential passengers in each, Rural Transportation program has established a “three-bag rule” that limits the number of bags or packages that each passenger may transport with them. Each bag cannot exceed 20 lbs., nor contain hazardous materials. If needed, drivers will help load and unload those three bags or packages for passengers and will place them at the curbside upon de-boarding. If assistance is needed beyond these points, it is the responsibility of the passenger to make proper arrangements.

Drivers are not allowed to run errands for passengers.

When a driver fails to assist you while boarding or de-boarding, please call the Rural Transportation Supervisor at (985) 868-8411 to file a report.

Rural Transportation is not responsible for any damage to or loss of passenger’s property. Please ensure you have all your belongings before leaving the bus.

PROPER CONDUCT

All passengers are expected to exercise proper conduct while using transportation services. Terrebonne Rural Transportation reserves the right to revoke riding privileges to passengers who do not conduct themselves appropriately while in the bus.

Fighting, throwing things, pushing, shouting, rough behavior, and vulgar language are forbidden.

Passengers should surrender priority seats when asked to do so by the driver.

Passengers should only use audio equipment with headphones, and must keep the volume low.

Rural Transportation buses may not be used as a forum for religious, political, or personal beliefs; and no printed materials, other than that specifically provided or authorized by this program may be distributed on board.

TRIP PURPOSE

Rural Transportation Program does not restrict the number of trips provided to a qualifying client during any period of time. All trips, within Terrebonne Parish are eligible, no matter what the purpose. No waiting list or standby list will be maintained.

Examples of trip destinations include, but are not limited to, medical appointments, social service agencies, shopping, personal business, recreation, work, and visitation with family and friends.

MOBILITY AIDS AND LIFE SUPPORT

Eligible passengers may travel with service trained animals to assist them. Persons with respirators, portable oxygen or other life support equipment will not be refused service. Due to safety concern's TCOA will not transport an oxygen tank that is not wrapped or in a protective case (i.e. tank on wheels).

SERVICE ANIMALS

TCOA shall permit service animals to accompany individuals with disabilities in all transit vehicles and facilities.

Service animals are used to assist persons with disabilities including those with visual impairments, hearing impairments, mobility impairments, epilepsy, arthritis, and other physical disabilities. Service animals aid in a number of ways. The service animal is required to be under the control of the owner at all times.

DESTINATIONS

Drivers are instructed to stop at the passenger's scheduled destination only. A destination may not be changed after the passenger has boarded. Passengers must be driven to the scheduled destination - alternate locations are not allowed.

Drivers will not enter a facility to look for a passenger. The passenger should be ready at the door of the pre-determined location when the bus arrives to pick them up.

RESERVATION PROCEDURE

Rural Transportation operates a non-emergency transportation service.

To request transportation service, call **(985) 868-7703** by 12 noon the business day before service is needed. Same day requests to be returned home will be accepted if there is space available, but **cannot** be guaranteed. Reservations are accepted up to 90 days in advance. Passengers are advised to call as early as possible to reserve their trip.

Reservations are made on a first-come, first-served basis. Rural Transportation staff is on duty Monday through Friday, from 6:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. to take your calls. Please know the street address of both your pick-up and your destination. Your appointment time must be scheduled for no later than 1:00 o'clock P.M. It is the passengers' responsibility to inform TCOA staff of any additional passenger when booking their trips. This is necessary to ensure seat availability. We make every effort to get passengers to their destinations within one hour of their requested time. Passengers must understand that Rural Transportation is **not** a taxi service. Rural Transportation passengers will often, and can expect to share a ride with other program participants.

Trips may be canceled by Rural Transportation due to unforeseen and/or unavoidable circumstances such as bad weather, traffic problems, and bus breakdowns. Passengers will be informed whenever transportation service has to be canceled and a reason or explanation will also be given at that time.

NO-SHOW POLICY

Any Person who establishes a pattern of not showing up for scheduled trips without contacting the Transportation Department at (985)868-7701 to cancel within 2 hours of pick up time, may be suspended from TCOA Transportation Services. No-shows that exceed 20% per month will result in service suspension. Service suspension can range from 1 week up to 4 weeks. A written warning notice will be mailed to the client prior to any suspension of service.

Suspension decisions are subject to appeal. The Executive Director will exercise authority to reverse the decision or amend the suspension.

INCLEMENT/ADVERSE WEATHER

Ensuring passengers, drivers, and public safety is TCOA's primary concern. During adverse weather conditions we will make every effort to maintain operations. However, TCOA reserves the right to delay or cancel operations as necessary. If weather-related cancellation is necessary, TCOA staff will provide as much advanced notice as possible to passengers who booked trips for that day.

REASONS PASSENGERS MAY BE REFUSED SERVICE

- Refusal to follow safety rules or instructions
- Offensive, violent, threatening, abusive, destructive, illegal, or otherwise inappropriate behavior or language.
- Wheelchair or scooter beyond the limits of the lift.
- Wheelchairs must be in safe working condition. (i.e. fully functional brakes, foot rest, etc.)
- Refusing to use the provided occupant restraints will result in the refusal of service unless there are medical reasons why a passenger cannot wear a seat belt, the passenger must present a doctor's statement that wearing the seat belt and harness is medically unsound. However, if a particular mobility device cannot be secured by the existing securement system, services will not be refused.
- Refusing to use safety securements (i.e. wheelchair seat belt, etc.) as required or requested by TCOA to transport safely.
- Persons who are not capable of transferring from one seat to another on their own (TCOA

drivers are not allowed to lift or carry passengers)

- Persons traveling alone who are not capable of boarding or de-boarding the bus without the aid of a personal care attendant.
- Persons traveling in a wheelchair, without an escort, who require continual monitoring and/or assistance.
- Offensive odors.
- Service animals not under control of the owner.
- When travel will take a bus over unsafe, impassable, or potentially damaging roads.
- If a passenger intentionally damages a Rural Transportation bus.

HOLIDAY SCHEDULE

Rural Transportation service will not be available during the following observed holidays; with the exception of Dialysis Patients:

New Year's Day

Mardi Gras Day

Memorial Day

Independence Day

Thanksgiving and the day after

Martin Luther King's Day

Good Friday

Juneteenth Day

Labor Day

Christmas Eve and Christmas Day