



# Complementary Paratransit Plan

**5400 Cline Avenue  
East Chicago, Indiana  
46312**



**Prepared by: East Chicago Transit**

**Approved by:**

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**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

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## **PREFACE**

This plan describes the operation of the Complementary Paratransit Service operated by East Chicago Transit based on regulations of the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). It includes the following information:

- An introduction and description of the plan to provide Complementary Paratransit comparable to fixed route service
- Glossary and definitions
- General information about the entity submitting the plan, East Chicago Transit (ECT)
- A description of the Complementary Paratransit system information about the proposed paratransit eligibility determination process
- Required certifications and process for resolving appeals to decisions about certification
- Policies and procedures for Complementary Paratransit and Fixed Route services
- A description of the Fixed Route services
- A description of the public participation process used to develop the plan.

The final ADA Complementary Paratransit Plan is available upon request in accessible formats, such as large print, audiocassette, audio compact disc (CD), or Braille.

## **GENERAL INFORMATION - EAST CHICAGO TRANSIT**

**5400 Cline Ave.**

**East Chicago, IN 46312**

**Office phone: (219) 391-8465 (voice and relay)**

**Fax: (219) 391-8473**

**Website: [Bus Transit Home Page Click here](#)**

**Email address: [frosado@eastchicago.com](mailto:frosado@eastchicago.com)**

## **ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE HOURS**

The ECT office is open Monday – Friday: 8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

The office is closed on Saturday and Sunday and on specified holidays.

A Supervisor is on the premises to retrieve any paratransit messages left by voice mail Monday - Friday between 5:00 a.m. and 8:44 p.m. and Saturdays between 8:30 a.m. and 4:31 p.m.

Note: Due to an Executive Order establishing unpaid leave (furlough) for ECT employees, the ECT administrative office will be closed on scheduled furlough days ordered by the City of East Chicago. These days are subject to change and will be posted to the public by website as well as posted on all transit vehicles, the bus shelters, libraries, and other public venues. On furlough days, a Supervisor is on the premises to retrieve any paratransit messages left by voice mail 8:30 a.m. and 4:31 p.m.

## **HOURS OF SERVICE – FIXED ROUTE AND COMPLEMENTARY PARATRANSIT**

Monday - Friday: 5:55 a.m. – 8:44 p.m.

Saturday: 9:00 a.m. – 4:31 p.m.

Sunday: No service

East Chicago Transit does not operate on Sundays or the following holidays:

New Years' Day, Martin Luther King's Birthday, Good Friday, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Presidents' Day, Veterans Day, Thanksgiving Day, Day after Thanksgiving, Christmas Eve, Christmas Day

## **HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION**

**1005 E. Chicago Ave**

**East Chicago, IN 46312**

**(219) 391-8477**

**(219) 391-8544 fax**

## GLOSSARY and DEFINITIONS

**ACCESSIBLE FORMAT** - Information provided in alternate formats, such as large print, audio compact disc (CD), audio cassettes, or Braille. **AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST**

**ADA**  - Americans with Disabilities Act signed into law in 1990, making it illegal to discriminate against persons with disabilities regarding employment, public services, public accommodations and telecommunication. The intent of this law is to provide equal opportunity to persons with disabilities, allowing them to fully participate in society and live independently and with economic self-sufficiency.

**CATS**  – Council on Accessible Transportation Services, a committee consisting of a group of people set apart from ECT with the sole purpose to oversee the ADA portion of ECT transit services. Any and all appeals pertaining to ADA will be directed to CATS for review. For additional information, please call the office at (219) 391-8465 or visit the ECT website at <http://www.eastchicago.com/page10/page90/index.html> [see appendix G]

**COMPANION / GUEST** - A person accompanying a registered paratransit rider

**COMPLEMENTARY PARATRANSIT** - Comparable transportation for individuals who, because of a physical or mental impairment cannot use the ECT fixed route service and/or cannot get to a fixed route stop

**DISABILITY (as defined by ADA)**  - A person with a disability is defined as:

- 1) A person with a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities;
- 2) A person with a record of such a physical or mental impairment; or
- 3) A person who is regarded as having such impairment.

*It should be noted that the ADA definition of disability is not the same as other definitions of disability used in other federal laws and programs such as Social Security, Workers Compensation, Veteran's programs, etc. Also, note that having a current disability/handicapped auto tag or license plate does not provide automatic eligibility for ECT paratransit services.*

**ECT**  - East Chicago Transit agency that provides fixed route and complementary paratransit services for the City of East Chicago

**FTA** - Federal Transit Administration

**NIRPC** – Northwest Indiana Regional Planning Commission

**OPERATOR** - A person trained to lawfully operate an East Chicago Transit vehicle.

**PERSONAL CARE ATTENDANT (PCA)** – a person designated or employed specifically to help a person with a disability meet his/her personal needs on a regular basis.

**RELAY INDIANA** - A telecommunications relay service that provides telephone accessibility to people with hearing or speech impairments who use teletypewriters (TTYs). Relay Indiana gives hearing or speech impaired individuals the opportunity to make personal and business calls, with no restrictions on the length or numbers of calls placed. It is reached by dialing 711 from a telephone or TTY.

**SERVICE AREA** - ECT must provide Complementary Paratransit service to origins and destinations within corridors that extend 3/4 of a mile on each side of and at the beginning and end of its fixed routes and must be available throughout the same hours and days as the fixed route service. Eligible passengers may schedule trips anywhere within 3/4 of a mile that fixed route travels. If you are unclear about the 3/4 mile radius, please call the office at (219) 391-8465 (voice/relay) or consult our website at for maps and routes.

Note: Additional definitions in this plan will be added in revisions, as needed.

## COMPLEMENTARY PARATRANSIT

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) was passed to ensure that persons with disabilities have an equal opportunity to live independently, to be economically self-sufficient, and to participate fully in all aspects of life. The law states, “No qualified individual with a disability shall, by reason of such disability, be excluded from participation in or be denied the benefits of the services provided by a public entity”. These services include public transportation. The law also stipulates that any “public entity which provides fixed route service shall offer a comparable paratransit service for those persons with disabilities who are unable to use the fixed route service.” (See Appendix A)

East Chicago Transit provides both fixed route and Complementary Paratransit service. ECT has been operating Complementary Paratransit service since 1997 in addition to its fixed route service, which began in 1972. ECT oversees and provides its own vehicles and drivers for the fixed route and Complementary Paratransit service.

The ECT Paratransit zone extends  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile on each side of and at the beginning and end of its fixed routes service corridor, straddling Hammond, Griffith, Hessville, Highland, and part of Gary.

ECT Complementary Paratransit Service provides transportation to people with disabilities who are unable to use the ECT fixed route bus system. It is a shared ride service operated with accessible vehicles.

ECT is governed by the City of East Chicago’s Mayor and administration who appoint the ECT Transit Director. The Transit Director supervises administration, staff, drivers, dispatchers, and others necessary to maintain operations of the department.

ECT’s funding process relies on federal grants that are subgranted through the Northwest Indiana Regional Planning Commission (NIRPC). ECT submits a budget to the City of East Chicago for the year. The budget process starts by projecting the cost of providing the next year’s service and adding the projected cost of any expansion in service planned.

Any future necessary modifications to the service will obviously affect the current users of the service, and the plan has been developed with the intent of minimizing adverse effects, if any, to the existing users. Each year the ECT Complementary Paratransit Plan will be updated to reflect the most current Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and ADA regulations.

# **POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR COMPLEMENTARY PARATRANSIT AND FIXED ROUTE SERVICES**

## **ACCESSIBLE FORMATS**

ECT provides information in alternate accessible formats, including large print, email, audio compact disc (CD), audio cassettes, Braille, etc. upon request.

To request material in an alternate accessible format, contact ECT at (219) 391-8465 (voice/relay).

## **CARRY-ON ITEMS**

Carry-on packages are limited to 4 grocery bags or similar sized packages. Operators will not help carry any packages on or off the vehicle. Aisles and doorways must be kept clear at all times for safety. If a passenger needs assistance with carry-on items, the passenger should arrange for someone to assist him or her, for example a Personal Care Attendant or companion. ECT does not provide Personal Care Attendants or companions.

## **COMPANIONS, GUESTS, AND PERSONAL CARE ATTENDANTS (PCA)**

A paratransit certified rider is entitled to have a Personal Care Attendant (PCA) ride with him or her on the paratransit vehicle, if needed. In addition, the eligible rider is entitled to ride with one companion on the paratransit vehicle. ECT also allows a guest to ride with the paratransit passenger if space on the vehicle permits.

### **Personal Care Attendant**

If a paratransit passenger requires a PCA, one may accompany him or her. The passenger must reserve a space on the van for the PCA when making the reservation. If a passenger did not require a PCA when he or she originally applied to ECT and now does require a PCA, the passenger should contact the ECT office to provide this updated information.

### **Companion**

A paratransit passenger may also be accompanied by a companion. In order to be considered a companion, the person accompanying the eligible individual must be traveling to/from the same origin and destination. A family member or friend accompanying a certified paratransit rider will be regarded as a companion and not as a PCA, unless the family member or friend is acting in the capacity of a PCA. When making a reservation, the passenger should notify ECT that he or she is bringing a companion.

### **Guest**

A guest may also accompany a passenger on a paratransit ride. Due to limited space, when scheduling the trip, the passenger must state if he or she wishes to bring a guest. Guests are permitted on a space available basis. There may not always be space to include a guest on the trip because the paratransit vehicle may be transporting other passengers and possibly their PCAs and companions. Bringing more than one guest is not permitted.

Companions and guests are expected to follow all of the rules and regulations for riding ECT. ECT reserves the right to suspend or revoke the riding privileges of any passenger, companion, guest or PCA for misconduct.

ECT does not provide Personal Care Attendants.

### **CUSTOMER SERVICE AND COMPLAINTS**

East Chicago Transit welcomes your comments, suggestions or complaints. We are committed to using passenger and customer input as a tool to improve service quality.

ECT offers a complaint form on every transit vehicle. You can share your comments, suggestions, and complaints by filling out this form. You can also call our office and a complaint form will be mailed to you. If assistance in filling out a complaint form is required, please contact the office and one of our staff will assist you. Comments, complaints or suggestions may be submitted by mail, on our web site, or by phone.

All service complaints are subject to ECT Complaint Policy. All complaints are investigated and receive responses. We can only resolve problems if we are informed, so please do not hesitate to contact us.

A service complaint is defined as a dispute or dissatisfaction with service. Any passenger or citizen with a complaint has within 10 business days to submit the complaint. Preferably complaints should be in writing with a signature, address and phone number so that we can contact the complainant for additional information and to provide a response. It is possible to submit complaints anonymously but this will limit the ability of ECT to investigate the matter and no response can be provided. Please mail, email, fax or deliver this form to: East Chicago Transit, Attn. Transit Director; 5400 Cline Ave; East Chicago, IN 46312. Phone-in complaints shall be documented by our dispatcher and given to the ECT Director. The ECT Director or designee shall review the complaint and within 30 business days of its receipt and notify the complainant if contact information is provided.

If a complaint is not resolved to the complainant's satisfaction, the complainant can appeal the resolution and submit such demand to the Council on Accessible Transportation (CATS) at 5400 Cline Ave. East Chicago In. 46312 for review. A CATS designee or ECT Director will notify complainant within 10 business days of the determination on the appeal.

### **EATING OR DRINKING ON VEHICLES**

ECT prohibits eating and drinking on its vehicles.

ECT will make reasonable accommodations for a passenger with a disability, if appropriate. The passenger should contact the ECT Director at (219) 391-8465 (voice/relay) or [frsado@eastchicago.com](mailto:frsado@eastchicago.com) to make the request.

### **FARES, AGE, SHIRTS AND SHOES**

ECT currently provides riders with free fixed route bus transit and complementary Paratransit service. Riders 13 years or younger must be accompanied by an adult. Shirts and shoes must be

worn at all times while riding ECT buses or paratransit vehicles. Hoods and masks must be removed when riding buses.

Persons with disabilities may request a reasonable accommodation by contacting the ECT Transit Director at (219) 391-8465 (voice/relay) or by email at [frosado@eastchicago.com](mailto:frosado@eastchicago.com)

### **LIFT DEPLOYMENT**

ECT fixed route buses and paratransit vans are accessible. ECT fixed route buses have lifts or ramps and have kneeling capacity that lowers the height of the first step onto the curb or ground to allow access.

Operators must deploy the lift/ramp or use the kneeling capacity upon request from any passenger.

All lifts and ramps can be operated manually if the automatic features fail. Drivers must deploy them manually when needed.

### **MOBILITY AIDS/WHEELCHAIRS, SEATBELTS, AND SECUREMENT**

ECT fixed route buses and paratransit vans are lift/ramp equipped to allow people with wheelchairs or mobility aids to enter them. ECT will make every attempt to accommodate wheelchairs, scooters, and other mobility aids. ECT requests that all mobility aids are clean, safe, and in good working order.

Mobility aids must be secured while on ECT fixed routes and paratransit vehicles. Power chairs must have the power off and the brakes locked while being raised and lowered on the lift and while in the vehicle. If for some reason a mobility aid cannot be secured, the rider will not be denied service. If a mobility device or wheelchair can be secured, but the rider refuses securement, ECT can deny service.

ECT encourages all passengers to use a seatbelt on paratransit or fixed routes service. Passengers are not required to wear their lap belt, and will not be denied service on fixed route buses or paratransit vans if they do not use it.

Children age 4 years or younger or that weigh 40 lbs. or less, must ride in a car seat provided by their parent or guardian. ECT does not provide child safety seats for children. Children age 13 years or younger must be accompanied by an adult.

Operators will not move the bus/van until all passengers are seated and/or properly secured.

ECT is not a medical transport service and will not transport stretchers

### **OXYGEN TANKS AND RESPIRATORS**

Personal oxygen tanks and respirators can be transported but must be secured by the rider. Riders are responsible for keeping oxygen tanks and respirators with them at all times. The operator will not control any oxygen tank or respirator mechanisms.

## **PERSONAL CARE ATTENDANTS (PCAs), COMPANIONS, GUESTS**

### **PARATRANSIT**

A certified rider on Complementary Paratransit is entitled to have a Personal Care Attendant (PCA) ride with him or her on the paratransit vehicle, if needed. In addition, the eligible rider is entitled to ride with one companion on the paratransit vehicle. ECT also allows a guest to ride with the paratransit passenger if space on the vehicle permits.

#### **Personal Care Attendant**

If a paratransit passenger requires a PCA, one may accompany him or her. The passenger must reserve a space on the van for the PCA when making the reservation. If a passenger did not require a PCA when he or she originally applied to ECT and now does require a PCA, the passenger should contact the ECT office to provide this updated information.

#### **Companion**

A paratransit passenger may also be accompanied by a companion. In order to be considered a companion, the person accompanying the eligible individual must be traveling to/from the same origin and destination. A family member or friend accompanying a certified paratransit rider will be regarded as a companion and not as a PCA, unless the family member or friend is acting in the capacity of a PCA. When making a reservation, the passenger should notify ECT that he or she is bringing a companion.

#### **Guest**

A guest may also accompany a passenger on a paratransit ride. Due to limited space, when scheduling the trip, the passenger must state if he or she wishes to bring a guest. Guests are permitted on a space available basis. There may not always be space to include a guest on the trip because the paratransit vehicle may be transporting other passengers and possibly their PCAs and companions. Bringing more than one guest is not permitted.

Companions and guests are expected to follow all of the rules and regulations for riding ECT

ECT does not provide Personal Care Attendants.

ECT reserves the right to suspend or revoke the riding privileges of any passenger, companion, guest or PCA for misconduct.

### **FIXED ROUTE**

#### **Personal Care Attendants (PCA)/ Companions/Guests**

For fixed route buses, no advance notice or reservation is needed for a passenger with a disability who wishes to bring a PCA, companion or guest.

Companions and guests are expected to follow all of the rules and regulations for riding ECT

ECT does not provide Personal Care Attendants.

ECT reserves the right to suspend or revoke the riding privileges of any passenger, companion, guest or PCA for misconduct.

### **PICKUP AND DROPOFF LOCATIONS**

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) regulation 49 CFR §37.129(a) provides that, with the exception of certain situations, complementary paratransit service generally means service from the point of boarding the vehicle to the point of disembarking from the vehicle. This is often referred to as curb-to-curb service. However, in some cases, enhanced service such as door-to-door service can be provided.

If a paratransit rider believes that he or she requires assistance beyond curb-to-curb service please try to notify ECT before your scheduled pickup time, if possible. ECT will attempt to accommodate the request as long as the driver is able to do so and as long as doing so does not constitute an undue burden or fundamentally alter the nature of the service. The decisions are made on a case-by-case basis. ECT's obligation does not extend to providing personal services, such a driver going beyond a doorway into a building to assist a passenger or a driver losing visual contact with the vehicle.

ECT drivers are not required to:

- Push a wheelchair down steps or unsafe steep inclines
- Go into a business to look for a passenger who is not outside at the scheduled pick-up time.
- Enter a passenger's home or garage
- Load or unload personal items
- Attend to any specific personal request of passengers, such as helping passengers get dressed, handling medications, personal keys, ATM, credit cards, checkbooks or cash
- Repair passenger wheelchairs or other mobility devices
- Purchase or pick up items, such as, prescriptions, alcohol, tobacco products, or groceries for passengers at any business locations including a drive-thru

### **PUBLIC HEARING / COMMENT**

Necessary modifications to service or fares will obviously affect passengers and a plan has been developed to appropriately notify the public in advance about such possible changes and obtain their feedback. Information about any major modifications or changes in services or fares and/or to the Paratransit Plan, along with notices about public hearing(s) and the public comment period will be sent to all current ECT Complementary Paratransit passengers. Similar notices will also be posted on all ECT fixed route buses, in paratransit vehicles, at the main administrative office, and at various locations around the City of East Chicago. Advertisements and press releases will also run in local media.

## **ECT Policy for Public Notification of and Comment on Proposed Transit Service Changes**

#### Purpose:

- To provide adequate notice of a proposed service change to the public and specifically to service users
- To provide an avenue for the public to comment on proposed service changes, and
- To provide an opportunity for the transit provider to consider the views and comments made by the public prior to the implementation of the change.

#### Definition of Change in Service or Fare:

This policy affects any temporary or permanent fare increase or major service reduction. It is to be implemented in the event of the proposed establishment of a fare or an increase in fares. It is to be used when a service reduction is proposed. This includes a reduction in service span, days of the week, or frequency of service. It includes a major service reduction, defined as the elimination of a route(s) or a substantial rerouting affecting approximately 1/4 of the service or more.

#### Public Notice of the Service Change:

- The public shall be notified by ECT of the proposed service change by posting of a notice at the business office of the operator for a period of at least 30 business days prior to the effective date of the change.
- ECT shall post the notice on the revenue vehicles for a period of at least 30 business days prior to the effective date of the change.
- ECT shall deliver to the Northwest Indiana Regional Planning Commission (NIRPC) a copy of the notice at least 30 business days prior to the effective date of the change.
- The notice shall contain information describing the proposed fare increase or service reduction, the service area affected, and the effective date of the change.
- ECT shall adhere to any applicable federal or state laws and regulations concerning notification.
- This notice may be combined with the notification of public hearing.
- Public notices shall be made available in alternate accessible formats to a person with a disability upon request.

#### Public Hearing:

- A public hearing shall be held at a time and place convenient for the public.
- The hearing shall be held in a place accessible to people with disabilities.
- The public hearing is to take place at least 14 business days prior to the effective date of the service change.
- A legal notice issued by ECT announcing the public hearing shall be published in the two largest newspapers of general circulation in each county in which the service change is to take place. Publication shall be between 21 and 30 business days of the effective date of the service change. The notice(s) shall appear no less than 14 business days prior to the date of the hearing.

- The notice of the public hearing shall also be posted at the business office of the operator and shall be posted on the revenue vehicles at least 7 business days prior to the date of the hearing.
- Notification of the public hearing, including the legal notice(s) and postings, shall indicate the time, date, place and purpose of the hearing. The service change shall be described in adequate detail. Included in such notifications shall be an offer to employ a sign language interpreter for a person who needs one upon request. Such notifications shall also state that written views and comments will be accepted at the ECT business office. An address, telephone number and name of the contact person for ECT and for NIRPC shall appear in the notification(s).
- A court reporter shall provide a written transcript of the hearing proceedings and shall deliver a transcript of the proceedings to the operator at least 7 business days prior to the effective date of the service change.
- All costs of the public hearing, including legal notices, court reporter, sign language interpreter, reasonable accommodations, etc., are the responsibility of ECT.

A person with a disability who requires a reasonable accommodation in order to participate in the public hearing or provide testimony may contact the ECT Transit Director to make the request.

### **REASONABLE ACCOMMODATIONS**

A reasonable accommodation is a modification or adjustment that makes it possible for a qualified individual with a disability to enjoy an equal opportunity in using ECT services. Reasonable accommodations are determined on a case-by-case basis by the ECT Director and are not required when the costs, service change, or policy change would constitute an undue hardship for ECT.

Passengers with disabilities can make a request for a reasonable accommodation by contacting the ECT Director at (219) 391-8465 or by email at [frosado@eastchicago.com](mailto:frosado@eastchicago.com). The Director will evaluate each request based on the provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and will seek technical assistance, as needed.

Inquiries and records relating to requests for reasonable accommodations are confidential.

### **REPLACEMENT OF VEHICLES IN SERVICE WHEN NEEDED**

All lifts or ramps can be operated manually if the automatic features fail. Drivers must deploy them manually when needed.

When a lift fails, ECT requires operators to report the malfunction immediately to the supervisor or mechanic; operator(s) are instructed that manual operation of the lift may be required at the time of malfunction. During this time a spare vehicle will be dispatched to the location within 30 minutes if needed. The malfunctioned lift will, if possible, be repaired within 7 working days. Special order or back order parts, electrical diagnosis or major engine breakdown may take longer.

## **SAFETY**

For safety purposes vehicle interior lights in vehicles must stay on at all times.

Standees in fixed route buses should hold onto handrails when the vehicle is in motion. Seated passengers should remain seated until the vehicle comes to a complete stop.

Passengers should not cross in front of vehicles when entering or leaving buses or paratransit vehicles.

## **SERVICE ANIMALS**

Service animals are permitted on ECT paratransit vans and fixed route buses. A service animal is an animal that is individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability.

Service animals should be under the control of the owner at all times. Service animals are subject to suspension for misconduct.

Pets are not permitted on ECT paratransit or fixed route, unless they are in a carry-on travel cage.

## **STOP ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Fixed route bus operators must announce major intersections, transfer points, and all requested stops.

## **TRAINING**

ECT will hold sensitivity training for its employees on a yearly basis. This training is in place to develop an appreciation of the challenges faced by persons with disabilities.

**COUNCIL on ACCESSIBLE TRANSPORTATION SERVICES (CATS)** Council on Accessible Transportation Services, a committee consisting of a group of people set apart from ECT with the sole purpose to oversee the ADA portion of ECT transit services. Any and all appeals pertaining to ADA will be directed to CATS for review. For additional information, please call the office at (219) 391-8465 (voice/relay). or visit our website at,

<http://www.eastchicago.com/> [See Appendix G]

## **HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION**

**1005 E. Chicago Ave.**

**East Chicago, In. 46312**

**Phone: (219) 391-8477 (voice/relay)**

## **COMPLEMENTARY PARATRANSIT ELIGIBILITY, CERTIFICATION, SCHEDULING**

### **TYPES OF ELIGIBILITY**

Eligibility to use ECT Complementary Paratransit falls into 2 categories:

- 1) Full (Permanent) Eligibility** - Allows the customer to ride within the service area  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile corridor without additional restrictions.
  
- 2) Temporary Eligibility**- Allows the customer to ride within the service area  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile corridor without additional restrictions for a temporary span of time. The expiration date for each customer's eligibility will be explained as he or she is certified. Recertification is required at the end of the designated eligibility term.

### **WHO IS ELIGIBLE?**

ECT Complementary Paratransit eligibility is based on an individual's functional ability rather than a specific medical diagnosis. The ADA identifies the conditions below for which individuals are eligible for complementary paratransit services.

- 1) "Any individual with a disability who is unable, as a result of a physical or mental impairment (including a vision impairment), and without the assistance of another individual (except the operator of a wheelchair lift or other boarding assistance device), to board, ride, or disembark from any vehicle on the system which is readily accessible to and usable by individuals with disabilities.
  
- 2) "Any individual with a disability who has a specific impairment related condition which prevents such individual from traveling to a boarding location or from a disembarking location on such system." Conditions, such as weather, distance and terrain do not automatically confer eligibility. However, if travel to and from a boarding location is impossible when combined with a specific impairment related condition, complementary paratransit services shall be provided."

### **VISITOR ELIGIBILITY**

Out-of-town visitors who are paratransit certified in another transit district are eligible to use ECT Complementary Paratransit services subject to the following:

1. Visitors must contact ECT at least 2 weeks before service is required.
2. Visitors will need to provide proof of their paratransit eligibility in the other transit district, their place of residence, and information regarding their disability prior to scheduling for ECT Complementary Paratransit services.
3. The visitor may use ECT service for up to 21 days a year. If the visitor needs further service, he or she must officially enroll with ECT by completing a paratransit eligibility application.

## **ECT PARATRANSIT CERTIFICATION**

To determine if you are eligible for Complementary Paratransit service, you call ECT at (219) 391-8465 (voice/relay) and request an application to be mailed to you. Please let our staff know if you would like an alternate accessible format, such as cassette tape, large print, e-mail, Braille, or CD. You may also print an application from our website at <http://www.eastchicago.com/page10/page90/page92/index.html>

After receiving your application, it can take up to approximately 21 working days to process at which time you will be officially notified of your eligibility status. If ECT has not made a determination of eligibility by the 21<sup>st</sup> working day, the applicant shall be treated as eligible and provided service until a final decision is made. Customers are responsible for providing ECT with updated contact information, including telephone number and address so that ECT can obtain additional information as needed.

Eligible applicants will be certified either for temporary or permanent certification. The eligibility period will depend on the applicant's specific functional disability and its duration.

ECT will notify applicants receiving temporary eligibility of the need to reapply for certification requirement 30 days prior to the expiration of their eligibility period if they still need paratransit services. If the person fails to return the recertification application, the eligibility for ECT Complementary Paratransit services will be terminated. [See Appendix B]

For independent travel, riders must be at least 14 years old. Riders 13 years old and younger are required to have supervision.

## **ELIGIBILITY APPEALS**

The initial decision to deny an ECT Complementary Paratransit application is made by the Transit Director. The official notification will give specific reasons related to eligibility criteria explaining why the denial decision was made.

Persons who are denied eligibility for ECT Complementary Paratransit may appeal the initial eligibility determination within 15 business days of the decision by providing a written request stating the following: Name, address, phone number, what the decision was, and why you are appealing the determination. You can mail this appeal to: ECT, 5400 Cline Ave, East Chicago, IN 46312.

The appeal will be reviewed by the ECT Director and CATS for the final determination.

Applicants who have been denied eligibility for permanent paratransit service will not be provided with paratransit service during the appeal process. Applicants who applied for permanent eligibility but were granted only temporary eligibility will be provided with paratransit service during the appeal process.

## **SCHEDULING ECT PARATRANSIT RIDES**

Trips can be scheduled only for certified paratransit riders only. There is no priority given for ECT Complementary Paratransit rides. All rides, regardless of destination or purpose, are scheduled in the same way on a **FIRST COME, FIRST SERVED BASIS**. [See Appendix C]

ECT encourages passengers to make reservations at least 24 hours in advance but reservations can be made the day before your appointment during business hours. To schedule a trip, call ECT at (219) 391-8465 (voice/relay) during normal business hours, Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

You may also make a reservation up to two weeks in advance of your appointment. We do our best to accommodate same-day reservations or changes but ADA regulations do not require us to do so.

When the administrative office is closed voice mail is available for leaving a message requesting a reservation. A Supervisor is on the premises to retrieve any paratransit messages left by voice mail Monday - Friday between 5:00 a.m. and 8:44 p.m. and Saturdays between 8:30 a.m. and 4:31 p.m. Reservations made by voice mail on Saturdays after 5 p.m. or on Sundays or holidays will be answered on the next scheduled business day. **If you leave a voice mail reservation on the answering machine, be sure to speak clearly and provide your complete information: name, paratransit certification number, date and time you wish to schedule the ride, and a description of your requested pickup and dropoff locations. If the message does not include all the required information your trip may not be scheduled.**

If you make a voice mail reservation, please call the office on the following scheduled business day after 5:30 a.m. at which time you can speak to a supervisor to confirm your reservation.

ECT will not be liable for any reservations lost in voice mail due to events outside its control such as a power outage, electrical storms, etc.

Scheduling is made on a **FIRST COME, FIRST SERVED BASIS**. Voice mail scheduling will be made by the date and time of calls.

### **When scheduling your trip, be ready to provide the following information:**

- Your name.
- The date of your trip.
- Your pick-up address (including building/ business name, specific pick-up information, i.e. alley door, side doors).
- The street address of your destination (including business name or specific drop-off information).
- The time you would like to be picked up OR the time you need to reach your destination.
- The time you would like to be picked up from your destination for the return trip.
- If a Personal Care Attendant (PCA) will be traveling with you.
- If a guest other than your PCA will be traveling with you, including children

If you are scheduling a trip after 5:00 p.m. on a weekday or on the weekend via the voice mail, it is essential that you leave all of the required information listed above. The trip cannot be scheduled without the complete details regarding the trip. If the dispatcher does not have all of this information, he or she will attempt to contact you.

It is our goal to provide all requested trips. However, we cannot guarantee that you will receive your first choice of times. When requesting a time, the staff may negotiate the time of the pick-up within one hour of your initial request. For example, if you are requesting a trip at 9:00 a.m., you may be asked to accept a trip between 8:00 a.m. and 10:00 a.m.

### **SUGGESTIONS FOR SCHEDULING**

Scheduling is done in 20 minute intervals, with appointments on the hour, at 20 minutes after the hour, and 40 minutes after the hour. When scheduling your ride, allow adequate time to reach your destination, remember to account for the pick-up and drop-off of other passengers, traffic conditions, and weather delays. Make sure that you allow plenty of time to complete your appointment so that you will be ready to meet the ECT Complementary Paratransit van at your scheduled return pick-up time. The paratransit van may not be able to return for you if you underestimate or overestimate your requested return pick-up time. If you miss the return trip, the driver calls the office to report this and if you call at a later time for pick up, this is treated as a Will-Call ride, meaning that ECT will schedule your pickup when time permits.

Please check with the destination (store, doctor's office, business) that you are going to in order to make sure that they are open at the correct hours so you do not have to wait for your ride outside before or after their business hours.

At the time you make your reservation if you are not sure what time you will be ready for your return trip, you may request a Will-Call trip for the return. This means you would call the ECT office to make arrangements for your pickup when you are ready. The pickup will be treated as "same day scheduling" and will be scheduled when time permits.

### **WHEN DO YOU NEED TO BE READY?**

The van may arrive from 20 minutes ahead of your scheduled pickup time to 20 minutes after the scheduled pick-up time. You should be ready to board the van any time within that 40-minute window.

**Example:** You schedule a ride for 10:20 a.m. The operator may pick you up any time between 10:00 a.m. and 10:40 a.m. You will be charged with a No-Show if you do not board the van within 5 minutes of your scheduled pick up time. If the van arrives early, the 5-minute wait time will not begin until your scheduled pick-up time. If the van arrives late, the 5-minute wait time will begin upon arrival of the van.

If a paratransit van will be more than 20 minutes early or late for a scheduled pick up time, ECT will make every effort to contact you so that you are aware of the change.

### **COMPANIONS / GUEST AND PERSONAL CARE ATTENDANTS (PCA)**

A paratransit certified rider is entitled to have a Personal Care Attendant (PCA) ride with him or her on the paratransit vehicle, if needed. In addition, the eligible rider is entitled to ride with one companion on the paratransit vehicle. ECT also allows a guest to ride with the paratransit passenger if space on the vehicle permits.

### **Personal Care Attendant**

If a paratransit passenger requires a PCA, one may accompany him or her. The passenger must reserve a space on the van for the PCA when making the reservation. If a passenger did not require a PCA when he or she originally applied to ECT and now does require a PCA, the passenger should contact the ECT office to provide this updated information.

### **Companion**

A paratransit passenger may also be accompanied by a companion. In order to be considered a companion, the person accompanying the eligible individual must be traveling to/from the same origin and destination. A family member or friend accompanying a certified paratransit rider will be regarded as a companion and not as a PCA, unless the family member or friend is acting in the capacity of a PCA. When making a reservation, the passenger should notify ECT that he or she is bringing a companion.

### **Guest**

A guest may also accompany a passenger on a paratransit ride. Due to limited space, when scheduling the trip, the passenger must state if he or she wishes to bring a guest. Guests are permitted on a space available basis. There may not always be space to include a guest on the trip because the paratransit vehicle may be transporting other passengers and possibly their PCAs and companions. Bringing more than one guest is not permitted.

Companions and guests are expected to follow all of the rules and regulations for riding ECT. ECT reserves the right to suspend or revoke the riding privileges of any passenger, companion, guest or PCA for misconduct.

ECT does not provide Personal Care Attendants.

### **NO-SHOW AND TRIP CANCELLATION POLICY**

Scheduling a ride and then failing to use the service without proper cancellation makes scheduling difficult for other customers and affects ECT's ability to meet its paratransit schedule.

Cancellations must be phoned in to the ECT office at least 1 hour in advance of a scheduled trip. If a rider fails to cancel a scheduled appointment or fails to cancel at least 1 hour in advance, he or she will be charged with a No-Show.

A No-Show will be recorded for a passenger when the following situations occur:

- Not showing up for a scheduled ride.
- Not boarding the van within 5 minutes after the scheduled pick-up time if the van has arrived.

- Failing to cancel a ride 1 hour or more before a scheduled trip.
- Choosing not to ride once the van arrives at the scheduled pick-up time.

If you have scheduled more than 1 trip during the day and are unable to complete any of them you must call to cancel them otherwise, the operator will go to your next scheduled location. If you are not present for your remaining rides, you will be charged additional No-Shows.

Within 5 business days of a No-Show, ECT staff will send an official notice to the passenger. The notice will state the dates and times you were either late, cancelled upon the drivers' arrival to your origin, called to cancel less than one hour prior to pickup, or just failed to contact the office if you were cancelling your ride.

ECT staff will officially notify, within 5 business days, a passenger who misses 3 scheduled trips in a 1 month period due to No-Shows to let the passenger know that he or she is at that time suspended for 1 week during which time the rider will not be able to use the paratransit service..

No-Shows will not be imposed for circumstances beyond a rider's control such as:

- A sudden personal emergency
- Sudden or worsening illness
- Your job cancels or changes your work schedule on very short notice.
- Late arrival of the ECT paratransit vehicle (more than 20 minutes late)

Passengers should contact ECT staff to explain these circumstances if they occur.

## **SUSPENSION OF SERVICE**

If you misuse ECT transit service, this may result in suspension of your transit service. The following are examples of misusing ECT transit service:

### **1. Suspension for obtaining or using ECT paratransit service under false information, including:**

- The paratransit customer deliberately makes false or misleading statements on the eligibility application; or
- Allowing any other individuals, such as friends, family members, to ride using the paratransit-certified customer's eligibility and name.

Customers determined to have allowed non-eligible individuals to use their name to ride ECT paratransit will be suspended for the following periods:

- 1<sup>st</sup> occurrence – 1 month suspension.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> occurrence – 6 months suspension.
- 3<sup>rd</sup> occurrence – 1 year suspension, at the end of which time the passenger must reapply for paratransit eligibility.

### **2. Suspension for No Shows.**

ECT paratransit customers who fail to show up for their scheduled pick-up will be charged with a No Show. If you are charged with repeated No Shows, you will be suspended.

Suspensions will not be imposed for circumstances beyond your control. Examples of situations not within your control are:

- A sudden personal emergency
- Sudden or worsening illness
- Your job cancels or changes your work schedule on very short notice.
- Late arrival of the ECT paratransit vehicle (more than 20 minutes late)

Persons who accumulate 3 No Shows within a 30-day period will have their riding privileges suspended for the time period listed below:

- 3 No Shows – 1 week suspension
- 6 No Shows – 2 week suspension
- 9 No Shows – 3 week suspension
- 12 No Shows – 4 week suspension

Suspension is only imposed for a true pattern or practice of missing scheduled trips.

### **3. Suspension for abusive or disruptive behavior.**

For the safety and comfort of all ECT paratransit customers and operators, ECT has established this policy to address incidents of disruptive or abusive behavior by customers. Disruptive and abusive behavior includes, but is not limited to the following:

- **Hazardous conduct:** Any act that endangers the safety or creates the potential for physical harm to the operator, other passengers or the general public.
- **Abusive conduct:** Any offensive act that invades the “personal space” of others or touching another person in a rude, insolent or angry manner. Abusive conduct also includes the verbal abuse of operators, ECT paratransit staff, and/or other passengers that is not a direct result of the customer’s disability.
- **Unlawful harassment:** Any unwelcome verbal, non- verbal, or physical behavior having discriminatory connotations. This includes, but is not limited to harassment on the basis of race, sex, color, ancestry, national origin, religion, disability, age, sexual orientation, and marital status.
- **Unauthorized use or damage of vehicle or equipment:** Any instance where a customer operates or attempts to operate the vehicle and/or equipment. Any instance where a customer willfully or intentionally defaces or damages an ECT vehicle.
- **Unintentional misconduct:** Any act that would qualify as a hazardous conduct, but is the direct and immediate consequence of a customer’s disability.
- **Voluntarily and repeatedly violating riding rules, including:** Smoking, eating and drinking (unless authorized as a reasonable accommodation), refusing to remain seated while the vehicle is in motion, and are causing unnecessary delays for the operator and other passengers.

For any offense that is determined to be minor, a written warning, or notification will be issued to the customer. If the offenses continue, the customer will be suspended.

Customers found to have been disruptive or abusive and those that have previously received a written warning will be suspended for the following periods:

- 1<sup>st</sup> occurrence – 1-month suspension.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> occurrence – 6-month suspension.
- 3<sup>rd</sup> occurrence – 1 year suspension, at the end of which time the passenger must reapply for paratransit eligibility.

CATS and the Transit Director are responsible for determining the severity of each offense.

#### **4. Suspension appeals**

CATS and the Transit Director will investigate all incidents subject to a suspension. The customer will receive official notice of any suspension of service. The notification will explain the reason(s) for the suspension along with written instructions for appealing the suspension. Suspensions will not be imposed until the customer has had the opportunity to complete the appeals process. The customer must adhere to the time limits noted in the suspension appeals process. Failure to appeal a suspension within the time limits shall result in implementation of the suspension.

ECT reserves the right to impose an immediate suspension for any offense that is found to pose a serious physical threat to the operator, other passengers, or the general public. **There are NO appeals under these circumstances.**

#### **APPEALS PROCESS**

Appeals must be initiated within 48 hrs from the time service is discontinued. They must be initiated by the paratransit rider or by another person authorized to act on behalf of the customer. The appeal must be in writing of on an ECT appeal form. If a rider needs assistance with preparing an appeal or completing the ECT appeal form, he or she may contact ECT. Appeals must document why the customer feels the cancellation of service is inappropriate. The customer will have the opportunity to be heard in person or may submit his or her arguments in writing or an accessible format.

All appeals (Late Cancellation/No Show/ Incident) must be mailed or presented in person to:

**East Chicago Transit  
Attention: Transit Director / Appeals Process  
5400 Cline Ave.  
East Chicago, IN 46312**

CATS and the Transit Director will review the appeal and issue a response within 21 business days of receipt of the appeal.

## **FIXED ROUTE**

### **LEARNING TO USE FIXED ROUTES**

Many East Chicago residents with disabilities can use the fixed route service because of the following accessible features:

- All ECT buses are equipped with wheelchair lifts / ramps and a kneeling feature
- Bus operators announce major intersections, transfer points, and all requested stops
- ECT vehicles are equipped with a wheelchair securement system
- ECT operator shall assist individuals with the use of these features (available upon request)

There are also many advantages to using ECT fixed route system over using ECT paratransit service. These include:

- You do not have to call in advance for a ride
- You can change your travel plans at the last minute
- The bus runs on a regular schedule
- The buses go to many places in the community that are shown on the route map
- All buses are accessible

There are many advantages to using ECT fixed route system over using a personal car for transportation. These include:

- No parking problems or vehicle break-ins
- Lower automotive costs
- Sit back and relax
- No traveling alone
- Explore city safely
- Reduce air pollution

Customers can call our office to assist with bus schedules and trip planning.

For more information about ECT fixed route schedules, call (219) 391-8465 (voice/relay) , or visit our website: [Bus Routes click here](#)

## VEHICLE MAINTENANCE

### **Preventive Maintenance for All ECT Passenger Vehicles**

Preventive maintenance is based on recommended procedures as documented by the manufacturers. Supervisors will provide the ECT maintenance department with the necessary guidance to service the existing ECT fleet and to prolong their useful life. Preventive maintenance is not intended to be static and may be revised as needed to reflect improved maintenance practices and procedures as they come about.

This work is to be conducted by ECT mechanics during scheduled working hours. Primary emphasis is on preparing the fleet for daily scheduled revenue service.

The preventive maintenance guidelines recommended by the manufacturer have been formatted in an easily understandable table that explains what maintenance needs to be performed at each recommended maintenance interval. Following the 42,000 mile preventive maintenance check-up for buses, all items recommended for inspection/service or repairs by the manufacturer will be put through the preventive maintenance program every 6,000 miles for buses. All other vehicles recommended for inspection/service or repairs will also follow the manufacturer preventive maintenance program (as stated by the manufacturer).

Wheelchair lift preventive maintenance is based on recommended procedures as documented by the manufacturers. There are 6 cycles in which our lifts are maintained

- Pre-trip inspection (daily)
- Post trip inspection (daily)
- During preventive maintenance of vehicle
- 4 week cycle maintenance
- 3 month cycle maintenance
- 1 year cycle maintenance

Completed preventive maintenance work will be filed and sent to NIRPC every month via e-mail, along with current vehicle mileage and any other maintenance work performed.

When a lift fails, ECT requires operators to report the malfunction immediately to the supervisor or mechanic; operator(s) are instructed that manual operation of the lift may be required at the time of malfunction. During this time a spare vehicle will be dispatched to the location within 30 minutes if needed. The malfunctioned lift will, if possible, be repaired within 7 working days. Special order or back order parts, electrical diagnosis or major engine breakdown may take longer. **See Appendix H**

## QUICK REFERENCE INFORMATION

### **Mailing Address**

East Chicago Transit  
5400 Cline Ave  
East Chicago, IN 46312

### **General ECT Information**

Phone: (219) 391-8465 (voice and relay)  
Fax: (219) 391-8473  
Website: [www.eastchicago.com/departments/bus\\_transit/](http://www.eastchicago.com/departments/bus_transit/)  
Email address: [frosado@eastchicago.com](mailto:frosado@eastchicago.com)

### **Paratransit Reservations/Cancellations**

Phone (219) 391-8465 (voice and relay)

### **Comments/Complaints**

Phone: (219) 391-8465 (voice and relay)  
Email: [frosado@eastchicago.com](mailto:frosado@eastchicago.com)  
Website link: <http://www.eastchicago.com/>

### **To request a document in an accessible / alternate format**

Phone: (219) 391-8465 (voice/relay)  
Email address: [frosado@eastchicago.com](mailto:frosado@eastchicago.com)

**For life-threatening emergencies, always call 911.**