

Metropolitan Evansville Transit System



METS Mobility Policy

2019 - 2021



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MOBILITY POLICIES

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Eligibility: All Evansville citizens that are 65 years of age or older and citizens with a documented disability which limits their use of the METS fixed route system are eligible for Mobility Service. Also, the minimum age limit for children riding without a parent or guardian is Six (6) years of age. All Vanderburgh County citizens that live outside the service area as described under “Area of Operation” and are 65 years of age or older and/or with a documented disability are eligible for Mobility Service.

Area of Operation: Mobility service will be provided to eligible clients within the city limits and within a ¾ mile corridor along either side of fixed routes which extend beyond city limits. The service area will also include an area with a ¾ mile radius at the ends of such fixed routes. Drivers should refer any questions concerning interpretation of the service area to the dispatcher. A map of the service area is located in the dispatch office.

Personal Care Attendants (PCA’s): ADA clients can request approval to have someone accompany them to assist them during their trip, reaching items on shelves, communicating with medical professionals, etc. A PCA need not be a professional worker (He may be a family member or friend.) and is not required to pay a fare.

Companions: An eligible client is entitled to have one companion ride with him. If the client uses a PCA, the client is entitled to have one companion travel with him in addition to the PCA. Additional companions shall be offered service, provided that there is space on the vehicle transporting the eligible client and that transporting the additional companions will not result in a denial of service to ADA eligible clients. In order to be considered a companion for the purposes of this paragraph, the companion must have the same pickup and drop points as the eligible client. The companion will pay the same fare as the client they are riding with.

Reservations: Mobility service is not an ambulance or emergency service. Clients must schedule trips between the hours of 8:00 AM to 4:00 PM on the day prior to the trip. They can

also schedule their trip up to 14-day in advance to assure their requested time is available. However, if the requested time is not available the dispatcher will assist in negotiating an alternate time. "ADA clients only" will be offered a 2-hour window of the original requested time for their convenience. Clients are encouraged to use the 24 hour answering machine to reserve rides, however, it is understood that some clients do not have touch-tone phones and cannot access the answering machine menu, or because of cognitive problems or speech impairments, may have difficulty making themselves understood. For these clients allowances will be made so that they may reserve their ride by talking directly to a dispatcher.

Clients reserving a trip must be ready for pickup one hour prior to their appointment time, in order to enable the operator to get all clients within that hour to their appointments on time. **Clients should have everything they will be taking with them (including fare, purses, and coats) near the door and be looking for the van.** A client who has been dropped off at an appointment or other destination during the day must call for the return will-call ride by 5:00 PM, 4:00 PM on Saturdays. Operators dropping clients mid to late afternoon should remind clients of this policy.

Clients may schedule rides for extended hours (pickup or return after 5:00 PM), but all rides after 5:00 PM (including return rides) must be scheduled on the previous day.

Mobility service is not a taxi service. It is a branch of the fixed-route transportation system and more like a bus service than a taxi service. When a client is boarded it is very likely that, as on a bus, several clients will be picked up and dropped before the client is finally delivered to his destination. However, because of the demand/response nature of the service, the routes are not fixed and it is impossible to predict closely when the van will reach a given address. This variability is the reason it is necessary for the client to be ready one hour before his appointment time and may wait for a while before being picked up for a will-call return trip.

In cases where there is some misunderstanding about the destination of the client, the operator will make every effort to accommodate the client. Particularly when making a return trip, the client must often rely on staff at medical offices, stores, or other businesses to make their call for them. The staff often misunderstands or forgets to tell the dispatcher of the intended destination. For this reason the operator should always check the client's destination during boarding. It might be necessary for the client to wait for another van if the destination will not work into the operator's routing. If the new destination will work into the operator's current routing, the operator should board the client and inform the dispatcher of the change in destination.

Record keeping: Mobility operators will perform a pre-trip vehicle inspection and complete a vehicle defect card before leaving the garage at the beginning of the shift. The Operators will perform a post-trip vehicle inspection at the end of the shift and make necessary additions to the defect card.

Mobility operators will record client transactions on a Daily Driver's Log. Information included will be date, driver's name, vehicle number, starting and ending vehicle mileage, client name,

address of origin, address of destination, whether the client is ambulatory, scheduled pickup and appointment times, actual pickup and drop times, method of fare payment, and whether the client is a convenience rider. At the end of his shift the operator will total, record, and account for all fares collected that day.

Mobility operators will record fueling information on a fuel form when it is necessary for the operator to fuel a vehicle. Necessary information will include date, vehicle number, gallons dispensed, and odometer reading at time of fueling.

Void policy: If an operator arrives at a pickup address and the client is not in view or does not answer the door, the operator must verify that he is at the correct address and at the correct time by calling the dispatcher. The dispatcher may decide to call the client on the telephone to determine the reason for the lack of response. There are many possible reasons for the client not to answer the door including a misunderstanding of the reservation time, a last minute trip to the bathroom, or a hearing impairment. The dispatcher and the operator must use good judgement in deciding whether the operator can wait for the client, whether another van can be sent later for the client, or whether the client should be considered to have “voided” the reservation, relieving Mobility of its obligation for that reservation. In making this determination the operators and dispatchers should keep in mind that many of the Mobility clients suffer from degrees of cognitive disorders and confusion. The operator should also consider whether waiting a few extra minutes would jeopardize the probability of getting other clients to their appointments on time. The Operator, who is on the scene, often can assess the situation much more accurately than the dispatcher, who is getting information second-hand. For that reason the operator should not pressure the dispatcher over the radio to make a decision, based on sketchy information, whether the operator should wait or not. The operator, in most cases, after checking to verify the address and time, should make the decision, considering the time constraints involved.

If it is determined that a client will not be transported, the operator will leave a void slip in the client’s door or some visible but secure location and turn in a copy with his forms at the end of the shift. Clients who void reservations may have their Mobility riding privileges suspended. (See-No Show/Cancellation Policy) The client must contact the METS office to cancel any other service.

Fare policies: Payment for the ride is expected at the time of boarding. METS Mobility utilizes a two-tier fare structure. ADA eligible riders pay \$1.50 for a one-way trip and convenience riders pay \$3.00 for a one-way trip. County fare riders pay \$5.00 for a one-way trip. Clients will be permitted to pay for multiple rides for that day at the time of boarding. Clients will not be permitted to pay for rides scheduled for other days.

Operators will accept the following as fare: cash, ride cards (ADA and convenience), SWIRCA tickets, Mobility ride tickets, and personal checks (from clients approved by management). All proper fares will be accepted for the trip. It is not the operator’s responsibility to question the

source of the fare. Clients are responsible for having exact fare, but operators should give change from their money bag, if possible.

When a client pays for a round trip upon boarding the van, it is normal procedure for the operator to call that information in and for the dispatcher to record it. The dispatcher should then advise the operator who returns for that client of the prepayment. Sometimes, however, the dispatcher neglects to advise the operator of the prepayment. The operator will not question a client's accuracy or honesty when the client says he has already paid for this trip. If there is any question, the operator can make a note on his driver's log and question the dispatcher at the end of the shift. On the other hand, if the client cannot remember whether he paid for a round trip at his earlier pickup, it is quite acceptable to call the dispatcher, making it clear that the client cannot remember and would like the dispatcher to check the fare status.

Privacy: While conversation is discouraged during the trip, so that the operator can stay focused on his duties, it is inevitable that some clients will reveal personal information about themselves, either openly or accidentally. It is also true, because of the close contact between the operators and the clients during the routine exercise of their duties, that operators will observe traits, habits, and information of a personal nature concerning the clients. This information, even when openly given, should be considered strictly private and should not be shared with other clients. Any inquiries from one client concerning another client should be politely deflected.

By the same token, operators should not share personal information about other operators, other METS employees, or METS management with clients. Operators, likewise, should refrain from critiquing the performance of other METS employees, including other operators, dispatchers, maintenance workers, or managers. If a client complains to an operator about the job performance of an operator, the client should be encouraged to call a supervisor.

Radio conversation should be kept to a minimum and no personal client information should be transmitted. Operators and Dispatchers should take great care to avoid radio traffic which could be embarrassing to a client (Comments such as "She is really slow, you know" or "He made a mess on my van").

Client assistance: Operators will get off the van when loading or unloading clients and position themselves so they can assist the clients up or down the van steps. Operators will offer to hold items for the clients so that the clients may more easily and safely grip the handholds as they enter or exit the van. **Operators will assist clients from their door or lobby to and onto the van and from the van to their door or lobby.**

Seat and lap belts: All Mobility clients shall be encouraged to use available seat and lap belts. Operators will assist clients who request or need help in fastening their belts. If a client refuses to use a lap belt or is too large for the belt to reach, that will not be sufficient reason to deny service.

Wheelchairs: Wheelchairs must be in good operating condition so that the client can be transported without injury to clients or operator. Clients who cannot move themselves in their wheelchairs must have footrests on their wheelchairs to prevent injury to feet or legs while being pushed by the operator. The entity may decline to carry a wheelchair/occupant if the combined weight exceeds that of the lift specifications or if carriage is demonstrated to be inconsistent with legitimate safety requirements. Also, if such a wheelchair was of a size that would block an aisle and or interfere with the safe evacuation of passengers in an emergency, the operator could deny carriage of that wheelchair based on legitimate safety requirement.

Wheelchairs will be anchored using a 4-point tie down method, attaching the straps to points on the wheelchair frame to provide secure anchoring and to prevent damage to the wheelchair. A lap belt positioned just above the hips will restrain the client. Service will not be denied clients because their wheelchairs are difficult to anchor. *Operators will use a shoulder restraint for all wheelchair clients who have had both legs amputated above the knees.*

Manual wheelchairs are positioned on the lift with the rear wheels toward the vehicle for safety and to put less stress on the lift. If the operator rides the lift with the wheelchair client, the operator should be positioned behind the wheelchair for the same reasons. Operators should never ride the lift while standing at the outboard end of the lift, because it is unsafe and the cantilever effect of such an action places undue stress on the lift. The wheelchair locks or brakes should be set when the wheelchair is on the lift and the safety restraint should be fastened.

An exception to the rule concerning direction of the wheelchair on the lift is made for electric wheelchairs for two reasons. 1.) It is difficult for most electric wheelchair users to back onto the relatively narrow lift. 2.) Because of the design of most electric wheelchairs, the client is situated more toward the front of the wheelchair than with a manual wheelchair, resulting in a more equal weight distribution along the frame of the wheelchair.

The operator does not ride up the lift with electric wheelchairs but stands on the ground beside the lift as the client is lifted, offering support and reassurance by his presence.

Ramps: Wheelchair ramps must meet City of Evansville code requirements. Ramps and sidewalks must be structurally sound and be clear of loose dirt or material, and frost, snow, or ice.

Standees on Lift: Ambulatory clients who require the lift to board the van will stand on the lift facing the direction of travel onto or off the van and will hold the yellow rails provided. The operator will ensure that, for safety, the client holds on to the proper handhold and not grasp moving parts of the lift.

Parcels and bags: Clients will be allowed up to 4 packages or bags, no single package weighing more than 25 pounds. The operator will assist with packages on and off the bus. The operator will be expected to use sound and fair judgement in evaluating whether several small plastic bags (more than 4 in number) would cause the client to be ineligible for the ride.

Mobility radio procedures: Operators will be required to call for a radio check before leaving the garage. It should be understood that this is a three-step procedure. 1.) The driver calls base for a radio check, identifying the vehicle by number. 2.) Base replies to the operator that the calling “vehicle number” is “clear and to go ahead with mileage. 3.) The operator replies to base that he has copied the “clear” message.

Operators are required to call their “pickups and drops” as they pick up and drop off their clients (If the device is not working). For routine pickups and drops the operator will simply call his vehicle number and that he has picked up or dropped off on the appropriate street name, without waiting for a response from the dispatcher. This procedure will allow the dispatcher to keep track of the operator’s progress without the dispatcher interrupting any task he might be working on at the time and saving radio airtime.

If, however, the operator has any information that the dispatcher must be alerted to (for example, paid round trips [code ones], a clear vehicle [the operator is available for new runs], or problems finding a client), the operator must call base (identifying by vehicle number) and wait for a response from the dispatcher before transmitting the information.

After dispatching new runs to an operator, the dispatcher should wait for a response that the operator has “copied” the runs, before turning to other tasks such as answering the phone. The operator may have questions about the runs just dispatched. The operator should answer that he has “copied” the runs as soon as possible to free the dispatcher to tend to other tasks. It is not necessary to write down all the information before answering, only enough information to be clear to the operator.

When an operator or dispatcher makes a general call for help from anyone who can answer the question, the operator wanting to assist should call the operator who needs assistance and wait for a response before replying. Otherwise, there may be more than one person talking at the same time and no one can be understood.

Dispatchers and operators should speak slowly and clearly enough to be understood. If it is difficult to hear or understand an operator, the dispatcher should inform the operator of any problems (such as volume) so the operator can adjust his radio technique.

Complaints, compliments or service issues may be registered by phoning METS at (812)435-6188. The customer service representative will record all of the details of the issue. Complaints or compliments can also be filed on the City of Evansville website: www.evansvillegov.org

Rider Suspension Policy

SUSPENSION FROM SERVICE

Anyone who engages in prohibited conduct may be trespassed, ordered to leave, or otherwise restricted in the use of METS property or services by a member of law enforcement or a METS employee. Failure to immediately comply may be grounds for prosecution for criminal trespass

and/or unlawful transit conduct.

Immediate Suspension: A METS employee may immediately re-seat, refuse transportation, or temporarily suspend (for the rest of that day) from METS vehicles, facilities, or properties anyone who poses a safety or security risk, interferes with or impinges on the rights of others, impedes the free flow of the general public, or impedes the orderly and efficient use of METS vehicles, facilities, or properties. Further suspension must be issued by a member of the Operations Supervisory Staff.

Notice Procedure: Whenever possible, METS will provide a suspended person with written notice. The notice will specify the reason or reasons for suspension, duration, and effective date of the suspension, and state the appeal process.

Length of Suspension: METS will use the following guidelines, as well as other criteria, when determining the length of suspension. Other criteria include, but are not limited to, the individual's history of documented prior conduct/incidents. METS Supervisory personnel, may, using their own judgment, suspend a person from METS properties/service for an undetermined length of time, i.e., Until Further Notice.

1. If the suspended person has had no suspension violations, including removals, in the prior 12 months, and the prohibited conduct would constitute a misdemeanor in Indiana State or prohibited by 35-43-2-2, the duration of the suspension should not exceed 60 days
2. If the suspended person has had one violation, including suspension or removal, in the prior 12 months, and the prohibited conduct would constitute a misdemeanor in Indiana State or be prohibited by 35-43-2-2, the duration of the suspension should not exceed 90 days.
3. If the suspended person has had two or more policy violations, including suspensions or removals, in the prior 12 months, and the prohibited conduct would constitute a misdemeanor in Indiana State or is prohibited by 35-43-2-2, the duration of the suspension should not exceed 120 days.
4. If the prohibited conduct is identified as Class C or above felony, the duration of the suspension could range from one year to indefinite.
5. Permanent suspension may be appropriate under certain circumstances, e.g., Assault in the 3rd Degree or greater.

APPEAL PROCEDURE

Anyone suspended from METS service may appeal to METS's Superintendent of Operations or designee within 15 calendar days of initial notification. This may be done by requesting a

review of the suspension via email, phone or letter.

If a suspended person requests a hearing, METS will schedule a hearing (in the form of a phone appointment) within 30 days of receiving the request for appeal. The ruling will be determined by the Superintendent of Operations or designee and communicated to the suspended person.

When determining a possible return to service, METS will consider both the details regarding the current suspension as well as any past history of suspensions with METS.

Notification of Reasonable Modification: The METS Mobility provides reasonable modifications to individuals with disabilities by making changes to policies, practices, and procedures if needed by an individual with a disability to enable him or her to participate in The METS' ADA services subject to several exceptions. These exceptions include when the modification would cause a direct threat to the health or safety of others, would result in a fundamental alteration of the service, would not actually be necessary in order for the individual with a disability to access METS Mobility service or would result in an undue financial or administrative burden. In addition, METS Mobility will only handle reasonable accommodation requests that are practicable on the spot.

Disability Advisory Committee: The Advisory Committee is made up of Mobility clients, service providers, and other interested citizens.

The Disability Advisory Board Committee meets at 11:00AM on the first Friday of every month at the Civic Center Complex 1 N.W. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard- Room-301.