



*For Transportation Employees*

EVERYONE BENEFITS!  
**Accessible Public  
Transportation**

*"Public transportation is  
important to us. As people with  
disabilities, we are just like  
everyone else who wants access  
to our community. Just take the  
time to understand our needs"*

— A self-advocate

Institute on   
**Human Development  
and Disability**

The University of Georgia

**P**ublic Transportation is very important to people with disabilities in this community. We depend on the buses and the para transit for our independence and our freedom. Public transportation helps us to participate in our communities: to go to work, to church and just get on with our daily lives. With your help, our community can be an accessible place and we can all be equal, contributing members.

Most of the time, the assistance that you can offer a person with a disability is the very same service that would be helpful for everyone.

We know that it is sometimes difficult to know how you can help people with disabilities – what to ask and what to do. This brochure was written to help you to better understand the needs of people with disabilities, what assistance you can offer, and when and how to

offer that assistance.

You will not always know when you have a passenger with a disability, because you can't always tell if someone has a disability just by looking at them. A person with a disability may do something a little differently so that they can get where they need to go.

- People with *visual disabilities* may use a white cane to navigate on the sidewalk and up and down steps.
- People with *mobility impairments* may use a wheelchair and require a lift and curb cuts.
- People with *cognitive disabilities* may use different visual or audible cues to help them understand where they are and where they want to go.
- People who are *deaf or hard of hearing* may use sign language, write notes, read lips, or use a hearing aid or assistive listening device to help them communicate with others.

Aside from these accommodations, people with disabilities are just like you. They are neighbors, co-workers, and friends that you can

help by assisting them to navigate the public transportation system safely and efficiently.

Most of the time, the assistance that you can offer a person with a disability is the very same service that would be helpful for *everyone*.



### **Make information accessible to everyone:**

1. **Announce all stops loudly and clearly.** This helps *all passengers* understand where they are and when they need to get off the bus. If you have a sign inside the bus that indicates the stop, make sure that it is always turned on and working properly.

2. Make sure that your bus has a **sign stating the fare** and any other important information. Announce this information verbally on a regular basis.

3. Make sure that **bus schedules and routes** are available in **large print, by phone, and on audiocassette**. Frequently tell passengers that this information is available and how to access it.

4. **Keep a pencil and paper handy** to use to communicate with a person who is deaf or hard of hearing – if they request it.

5. When a passenger asks you a question, **answer** them as **plainly and clearly** as possible without any unnecessary information.

Example: "Where are we?" "We are traveling south on Main Street. We just passed Elm Street and will reach our stop at Oak Avenue in about three minutes."



### **Communicate in language that is helpful and respectful to everyone:**

1. **Face the person and speak clearly.**

2. **Speak respectfully.** Please do not address passengers in a way that may sound demeaning like: "Honey" or "Sweetie."

3. **Do not assume that anyone needs extra assistance.** A simple comment like, "Please let me know if I can assist you" is helpful and courteous to all passengers.

4. **Speak directly to the person with a disability,** even if they are accompanied by a friend or an associate.



### **If a person with a disability requests your assistance:**

1. **Be respectful of personal space.** Do not take a person by the elbow or the arm to guide them, unless they have specifically requested that you do so. Do not touch anyone's wheelchair (especially power controls) without first asking their permission.

2. **If you are unsure** about how to offer the assistance requested, **ask:** "What is the best way for me to help you?"

3. Whenever possible, **pull the bus up to a curb** as you stop, so that all passengers can exit easily and safely. People with visual or mobility impairments can find it particularly difficult if they must exit onto the street or onto an area that is not level. For people with visual impairments, offer verbal directions that will help them to step safely to the curb or to the sidewalk. (Example: "The curb is 12 inches directly in front of the bottom step.")

People with disabilities may **need a little extra time** to negotiate the steps and/or the wheelchair lift safely. **Be polite and reassuring.** Do NOT rush to help. DO offer your help if you think it may be needed (but do not touch the person or their wheelchair, cane, etc., unless given permission). **Point out nearby curb cuts** to passengers with mobility

impairments when possible. Let all passengers know that they can take the time they need to exit safely.

4. If a person asks for instructions to learn to navigate the bus system or to learn a new bus route, **have information handy** that will help them to contact someone at your office about rider training.



### **Special instructions for para transit:**

Para transit is designed specifically for people with disabilities to help them to be included as equals in our community – to work, to shop, etc. – even if they cannot drive or ride the regular bus. Issues of efficiency of para transit service must be secondary to the mission of providing a service that helps people with disabilities to have meaningful access to the world outside and an opportunity to participate as equal citizens of their communities. Sensitive and respectful para transit dispatchers and drivers are a vital part of the disability service system in our communities.

#### **For dispatchers when scheduling para transit:**

Be very clear. Repeat times and locations for pick-up AND the times and locations for the return trip. If passengers are required to be ready for pick-up early, add that time to the requested pick-up time. Example: Jane wants to be picked up at the Library at 2 p.m. If your regulations require that riders be ready 15 minutes prior to their pick-up time, tell Jane that her pick-up time is 1:45. The rider will understand that the bus may be later – but will not be confused by hearing two different pick-up times. This will lessen the confusion so that the rider and the driver will have the same “ready time.”

#### **For drivers assisting passengers:**

Each person with a disability is different and the support that each person requires is different, too. Some para transit passengers may need assistance from their door to the bus. Others may

need no direct support at all. Ask the passenger (*not* their care giver or companion) what support they require and how you can best provide it. If supporting your passenger requires that you touch them, do so only with their permission and according to their instructions. Never control a passenger’s wheelchair unless they have given you permission to do so.

Some people with disabilities may have problems with speech or cognitive impairments that make it more difficult for them to express themselves. This does NOT mean that they are mentally incompetent or child-like. Address your passenger respectfully – as Mr. or Ms. Jones. Listen carefully and repeat what you think you heard the passenger say. It is okay if you have difficulty understanding what a passenger wants or needs – be honest. Say, “I’m not sure I understand you, but I’ll keep trying.” In the beginning, try communicating with yes or no questions. Just be patient and over time you will learn to understand your passenger’s way of communicating!

*If you would like further information or training on how to assist people with disabilities, please contact the Institute on Human Development and Disability.*

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*One of a series of Disability Protocol brochures prepared and disseminated by the Institute on Human Development and Disability. This document available in an alternate format on request.*

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# Quick Tips for Transportation Employees

EVERYONE BENEFITS!

## Accessible Public Transportation



Here's what  
*People with Disabilities*  
want you to know about accessible  
public transportation.

We depend on the buses and the para transit for our independence and freedom. *Public transportation helps us* to be contributing members of our community. The assistance that you offer a person with a disability is most often the very same service that would be helpful for everyone!

EVERYONE BENEFITS FROM  
ACCESSIBLE TRANSPORTATION!

Communicate in a language that is helpful and respectful to everyone

- Face person and speak clearly
- Speak respectfully
- Do not assume that anyone needs extra assistance
- Speak directly to the person with a disability, even if they are accompanied by a friend or an associate

Make information accessible to everyone

- Announce all stops loudly and clearly
- Have a sign stating bus fare and also announce this information verbally
- Keep pencil and paper handy
- Answer questions plainly and clearly

If a person with a disability requests your assistance...

- Be respectful of personal space
- If you are unsure about how to offer assistance, ask
- Whenever possible, pull the bus up to a curb so all passengers may exit safely
- Have bus system information handy

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For detail, see the Disabilities Protocol/Transportation brochure or contact:

**Institute on Human Development and Disability** at the University of Georgia,  
(706) 542-3457, [www.uap.uga.edu](http://www.uap.uga.edu)