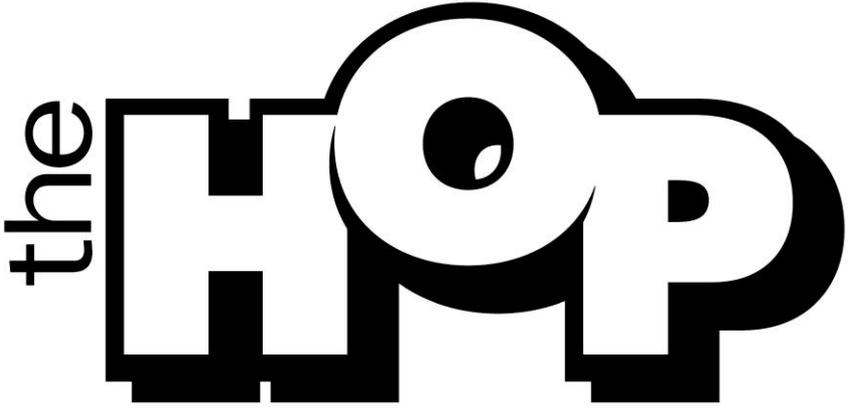


# Rural Bell County Service Passenger Guide



**Operated by Hill Country Transit District**

*Central Texas' Regional  
Public Transit System*

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## **WHAT IS THE HOP?**

The HOP is a regional public transit system whose purpose is to provide fixed route transit service, which is a system of routes that operate along a pre-defined route and serving designated bus stops. Anyone can ride The HOP fixed route buses by paying the base fare of \$1.00; a discounted fare is also available to people with disabilities, senior citizens, students, Medicaid recipients, and children under 12 years of age.

## **WHAT IS RURAL BELL COUNTY (RBC)?**

Hill Country Transit District (HCTD) will provide only non-emergency medical trips for elderly (60+) and qualified, disabled individuals in rural Bell County. All trips are limited to medical purposes only. If you are 60 years old or older you can be qualified for transportation by filling out a service eligibility certification form. If you are under 60 years of age and have a physical or mental disability you may be eligible for transportation depending on your disability. You must pre-qualify by filling out a service eligibility certification form before service can be provided. Interested rural Bell County residents must complete a RURAL BELL COUNTY TRANSIT SERVICE ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION FORM (RBC Eligibility Form) and receive approval before transportation will be provided. To

obtain a form, call 254-933-3700 or 1-800-791-9601 ext. 5010 and one will be mailed to you.

Clients receiving transportation through the Texas Medical Transportation Program (MEDICAID) do not require HCTD approval to continue their service under the MEDICAID program.

There are some restrictions to riding the Rural Transportation system:

1. All trips are limited to medical purposes only.
2. All trips must start or end in the rural service area.
3. You must pre-qualify before service can be provided. If you wish to see if you are qualified for Rural Bell County transportation services, you must complete an RBC Eligibility Form and provide documentation of age or disability. This can be obtained by calling 254-933-3700 or 1-800-791-9601.
4. All rides must be booked in advance (at least by 5 pm the day before the requested trip). **No same day service will be provided.** To book a ride, contact scheduling at 254-933-3700 or 1-800-791-9601. Please be prepared to give your name, pick up address and address of the destination where you are requesting transportation. Return trips must be booked at this time also. Scheduling hours are between the hours of 8 am and 5 pm Monday through Friday, excluding holidays. Scheduling is closed on HCTD holidays. You must call this office at least one hour in advance of your scheduled pick up time to cancel your trip. Not doing so may jeopardize your transportation in the future.
- 5 PCAs may ride the system for free. Contribution/donations to offset the cost of service will be graciously accepted. All donations must be deposited in the fare box.

All other riders will be required to pay a \$2.00 fare for all one way trips (\$4.00 round trip - \$2.00 each way).

6. Service hours are limited to 7 am to 4 pm weekdays only with no holidays or Saturday service. Please see section entitled ‘Service Hours’ for more information.

## **HAVE YOU TRIED THE HOP’S FIXED ROUTE SERVICE?**

The HOP encourages passengers who are RBC eligible to ride the Fixed Route Service whenever possible. Fixed Route Service offers many benefits to RBC eligible passengers including:

- No need to schedule a trip in advance.
- Only fifty cents to ride when you show your RBC ID card.
- Flexible routes allow you to get to your destination and return home at your leisure.

If you have any questions about The HOP’s Fixed Route Service or are interested in Travel Training, call The HOP at (254) 933-3700, and enter 5010 for the department number.

## **CERTIFICATION & RECERTIFICATION**

People interested in Rural Bell County Service as potential users must complete “RBC Eligibility Form” and receive

approval before transportation will be provided. The maximum certification period is 3 years; however, eligibility periods may vary according to each individual's functional ability.

After submission of an application, a determination as to whether an applicant is eligible for RBC service will be made within 21 days. If accepted, a letter of acceptance and an RBC ID card will be issued to the applicant. Approval of eligibility for RBC provides eligibility only for the RBC program.

Typically, initial approval of RBC eligibility is for a term of no more than three years. When the user's eligibility period is near its expiration date, The HOP reserves the right to:

1. Send the RBC passenger a re-certification form, which requires the passenger to provide updated information regarding address, contact information, etc., or
2. Send the RBC passenger a new eligibility application form, calling for the passenger to submit a new eligibility application.

The HOP always reserves the right to refuse to renew an eligibility status, or to deny eligibility applications or renewal requests, based on current program guidelines. If a new application, renewal certification, or information shows that the passenger does not meet the RBC eligibility requirements, the RBC status will not be renewed.

The HOP also uses this recertification process to identify passengers who no longer live within the service area to minimize the active passengers listed in The HOP's records. Sometimes a passenger's status in terms of disability may change, such as in a temporary eligibility, and the re-certification process helps ensure active RBC certifications are truly eligible for service.

Note: When boarding the vehicle, your eligibility card and a valid, government-issued (federal or state) photo ID must be presented. If you should change your address or telephone number, lose your card, or if your disability changes, you must notify The HOP by calling: (254) 933-3700, extension 5010.

## **SPECIAL ACCOMMODATIONS**

### **Wheelchair/Mobility Devices**

The HOP will comply with ADA standards for transporting individuals with mobility devices. Individuals using any device that exceeds ADA standards and/or prevents The HOP from providing transportation safely may be denied service. Before using this service, passengers must ensure that mobility devices are in good working condition, clean and safe.

### **Other Passengers and Personal Care Attendants**

Some passengers may require a PCA. If a PCA is required based on the passenger's disability, and the PCA actually performs an assistant role, the PCA may ride

without fare, provided the passenger's ID card so indicates as approved by the HOP. However, the passenger must notify The HOP in advance of the need for a PCA, and The HOP has the right to verify that need. An appropriate need for a PCA includes immobility, disorientation, non-comprehension, or communication impairment. If a PCA does not perform a specific necessary travel function, the passenger may be considered as ineligible for a PCA.

### **Children**

Children under the age of four years must have a car seat as required by State Law, and the passenger must provide the car seat. The state of Texas has other specific requirements related to transport of children – the passenger is responsible for planning ahead and telling The HOP when scheduling the trip about the car seat/booster requirements. Passengers traveling with infants must provide an infant carrier approved for use in cars. The passenger is responsible for placing the infant into the carrier and properly securing the carrier with a seat belt.

### **Service Animals**

When making a reservation, passengers must notify the dispatcher/scheduler if a service animal will accompany the passenger. Service animals are permitted if they are required for travel and were approved during the certification process.

### **Origin-to-Destination Service**

The ADA complementary paratransit service is an origin-to-destination service. Drivers are generally not permitted to go

beyond the threshold or ground level of any building. Drivers will assist with wheelchairs over one curb, step or threshold and up sturdy, safe, and accessible wheelchair ramps. Origin-to-Destination service does not include loading and unloading personal items, packages, groceries, etc., or assisting passengers on unsafe or steeply inclined mobility ramps or stairs. Drivers will not place the vehicle in any area that may damage the vehicle or create an unsafe passenger situation. Drivers may not go into a residence but may assist the passenger in opening or unlocking the door, if necessary.

### **Minor Service Adjustments**

Passengers with disabilities sometimes face unusual circumstances when attempting to use The HOP. The HOP has a policy whereby requests for service modifications may be considered from people with disabilities, whether using the fixed route service or the RBC complementary paratransit service. For example, passengers may need assistance in the following situations, and The HOP is willing to consider modifying its typical service in such situations, so long as it is safe to do so:

- Fixed route drivers may pull forward a reasonable distance to allow use of an otherwise obstructed bus stop;
- Passengers may need assistance in using fare media;
- Passengers may need an exception to eating/drinking on the bus to avoid adverse health situations;

- Paratransit drivers may pick-up at specific entrances at locations with multiple entrances;
- Paratransit drivers may provide extra assistance if needed in extreme weather conditions.

The HOP has rules and regulations it must follow to ensure passengers, drivers, and equipment are free from hazards, but The HOP is also willing to consider special circumstances if so doing does not cause unsafe or unreasonable conditions. Requests may not be considered if they require a fundamental alteration to service, such as providing only new buses for a specific passenger, providing exclusive rides instead of shared rides, allowing a PCA to leave the passenger, operating outside of regular service hours, or calling for the driver to serve as a PCA. Such situations are not considered as service modifications. The HOP also cannot expose anyone or any equipment to health or safety risks, such as calling for a bus to back in a hazardous area, or leaving a vehicle unattended by the driver for a lengthy time.

The service modification requested must truly be needed by the passenger making the request in order for the trip to be made. For example, requesting a specific driver is not a service modification because another driver can still provide the trip. A service modification is one in which the individual with a disability must have the modification to fully use the services provided by The HOP for the purpose intended by The HOP. Each request to a modification of the service provided by The HOP must depend on the facts and circumstances of each individual

situation. For example, a request to not ride with another passenger is generally not a service modification, as it would place an undue burden on The HOP. The HOP prefers advance notice for service modifications for passengers with disabilities, but when feasible, The HOP staff has the flexibility to handle requests on the spot, although only when it is practical for such on the spot consideration.

## **SERVICE HOURS**

Service hours during which RBC paratransit is provided are limited to the following hours. The start times are the earliest a passenger can be scheduled for pickup, and the end times are the latest times a passenger can be dropped off at the final destination.

Monday-Friday                      7:00 AM – 4:00 PM  
No service on weekends or holidays.

## **SCHEDULING HOURS**

Monday – Friday                      8 AM – 5 PM  
No scheduling on weekends or holidays.

## **ADMINISTRATIVE HOURS**

Monday – Friday                      8 AM – 5 PM

# SCHEDULING PARATRANSIT TRIPS

Reservations can be made up to 14 days in advance and up through the day before your appointment. Please note that The HOP does not provide same-day service and that trips must be scheduled before the day of the trip. When scheduling a trip, passengers must provide the following information:

- The HOP ID card number;
- Whether a personal care attendant (PCA) will travel with the passenger – PCA must be authorized in advance;
- Whether a companion will travel with the passenger, including children and service animals;
- The pick-up address (including building number, name and or landmarks) – the exact street address is required;
- The date for the trip;
- The destination address – the exact street address is required;
- The time of any specific appointment, or the time the passenger wishes to be picked up.

The HOP may schedule the pick-up time up to one hour before or after the requested pickup time.

## **When To Be Ready – Driver Wait Time**

Special Transit Services vehicles may arrive at the pick-up

location as early as 15 minutes before and up to 15 minutes after the scheduled pickup time. For example, if the scheduled pickup time is 9:00 AM the bus may arrive within the thirty minute window between 8:45 AM and 9:15 AM. When the vehicle arrives the passenger must be ready to board. Passengers are encouraged to watch for the bus to arrive so they can quickly board. The bus driver has a tight schedule and other passengers may be picked up late unless everyone is on time. Drivers are directed to wait no longer than five minutes. The RBC vehicle may not be available to come back for passengers who were not ready.

### **Return Trips**

Passengers are strongly encouraged to schedule a return trip. Unscheduled return trips may result in wait times of up to two hours, and most passengers find a scheduled return trip minimizes wait time. For example, if the trip is for a medical appointment, which happens to end at 1:00 PM, the bus may arrive as late as 3:00 PM when calling for a “will call return” rather than scheduling a return trip. However, if the passenger can reasonably predict the appointment will end no later than 2:30 PM, the pickup time can be scheduled for 2:45 PM, providing time for the thirty minute pickup window (described elsewhere herein), and the passenger can expect a pickup time no later than 3:00 PM, saving up to an hour wait time.

When scheduling a trip near the end of the service day, please remember that the last drop-off time cannot be later

than the scheduled end of the service day. The service day ends at 4:00 PM, so any trips late in the day must be scheduled to ensure the passenger is dropped off no later than 4:00 PM.

### **Canceling Trips**

Trip cancellations must be made at least one hour before the scheduled pickup time. To cancel a trip, passengers may call (254) 933-3700, extension 5009.

## **FARES**

The fare for each RBC passenger is \$2.00 for a one-way trip. One authorized PCA for an RBC passenger may board without a fare. Each companion other than the one authorized PCA must pay the full fare of \$2.00 per person. The fare must be paid upon boarding. The fare may be paid in cash, exact change only. The HOP has its own fare media options, which for RBC includes tokens and multi-ride punch tickets. Tokens are similar to a regular coin, but are not considered as legal tender, and are valid only for fare payment for The HOP bus fare. Each token has The HOP fare value of fifty cents, so four tokens will be required for a regular RBC fare of \$2.00.

The HOP also has available “Multi-Ride Tickets”, each printed with space for ten “punches.” Each punch has a value of fifty cents, and will be punched four times for a \$2.00 RBC fare. Each “Multi-Ride Ticket” is sold for \$5.00. Multi-Ride tickets are available by mail, in person

at The HOP offices in Belton, and in a few area offices (call 254-933-3700, extension 5010 for a list of such ticket outlets).

Although The HOP has a Monthly Pass available for fixed route bus service only, the monthly pass cannot be used for any other fare, and should not be purchased for any purpose other than fixed route fare payment.

## **RULES FOR PASSENGERS**

No list of rules can possibly cover all circumstances or potential events. However, the following rules for passengers has been developed and is presented in an effort to provide a quiet, comfortable, and safe ride for all passengers. The HOP's RBC program, which provides medical transport service for elderly and disabled Rural Bell County passengers, operates on the basis of "shared use vehicles", which means that all passengers, regardless of the type of trip, are subject to sharing the ride with other people. It is important that everyone is courteous, friendly, and patient with other passengers. Many people ride The HOP buses, and in addition to following these riding rules, rides can be made more comfortable if everyone practices good personal hygiene. Everyone can help make the ride safe by adhering to these rules.

- Passengers must accept service as shared rides, and they must often share vehicles with other passengers.

- Passengers must present The HOP ID Card or reciprocal ID card when boarding. The HOP ID Cards are non-transferable and may be revoked if misused. **A valid government-issued (state or federal) photo ID must be presented with The HOP ID when boarding.**
- Passengers must wear seat belts, and passengers using wheelchairs or other mobility equipment must adhere to securement requirements. Failure to do so may result in the trip being canceled.
- Profanity, abusive language, or threatening or intimidating actions or words are not permitted and may result in a disruption of service.
- Eating, drinking, smoking, and the use of tobacco products (including e-cigarettes and vaping products) are prohibited on The HOP vehicles.
- Drivers are not allowed to accept tips.
- Drivers are not allowed to handle money. Fares and contributions paid must be deposited directly into the fare box.
- Adult passengers must properly supervise all children and ensure that they remain quiet and seated.
- Passengers may not bring on board any baggage or articles that, due to size or numbers, would restrict free movement of passengers. All items must be stowed securely, out of the aisles of the vehicle, during the entire trip. Items must be stowed in such a manner that they do not become loose during travel, that they do not take up other passenger

space if needed, and they are not a tripping hazard to other passengers. The HOP understands passengers use The HOP buses for shopping trips, sometimes resulting in a passenger boarding with numerous packages, grocery bags, or parcels. So long as the passenger can load and unload such items without The HOP driver assistance and within a reasonable time, The HOP allows such items, provided the items can be stored out of aisles, and out of the way of other passengers. Unreasonably large items, an unreasonably large number of items, or untimely disruptions to scheduled service because of delays in loading or unloading are strongly discouraged. Drivers are not permitted to load or unload items, and are not permitted to assist with moving the items from the bus to the final destination.

- Passengers must be very careful when boarding and exiting the bus to avoid tripping, slipping or falling, especially watching for steps, curbs, and street gutters.
- No radios, music boxes, boom boxes, or other distractions are allowed.
- No open containers are allowed. Only spill proof containers are allowed on the bus. If the container is dropped and likely to spill, it is prohibited.
- No trash, gum, or empty containers are to be left on the bus.
- No person shall deface, damage, write upon, soil, or spit in or on any The HOP vehicle.

- No pets or animals are allowed in the vehicle other than a service animal accompanying a person with a disability, or an animal in a cage or standard pet carrier.
- No person shall possess or carry any explosives, corrosive acids, flammable liquids, gasoline containers, or any type of hazardous material while on the vehicle. (Respirators and portable oxygen supplies are permitted on board if needed for health reasons and only if they can be properly secured. Empty oxygen bottles are not allowed).
- No person shall possess any illegal weapons on The HOP bus.
- No laundry is allowed on board except in an enclosed bag.
- No person shall interfere with the driver's operation of the vehicle.
- The HOP operated vehicles may not be used as a forum for religious, political, or personal beliefs; and no printed materials, other than that specifically provided by or authorized by The HOP, may be distributed on board.
- Children under 12 years of age must be accompanied by an adult.

## **HOLIDAYS**

No fixed route or RBC transit services will be provided by The HOP on the following holidays:

- New Year's Day

- Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
- Presidents' Day
- Good Friday
- Memorial Day
- Independence Day
- Labor Day
- Veterans' Day
- Thanksgiving Day
- Day after Thanksgiving Day
- Christmas Eve
- Christmas Day

If a holiday falls on a Saturday or a Sunday, The HOP may be designated another day for observance. Passengers may check The HOP's web site at [www.takethehop.com](http://www.takethehop.com) to verify holidays. Efforts are made to keep these holidays consistent, but The HOP reserves the right to modify holiday service.

## **ADA TRAVEL**

Trips may be scheduled in the urban service area so long as ADA eligibility has been established and rules for travel are followed. For more information about The HOP ADA service, please see the website at [www.takethehop.com](http://www.takethehop.com) or call The HOP at (254) 933-3700 and speak to a customer service representative.

## **CONTACT INFORMATION**

Hill Country Transit District  
4515 W US 190  
Belton, Texas 76513

Website: [www.takethehop.com](http://www.takethehop.com)

Telephone Numbers:

Trips may be scheduled by calling **(254) 933-3700** or **1-800-791-9601** during normal weekday business hours, selecting extension **5009**.

To speak to a dispatcher about a trip already scheduled on the day of the service, passengers may call **254-933-3700**, or **1-800-791-9601**, extension **5008**.

To speak to a dispatcher about planning a trip with Fixed Route Service, callers may call **(254) 933-3700** or **1-800-791-9601**, extension **5010**.

**DISCLAIMER:**

This guide is only a source of information and serves as guidelines outlining Hill Country Transit District's RBC complementary paratransit service. It is not intended to cover all situations nor is it a legally binding document. Although efforts are made to make corrections as needed with subsequent printings, contents are subject to change with little or no notice.

**To Call The HOP:**

(254) 933-3700

***Toll Free:*** 1-800-791-9601

**Department Numbers:**

**RBC Scheduling – 5009**

*(To be called for scheduling future rides)*

**RBC Dispatch – 5008**

*(To be called with questions regarding today's rides.)*

**Customer Service – 5010**

*(For information on Fixed Routes.)*

**Compliments and Complaints – 5010**

**Website:**

<http://www.takethehop.com>