

City of Gatlinburg



GMT ADA Paratransit Plan

For Paratransit Services

Updated June 1, 2025

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Rules for ADA Eligibility for Paratransit Services

ADA paratransit service must be provided to all passengers described as being ADA eligible. ADA eligibility includes the following:

1. Any individual with a disability who is unable, as a result of a physical or mental impairment (including a visual 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 an accessible vehicle in the system. Included in this category are individuals with mental or visual impairments who cannot navigate the system, passengers traveling with service animals and individuals using respirators, concentrators and portable oxygen.
2. Persons who cannot use vehicles without lifts or accommodations. These persons are eligible for paratransit service if accessible fixed-route vehicles are not available on the bus routes in which they need to travel, when they need to travel during operational hours of GMT Fixed Route.
3. Persons with specific impairment related conditions that cannot travel to a boarding location or from a disembarking location to their final destination. The condition must prevent the person from using the fixed-route system. Conditions that make getting to the fixed-route bus stop “more difficult” do not grant eligibility. Second, architectural barriers (such as no curb cuts) not under the control of GMT Fixed Route, and environmental barriers (such as distance, terrain, and weather) do not, when considered alone, confer eligibility. If, however, travel to or from a boarding location is impossible when these factors are combined with the person’s specific impairment-related condition, conditional paratransit service will be provided to eligible passengers.

How to Become Certified as ADA Eligible for Paratransit Service

Applications for certification as being ADA eligible for GMT paratransit service are available at the City of Gatlinburg City Hall, 1230 East Parkway, Gatlinburg, TN 37738, or a request for a copy to be mailed can be made by calling the (865) 436-4189.

Once the application is received, GMT will notify the applicant within twenty-one (21) days of his/her eligibility status. If a determination has not been made within 21 days of receiving the completed application, the applicant will be treated as eligible and will be provided service until or unless GMT denies the application. The applicant will receive a letter verifying whether eligible for service or not. If denied, GMT will state specifically the reason for the denial. For visually-impaired customers, a phone call will be made in addition to the letter.

Certification applications are available to anyone who requests them. Certifications are renewed every three (3) years.

Temporary Disability Eligibility for Paratransit Service

Any individual with a temporary disability, for the purpose of determining ADA eligibility will be subject to the same standards as those with permanent disabilities. Certification of eligibility in such cases will be subject to a specific expiration date.

Appeals Process for Denial of ADA Eligibility

GMT has established an administrative appeals process through which an individual who has been denied ADA paratransit eligibility can obtain review of the denial.

1. Appeal of the denial to certify an individual as ADA paratransit eligible must be filed within 60 days of written notification of the determination.
2. Upon issuance of the denial, GMT will provide the individual with the opportunity to be heard and to present information and arguments to an individual not involved with the initial decision to deny eligibility. GMT will again provide written determination as to the decision made upon completion of the appeals process and the reasons for it.
3. Any person aggrieved by the decision of the initial decision maker may appeal to the Transit Manager for GMT.
4. GMT will provide paratransit service to the applicant pending the final determination of the appeal.

ADA Eligible Visitors Policy

In accordance with the federal regulations published by the United States Department of Transportation, GMT will make paratransit service available to any individual with disabilities who is served by GMT. GMT will treat as eligible all visitors who present documentation that they are ADA eligible under the ADA paratransit eligibility criteria in the jurisdiction in which they reside.

All visitors requesting paratransit service in the jurisdiction in which GMT provides service, who do not present such documentation, will be required by GMT to show documentation of the individual's place of residence and documentation of his or her disability. GMT shall accept certification from such an individual, that he or she is unable to utilize fixed-route transit service.

GMT will provide paratransit service to said visitor, who does not have documentation that he/she is ADA eligible. In order to receive service after the 21-day period within a 365-day period, the visitor will be required by GMT to apply for eligibility under the process for determining ADA paratransit eligibility that it has established.

SERVICE AREA:

ADA paratransit service is provided to all origins and destinations within the service area defined as the City limits of Gatlinburg. For GMT, the basic service is centered on each fixed-route bus route and extending $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile to either side of the fixed-route.

RESPONSE TIME:

As stated in the regulations, pick up times will be negotiated with ADA eligible passengers to make scheduling more efficient. As a ride-sharing service, GMT is allowed to negotiate within a one-hour window on either side of the requested pick up time. Any negotiation of time will be discussed with the passenger prior to pick up. The vehicle can arrive 1 hour within pickup time.

FARE STRUCTURE:

There is no cost to the rider for complimentary paratransit service.

Passengers must be listed as having a PCA when filing the necessary application for ADA eligibility.

TRIP PURPOSES:

Requests for all types of ADA eligible trips will be accepted and provided within the service area.

HOURS AND DAYS OF SERVICE:

ADA paratransit service shall be offered during the same days and hours that GMT offers fixed-route bus service. It is important to remember that a passenger must be certified as being ADA eligible before the passenger can make a reservation request.

Requests for GMT paratransit service to certified ADA eligible users on a particular day will be accommodated as long as the reservation is made anytime during the previous day's business hours. Customers calling GMT requesting same day scheduling will be accommodated on a space available basis only if other providers cannot respond to the request and GMT is so notified. ADA complementary paratransit trips may be requested during the following times:

GMT office business hours: 8 am – 4:30 pm, Monday through Friday

GMT uses an answering system after hours for cancelling trips or on Saturday and Sunday to schedule trips for Monday. Appointments can be made up to two weeks in advance. Service is on a first-come, first-served basis and is a ride-sharing arrangement. In order for staff to coordinate trips effectively, requests for a specific driver or vehicle are not accepted.

CAPACITY CONSTRAINTS:

GMT does not maintain waiting lists which would constrain demand on paratransit capacity.

GMT does not limit the number of ADA eligible paratransit trips to ADA eligible passengers of the public transportation system.

Since paratransit is a shared ride service, paratransit rides between Point A and Point B will usually take longer, and involve more intermediate stops, than a taxi ride between the same two

points with one passenger in the vehicle. However, GMT does not intentionally schedule excessive trip lengths.

Attendant Policy

Personal care attendants (PCA) will be permitted to accompany ADA eligible riders on ADA eligible trips. GMT will require that passengers state the need for a PCA when they request ADA eligibility certification. GMT does not provide PCA's.

One guest will be allowed to accompany an ADA eligible paratransit passenger on their ADA eligible paratransit trip. More than one guest will be allowed on a space available basis.

Trip Cancellation Policy For a Scheduled Trip

There is no penalty for a cancellation as long as notice is given at least one (1) hour in advance of the scheduled pick up time. Passengers are encouraged to give as much notice as possible if unable to make the appointment. We ask that passengers be cooperative in reducing cancellations. Cancellations are disruptive to the overall operation and the time could have been scheduled by another passenger. If a passenger cancels a trip less than an hour before the scheduled pick up time, it will be a late cancellation and treated the same as a No Show.

Passengers should call (865) 436-3897 as soon as known to cancel any trips. Cancellations can be made by leaving a message on the answering system 24 hours a day 7 days a week, but every effort should be made to call during business hours which are between 8 am and 4:30 pm, Monday through Friday.

Policy Relating to Suspension of Riding Privileges Due to Excessive No Shows or Late Cancellations or Inappropriate Conduct

GMT reserves the right to suspend service to an individual who, for reasons within his or her control, has a "pattern or practice" of missing scheduled trips. This provision does not apply to trips that are missed for reasons that are beyond the passenger's control, (including trips which are missed due to GMT error). GMT also reserves the right to suspend service to an individual who engages in violent, seriously disruptive or illegal conduct on a paratransit vehicle or to a paratransit driver. Before suspending service, GMT will take the following steps:

1. After an individual has missed within a 30-day period, three (3) or more no-shows representing at least 50 percent of scheduled trips will be grounds for temporary suspension of service. GMT will notify the individual in writing of the proposal to suspend service and the proposed sanction.
2. Upon receipt of the suspension, GMT will provide the individual with the opportunity to be heard and to present information and arguments to an individual not involved with the initial decision to suspend service to the individual.

3. After giving the individual the opportunity to be heard and to provide information and arguments contrary to the proposal to suspend service, GMT will provide notification of the decision and the reasons for it.

Types Of Vehicles Used For Transportation

As listed in Appendix A. Vehicles subject to change.

Appendix A

Types Of Vehicles Used For Transportation

Type of Bus	No. Ambulatory Passengers	Wheelchair Capacity
Paratransit	14	2
Paratransit	19	2
Paratransit	19	2
Type of Bus	No. Ambulatory Passengers	Wheelchair Capacity
Fixed - Route	32	2
Fixed - Route	34	2
Fixed - Route	20	2
Fixed - Route	32	2
Fixed - Route	20	2
Fixed - Route	18	2
Fixed - Route	18	2
Fixed - Route	18	2
Fixed - Route	34	2
Fixed - Route	34	2
Fixed - Route	34	2
Fixed - Route	34	2
Fixed - Route	32	2
Fixed - Route	34	2
Fixed - Route	32	2
Fixed - Route	32	2

GMT ADA

Transportation Services for the Disabled

GMT ADA Paratransit is a service for the people with physical, cognitive or visual disabilities who are functionally unable to independently use the GMT fixed route bus service either all of the time, temporarily, or only under certain circumstances.

GMT fixed route bus service is wheelchair accessible with lift-equipped on buses. In addition, other accommodations such as stop announcements made by drivers and assisting passengers with disabilities make using the fixed route bus service possible for many people with disabilities. People who are able to use the fixed route bus service should do so whenever possible.

Disability alone does not determine paratransit eligibility; the decision is based on the applicant's functional ability to use the fixed route bus and is not solely based on a medical decision. At the same time, unavailability of fixed route service by itself does not constitute eligibility for a person who could otherwise take the same trip on the bus, were the service is available.

The GMT ADA Paratransit program is designed to meet the Americans with Disabilities Act service criteria established by the federal government. Service is provided only to individuals found eligible by the GMT transportation department and under the following ADA guidelines:

- Service is provided within three-quarters of a mile of a GMT fixed bus route bus stop. GMT ADA Paratransit vehicles can only make pick-ups and drop-offs at places that are within three-quarters of a mile of a GMT fixed route bus stop.
- Service is provided only during the hours and days when fixed route service operates.
- Rides must be pick-up within one hour of request time.
- Service is provided for all types of trips.
- Eligible individuals may have personal care attendant (PCA), or companion that rides.

Application Process:

ADA Paratransit is provided for customers whose disability or health condition may prevent them from using the GMT fixed route services for some or all of their travel. Individuals who are interested in using ADA Paratransit service must apply and be found eligible according to ADA guidelines. The GMT ADA Paratransit Certification Program determines an individual's functional abilities and limitations for using fixed route services.

To apply for GMT ADA Paratransit call (865) 436-4189 to request an application. Once you have completed the application, call (865) 436-4189 to schedule an in-person interview. Please bring the completed application and a photo ID with you to the interview.

During the interview, we will review your application form and if necessary, help you complete it. We will also discuss with you your travel abilities and limitations in more detail. You may be asked to take a "mock" bus trip. This will give us a better idea of your travel abilities and limitations.

A decision will be made on your application within 21 days of the completion of the interview and assessment. If a decision is not made within 21 days, we will provide you with ADA Paratransit service until a final decision is made. You will be notified of your eligibility by letter. Once approved to schedule a ride call (865) 436-3897.

Appeal Process:

If you are denied of GMT ADA paratransit fixed route bus trips, we will notify you of the exact reason(s) for this decision and tell you how to appeal the decision.

You can appeal any eligibility decision made by GMT that limits your ability to use ADA Paratransit service.

All requests for an appeal must be in writing and should be mailed to:

City of Gatlinburg Mass Transit
Paratransit Coordinator
P.O. Box 5
Gatlinburg, TN 37738

If you have any questions about the appeal process, call (865) 436-4189.

GMT Fixed Route Paratransit Service Policy

Gatlinburg Mass Transit (GMT) will provide a paratransit transportation service to persons with disabilities if the starting point is within $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile or less from fixed route. Individuals must meet the provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990. FDA requires public transit agencies to provide complementary paratransit service to people with disabilities who cannot access GMT fixed route system.

Individuals who are interested in using GMT fixed route paratransit service must apply and be found eligible according to GMT paratransit fixed route service guidelines. Applicants are required to provide information to the Gatlinburg Mass Transit Paratransit service to determine eligibility to utilize the paratransit service.

Once application is completed and returned to:
City of Gatlinburg Mass Transit
Paratransit Coordinator
P.O. Box 5
Gatlinburg, TN 37738

A decision will be made on the application within 21 days. The applicant will be informed of the decision by mail. If a decision is not made within 21 days, GMT will provide paratransit service until a final decision is made within 30 days.

If applicant is determined not eligible for paratransit fixed route service, the individual may appeal that decision. Individuals have 60 days from the date of the letter informing them of an eligibility denial to request an appeal with GMT fixed route service. All requests for an appeal must be in writing and should be mailed to:

City of Gatlinburg Mass Transit
Transit Manager
P.O. Box 5
Gatlinburg, TN 37738

GMT appeal panel has 30 days to make a decision on the appeal.

Please answer the following questions as completely as possible. If a question does not apply to you, mark N/A in the space provided. Please note this application must be filled out in its entirety or it will be returned.

General Information:

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____ APT. #: _____

CITY: _____ STATE: _____ ZIP: _____

TELEPHONE NUMBER: Home (____) _____ Work: (____) _____

EMAIL ADDRESS: _____

Date of Birth: _____ Social Security No: _____

Emergency Contacts:

Name: _____ Relationship: _____

Telephone number: Home: (____) _____ Work: (____) _____

Address: _____

Name: _____ Relationship: _____

Telephone number: Home: (____) _____ Work: (____) _____

Address: _____

Statement of Disability:

Please check the reason(s) why you are seeking GMT paratransit eligibility.

- ☐ I can use regular Fixed Route buses to go most places.
- ☐ I can use regular Fixed Route buses sometimes, but only if they are equipped with wheelchair lifts.
- ☐ I can NEVER use a Fixed Route bus because (Explain briefly): _____

Do you require a Personal Care Attendant (PCA)? (A PCA is a person who must travel with you to assist in performing medical or personal tasks)

- ☐ YES
- ☐ NO

Do you use any mobility aids? (Check all that apply)

- ☐ I do not use mobility aids
- ☐ Manual Wheelchair
- ☐ Motorized Wheelchair
- ☐ Walker
- ☐ Crutches
- ☐ Service Animal
- ☐ Prosthesis
- ☐ Portable Oxygen Tank
- ☐ Leg Brace
- ☐ Other _____

Using a mobility aid or on your own, how far can you travel? Check all that apply.

- ☐ I cannot travel outside my house / apartment.
- ☐ I can get to the curb in front of my house / apartment.
- ☐ I cannot travel more than 200 feet.
- ☐ I can travel up to $\frac{1}{4}$ mile.
- ☐ I can travel up to $\frac{1}{2}$ mile.
- ☐ I can travel up to $\frac{3}{4}$ mile.

If you use a wheelchair or scooter, how wide is it? _____ inches.

How heavy is it when occupied? _____ pounds,

How do you currently travel to your frequent destinations? (Check all that apply)

- ☐ Buses
- ☐ Taxi
- ☐ Drive myself
- ☐ Para- Transit
- ☐ Other _____

Please check box that best describes your current living situation:

- ☐ 24 hour care or Skill Nursing Facility
- ☐ Assisted Living Facility
- ☐ I receive assistance from someone that comes to my home to help with daily living activities
- ☐ I live with family members who help me
- ☐ I live independently (without assistance of another person)

Which of the following best describes you if you had to wait outside for a ride? (Check only one response)

- ☐ I could wait by myself for ten to fifteen minutes
- ☐ I could wait by myself for ten to fifteen minutes only if I had a seat and shelter
- ☐ I need someone to wait with me because _____

To better understand your needs please list the trips that you will make most frequently using GMT paratransit fixed route service. Please list origin of trip and destination and the number of trips to that destination each week.

From: _____

To: _____

From: _____

To: _____

From: _____

To: _____

From the following list, please check off all disabilities or symptoms that prevent you from boarding, riding or disembarking from fixed route buses. **All areas checked off must be stated in the doctor's certification part of this application.**

General Medical Condition

- ☐ Cancer
- ☐ Diabetes
- ☐ Renal
- ☐ Organ Transplant
- ☐ Other: Specify _____

Vision / Hearing / Speech Conditions

- ☐ Aphasia
- ☐ Cataracts
- ☐ Glaucoma
- ☐ Diabetic Retinopathy
- ☐ Visual Field Deficit
- ☐ Night Blindness
- ☐ Partially Blind
- ☐ Legally Blind
- ☐ (20/20 or worse)
- ☐ Totally Blind
(No light perception)
- ☐ Deaf
- ☐ Deaf / Blind
- ☐ Other: Specify _____

Heart & Circulatory Conditions

- ☐ Angina
- ☐ Congestive Heart Failure
- ☐ Edema
- ☐ Heart Surgery
- ☐ High Blood Pressure
- ☐ Other: Specify _____

Neuromuscular Conditions

- ☐ Cerebral Palsy
- ☐ Brain Injury
- ☐ Multiple Sclerosis
- ☐ Muscular Dystrophy
- ☐ Paraplegia
- ☐ Parkinson's Disease
- ☐ Quadriplegia
- ☐ Spinal Bifida
- ☐ Stroke
- ☐ Vertigo / Dizziness
- ☐ Other: Specify _____

Lung & Breathing Conditions

- ☐ Allergies
- ☐ Asthma
- ☐ Cystic Fibrosis
- ☐ Emphysema
- ☐ Other: Specify _____

Bone & Joint Conditions

- ☐ Amputation
- ☐ Broken Bone
- ☐ Arthritis
- ☐ Osteoarthritis
- ☐ Osteoporosis
- ☐ Other: Specify _____

Cognitive / Psychological

- ☐ Alzheimer's
- ☐ Autism
- ☐ Dementia
- ☐ Mental Retardation
- ☐ Panic Disorder
- ☐ Schizophrenia
- ☐ Other: Specify _____

Is your disability described above: ☐ Temporary OR ☐ Permanent

Applicant's Certification, Consent of Release of Application Information

I understand that my application will be returned if it is not completed. I confirm that all the information that I provide on this application is true to the best of my knowledge. I understand that my application is subject to review and verification and that misrepresentation of any material information will lead to the revocation of my certification. I understand that a false statement made herein may result in the rejection of my application for paratransit fixed route service.

I agree to notify GMT if I no longer need paratransit fixed route service for any reason, including a change in my ability to use bus service. I also understand that failure to adhere to the policies and procedures for using complementary paratransit fixed route service may be grounds for suspending or revoking my eligibility to participate in this program.

In the event that I apply for paratransit eligibility in another county, I hereby authorize City of Gatlinburg Mass Transit to release the information on my paratransit application to such agency.

SIGNATURE OF APPLICANT

DATE

*** PLEASE NOTE THIS APPLICATION MAY TAKE UP TO 21 DAYS TO PROCESS.**

*** PLEASE HAVE YOUR MEDICAL DOCTOR COMPLETE THE REMAINDER OF THIS APPLICATION.**

PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATION

Dear Doctor:

The applicant who asked you review the information on the application and to sign this form is applying for eligibility for GMT paratransit service. Please read the following information carefully since it may affect your response. Please write clearly.

Qualifications for Paratransit

Paratransit service is designed to serve ONLY those persons whose severity of disability prevents them from using public transportation. Under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), disability alone does not qualify a person to ride paratransit. A person must be FUNCTIONALLY unable to use the fixed route bus service.

Service is provided to the following two general groups of persons with disabilities.

1. Persons, who have specific impairment – related conditions which make it IMPOSSIBLE not just DIFFICULT to travel to or from the bus stop.
2. Persons, who are unable to board, ride or exit from the fixed route buses even if they are able to get to a bus stop and the bus is equipped with a wheelchair lift.

What is Paratransit?

Paratransit is an alternative, origin to destination demand – responsive public transportation service. It is designed to “mirror” the fixed route bus service in terms of service times and areas.

Origin to destination and “mirroring” provisions of ADA mean that assistance is provided to individuals between the first door of their starting point or destination and the paratransit vehicle. Assistance is provided to help board and exit vehicles. In addition, paratransit is required to provide service only if both the starting point and the destination of a trip are located within $\frac{3}{4}$ mile of GMT fixed route service during hours when route is operating.

DOCTORS CERTIFICATION

Please review the medical information provided in the application and fill out the certification as is appropriate and sign the document. The information you provide will assist us in serving ONLY those who need paratransit.

Certification of Disability: **(PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY AND LEGIBLE)**

I, (Name of Physician): _____ certify that

(Name of Patient) to be a severely disabled
person who has been a patient of mine since _____ (Date)
and whose diagnosis is _____

Please describe the physical and / or cognitive condition and how it functionally prevents the applicant from using fixed route bus service.

I also certify that the medical information provided in the application is accurate to the best of my knowledge and is consistent with the applicant's medical diagnosis.

Signed this _____ Day of _____, 20____

(Signature of Physician)

License Number

Street Address

(City)

(State)

(Zip)

UNDERSTANDING THIS APPLICATION FORM

I understand that the purpose of this application form is to determine if I, the applicant am eligible to use the paratransit fixed route service according to the guidelines of the American with Disability Act.

I understand that this application cannot be processed if it is not complete. I understand that GMT may contact my healthcare professional / agency to verify my disability.

I understand that the Paratransit Coordinator may need to talk to me or see me at a later date to clarify or get further information.

I understand that all information will be kept confidential; only the information required will be disclosed to those who perform those services.

I understand the application process can take up to **21 days** from the time GMT office receives a complete application. If my application is returned for clarification or additional information, this can delay the process. I will receive notification of determination of this application.

I understand that I may appeal the determination within **60 days** after receipt of written notification if I am determined not eligible for paratransit fixed route service or if I am dissatisfied with my eligibility type.

I understand if the GMT office receives new information regarding a change in my functional or cognitive ability, my eligibility status may be reviews and changed.

I certify that the information provided on this application is true and correct to the best of my knowledge.

I understand that falsification of information may result in denial of service as well as penalty under the law.

SIGNED: _____ DATE: _____
(Applicant's Signature)

CO-SIGNED: _____ DATE: _____
(Guardian or Person assisted with this application)

RELATIONSHIP TO APPLICANT: _____

GMT Fixed Route Paratransit Appeal Process

The FDA requires that fixed route services establish a process to appeal decisions if they are denied access to Gatlinburg Mass Transit (GMT) paratransit fixed route service. GMT has established an appeals procedure for persons whose applications for paratransit fixed route eligibility are denied or for persons who have received suspension notices for other reasons.

Individuals may file an appeal when GMT denies paratransit service for any of the following reasons:

- Denial of Eligibility
- Suspension resulting from excessive No-Shows or Late Cancellations
- Suspensions for Disruptive Behavior

GMT will inform an applicant or clients of a decision to deny eligibility status or to suspend service by letter. Individuals have 60 days from the date of the letter informing them of an eligibility denial to request an appeal. Request for an appeal must be sent in writing to the GMT at the following address:

City of Gatlinburg Mass Transit
Transit Manager
P.O. Box 5
Gatlinburg, TN 37738

The appeal process allows individuals an opportunity to state their intent to appeal. The appeal process is an opportunity to be heard and present information. The appeals board panel will consist of the Transit Manager, Assistant Transit Manager, and the Paratransit Coordinator. The Appeal Panel will issue a final written decision within 30 days of the appeal hearing. A written notification of an appeal determination, with reasoning will be sent to applicant. GMT will not provide service to individuals who are pursuing an eligibility appeal. If the appeal panel has not made a decision within 30 days after the hearing, temporary paratransit fixed route service will be provided. The temporary service will continue until a decision on the appeal is reached.

If you have any questions about the appeal process contact the Paratransit Coordinator at (865) 436-4189.