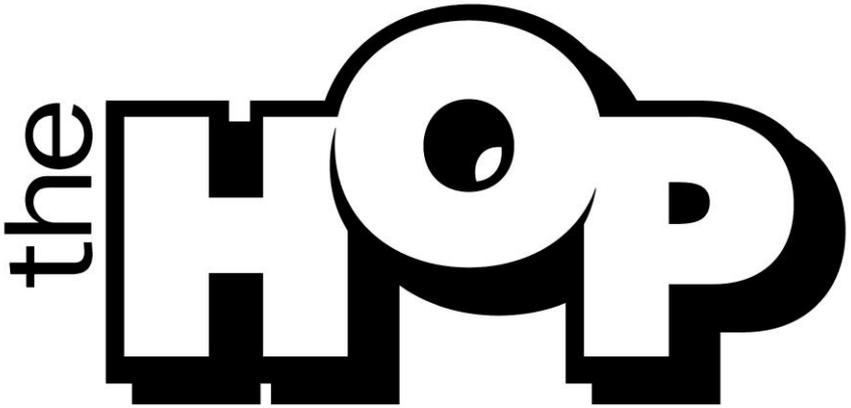
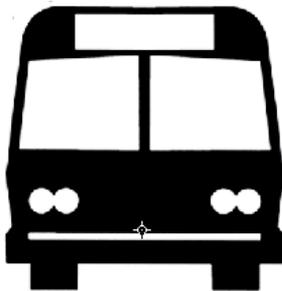


# ADA Complementary Paratransit Service Passenger Guide



**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, Medicare recipients, and children under 12 years of age.

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) provides partial funding for The HOP, and the FTA provides specific requirements related to the provision of public transit service. One such requirement provides that The HOP must also provide ADA complementary paratransit service for people whose disability prevents them from using the regular fixed route service.

## **WHAT IS SPECIAL TRANSIT SERVICE (STS)**

The HOP's Special Transit Service (STS) is a program that operates a special fleet of buses that provides origin-to-destination transit service for ADA eligible passengers. The STS vehicles also provide "shared rides", and passengers may be carried under multiple service programs, including Medicaid program, or other special transit service programs.

## **WHAT IS ADA COMPLEMENTARY PARATRANSIT SERVICE?**

Section 223 of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) requires that public entities that operate non-commuter fixed route

transportation services also provide complementary paratransit service for individuals unable to use the fixed route system. These individuals may submit a written application for ADA eligibility to The HOP. If approved, they will receive an ADA service card showing their eligibility for the service. This service is designed to operate during approximately the same hours and in approximately the same service area as the fixed route service.

ADA paratransit standards are provided for in 49CFR37.123 of the Code of Federal Regulations. ADA complementary paratransit service is provided only to origins and destinations within  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile of each side of each fixed route operated by The HOP, as provided by federal regulations. Based on this defined area, a large service area covers portions of Copperas Cove, Killeen, and Harker Heights weekdays.

ADA service will not be provided between the following areas:

- No service between the Belton service area and other service areas (Killeen and Temple);
- No service between Temple and other service areas (Killeen and Belton);
- No service between Killeen and other service areas (Temple and Belton).

Persons with a disability who believe they are unable to use the fixed route service may apply for ADA Eligibility. If approved, persons may use The HOP's ADA complementary paratransit service. To become eligible for ADA service, the person's disability must be directly related to the inability of the person with a disability to use the existing fixed route system. ADA complementary paratransit service is designed to assist those qualified individuals who are unable to ride the fixed route bus system, including those who are unable, because of a disability, to get to or from the fixed route bus stops, or to board, ride, or

disembark the fully accessible fixed route buses. ADA service is only available for qualified individuals and a Personal Care Attendant (PCA) and one companion (read further for more information about a PCA or companion). Additional companions may ride based on space availability.

It is important to remember that the ADA service is provided to complement the fixed route service, and distance to a bus stop is not, in itself, a factor for determining ADA eligibility. The purpose of ADA is to provide trips to and from locations that are within  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile of a fixed route, and locations further than  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile from a fixed route are simply not within The HOP's immediate service area.

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

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

- No need to schedule a trip in advance.
- Only fifty cents to ride when you show your ADA 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 the ADA complementary paratransit service as potential users must complete "THE HOP SPECIAL TRANSIT

SERVICE ADA PARATRANSIT ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION FORM” and receive approval before transportation will be provided. Persons are not required to reside within the service area, but all trip origins and destinations must lie within one of the specific ADA service areas, and trips may not extend outside the specific ADA service area. The length of eligibility periods may vary according to each individual’s functional ability to use the fixed route bus system.

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

Typically, initial approval of ADA 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 ADA passenger a re-certification form, which requires the ADA passenger to provide update information regarding address, contact information, etc., or
2. Send the ADA passenger a new eligibility application form, calling for the passenger to submit a new eligibility application (this may be done in cases in which the original application is unclear or incomplete).

The HOP always reserves the right to refuse to renew an eligibility status, or to deny eligibility applications or renewal requests, based on the then-current FTA guidelines. If a new application, renewal certification, or information shows that the passenger does not meet the ADA eligibility requirements, the ADA 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 ADA 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 Personal Care Attendant (PCA). A personal care attendant (PCA) is someone designated or employed specifically to help the eligible individual meet his or her personal needs. A PCA typically assists with one or more daily life activities such as providing personal care, performing manual tasks, or providing assistance with mobility or communication. If a PCA is required, the PCA may ride without fare, however, the passenger must notify The HOP in advance of the need for a PCA.

Other than a PCA and one additional companion, other passengers

(companions) accompanying the passenger are subject to space available and must pay the full STS fare.

### **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 in order to ensure that adequate space is available for the animal.

### **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.

## **Visitors**

Visitors to The HOP service area may become eligible for ADA service in one of two ways. The visitor can present documentations from his/her home jurisdiction's ADA complementary paratransit system that he/she is eligible. The HOP will accept the other jurisdiction's ADA eligibility ID card for the visitor or other documentation verifying the visitor is ADA eligible. The HOP will issue a temporary ID card valid for no more than 21 days from the date of issue, and the visitor will be immediately able to use the ADA complementary paratransit service by The HOP.

If the visitor's disability is apparent, The HOP may elect to provide temporary eligibility immediately. If the visitor's disability is not readily apparent, the visitor can provide written proof of the disability through a doctor's letter, or from rehabilitation professional. In this situation, the visitor must also provide The HOP with documented proof of residence (driver's license or other proof of residence) in another city to be eligible as a visitor here. Once the documentation is presented satisfactorily, The HOP can make service available on the basis of a statement by the visitor that his/her disability prevents him/her from using regular fixed route service. The HOP can then issue The HOP's ID card with a 21 day eligibility period.

The HOP is not required to provide more than 21 days of visitor status within any 365 day period, but special circumstances may be considered.

## **Reasonable Modifications**

Passengers with disabilities sometimes face unusual circumstances when attempting to use The HOP. The HOP has a policy whereby requests for reasonable modifications may be considered from

people with disabilities, whether using the fixed route service or the ADA 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:

- 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;
- STS drivers may pick-up at specific entrances at locations with multiple entrances;
- STS 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 personal care attendant. Such situations are not considered as reasonable 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 reasonable 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 reasonable modification because another driver can still provide the trip. A reasonable 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 reasonable modification, as it would place an undue burden on The HOP.

The HOP prefers advance notice for reasonable 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 ADA complementary paratransit is provided are limited to the following hours. These are the hours during which regular fixed route service is provided. 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	5:25 AM – 6:45 PM
Harker Heights STS	5:25 AM to 10:35 AM & 1:35 PM to 6:45 PM
Saturday & Sunday	CLOSED
Holidays	(See “Holidays”)

## **SCHEDULING HOURS**

Monday – Friday	8 AM – 5 PM
Sunday and Holidays	8 AM – 5 PM

# 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. Please note that trips are provided as space-available, and so it is recommended the trips be scheduled as far in advance as is feasible for the passenger. 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, as provided within the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990.

### **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 3:00 PM, the bus may arrive as late as 5:00 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 3:30 PM, the pickup time can be scheduled for 3:45 PM, providing time for the thirty minute pickup window (described elsewhere herein), and the passenger can expect a pickup time no later than 4:00 PM, saving up to an hour wait time.

There are certain trips such as medical trips for which an exact time for pick-up is difficult to determine, so the passenger should allow plenty of time when scheduling the return trip, and should allow for the thirty minute pickup window described herein.

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 6:45 PM, so any trips late in the day must be scheduled to ensure the passenger is dropped off no later than 6:45.

### **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, and will leave after that time, and the STS vehicle may not be available to come back for passengers who were

not ready.

### **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 ADA passenger is \$2.00 for a one-way trip. One authorized PCA for an ADA passenger may board without a fare. Each companion other than the one authorized PCA must pay the full ADA 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 ADA 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 STS 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 ADA 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 STS program, which provides service for ADA 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.
- 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.
- Shoes and shirt must be worn. No swim suits allowed.
- 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 on 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 ADA 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
- Juneteenth
- 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 designate 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.

# COMMENTS AND COMPLAINT PROCESS (INCLUDING ADA COMPLAINTS)

Compliments, comments and/or complaints should be submitted via telephone contact with the Transportation Clerk or in writing. Please call **(254) 933-3700** or toll-free **1-800-791-9601**, use extension **5010** and your complaint will be taken by the Transportation Clerk and investigated by the HCTD staff. Correspondence should be sent to the Transportation Clerk at 4515 W. US-190, Belton, Texas 76513, or via e-mail to **comments@takethehop.com**.

- **Compliments** - If any staff has been particularly helpful, or has gone out of their way to provide assistance, please let us know so The HOP can acknowledge the employee's performance.
- **Comments** - Any comments or suggestions you may have can be sent to the attention of the Transportation Clerk.
- **Complaints** - Complaints should be submitted to the Transportation Clerk within three business days of occurrence to ensure an appropriate response. Serious problems should be reported immediately. The complaint will be investigated by the responsible staff who will send the results of the investigation to the Transportation Clerk. The Transportation Clerk will then contact the complainant with the results of the investigation.

The HOP considers its obligation to full compliance with ADA requirements seriously, and is pleased to assist anyone with their concerns.

# NONDISCRIMINATION POLICY

Per Federal Regulations and HCTD policies, the following practices are prohibited:

- Discriminating against an individual with a disability in connection with the provision of transportation service.
- Denying an individual on the basis of disability, the opportunity to use general public transportation service, if the individual is capable of using that service.
- Requiring an individual with a disability to use designated priority seats, if the individual does not choose to use these seats.
- Imposing special charges, not authorized by this part, on individuals with disabilities, including individuals who use wheelchairs, for providing services required by this part or otherwise necessary to accommodate them.
- Requiring an individual with disabilities be accompanied by an attendant.
- Refusing to serve an individual with a disability because the entity's insurance company increases rate or denies insurance coverage because of passengers with disabilities.
- Refusing to provide service to an individual with disabilities solely because the individual's disability results in appearance or involuntary behavior that may offend, annoy, or inconvenience employees of the entity or other persons.

# 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 business hours, selecting extension **5009**. On Sundays and holidays, the same numbers may be used, but callers will be referred to a recorded message center, and only trips called in between 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. on these days will be scheduled.

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 Customer Service Representative 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 ADA 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.