

028.000 Complementary Paratransit Services

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires public transit agencies that provide fixed-route service to provide “complementary paratransit” services to people with disabilities who cannot use the fixed-route bus or rail service because of a disability. Complementary paratransit services provide curb-to-curb service to such persons within 3/4 of a mile of a bus route within the transit agency’s service area, at the same hours and days, for no more than twice the regular fixed route fare. The following describes the requirements of the RBA’s Complementary Paratransit Services.

028.010 General Requirements

The provisions in this section are a general overview of the system service requirements and all other provisions and sections of this manual apply.

- All passengers that use a lift may enter the platform either backwards or forwards, according to personal preference.
- The RBA Service Providers may not refuse to provide services because an individual’s disability results in an appearance or involuntary behavior that may offend, annoy, or inconvenience employees or other persons. An individual with a disability who engages in violent, seriously disruptive or illegal conduct may be refused service on these grounds, and the RBA Service Provider may choose to provide service under the specified condition that a Personal Care Attendant accompany the individual to mitigate the problem.
- Adequate time is provided to allow individuals with disabilities to complete boarding or disembarking from the vehicle.
- To the extent that they can be accommodated in the areas of the passenger compartment provided for passengers’ personal effects, wheelchairs or other mobility aids and assistive devices used by individuals with disabilities, or components of such devices, shall be permitted in the passenger compartment. When the vehicle is at rest, the driver shall assist individuals with disabilities with the stowage and retrieval of mobility aides, assistive devices, or other items that cannot be accommodated in the passenger compartment of the vehicle.
- The RBA Service Provider shall permit service animals to accompany individuals with disabilities on vehicles. Service animals are defined as animals that are specifically trained to assist individuals with disabilities. Service animals are working animals that perform various tasks, not pets, but trained to guide, alert, or physically assist in movement of the disabled individual. Service animals can be denied service if they exhibit bad or threatening behavior that could pose as a risk to the safety of other passengers or the driver. Repeated documentation of violent or disruptive acts will be reasonable cause to deny future service to noted passenger(s) and their respective service animal(s).
- The RBA Service Provider shall not prohibit an individual with a disability from traveling with a respirator or portable oxygen supply, consistent with the applicable Department of Transportation rules on the transportation of hazardous materials.
- The RBA Complementary Paratransit Service is a curb-to-curb service not door-to-door service. Drivers will not be required to assist you from your door to the vehicle or from the curbside to your door. However, if reasonable considerations can be accommodated please ask for additional help at the time of scheduling a ride.
- If a passenger requests a reasonable accommodation under the ADA guidelines, provide the accommodation and contact the Planning and Transit Director to document the request. All reasonable

requests for accommodation under ADA guidelines shall pre-empt any other published rule or policy. Drivers shall be provided with a list of routine reasonable requests for accommodation.

- All RBA public information shall always be available in alternate formats upon request. Types of alternate formats include Spanish, Braille, Large Print Type, cassette tape, or electronic (pdf and Microsoft Word). The RBA has providers for all types of alternate formats however availability varies with the type of format. The RBA shall have a supply of all RBA public information in the above types of alternate format available at all times. In the event the RBA's supply is depleted, such supply will be replaced within fifteen (15) days.

028.020 **Hours of Service and Service Area**

The hours of service for this program are as follows:

Monday – Friday **5:30 A.M. – 9:00 P.M. (earliest pick-up to latest drop-off)**

Saturday **6:00 A.M. – 9:15 P.M. (earliest pick-up to latest drop-off)**

No Sunday or major holiday service will be provided.

The service area for this program is the same as that which is provided by the Regional Bus Authority buses, and includes all areas ¾ of a mile beyond the current fixed-route bus service area. Service will not be provided beyond the boundaries of the following areas:

Monday – Saturday – Communities Served

- **All of Hammond and Munster**
- **Whiting** southwest of Dickey Rd.
- **East Chicago** from White Oak to McCook Street.
- **Gary** between Cline Avenue and Lee Street.
- **Highland** 4th Street to Munster line.
- **Dyer** Main Street to 213th Street
- **Chicago, IL** E. 100th Street to E. 114th Street and S. Burley Avenue to State Line.
- **Calumet City, IL** State Street to 171st Street and Wentworth to State Line.

ALL TRIPS MUST BEGIN AND END WITHIN THE BOUNDARIES INDICATED ABOVE.

The RBA, or its contractor, shall have a designated person available during normal hours of operation (as well as one hour after operations are completed) to promptly handle and investigate all- telephone inquiries and/or complaints regarding complementary paratransit service that require immediate action. The appropriate telephone number for such inquiries/complaints shall be provided on the rider's certification card. Circumstances requiring immediate action may include, but are not limited to, inquiries about the whereabouts of a vehicle that is at least fifteen (15) minutes late, riders that are stranded without transportation, instances where the driver is incapacitated or other instances where the rider's safety might be affected. Such complaints will be given immediate attention and investigation. Such complaints will be recorded in writing and written responses will be completed in an expeditious manner.

SERVICE BOUNDARY MAPS ARE IN APPENDIX C AND
AVAILABLE ON THE RBA WEBSITE AT RBA-NWI.ORG.

028.030 **Complementary Paratransit Eligibility**

028.031 Certification Eligibility Criteria

- a. The following categories of persons are eligible for complementary paratransit services.

Persons Who Cannot Navigate the System.

This applies to applicants who, even with training, cannot board, ride, navigate, or disembark from fixed route bus services without the assistance of another individual (other than the operator of a wheelchair lift or other boarding assistance device). (Examples would be some individuals with cognitive or mental disabilities, or a blind individual who has had no mobility training in order to navigate the route to their destination.)

Persons Who Have Accessibility Issues.

This applies to applicants who can use or learn to use an accessible public transit system, but the system is not fully accessible to them. This may be due to physical barriers along the route, or if the individual's wheelchair cannot be accommodated on a bus lift or tie-down on the fixed route's vehicles. (Examples: There are no sidewalks, broken sidewalks or no curb cuts along the route and the individual is unable to get to the bus stop; the bus stop is not accessible and it is unsafe for the individual to wait in open weather.)

Persons Who Have Specific Limitations.

This applies to applicants who have specific disabilities that prevent them from getting to or from a bus stop other than architectural barriers, which are covered by item b above. (Examples: An individual who uses a wheelchair is able to negotiate a trip to the bus stop up a moderately-sloped hill on a summer day, but cannot do so during the winter with unplowed snow. Or an individual who is unable to negotiate a trip to the bus stop in extreme temperatures. In such cases, the interaction between the individuals' specific impairment-related condition and the environmental barriers renders the individual eligible for complementary paratransit.)

- b. Complementary Eligibility Categories.

The RBA easygo Lake Transit System uses three categories of eligibility.

Fully Eligible - Allows the customer to ride within our service area without any additional restrictions. The disability or health condition always prevents the applicant from using fixed route buses.

Temporary Eligibility - Allows the customer to ride within our service area without additional restrictions for a limited time span. The health condition or disability temporarily prevents the applicant from using the fixed route buses.

Conditional Eligibility - Allows the customer to ride within our service area under certain conditions based on their abilities. The applicant is able to use the fixed route buses for some of his/her trips when his/her disability, health conditions, or environmental barriers prevent the use of fixed route buses.

028.032 Certification Application Process

In order to be approved to participate in this program, you the applicant must complete both

Parts A & B of the Application for Paratransit Certification in Appendix A of this Manual and return it to the office address listed. Application for Paratransit Certification forms that are not complete will not be accepted for review by the RBA ADA Paratransit Coordinator. NOTE: If another paratransit provider has certified you, please complete the application as indicated and submit documentation along with your application. Your Application for Paratransit Certification form must be completed in full, and must include the name of a professional familiar with your functional abilities. If you do not indicate the name and address of such a professional, your application will not be approved.

There are no income guidelines associated with this program. Additionally, while there is no requirement that you reside within the service area boundaries, all trips must begin and end within the RBA's service area. If you do not reside in the service area but are certified to use the RBA's complementary paratransit services, you must make your own way into the service area in order to take advantage of these services.

The completed Application for Paratransit Certification form will be processed within 21 days of the receipt.

The RBA ADA Paratransit Coordinator will review your application and make a determination as to whether an In-Person functional assessment is required and will contact you within the 21 day processing period to perform an interview. Applications requiring verification by your designated professional will be closely monitored to comply with the processing deadlines. In the event the Regional Bus Authority does not process your application within 21 days from the date of your application, you will automatically be presumed eligible and issued a temporary certification card on the 21st day. In the event the designated professional verification does not support the need for complementary paratransit services indicated on your application, you will be notified in writing of such determination, and your certification to the program will be suspended. You may, at this time, file an appeal as described below, and provide any pertinent information you feel will be appropriate to support your need for complementary paratransit services.

You will be notified in writing of your acceptance or denial to the program. In the event you are denied, you shall be given reasons for such denial and the ability to appeal the denial pursuant to Appendix B of this Manual.

Upon notification of acceptance to the program, you will receive a certification card, which will be valid for the period indicated on the card. You may be required to be re-certified on a yearly basis.

Your certification card will indicate the name and phone number of the RBA service providers, which you must contact to schedule your trips. Information regarding trip scheduling will be provided to you with your certification card.

028.033 Certification Appeal Process

When the Paratransit Coordinator has denied an applicant to participate in the RBA easygo Lake Transit Service Complementary Paratransit Program and the applicant wishes to appeal, whether verbally, in writing, by mail, or by email, the appeal must be made no later than sixty (60) days after receipt of written notification of denial. If an applicant cannot write or has difficulty filing an appeal he or she can contact the Regional Bus Authority, Deputy Manager and/or Planning and Transit Director at (219) 853-6513 within the sixty (60) days and file the appeal by phone call. Appeals taken over the phone shall be documented on the appropriate Appeal Form in Appendix B of this Manual and a copy will be provided to the applicant. Additionally, applicants have the right to use an advocate to assist them in filing an appeal.

All appeals of denials of eligibility will follow the same procedures as are applicable to appeals of complaint decisions as set forth in Section 020.000, Complaint Appeal Process.

028.040 Reservations and Scheduling

A Complementary Paratransit Certification Card will be issued to all approved paratransit users. This card will contain the phone number of the RBA service provider for scheduling rides. Please use the card when making reservations.

Requests for trips will be accepted 365 days per year, and you may make your reservations 14 days in advance of the trip date. Subscriptions Services also known as Standing Order Trips are permissible, please review definition and requirements at the end of this section. You should strive to give as much advance trip notice as possible; however, you are only required to call the service provider one day in advance of the trip date. Your pick up time shall not be more than one hour earlier or later than the requested pick up time. Paratransit rides are on a first-come, first serve basis regardless of the trip purpose.

To request a trip, call the RBA Provider; Triple "A" Express at (219) 972-3233 during its hours of business operation (currently between the hours of 5:30 a.m. and 7:00 p.m. seven days (7) a week). Reasonable efforts will be made to schedule trips for requests between 7:00 p.m. and 9:00 p.m. for next day service. Triple "A" Express shall ascertain the type of vehicle required for transport at the time the reservation is made. When requesting a trip, be ready to provide the following information:

- a. Name
- b. Certification Number
- c. The address of the pickup point
- d. The address of the drop off point
- e. The date of your trip
- f. The time you would like to be picked up
- g. Whether you will be traveling with a companion
- h. Whether you will be traveling with a personal care attendant

- I. Whether you will be traveling in a lift equipped van
- J. Whether you will be traveling in a cab

PARTICIPANTS WILL BE REQUIRED TO SHOW THEIR CERTIFICATION CARD TO THE DRIVER, ALONG WITH ONE ADDITIONAL FORM OF IDENTIFICATION UPON BOARDING THE VEHICLE.

Participants are advised to contact the service provider in the event they must cancel a trip. Sanctions may be imposed on you for a pattern of missed trips. Missed trips due to operator error or severe inclement weather will not be charged against you. Please consult the sanction policy included with this information.

PLEASE DO NOT CONTACT THE RBA OFFICE FOR TRIP SCHEDULING, AS WE WILL BE UNABLE TO SCHEDULE YOUR TRIP. PLEASE CONTACT THE SERVICE PROVIDER LISTED IN THIS INFORMATION FOR YOUR TRIPS SCHEDULING.

There are no limits on the number of trips you can take. There are no limitations on the distance of the trip, or restrictions based on the purpose of your trip. However, this program will only provide you with trips within the RBA easygo Lake Transit System service boundaries.

PICK-UP WINDOW, UNTIMELY TRIPS, MISSED TRIPS, AND TRIP DENIALS

The RBA's complementary paratransit system has a Pick-Up Window within which the paratransit vehicle is to arrive at the pick-up address. The Pick-Up Window is between fifteen (15) minutes before to fifteen (15) minutes after the scheduled pick-up time. Upon arrival at the pick-up address, the rider will be called.

A Missed Trip occurs when the paratransit vehicle arrives more than fifteen (15) minutes before the scheduled pick-up time (and the driver refuses to wait to within the fifteen (15) minute Pick-Up Window), or the paratransit vehicle arrives more than fifteen (15) minutes after the scheduled pick-up time.

A Trip Denial occurs when the pick-up time cannot be scheduled within a Two-Hour Window beginning one hour before to one hour after the requested pick-up time.

See Section 023.100, Sanctions Policy for the rules regarding sanctions applicable to service providers related to untimely trips, missed trips, and trip denials, including the possibility of rider compensation for these problems.

SUBSCRIPTION SERVICES (Standing Order Trip)

If you wish to schedule repeat Subscription Service (Standing Order Trip) to the same place (work, school, doctor, church, etc.), from the same place, on the same days of the week, at least once bi-monthly, you may schedule standing order trips. Standing order trips are ongoing and/or regularly scheduled trips. Please note that subscription services are limited to 50% of the capacity of the complementary paratransit services. In the event the RBA's complementary paratransit system reaches this capacity for subscription services, additional requests will be placed on a waiting list.

All standing order trips are subject to Sanctions Policies of this Manual and must be cancelled accordingly. All Subscription Services and standing order trips for the holidays that easygo Lake Transit does not operate will be automatically cancelled. If you are interested in scheduling a standing order, contact the easygo Lake Transit Service Provider, Triple A Express at (219) 972-3233 to make trip arrangements.

028.050 Fares and Passes

You will be required to pay, in cash or by voucher, to the driver, prior to leaving for your destination, two dollars and fifty cents (\$2.50) per one-way trip. UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES SHOULD YOU PAY THE DRIVER

A FARE IN EXCESS OF TWO DOLLARS AND FIFTY CENTS (\$2.50) FOR A ONE-WAY TRIP WITHIN THE RBA SERVICE TERRITORY. This fare is based upon one origin and one destination per trip.

All children under the age of six (6) and Personal Care Attendants shall be given free rides provided they are attended by the Fare paying rider. Please see the next section for more information on companions and personal care attendants.

If you choose to have the driver take you to more than one destination, you will be charged Two Dollars and Fifty Cents (\$2.50) for each additional destination.

Drivers can make cash change for American currency up to a twenty (\$20.00) dollar bill.

028.060 Companions & Personal Care Attendants

Riders have the right to have one companion travel with them. More than one companion is permissible provided that space is available at the time of making a trip reservation. Your companion(s) will be charged the same fare as you are charged for the trip. Companions will only be picked up and let off at the same location as you.

A Personal Care Attendant (PCA) may be approved to assist you when traveling; the Personal Care Attendant will ride along with you free of charge and does not count as your "companion". Your certification card will indicate whether you have been approved for a Personal Care Attendant. Your Personal Care Attendant will only be picked up and let off at the same locations as you.

As listed in the scheduling section, you must indicate at the time of scheduling whether you have a Personal Care Attendant and/or companion(s) that will be riding with you.

If your certification card does not indicate that you have been approved for a Personal Care Attendant, the person you take with you will be treated as a companion, and charged the same fare as you are charged.

028.070 Wheelchair Securement Policy

- All common wheelchairs and their users shall be transported in the contractor's vehicles. The contractor is not required to permit wheelchairs to ride in places other than designated securement locations on vehicles. (A "common wheelchair" is defined as mobility aid belonging to any class of three or four-wheeled devices, usable indoors, designed for and used by individuals with mobility impairments, whether operated manually or powered. A "common wheelchair" does not exceed 30 inches in width and 48 inches in length measured two inches above the ground, and does not weigh more than 600 pounds when occupied. This definition includes power wheelchairs and three-wheeled scooters.)
- All RBA vehicles both owned and leased shall provide a securement system to ensure that the wheelchair remains within the securement area. Drivers must assist any person requesting assistance with securement systems, ramps and lifts. If it is necessary for the personnel to leave their seats to provide assistance, they shall do so.
- A rider may be required to permit his/her wheelchair to be secured, however the contractor cannot deny transportation to a wheelchair or its user on the grounds that the device cannot be secured satisfactorily by the vehicle's securement system. Federal regulations allow service to be denied for safety reasons, however reasonable accommodations can be requested and provided by the driver.

- A Driver may recommend to a wheelchair user that the individual transfer to a vehicle seat. The Driver cannot demand the individual transfer, nor can the driver require the use of seat belts unless all passengers are required to use seat belts.
- The contractor shall ensure that adequate time is provided to allow individuals with disabilities to complete boarding and disembarking from the vehicle.

028.080 Wheelchair Lift Equipment Failure Policy

The following provisions are primarily for passenger safety and are written for the use for the use of the RBA Service Provider(s).

- The driver is responsible for checking the lift or ramp and other accessibility features before the start of their service to determine if the accessibility features are operating properly. No paratransit vehicle shall be used in the operation of revenue service with an inoperable lift or other accessibility feature. When an accessibility feature is out of order, the RBA Provider shall take reasonable steps to accommodate individuals with disabilities who would otherwise use the feature.
- The RBA Provider shall inspect all vehicles in daily and monthly inspections and in annual performance reviews. The RBA Provider shall establish other systems of vigilant regular and frequent maintenance checks of lifts and other accessibility features to determine if they are operable.
- If, during the course of operation, a lift device or other accessibility equipment malfunctions, the driver shall contact dispatch immediately. Manual operation may be required by the vehicle driver until such time that the vehicle can be repaired or replaced with minimal service interruption. The driver cannot deny transportation to a disabled passenger on the grounds that the lift is not working, or the securement device is malfunctioning.
- When necessary, if an inoperable lift condition exists, the RBA Service Provider shall dispatch another vehicle or provide other means to continue service of the scheduled trip within thirty (30) minutes of the time the need is discovered.

028.090 Visitor Policy

A visitor is an individual who does not reside in the RBA's service area and has not been certified by the RBA. Visitors can access the RBA's paratransit services for up to twenty-one (21) days in a year.

If an out-of-town individual is seeking to utilize the Regional Bus Authority Complementary Paratransit Service as a visitor and is certified by another transit system as ADA-eligible, the Regional Bus Authority will honor this certification. The individual must contact the Regional Bus Authority, and a temporary certification card will be issued.

For the period of the visit, the visitor will be treated exactly like an eligible local user, without any higher priority being given to either. Visitors are subject to the same guidelines as local participants.

Visitors who expect to or do exceed the twenty-one (21) day service limit must apply for regular certification.

028.100 Sanctions Policies

028.101 Rider Sanction Policy

Sections 37.125(h) of the Americans with Disabilities Act allows complementary paratransit service to be suspended for a reasonable period of time, in cases where an individual consistently misses scheduled appointments. The following is the Regional Bus Authority policy to suspend for a reasonable period of time, the provision of complementary paratransit service to ADA eligible individuals who establish a pattern of practice of missed scheduled trips.

- Sanctions will not apply to trips that are missed for reasons beyond the participant's control.
- Scheduling problems, late pickups, and other operations problems are not attributed to the participants and are not subject to the rider sanctions policy.
- Riders are required to cancel a scheduled trip at least one hour prior to the scheduled pick up time. If a rider does not contact the service provider at least one hour prior to the scheduled pick up time to cancel the trip, the rider will be considered a "no show" for that particular trip. If the rider chooses not to ride once the accessible van or taxi arrives at the scheduled pick-up time, the participant will be considered a "no show" for that particular trip. Not showing up for a scheduled ride is also considered a "no show" for that particular trip.
- Riders will be contacted by RBA officials to determine if the reason for the no show was due to a service problem. If it is determined that the no show was due to a service problem, the incident will not be subject to the rider sanction policy.
- Service will be suspended for a period of 30 days for any rider who accumulates a total of six (6) no show trips for a six month period. Each six month period will be monitored individually with the first six month period being January 1st through June 30th, and the second six month period being July 1st through December 31st. No show trips from one six month period will not be carried over to the next second six month time period.
- If a rider accumulates a total of six no shows for a six month period, the rider will be notified in writing by RBA officials that a 30 day suspension of service is being proposed. This notification will include the basis for the proposed suspension of service, and the process for appealing the proposed suspension.
- If a rider wishes to file an appeal to the proposed 30-day suspension of service, the appeal, whether verbal, written, mailed, or submitted by email, must be made within ten (10) days of the receipt of the notification to suspend services. If a complainant cannot write or has difficulty filing an appeal he or she can contact the Regional Bus Authority, Deputy Manager and/or Planning and Transit Director at (219) 853-6513 within the ten (10) days and file the appeal by phone call. Appeals taken over the phone shall be documented on the appropriate Appeal Form in Appendix E of this Manual and a copy will be provided to the complainant. Additionally, complainants have the right to use an advocate to assist them in filing an appeal.
- A written notification of the decision regarding the appeal and the reasons, upon which the decision was made, will be forwarded to the participant no later than 30 days from the day of the receipt of the appeal. **Please consult the complaint policies and procedures in Section 020.000 through 023.000 included with this information.**
- The proposed 30 day suspension of service will not be implemented until the appeal process has concluded.

All Complementary Paratransit Riders are entitled to free trip vouchers or direct monetary compensation for Trip Denials, Untimely Pick-Ups and Missed Trips. The free trip vouchers and/or monetary compensation is dependent number of violations within a specific timeframe as follows:

Trip Denials:

If Service cannot be provided to the Rider's requested trip within the Two-Hour Window (between one hour before and one hour after requested time) on more than two (2) occasions in a thirty (30) day period, then the Rider shall be provided two (2) free trip vouchers for a free complementary paratransit round trip.

If Service cannot be provided to the Rider's requested trip within the Two-Hour Window (between one hour before and one hour after requested time) on more than eight (8) occasions in a forty-five (45) day period, then the Rider shall be compensated monetarily one hundred dollars (\$100.00).

Untimely Pick-Ups and Missed Trips:

The Pick-Up Window for all scheduled trip service is the arrival of the accessible van or taxi fifteen (15) minutes before and up to fifteen (15) minutes after the Riders scheduled pick-up time.

If the accessible van or taxi arrives more than fifteen (15) minutes before the Riders scheduled pick-up time (and the driver refuses to wait to within fifteen (15) minutes of the Riders scheduled pick-up time), or the driver arrives more than fifteen (15) minutes after the Riders scheduled pick-up time on more than two (2) occasions in a thirty (30) day period, the Rider shall be provided two (2) free trip vouchers for a free complementary paratransit round trip.

If the accessible van or taxi arrives more than fifteen (15) minutes before the Riders scheduled pick-up time (and the driver refuses to wait to within fifteen (15) minutes of the Riders scheduled pick-up time), or the driver arrives more than fifteen (15) minutes after the Riders scheduled pick-up time on more than eight (8) occasions in a forty-five (45) day period, the Rider shall be compensated monetarily one hundred dollars (\$100.00).

Riders who believe that they are entitled to free trip vouchers and/or monetary compensation must contact the RBA Transit and Planning Director and file a written Complaint Form with the applicable information to determine when the Trip Denial, Untimely Pick-Ups, or Missed Trips occurred so that verification can be documented.

029.000 Vacant for future provisions