

# ROWAN TRANSIT SYSTEM PROCEDURES MANUAL



## **Mission Statement**

The mission of the Rowan Transit System (RTS) is to provide safe, efficient and affordable mobility choices to Rowan County residents through a consolidated transportation system managed by the Rowan Transit System with input from user agencies, under the direction of the Rowan County Board of Commissioners.

JULY 2021

## **Purpose and Maintenance of the RTS Procedures Manual**

The purpose of the Rowan Transit System (RTS) Procedures Manual is to document all aspects of the delivery of services and ensure compliance with North Carolina Department of Transportation – Integrated Mobility Division and Federal Transit Administration requirements. The manual will also serve as an orientation and training tool for all new RTS employees, as well as documents to be referenced when dealing with situations regarding passengers. The manual depicts all internal transit system procedures that must be adhered to by transit staff and passengers and approved by the Director of Transit.

The manual provides spacing between each procedure to provide a format whereby a specific procedure that must be revised and approved by the Director of Transit can be readily inserted into the manual. However, when this occurs the date of adoption and the revision date must be noted at the bottom left corner of the procedure. At the time of the initial adoption of the entire manual, each procedure must ensure the date adopted is also inserted each one in the bottom left hand corner.

The Director of Transit and the Transit Operations Manager are jointly responsible for ensuring that all procedures are up-to-date and consistent with operations or management and are officially approved at the appropriate level. The Transit Operations Manager is responsible for staying alert to changes in operations and NCDOT and FTA requirements and notifying the Director of Transit of needed revisions.

Other significant RTS documents, policies, and plans that are maintained separately by RTS or the County and that are important in terms of NCDOT and FTA compliance include:

- Rowan County Title VI Plan
- Rowan County Drug and Alcohol Testing Policy
- Vehicle and Facility Maintenance Plan
- Equal Employment Opportunity
- Rowan County Personnel Policies and Procedures
- Rowan County Financial Policies and Procedures
- System Safety Program Plan
- Transit Asset Management Plan

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## Procedure 1.1: Service Area, Days and Hours of Service

### Applies to: Staff and Customers

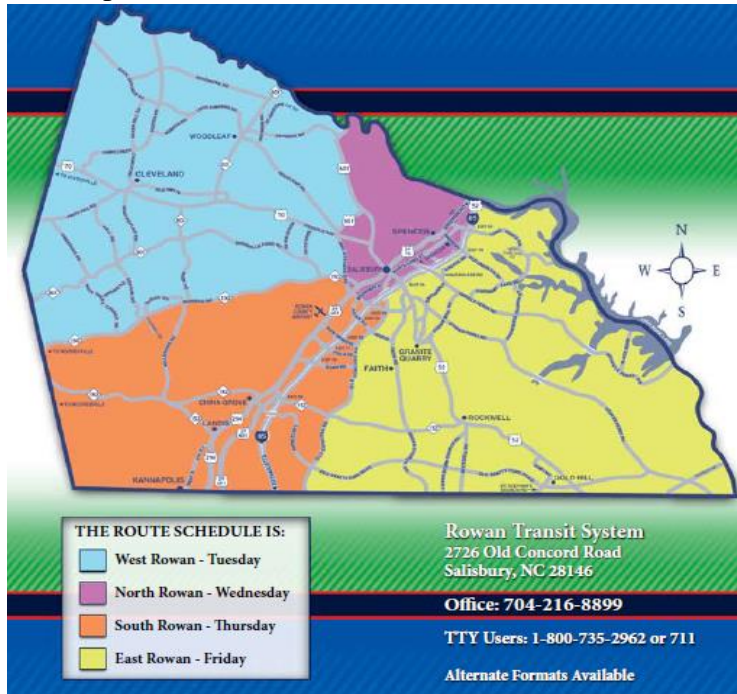
Purpose: To inform staff and the public about the geographic service area, types of service and hours of operation of RTS.

### **Guidelines:**

RTS is a non-emergency public transportation service for Rowan County residents. It operates Monday through Friday from 7:00AM to 5:00 PM excluding the following county holidays: New Year's Day, Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Birthday, Good Friday, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Veteran's Day, Thanksgiving (2 days), and Christmas (3 days).

Transportation service is available one day per week for each area of the county. By having designated days, RTS can operate more efficiently to help as many people as possible on the same day. THE ROUTE SCHEDULE IS: West Rowan - Tuesday North Rowan - Wednesday South Rowan - Thursday East Rowan - Friday

See Map and Areas Served below:



## **Procedure 1.2: Reasonable Modifications**

### **Applies to: Staff and Customers**

#### **Introduction**

In accordance with the requirements of Title II and III of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), Rowan Transit System (RTS) will not discriminate against individuals with disabilities on the basis of their disability in its programs, services, or activities.

Upon request, RTS will generally, provide appropriate aids and services leading to effective communication for qualified persons with disabilities so they can participate equally in programs, services, and activities. This also includes qualified sign language interpreters, electronic documents or documents in large print, and other forms of communication accessible to people who have speech, hearing, or vision impairments.

RTS will make all reasonable modifications to policies and programs to ensure that people with disabilities have an equal opportunity to enjoy all its services. For example, individuals with service animals are welcomed at RTS's offices; even where pets are generally prohibited.

Anyone who requires an auxiliary aid or service for effective communication or a modification of policies or procedures to receive RTS services should contact RTS at 704- 216-8888 or 704-216-8889 or by e-mail at [rowantransit@rowancountync.gov](mailto:rowantransit@rowancountync.gov) within 7 days before the scheduled event or need.

ADA does not require RTS to take any action that would fundamentally alter the nature of its programs or services or impose an undue hardship. RTS will not place a surcharge on individuals requesting auxiliary aids/services or reasonable modifications of a policy that is not also extended to persons without disabilities.

Compliments, or complaints that a program, service, or activity of RTS's transit program is not accessible to persons with disabilities should be directed to RTS at 704-216-8888 or 704-216-8889, by e-mail at [rowantransit@rowancountync.gov](mailto:rowantransit@rowancountync.gov), online at [www.rowantransit.com](http://www.rowantransit.com) or mailed to:

Rowan Transit System  
Attn: Transit Operations Manager  
2726 Old Concord Road  
Salisbury, NC 28146

In accordance with applicable Federal Statutes:

- Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act
- Title VI of the Civil Rights Act

Rowan Transit System (RTS) will consider requests for reasonable modifications as follows:

- The individual requesting the modification will describe what they need in order to use the service
- The individual requesting the modification is not required to use the term “reasonable modification” when making a request
- Whenever feasible, requests for modifications will be made and determined in advance before RTS is expected to provide the modified service
- When a request for modification cannot practicably be made and determined in advance (because of a condition/barrier at the destination of an RTS trip; of which the individual with a disability was not aware until arriving), operating personnel will make a determination of whether the modification should be provided at the time of the request
- Request for modification of policies and practices may be denied only on one or more of the following grounds:
  - Granting the request would fundamentally alter the nature of an RTS service
  - Granting the request would create a direct threat to the health or safety of others
  - Without the requested modification, the individual with a disability can fully use the RTS service for their intended purpose
  - In determining whether to grant a requested modification, RTS will be guided by the provisions of the United States Department of Transportation 49 CFR Appendix E to Part 37.169

Following are examples offered as guidance when making reasonable modification determinations.



## **Snow and Ice**

Except in extreme conditions that rise to the level of a direct threat to the operator and others, a passenger's request for an RTS operator to walk over a pathway that has not been cleared of snow and ice should be granted so that the operator can help the passenger with a disability navigate the pathway. If snow or icy conditions at a stop, make it difficult or impossible for the passenger with a disability to get to a lift or for the lift to deploy, the driver should move the bus to a cleared area for boarding; if such is available within reasonable proximity to the stop.

## **Multiple Entrances**

For pickup and drop off locations with multiple entrances, ADA Paratransit passenger's request to be picked up at home; but not at the front door, should be granted as long as the requested pickup location does not pose a threat. In the case of frequently visited public places with multiple entrances (schools, malls, employment centers, hospitals, airports), the ADA Paratransit operator should pick up and drop off the passenger at the entrance requested by the passenger; rather than meet them in a location that has been pre-determined by RTS assuming that doing so does not involve a direct threat.

## **Private Property**

When accessing private property (e.g., in a gated community or parking lot, mobile home community, business or government facility where vehicle access requires authorized passage through a security barrier), even if it requires authorization, RTS will make every reasonable effort to gain access to such property. However, the operator is not required to violate the law or lawful access restrictions to meet the passenger's requests. A public or private entity that unreasonably denies access to an RTS vehicle may be subject to a complaint to the U.S. Department of Justice and U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development for discriminating against services for persons with disabilities.

## **Obstructions**

A passenger's request for an operator to position the vehicle to avoid obstructions to the passenger's ability to enter or leave the vehicle at a designated location (such as parked cars, snowbanks, and construction) should be granted so long as positioning the vehicle to avoid the obstruction does not pose a direct threat. To be granted, such a request should result in the vehicle stopping near the designated stop location. RTS is not required to pick up passengers with disabilities at non-designated locations.

## **Fares**

A passenger's request to handle their fare media when the passenger with a disability cannot pay the fare by the generally established means should be granted in the situation where a passenger cannot reach or insert a fare into the farebox. RTS personnel are not required to reach into pockets or backpacks in order to extract the fare media.

## **Eating and Drinking**

If a passenger with diabetes or another medical condition requests to eat or drink aboard a vehicle or in a transit facility in order to avoid adverse health consequences, the request should be granted; even though RTS has a requirement that prohibits eating or drinking on vehicles. An example is a person with diabetes who needs to consume a small amount of juice in a closed container or a candy bar in order to maintain blood sugar levels.

## **Medications**

A passenger's request to take medication while aboard an RTS vehicle or in a transit facility, should be granted. An example would be allowing individuals to administer insulin injections and conduct finger stick blood glucose readings. RTS staff will not provide medical assistance as this would be a fundamental alteration of their function.

## **Boarding Separately from Wheelchair**

A passenger who utilizes a wheelchair requests to board an RTS vehicle separately from his/her device when the occupied weight of the device exceeds the design limit of the vehicle lift will generally, be granted.

## **Dedicated vehicles or special equipment in a vehicle**

An RTS passenger's request for special equipment (such as installation of specific handrails or a front seat in a vehicle for the passenger to avoid nausea or back pain) can be denied so long as the requested equipment is not required by the Americans with Disabilities Act or the USDOT's rules. Likewise, a request for a dedicated vehicle can be denied. The USDOT views meeting the requests for a dedicated vehicle as involving fundamental alterations of RTS's services.

## **Exclusive or Reduced Capacity**

A passenger's request for an exclusive ADA Paratransit trip may be denied as a fundamental alteration of RTS's services. ADA Paratransit is a shared-ride service.

## **Outside the Service Area of Operating Hours**

A passenger's request for service may be denied when honoring the request would require travel outside of RTS's service area or to operate outside its operating hours. This request is not a reasonable modification because it would constitute a fundamental alteration of RTS's service.

## **Personal Care Attendants (PCA's)**

While PCA's may travel with a passenger with a disability, RTS is not required to provide a personal care attendant or personal care attendant services to meet the needs of passengers with disabilities. For example, a passenger's request for RTS's operators to remain with the passenger who; due to his/her disability cannot be left alone without an attendant upon reaching his/her destination may be denied.

## **Intermediate Stops**

USDOT views granting an RTS passenger's request for an operator to make an intermediate stop; where the driver would be required to wait, as optional. For example, a passenger with a disability arranges to be picked up at a medical facility and dropped off at home. On the way, the passenger with a disability wishes to stop by a pharmacy and request that the operator park outside of the pharmacy wait for the passenger to return, and then continue the ride home. While this can be an especially useful service for the passenger, and in some cases can save RTS time and money, such a stop in the context of a shared ride system is not required. Since ADA Paratransit is by nature a shared ride system, requests that could disrupt schedules and inconvenience other passengers could rise to the level of fundamental alteration.

## **Payment**

A passenger's request for the operator to provide the transportation service when the passenger with a disability cannot or refuses to pay the fare may be denied; with approval from dispatch. Since RTS charges payment to ride, to provide a free service would constitute a fundamental alteration of RTS's services.

## **Caring for Service Animals**

A passenger's request for the operator to take charge of a service animal may be denied. Caring for a service animal is the responsibility of the passenger or PCA.

## **Opening Building Doors**

For ADA Paratransit services, a passenger's request for the operator to open an exterior entry door to a building to provide and/or alighting assistance to a passenger with a disability should generally, be granted if providing the assistance would not pose a direct threat or leave the vehicle unattended or out of visual observation for a lengthy period of time.

## **Exposing Vehicles to Hazards**

If the passenger requests that a vehicle follow a path to a pickup or drop off point that would expose the vehicle and its occupants to hazards; such as running off the road, getting stuck, striking overhead objects, or reversing the vehicle down a narrow alley, the request can be denied as creating a direct threat.

## **Hard to Maneuver Stops**

A passenger may request an ADA Paratransit vehicle navigate to a pickup or drop-off point to which it is difficult to maneuver a vehicle. A passenger's request to be picked up in a location that is difficult, but not impossible or impractical to access, should generally be granted as long as picking up the passenger does not expose the vehicle to hazards that pose a direct threat.

## **Specific Drivers**

A passenger's request for a specific operator may be denied. Having a specific operator is not necessary to afford the passenger the service provided by RTS.

## **Luggage and Packages**

A passenger's request for an operator to assist with luggage or packages may be denied (with dispatch approval) in those instances where it is not the normal policy/practice or is outside the normal policy/practice to assist with luggage or packages.

## **Request to Avoid Specific Passengers**

An ADA Paratransit passenger's request not to ride with certain passengers may be denied. ADA Paratransit is a shared-ride service. As a result, one passenger may need to share the vehicle with people he or she would rather not.

## **Procedure 1.3: Passenger Code of Conduct, Suspensions and Appeals**

### **Applies to: Staff and Customers**

#### **Section 1: Purpose**

Rowan Transit System (RTS) is a service of Rowan County, administered by its Transportation Department. RTS's mission is to provide safe, reliable, convenient, and efficient public transportation to Rowan County citizens and visitors.

These Rules of Conduct ('Rules') are designed to:

- promote the health, safety, and comfort of RTS Riders and assure that Facilities are safe, clean, and accessible.
- promote and facilitate the safe, efficient, and proper use of RTS Facilities and Services.
- protect RTS Facilities, staff, and Riders; and
- assure the payment of Fares.

These Rules describe conduct that is appropriate and conduct that is prohibited when on or using RTS Facilities and Services. These Rules also detail the procedures RTS will follow for ordering Riders who exhibit prohibited conduct off RTS vehicles and other Facilities and temporarily or permanently prohibiting such persons from using RTS Facilities and Services ('Excluding' such persons). They also describe the process to be followed for appealing such Exclusion actions.

RTS may suspend, amend, modify, or revoke the application of any or all these Rules at any time as it deems necessary or desirable.

#### **Section 2. Overview of Conduct and Definitions**

##### **Conduct**

All persons using RTS Facilities and Services shall exhibit conduct that supports and is consistent with the safe and orderly use of the RTS public transit system in which Riders of different ages and abilities travel in close proximity to one another on fixed route and door to door vehicles. Appropriate conduct ('Appropriate Conduct') means that all persons using RTS Facilities or Services shall:

- listen to and follow the lawful orders and directives of RTS Operators and Supervisors.
- obey written instructions RTS posts.
- pay the Fare; and
- conduct themselves in ways that:
  - does not threaten their own health or safety or the health or safety of others;
  - does not unreasonably annoy, disturb, or intrude on the space of others; and

- does not unreasonably obstruct the aisles, seats, or doors of vehicles or obstruct others from using or accessing Facilities or Services.

No person using RTS Facilities or Services shall engage in prohibited conduct. Prohibited Conduct is conduct that:

- is illegal under any federal, state, or local law, regulation, or ordinance.
- damages any real or personal property of RTS, Operator, any Rider, or any other person.
- injures an Operator, any Rider, or any other person; or
- substantially interferes with or tends to interfere with RTS Service or Facilities.

Specific Prohibited Conduct is more fully described below. A Person who exhibits Prohibited Conduct may also be subject to criminal process or civil legal actions pursued by RTS or others.

### Definitions

In addition to the definitions contained elsewhere in these Rules, the following definitions apply.

Exclude, Excluded, Exclusion - means a Person may not enter upon or remain on RTS Facilities or use RTS Services for a specified period of time – also referred to as suspended.

Facilities - means all real and personal property and equipment of or used by RTS in the provision of RTS Services. Facilities include, but are not limited to, bus shelters, bus stops and transfer points, and areas inside and adjacent to such shelters, stops, and points; buses and other vehicles and equipment; and signs.

Fare – means the lawful charges established by RTS for the use of Facilities or Services.

Fare Media – means the various instruments and devices issued by or on behalf of RTS to use for the payment of Fare, including but not limited to farecards, passes, transfers, tickets, and vouchers.

Operator – means the driver of an RTS vehicle or RTS authorized service provider (taxi driver).

Person – means any individual, association, or entity.

Rider – means any Person using RTS Facilities or Services.

Services – means RTS fixed route and door to door and related services and such other services as may be offered from time to time by RTS.

Service Animal – means a guide dog, signal dog, or other animal individually trained to work or perform tasks for an individual with a disability, including, but not limited to, guiding

individuals with impaired vision, alerting individuals with impaired hearing to intruders or sounds, providing minimal protection or rescue work, pulling a wheelchair, or fetching dropped items (49 CFR 37.3). Unless required by law, the term Service Animal does not include a therapy animal or animal used for emotional support or comfort. The term Service Animal does include a working dog or other animal of a law enforcement agency.

Sound Production Device – means any device capable of producing sound including but not limited to: radio, television, musical instrument, tape recorder, cassette or compact disc player, speaker device or system, computer, computer tablet, smart phone, and any sound amplifier or sound-producing device like those items listed, but excluding an auxiliary aid or assistive device when utilized by a person with a disability as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Supervisor – means the Rowan Transit System Transit Operations Manager or RTS employee in a supervisory position. Supervisors are authorized to trespass a Person from Facilities.

Vehicle – Any RTS bus or other vehicle.

### **Section 3. Prohibited Conduct**

Level I Prohibited Conduct includes:

1. Entry onto a Vehicle when a Person's ability to function safely and in an orderly manner is believed to be weakened or diminished by the consumption of alcohol or by the taking of any drugs or other substance.
2. Entry onto a Vehicle, or causing a child to enter onto a Vehicle, when the child is age 13 or under unless accompanied by a Person 16 years of age or older.
3. Disturbing other Riders or the Operator or impeding, interfering with, or obstructing the provision of safe, efficient, comfortable, clean, and hygienic Service. This includes but is not limited to:
  - a) Refusing to vacate seats and areas designated by signs for senior citizens and people with disabilities when requested by a senior citizen or a person with a disability or by the Operator on behalf of such persons.
  - b) Using a Sound Production Device except when such Sound Production Device is used with headphones or earphones such that sound from such device is heard by the user only.
  - c) Standing when the Vehicle is in motion in front of the standee line at the front of the Vehicle near the Operator's seat or anywhere else in the vehicle.
  - d) Bringing any animal on a Vehicle unless such animal is caged. The cage must be capable of being held in the lap of the Rider possessing the animal. This prohibition does not apply to ADA Service Animals.
  - e) Bringing on-board a Vehicle any packages, articles, or equipment that cannot be safely carried by the Rider in one trip and that cannot be or are not secured by the

- Rider outside of the aisle. Packages, articles, or equipment may not block any exits or restrict the free and safe movement of Riders. Strollers and carts are permitted provided they are collapsed, secured by the Rider outside of the aisle, and do not block exits or restrict the free and safe movement of Riders. This prohibition does not apply to wheelchairs, crutches, canes, or other mobility aids or assistive devices.
- f) Distracting, or attempting to distract, an Operator.
  - g) Engaging in canvassing, selling, or soliciting on or at a Facility.
  - h) Distributing any paper or other material on or at a Facility.
  - i) Changing a child's diaper in a Vehicle.
  - j) Spilling food or drink, littering, or otherwise leaving trash or garbage on or at a Facility.
  - k) Exhibiting personal hygiene that may cause a health or safety hazard.
  - l) Hanging or swinging from stanchions or other Vehicle equipment with feet off the floor.
  - m) Hanging out, reaching out, or putting any item, article, or other substance outside of Vehicle windows.
  - n) Engaging in conduct that may cause a safety hazard.
  - o) Leaving the vehicle while it is parked to pick-up or drop-off another customer.
  - p) Making or placing false trip requests.
  - q) Riding while under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs.
  - r) Repeated no-shows or late cancellations (less than one-hour notice prior to scheduled trip).

Level II Prohibited Conduct includes:

1. Entry onto a Vehicle without payment of the Fare or display of Fare Media and refusing to get off the vehicle.
2. Entry onto a Vehicle using counterfeit or stolen Fare Media.
3. Destroying any property including marking, soiling, painting, inscribing, writing, spray painting, or placing graffiti upon and Facility; removing, injuring, or tampering with any Facility; or attempting to commit any of those acts, except as specifically permitted or directed by RTS.
4. Stealing or wrongfully taking any RTS Facility or other property or the property of another Person while on or using a Facility.
5. Disorderly or disruptive conduct, including:
  - a) Fighting.
  - b) Assaulting another or threatening to inflict bodily injury on another through words or actions.
  - c) Offensively touching another or using force on another without their consent or intentionally injuring another.
  - d) Harassing another.
  - e) Screaming or shouting offensive and unwelcome words at another.



- f) Stalking another.
6. Smoking or lighting any incendiary device, including a match, lighter, or torch on a Vehicle; or using vapor products as defined by G.S. 14-313, including but not limited to electronic cigarettes, on a Vehicle.
7. Bringing any items of a dangerous nature on-board a Vehicle. Items of a dangerous nature include pistols, guns, and other deadly weapons as defined in G.S. 14-269(a); any knife having a blade of three inches or longer; BB gun; air gun; paintball gun; airsoft gun; bow and arrow; flammable liquids; dangerous, toxic, caustic, hazardous, or poisonous substances; sheet glass; and sharp objects. Fencing foils must be sheathed and left at the front of the vehicle with the Operator. This prohibition does not apply to a person who has a concealed handgun permit or others exempt from the need for such a permit as defined in NCGS Chapter 14, Article 54(B).
  - a) Obstructing or interfering with the Operator's safe operation of the Vehicle.
8. Exposing any private part of a Person's body (indecent exposure as defined in G.S. 14-190.9).

#### **Section 4. Enforcement of the Rules**

The Operator may refuse entry onto a Vehicle to any Person who violates these Rules of Conduct.

The Operator or a Supervisor may provide oral and written warnings and may eject (order a Person to leave) or Exclude Persons from Facilities and suspend the use of RTS Services as follows:

- If an Operator or Supervisor becomes aware that any Person is engaging in any Prohibited Conduct, such Operator or Supervisor may give that Person an oral First Warning to immediately cease engaging in the Conduct and/or not to engage in the Conduct again. If the Person does not cease engaging in the Conduct, or if the Person was engaged in any Level II Prohibited Conduct, then the Operator or Supervisor may direct the Person to immediately leave the Vehicle or other Facility.
- If a Person fails or refuses to leave a Vehicle or other Facility after being directed to do so by an Operator or Supervisor, then such Person is subject to arrest and prosecution. Additionally, failing to leave a Vehicle or other Facility after being directed to do so may also subject a Person to the Exclusion Procedure, described in Section 5.

The remedy described in this section is not exclusive, and RTS or any other person may pursue such further legal action as applicable and appropriate. If a Person receives more than three (3) First Warnings in any 30-day period, that Person may be excluded from RTS Facilities and Services for not less than seven (7) days or more than thirty (30) days for a Level I Prohibited Conduct infraction. For Level II Prohibited Conduct infractions, RTS reserves to make that

determination on a case-by-case basis but a minimum of 30 days for the first infraction and longer for more serious offenses.

### **Section 5. Facility Exclusion Procedure**

If a Person has failed or refused to follow an order to cease Prohibited Conduct and RTS determines that an individual should be excluded from RTS Facilities and/or Services, or that conditions should be placed on the Person's continued use thereof, the process is as follows:

- A. The Director of Transit will issue an Exclusion Order via certified mail to the Person stating the reasons for the exclusion, the time period of the exclusion, and the Facilities and/or Services to which the Exclusion Order applies. In general, Level I Prohibited Conduct may result in exclusion for not less than seven (7) days or more than thirty (30) days and Level II Prohibited Conduct may result in exclusion for not less than 30 days or more than six (6) months. Repeated instances of Prohibited Conduct will result in longer exclusion periods. If continued use of Facilities and/or Services is made subject to safety conditions or restrictions (e.g. presence of a parent or guardian in the case of a juvenile; accompaniment by a personal care attendant or aide), a conditional Exclusion Order may be issued specifying that the Person will be subject to exclusion unless the imposed restrictions are complied with. The Exclusion Order may be issued verbally; however, any verbal notice will be followed by a written Exclusion Order via certified mail.
- B. The written Exclusion Order shall also advise the Person of his/her right to appeal the decision and include a copy of the appeal procedure. The Director of Transit shall provide a copy of the written Exclusion Order to the Transit Operations Manager about the reasons for and length of the exclusion.
- C. If an appeal is not filed by the excluded party within ten (10) business days from the commencement of the exclusion, the right to appeal terminates and the Exclusion Order is final.

### **APPEALS**

- A. Any Person Excluded from RTS Facilities or Services may appeal such Exclusion Order by submitting a written Notice of Appeal to the Director of Transit at the following address: Rowan Transit System 2726 Old Concord Rd Salisbury, NC 28146, Telephone: 704-216-8888, FAX: 704-216-7978 and Email: [valerie.steele@rowancountync.gov](mailto:valerie.steele@rowancountync.gov)

Such Notice of Appeal must be submitted within ten (10) business days from the date of the Exclusion Order. The Notice of Appeal shall state with specificity the grounds for the appeal and all the facts that the Excluded Person believes are relevant to the appeal.

The Director of Transit shall review and may uphold, reconsider, or modify the Exclusion Order and shall make his/her decision in writing within fifteen (15) business days of receipt of the Notice of Appeal. Exclusion Orders shall remain in effect pending an appeal.

- B. Should the Excluded Person wish to appeal the decision of the Director of Transit, the Excluded Person may appeal the Director of Transit's decision to the County Manager by filing a written Notice of Appeal of Director of Transit's Decision within ten (10) days of the date of the decision of the Director of Transit at the following address: Rowan Transit System, 2726 Old Concord Rd Salisbury, NC 28146 Telephone: 704-216-8888 FAX: 704-216-7978 Email: rowantransit@rowancountync.gov

The County Manager or designee shall hold a hearing within thirty (30) business days after the appeal has been filed. A notice of the hearing including a statement of the time, place, and nature of the hearing shall be mailed to the Excluded Person by the County's Director of Transit. The Excluded Person shall attend the hearing and may be represented by counsel and/or accompanied by a representative and one attendant. The Appeals Hearing is an administrative meeting and is NOT a public meeting. All decisions by the County Manager or designee are final.

#### **NON-COMPLIANCE WITH EXCLUSION ORDER: TRESPASSING**

If any Person subject to an Exclusion Order enters the specified Facilities or Services before the termination date listed in the Exclusion Order, that Person shall be trespassing and is subject to arrest and prosecution.

The following guidance for riders is provided in order to make customer trips as satisfactory and safe as possible, and to help the County provide efficient and effective service that serves its customers.

Customers may use wheelchairs, canes, walkers, and other common mobility devices on vehicles. They may also travel with oxygen tanks and respirators.

Customers traveling with a child who needs a car seat must supply it. Customers are responsible for securing the car seat and for its removal. Children riding in the rear seat are required to wear a seat belt.

The service provider has a one-hour service window for picking up a customer. This means that the vehicle may arrive at any time up to 30 minutes before or after the requested pickup time. For schedules utilizing an appointment time, the vehicle may arrive up to one hour in advance of the appointment.

Be prepared, ready and waiting at the curb when the vehicle arrives. The driver will only wait for five minutes if you are not at the indicated pickup point.

RTS tickets are for the use of RTS customers, they may also be utilized by authorized companions. The County reserves the right to only allow one companion per one-way trip. The companion shall pay with one ticket per one-way trip. Personal Care Attendants may ride for free when authorized by the eligibility certification.

Trips involving intermediate stops are not allowed, each trip must be booked with an origin and destination.

In summary, there are two situations whereby a customer's right to use RTS service may be suspended or cancelled:

1. When the customer's behavior is seriously disruptive or inappropriate as described in Level I and II Prohibited Conduct descriptions provided above.
2. When a customer does not show up for reserved rides or repeatedly (a pattern of incidents) cancels service with less than one hour's notice.

#### Guidelines:

1. Abusive and disruptive behavior includes but is not limited to:
  - a. Physical altercations with agency employees or other passengers
  - b. Threatening, intimidating, or harassing language
  - c. Excessive profanity
  - d. Shouting at agency employees or other passengers
2. The employee must report abusive or disruptive behavior in writing to his/her Supervisor, Transit Operations Manager or Director of Transit.
3. The Director of Transit or his/her designee will issue a written letter to the passenger requesting that the abusive or disruptive behavior cease while the passenger is using the transportation service. The letter will warn the passenger to cease the behavior and inform them of the following suspension requirements.
4. The following are the consequences of abusive or disruptive conduct:
  - a. The first offense may result in a suspension of service for up to 30 days.

- b. The second offense within a one-year period shall result in suspension of service for up to 60 days.
  - c. The third offense within a one-year period shall result in suspension of service for up to one year.
- 5. Depending on the severity of the behavior, the Transit Operations Manager or Director of Transit may immediately suspend service to the passenger with no warning.
- 6. Passengers who display the behaviors described above due to a disability, sudden personal emergency or sudden illness are exempt from this requirement. Director of Transit may request documentation from passengers with a disability that causes these behaviors in order for a determination if the passenger can continue to use the service.

## **Procedure 1.4: RTS Privacy of Information**

### **Applies to: Staff and Customers**

#### **Introduction:**

The following procedure provides staff and customers details about RTS privacy of information. RTS wants customers to be educated about our service, so customers are encouraged to read this disclosure carefully to understand the service.

RTS does not sell customer information to third parties.

RTS does not share customer information with outside parties who may wish to market their products to you. Customers do not have to take any action or instruct us to keep your information confidential. RTS will protect your privacy automatically.

Within RTS, staff safeguards your customer information carefully.

Customers have choices about how your information may be shared and used within RTS.

RTS is committed to protecting your customer information in every transaction, at every level of our organization. For this purpose, RTS has designed procedures, standards, and technology, which are described in our procedures.

RTS is committed to helping you protect your privacy every day. RTS has been a trusted paratransit eligibility service partner for many years. Customers can count on us to provide you with the responsive, professional service you deserve, and to protect your privacy and security along the way.

The RTS Privacy of Information Procedures described herein illustrates how we protect and use your customer information. RTS believes that protecting your privacy is an integral part of the customer service we provide to you. RTS does not share customer information with outside parties who may wish to market their products to you.

At RTS, we value your relationship, and we work diligently every day to honor the trust you place in us. Thank you for using RTS.

## Privacy:

How RTS protects and uses customer information:

1. RTS begins by safeguarding the security and integrity of customer information.
2. RTS is committed to protecting the security and integrity of customer information through procedures and technology designed for this purpose. For example:
  - RTS limits employee access to customer information to those who have a business reason to know this information. Employees are required to honor our code of conduct, which includes standards to protect customer confidentiality. Staff are subject to disciplinary action if they fail to do so.
  - RTS maintains policies and procedures covering the proper physical security of workplaces and records.
  - Our physical, electronic, and procedural safeguards meet or exceed federal standards regarding the protection of customer information. RTS requires independent contractors and outside companies who work with us to adhere to strict privacy standards through their contracts with us. RTS uses technological means (such as backup files, virus detection and eradication software, firewalls, and other computer software and hardware) to protect against unauthorized access or alterations to customer data.
3. RTS collects and maintains customer information as part of servicing your reservations and usage of paratransit and other transportation services. In the course of serving you, RTS collects information about you from a variety of sources, such as:
  - Information customers provide to us on applications or forms, such as your disability
  - Information RTS receives from an outside source, such as your doctor, regarding your health history or treatment status
  - Information about your previous paratransit eligibility status from transit agencies and the companies that serve them.
4. The customer information RTS collects is used to serve your trip reservation needs.
5. Information may be used among RTS, as well as with authorized third parties, for several purposes, such as:
  - To process your demand response service requests
  - To process your requests such as updates to address and mobility devices
  - To service your account by using your information to provide RTS enough information to schedule a ride including pick up address and emergency contact information

- To keep you informed by issuing notifications of expiration, ID cards (if applicable), and policy or procedure updates
6. RTS does not share information with outside parties who may wish to market their products to you. We may disclose the information we collect, as described above, with nonaffiliated third parties that are acting on our behalf, including:
    - Companies and transit agencies that perform transportation services. We may also share certain information with companies that help us conduct surveys or marketing research.
    - There are other situations when we may disclose to third parties the customer information we collect as permitted or required by law. Third parties could include government entities, courts, or other entities (in response to subpoenas and other legal processes), and those with whom you have requested us to share information.
  7. It is important to note that we do not share customer information with other companies for the purpose of marketing their products to you unless you specifically request in advance that we do so. It is not necessary for you to instruct us not to share information with these outside companies, because we will automatically keep your information confidential.
  8. Within RTS, we share information so that we can work together to serve you.
  9. RTS may disclose all the information we collect, as described above, within RTS operations, including:
    - Our administrative and customer service departments which, for example, service your accounts.
    - Our transit evaluation team to determine ADA paratransit eligibility and other transportation services you may qualify for.



## Procedure 1.5: Records Retention

### Applies to: Staff

Per the N.C. Municipal Records Retention and Disposition Schedule (NCMRRDS) and Federal Transit Administration (FTA) requirements, Transit staff is to retain records for the following lengths of time (page number of NCMRRDS are cited):

NCMRRDS Record	Period	Page #
1. Agendas	Destroy after 1 year	1
2. Associations and committees	Destroy after 2 years	1
3. Citizen Complaints	Destroy after 3 years	2
4. Letters/Memo's	(a) Keep records relating to history or operation of Access (b) Destroy remaining records > 3 years	2
5. Policy Statements	(a) Retain 1 copy permanently (b) Destroy remaining records > 3 years	2
6. Emergency Plans	Destroy when superseded or obsolete	2
7. Contracts	Destroy > 5 years after expiration	2
8. Policies and Procedures	(a) Internal - retain permanent copy (b) External – destroy > 1 year after superseded or obsolete	7
9. Reports	(a) Retain perm. copy of biennial & annual reports (b) Destroy all others > 3 years	8
10. Temporary Records	Destroy > 6 months (mailing lists, reservations, etc.)	8
11. Purchasing File	Destroy > 3 years & when released from all audits	10
12. Annual Budget	Preserve 1 perm. copy for record	11
13. Authorizations Form	Destroy > 3 years & when released from all audits	12
14. Invoices – all	Destroy > 3 years & when released from all audits	12
15. Paid Check, bills, vouchers	Destroy > 3 years & when released from all audits	20
16. Receipts	Destroy > 3 years & when released from all audits	21
17. Work Orders	Destroy in office 1 year after completion of work	47
18. Applications	Destroy after > 3 years	77

- (1) N.C. Municipal Records Retention and Disposition Schedule, N.C. Department of Cultural Resources, Division of Archives and History, Archives and Records Section, Records Services Branch, August 15, 1997. (2) RTS extended timeframe. The NCMRRDS recommends destruction after all the complaints are settled. NOTE: ADA requirements require the retention of ADA complaints for three years.

## Procedure 1.6: Fare and Service Changes

### Applies to: Staff and Customers

#### **Fares**

Fares are collected by RTS staff. Fares must be paid at the time of boarding.

Fares are as follows:

Type of Service	Fare Per One-Way Trip
Share Ride EDTAP & RGP	\$2.00
Dialysis Urban & Rural	\$2.00

RTS will collect all fares and issue a credit to the appropriate billing code on the monthly invoice. All fares are to be collected at the time of service. Example; if there are 50 one-way passenger trips on the Share Ride RGP billing code, a credit of \$100.00 should be reflected on the billing for that month.

#### **Fare or Service Changes**

Purpose: Federal Transit Administration (FTA) grantees are required to develop a local process to solicit and consider public comment prior to a fare increase or major changes in the provision of public transit services.

This Rowan County procedure describes when an opportunity for a public hearing is required, the goal, objectives, how hearings will be conducted, and how the results of hearings will be considered in the decision-making process.

#### Goal

The goal of this procedure is to support the Rowan Transit System [RTS] mission of providing Safe, Efficient and Affordable Mobility choices to Rowan citizens.

#### Objectives

RTS has developed the following objectives that are critical to achieving the goal of keeping fares affordable and reasonable for passengers while balancing the need to maximize fare revenue to help maintain and expand transit operations for the benefit of all customers.

1. Increase Ridership:
  - a. Increasing ridership to support societal goals of reducing traffic congestion and decreasing air pollution. RTS also wants to adopt strategies that will encourage ridership by means of an affordable fare structure.

2. Establish Equitable Fares and Justifiable Service Changes
  - a. To be equitable, fares and service changes must take into account the needs of the citizens who use transit. The fare structure and any proposed operating changes should consider the economic and social requirements of transit riders.
3. Enhance Customer Mobility and Access
  - a. The fare structure and any proposed service changes should enhance the ability of riders to access the system and move through it with ease. The fares and any changes will be explained in public meetings in easy to understand language.

## **Public Process**

RTS will conduct a comprehensive public outreach effort to ensure that the decisions being made are reflective of the needs and desires of the community but still within the means and resources of the county transit system. *RTS defines a “major service change: as one that alters the existing routes, schedule or hours by at least 25% of the total service provided.* RTS will take the following steps in seeking public input:

1. Public Notice Procedures: At a minimum, RTS will place a legal advertisement in the local newspaper to announce any proposed fare or major service changes and describe how and where the public may provide comment. RTS will also prepare notices in the form of press releases and provide written notices on system vehicles, public bulletin boards and notify agency and business partners directly or by email.
2. Solicitation of Public Comment Practices: To ensure public comment is considered, RTS will schedule public meetings at times and locations where there is the most interest from those affected by the fare or major service changes in system operations. Public hearings will be designed to provide a means by which RTS may inform the public of the basis for proposed actions, and the hearings will not be designed to be adversarial in nature. The public hearing will be conducted in an orderly manner under the control of the Director of Transit or an assigned staff person.
3. Transit Advisory Board (TAB) Review of all Public Input information: The RTS Advisory Committee or TAB will receive all written passenger comments and other recorded minutes from the public meetings that are held for public input. Any individual desiring to address the TAB will be given the opportunity to express their support or disagreement with fare or system changes.

## **Final Recommendations and Implementation:**

The TAB will consider all information presented and give findings of facts and recommended actions to the Administrative staff. The Rowan County Board of Commissioners is the final authority on any fare structure change. Public notice of system changes and new fares will be communicated to the public in the same manner as in Section IV A.

## **Procedure 1.7: RTS Grants Administration and Financial Management**

### **Applies to: Staff and Customers**

#### **Purpose**

The purpose of these grant and financial management procedures is to establish clear guidance regarding RTS's grant and financial management and administration of Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) – Integrated Mobility Division (IMD) grants when Rowan County is the subrecipient.

FTA and NCDOT grant programs have requirements which require Rowan County to comply with so as to continue to be eligible for grant funding. As a sub-recipient, Rowan County must demonstrate to NCDOT the legal, technical, and financial capacity to manage and administer grants. Financial ability includes the ability to match and manage NCDOT/FTA grant funds, cover cost and operating deficits, financially maintain and operate NCDOT/FTA funded facilities and equipment and conduct and respond to applicable audits.

The policies contained herein outline Rowan County procedures regarding application, acceptance, budgeting, accounting, and administration of NCDOT /FTA grants, as well as in regard to compliance with FTA/U.S. Department of Labor requirements related to Section 5333(b) labor protections.

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### ORGANIZATIONAL MANAGEMENT

#### Legal Authority: Authorizing Resolution

To be eligible for NCDOT/FTA funding, The Rowan County Manager is authorized by The Rowan County Board of Commissioners to apply for and receive funding. This was affirmed when the appropriately authorized person signed the authorizing resolution form included in the NCDOT grant application package. This form is submitted annually to NCDOT-IMD as required and is also maintained in the Rowan County Finance Department.

## **Annual Certifications/Signature Procedures**

Federal and State grant awards require applicants and grantees to certify that they are in compliance with or will comply with a variety of laws and regulations. As a sub-recipient of federal and state transit funds ROWAN COUNTY signs and submits certifications and assurances on an annual basis with its grant application to NCDOT. The Rowan County Director of Transit is responsible for updating the ROWAN COUNTY annual Certifications and Assurances [C&A] and securing the proper signatures/approvals including both the approval of the Governing Board and the Opinion of Counsel. The annual C&A's are filed according to the following procedure:

1. The Director of Transit reviews the list of C&A's received from FTA and compares - them with the C&A's from the previous year.
2. If there are changes in the C&A from the previous year, the Director of Transit forwards the C&A's to the Board of Commissioners for review.
3. If there are reports to be filed in conjunction with the C&A's, the Director of Transit completes the applicable reports for submission to NCDOT.
4. Upon concurrence from the Board of Commissioners, the Director of Transit secures approval and signature on the C&A's from the Rowan County Manager who is authorized to act on behalf of Rowan Transit System
5. The Director of Transit compiles the approved C&A's and applicable reports for Rowan County for submittal to NCDOT.
6. The Director of Transit officially submits the C&A's to NCDOT with the application.
7. The Director of Transit is responsible for maintaining a file with all of Rowan County's past and present C&A's.

## **Governance**

The Rowan County Board of Commissioners has the legal and fiduciary responsibility of the organization.

The RTS Advisory Committee [TAC] is representative of the community and is able to provide community-based advice to the Board of Commissioners. The TAC meets regularly, is “actively engaged” and conducts business in an open and transparent manner. All members of the TAC sign conflict of interest statements as required by federal regulations.

The by-laws for the Rowan County TAC were reviewed and approved by the TAC on May 19, 2010 adopted by the Board of Commissioners on July 19, 2010.

## **Rowan County Continuity of Operations Plan**

The Rowan County Emergency Operations Plan was developed to address multiple hazards that threaten our County. Through use of a functional format, the plan encourages an Integrated Emergency Management System (IEMS) approach to disasters and fosters prompt, efficient and coordinated response operations by elements of the emergency organization. IEMS requires a system-wide integration of skills, people and resources. IEMS recognizes that plans developed for one type of emergency are extremely useful for other emergency situations and a significant amount of emergency operational capability can be established by addressing broadly applicable functions.

Rowan County has adopted the National Incident Management System (NIMS) approach as well, to incorporate the elements of NIMS essential to efficient management of emergencies and disasters that will involve local, state and federal response agencies. The federal government places criteria for all emergency plans to comply with Homeland Security Presidential Directive #5 (HSPD-5). "To prevent, prepare for, respond to, and recover from terrorist attacks, major disasters, and other emergencies, the United States Government shall establish a single, comprehensive approach to domestic incident management. The objective of the United States Government is to ensure that all levels of government across the Nation have the capability to work efficiently and effectively together, using a national approach to domestic incident management. In these efforts, with regard to domestic incidents, the United States Government treats crisis management and consequence management as a single, integrated function, rather than as two separate functions"...

Division of Duties:

**Control Environment:** Assignment of Authority – NCDOT Grants

The Rowan County Manager is authorized to execute agreements and contracts with NCDOT.

The Rowan County Finance Director or Director of Transit is designated to submit the following, as indicated on the Delegation of Authority form submitted to NCDOT:

- Reimbursement Requests
- Budget Revisions
- Budget Amendments
- Period of Performance Extensions

**Signature Policy**

The Chairman of the Board of Commissioners and the Finance Director are authorized to sign checks for Rowan County:

Governing Board:

1. Reviews and approves annual County Department budgets
2. Reviews monthly and annual financial reports
3. Reviews and approves all grant applications and holds public hearings
4. Reviews and approves multi-year financial and operating/planning reports

Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC):

1. A forum to discuss relevant issues related to public transportation
2. An advocate in promoting new or expanded transit Services
3. Oversight to program operations, setting and monitoring goals
4. A participant in local & regional transit planning functions
5. As a guardian of passenger rights

Conflict of Interest Policy / Code of Conduct

In accordance with Board policy and related legislation, no employee, officer, agent, immediate family member, or Board member of the agency shall participate in the selection, award, or administration of a contract supported by Federal and/or State funds if a conflict of interest, real or apparent, would be involved.

Rowan County Personnel Ordinance

RTS employees and system operations are subject to compliance with the Rowan County Personnel Ordinance promulgated by the Human Resources Department. They set forth all policies, benefits, and regulations as they are approved by the Rowan County Board of



Commissioners. The Rowan County Personnel Manual thoroughly address subject areas that are relevant to this RTS Grants and Financial Management Policies and Procedures and are herein incorporated as referenced. For more information, the web site address is <http://www.co.rowan.nc.us/>

## **Labor Protections**

Rowan County receives federal assistance under the Federal Transit statute and agrees to comply with the terms and conditions of the protective labor arrangements in 49 CFR Section 5333(b). Section 5333(b) of Title 49 of the U.S. Code (Federal Transit Law) requires that employee protections, commonly referred to as “protective arrangements” or “Section 13(c) arrangements” be certified by the Department of Labor and in place, before Federal transit funds can be released to a transit provider. Rowan County protects employee in the following ways: the preservation of rights, privileges, and benefits, the protection of individual employees against a worsening of their positions related to employment, assurances of employment to employees of acquired mass transportation systems, assurance of priority of re-employment of employees whose employment is ended or who are laid off, and paid training or retraining programs.

### **Section 5333(b) Labor Warranty (S.5311)**

As part of its application for Rural and Small Urban Program funding, Rowan County has signed the 14-page NCDOT-IMD Section 5333(b) Labor Warranty. In signing this warranty, Rowan County agrees to preserve the rights of employees. Rowan County also agrees to provide allowances for dismissed and displaced employees under the terms set forth in the agreement. Further, in signing the warranty, Rowan County agrees that it will post notice of its compliance with Section 5333(b) in conspicuous place and maintain records to document compliance. This form is signed annually by the official authorized to sign the grant application.

### **Labor Complaint Resolution Procedures**

Rowan County has policies and procedures to provide adequate and fair hearing of employee grievances as set forth in the attachment to this document. Rowan County also maintains records that track compliant investigations including the date files, allegations, actions taken and resolution. The grievance or complaint resolution procedures for the Rowan County are attached to this document.

### **Contract Management and Oversight**

In the event that Rowan County opts to contract or subcontract for any portion of its transit service in the future, Rowan County will monitor each contract for quality in fulfilling the contract

requirements as well as compliance with FTA requirements. The Director of Transit is responsible for reviewing each contract and determining specific monitoring requirements based on type of contract and funding utilized.

### **Quality Assurance Monitoring**

At a minimum, service operating contractors is required to report monthly on the following:

- Number of one-way passenger trips by passenger/trip type
- Number of trips requested (demand-response service)
- Number vehicle miles and revenue vehicle miles
- Number vehicle hours and revenue vehicle hours
- Accidents and incidents that occur during the provision of contracted service. All accidents or incidents involving passenger injury or damage to Rowan County owned vehicles shall be reported immediately
- Complaints received and how they were addressed. Any complaint about potentially discrimination (Title VI or ADA) shall be reported immediately
- Vehicle breakdowns
- Delayed performance
- Maintenance performed on Rowan County-owned vehicles
- Employee training conducted
- Drug and alcohol testing activity
- Operating and administrative expenses
- Fares collected
- Any other performance measures specified in the contract

These reports are submitted in support of the contractor's invoice. The Director of Transit is responsible for reviewing the contractor's reports and invoices.

Should a contractor fail to deliver service meeting the contract's minimum standards, the Director is responsible for following through with any expected corrections and/or penalties as specified in the contract.

Any complaints received regarding contractor performance shall be investigated by Director of Transit. This will include contacting the customer/complainant for further information, discussing the complaint with the contractor, and determining what actions are needed to resolve the complaint.

## **Monitoring Compliance with FTA Requirements**

Each contract funded by FTA funds includes Federally required clauses appropriate to the contract. The Director of Transit is responsible for monitoring contractor compliance with all FTA requirements applicable to their contract, including:

- Financial Management
- Appropriate Use of FTA-Funded Vehicles and Facilities
- Maintenance of FTA-Funded Vehicles and Facilities
- Federal Contract Clauses in subcontracts
- Disadvantaged Business Enterprise
- Debarment and Suspension
- Lobbying
- Title VI
- Americans with Disabilities Act
- Charter Bus
- School Bus
- Drug and Alcohol Program
- Equal Employment Opportunity

Rowan County also makes periodic site visit to the contractor's headquarters to review documentation of compliance with each applicable FTA compliance area.

## **Document Control and Retention**

Rowan County retains all personnel, time, payroll, audit, tax, vendor, client and accounting records for a period no less than five years or three years beyond the close-out of any grant that finances each expense, whichever is longer. All tax records are maintained for a 7-year period. All records both digital as well as hard are stored in a manner which allows them to be both secure as well as easily accessible.

## **Public Access**

Rowan County complies with North Carolina regulations regarding access to public records and follows the procedures set forth in Records Retention and Disposition Schedule Public Transportation Systems and Authorities issued by North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources in April 2006. North Carolina General Statute §132.1 states: *(a) "Public record" or "public records" shall mean all documents, papers, letters, maps, books, photographs, films, sound recordings, magnetic or other tapes, electronic data processing records, artifacts, or other documentary material, regardless of physical form or characteristics, made or received pursuant to law or ordinance in connection with the transaction of public business by any agency of North Carolina government or its subdivisions. Agency of North Carolina government or its*

*subdivisions shall mean and include every public office, public officer or official (State or local, elected or appointed), institution, board, commission, bureau, council, department, authority or other unit of government of the State or of any county, unit, special district or other political subdivision of government.* (b) The public records and public information compiled by the agencies of North Carolina government or its subdivisions are the property of the people. Therefore, it is the policy of this State that the people may obtain copies of their public records and public information free or at minimal cost unless otherwise specifically provided by law. As used herein, "minimal cost" shall mean the actual cost of reproducing the public record or public information. (1935, c. 265, s. 1; 1975, c. 787, s. 1; 1995, c. 388, s. 1.)

The default guideline that is be followed by Rowan County is if the agency generates, stores, or maintains a document, that document is a public record and shall be made available to the public upon request. There are exceptions to what the statutes designate as public records, including the following sensitive information:

- Personnel records, including drug and alcohol program records
- Social security numbers (of employees, applicants, and customers)
- Medical and mental health information about specific customers

Unless otherwise specified, all personnel and financial records will be kept in a locked, fireproof file cabinet in an office to be specified by the Director of Transit with the key provided to a limited number of authorized individuals. If stored electronically, all sensitive materials will be password protected, with the password provided to a limited number of authorized individuals. The following criteria apply to all RTS employees, and TAC members:

1. Employees and all persons associated with RTS must maintain the confidentiality of privileged information concerning staff and participants in accordance with North Carolina confidentiality statutes and regulations.
2. No identifying information will be released to an outside agency or person without the informed consent of the person. Such consent must be granted in writing and the release to inform will expire one year from the date it is signed.
3. The following will have access to locked files:
  - a. Employees, and others who must access information in order to perform required job functions.
  - b. Federal, State, local or other monitoring agencies.
  - c. Court order. After documents' holding period has been completed, documents are destroyed using safety sensitive measures such as shredding, in accordance with the Records Retention and Disposition Schedule Public Transportation Systems and Authorities issued by North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources.

## **Electronic Documents**

Electronic documents are backed up daily to ensure all data is maintained in the event of local computer failure. Prior to an employee being terminated that employee's access to computer files is terminated.

## **Financial Records**

All financial records associated with NCDOT/FTA grants are retained for a minimum of five years or three years beyond grant close-out, whichever is longer. This includes all personnel, time, payroll, audit, tax, vendor, client and accounting records.

All financial records associated with the procurement of vehicles and equipment purchased with NCDOT/FTA grants will be retained for a minimum of five years or three years beyond the end of NCDOT's title lien on the vehicle/equipment, whichever is longer. This includes all vehicle maintenance and repairs records.

All financial records associated with the development of a facility financed with NCDOT/FTA grants will be retained for a minimum of five years or three years beyond final NCDOT/FTA payment for construction, whichever is longer.

## **Grants Administration**

### **Grant Application**

Preceding the release of each application, the Rowan County determines which projects and services will be included in that year's application, based on area's Community Transportation Services Plan – CTSP or other IMD required planning process.

Grant application packages are received electronically from NCDOT-IMD. Included in each is a timetable for the processing and completion of the application along with specific instructions on how to complete each section.

### **Grant Award and Agreement Execution**

NCDOT sends official notification by mail, and usually contacts the Director of Transit in advance of receiving a formal notification in the mail.

It is the responsibility of the Director of Transit to forward the grant agreement to Rowan County Finance for processing immediately upon receipt. The County Finance Department prepares a budget amendment when necessary to ensure the County budgets are consistent with the NCDOT grant revenues and local match.

## **Grant Reporting**

The Director of Transit is responsible for ensuring that all grant funds are expended in accordance with specific grant regulations (allowable and eligible costs) and must ensure that any fiscal and programmatic reporting requirements are adhered to.

## **Financial Management**

The fiscal year for Rowan County is from *July 1* to *June 30<sup>th</sup>*.

## **Multi-year Financial Plan**

The Rowan County develops a five-year financial plan as part of its Community Transportation Service Plan, which is required for funding under NCDOT. This financial plan is based on planned service changes and identified funding sources and is used as a basis for the annual grant application to NCDOT as well as for the development of RTS's annual budget.

**Budget Development:** Under the Local Government Finance Act, each local government and public authority in North Carolina is required to adopt an annual balanced budget ordinance, and is prohibited from expend any moneys, regardless of their source (including moneys derived from bond proceeds, federal, state, or private grants or loans, or special assessments), except in accordance with a budget ordinance or project ordinance adopted under N.C. § 159-8 or through an intra-governmental service fund or trust and agency fund properly excluded from the budget ordinance. The legal adoption of annual/fiscal year budgets does not preclude the approval of grant budgets throughout the year if the funding year is different from the fiscal year.

RTS also prepares an annual budget that updates the CTSP financial plan, based on CTSP service implementation milestones and changes in available funding. The annual budget is prepared at the beginning of the fiscal year/in preparation for the annual grant application to NCDOT/in preparation for the annual budget.

**Budget Revisions and Amendments:** A mid-year budget revision or amendment may necessary when the revenues unexpectedly increase or decrease, or expenditures are accruing at a faster rate than budgeted for. Grants are often amended to shift allocated funds from one cost category to another, increase or decrease the grant budget, change the grant period or to alter the programmatic requirements. Any amendment that alters the total grant revenues is prepared by the Director of Transit and submitted to the County Finance Director. Any budget amendment raising or lowering the expected grant revenue must be approved by the Board of Commissioners.

**Structure of Accounts:** Rowan County has chosen to use its own chart of accounts uniform to the Rowan County Finance Department procedures. Therefore, RTS must convert County expenditures to the UPTAS chart of account when requesting reimbursement from NCDOT for grant-related expenses.

## Procedure 1.8: Charter Service

### Applies to: Staff and Customers

NCDOT requires all subrecipients seeking Federal or State assistance to acquire or operate any public transportation equipment or facilities to enter into a "Charter Service Agreement," which states: "The subrecipient agrees that it, and each if its subcontractors at any level who use FTA or NCDOT funded vehicles, may provide charter service using equipment or facilities acquired with Federal/State assistance only in compliance with the regulations set out in 49 CFR 604." Subrecipients must agree to comply with the charter service requirement in 49 CFR 604 in our annual FTA/NCDOT Certifications and Assurances and comply with the recordkeeping and reporting requirements.

### **Subpart A-General provisions**

#### Purpose (Section 604.1)

The purpose of this part is to implement 49 U.S.C. 5323(d), which protects private charter operators from unauthorized competition from recipients of Federal financial assistance under the Federal Transit Laws.

This subpart specifies which entities shall comply with the charter service regulations; defines terms used in this part; explains procedures for an exemption from this part; and sets out the contents of a charter service agreement.

**Charter Service** under 49 CFR Part 604 means, but does not include demand response service to individuals:

1. Transportation provided by a recipient at the request of a third party for the exclusive use of a bus or van for a negotiated price. The following features may be characteristic of charter service:
  - (i) A third party pays the transit provider a negotiated price for the group;
  - (ii) Any fares charged to individual members of the group are collected by a third party;
  - (iii) The service is not part of the transit provider's regular scheduled service, or is offered for a limited period of time; or
  - (iv) A third party determines the origin and destination of the trip as well as scheduling; or
2. Transportation provided by a recipient to the public for events or functions that occur on an irregular basis or for a limited duration and:
  - (i) A premium fare is charged that is greater than the usual or customary fixed route fare; or
  - (ii) The service is paid for in whole or in part by a third party.



#### Exceptions (Subpart B)

- Government Officials (Section 605.6)
- Qualified Human Service Organizations (elderly, persons with disabilities, and low-income individuals) (604.7)
  
- When no registered charter provider responds to a notice sent by a recipient (Section 604.11)
- Leasing (must exhaust all available vehicles first) (Section 604.9)
- By agreement with all registered charter providers (Section 604.12)
- Petitions to the Administrator: (Section 604.11) Events of Regional or National Significance (604.10) Hardship (Section 604.8)

#### **Discretion (Section 604.13)**

##### Reporting Requirements for all Exceptions (Section 604.12)

This section set out the reporting requirements for public transit agencies that provide charter service pursuant to an exception.

1. A recipient that provides charter service in accordance with one or more of the exceptions contained in this subpart shall maintain the required notice and records in an electronic format for a period of at least three years from the date of the service or lease. A recipient may maintain the required records in other formats in addition to the electronic format.
2. In addition to the requirements identified in paragraph (a) of this section, the records required under this subpart shall include a clear statement identifying which exception the recipient relied upon when it provided the charter service.
3. Beginning on July 30, 2008, a recipient providing charter service under these exceptions shall post the records required under this subpart on the FTA charter registration Web site 30 days after the end of each calendar quarter.
4. A recipient may exclude specific origin and destination information for safety and security reasons. If a recipient excludes such information, the record of the service shall describe the reason why such information was excluded and provide generalized information instead of providing specific origin and destination information.

##### Registration of Private Charter Operators (Subpart C Section 604.13)

This section sets out the required information a private charter provider must submit in order to be considered a registered charter provider. Private charter operators shall provide the following information at <http://www.fta.dot.gov/CharterRegistration> to be considered a registered charter provider:

1. Company name, address, phone number, email address, and facsimile number;
2. Federal and, if available state motor carrier identifying number;
3. The geographic service areas of public transit agencies, as identified by the transit agency's zip code, in which the private charter operator intends to provide charter service;
4. The number of buses or vans the private charter operator owns;

5. A certification that the private charter operator has valid insurance; and
6. Whether willing to provide free or reduced rate charter service to registered qualified human service organizations.

#### Recipient's Notification to Registered Charter Providers (Section 604.14)

The section requires public transit agencies to provide notice to registered charter providers when the public transit agency is interested in providing the requested charter service.

1. Upon receiving a request for charter service, a recipient may:
  - a. Decline to provide the service, with or without referring the requestor to FTA's charter registration Web site ([http://www.fta.dot.gov/laws/leg\\_reg\\_179.html](http://www.fta.dot.gov/laws/leg_reg_179.html));
  - b. Provide the service under an exception provided in subpart B of this part; or
  - c. Provide notice to registered charter providers as provided in this section and provide the service pursuant to Section 604.9.
2. The public transit agency must provide the following information via email:
  - a. Email notice of the request shall be sent by the close of business on the day the recipient receives the request unless the recipient received the request after 2 p.m., in which case the recipient shall send the notice by the close of business the next business day;
  - b. Email notice sent to the list of registered charter providers shall include:
    - i. Customer name, address, phone number, and email address (if available);
    - ii. Requested date of service;
    - iii. Approximate number of passengers;
    - iv. Whether the type of equipment requested is (are) bus(es) or van(s); and
    - v. Trip itinerary and approximate duration; and
3. If the recipient intends to provide service that meets the definition of charter service under Section 604.3(c)(2), the email notice must include the fare the recipient intends to charge for the service.
4. When an e-mail is returned as "undeliverable " the public transit agency will send notification of the requested charter service by facsimile. The public transit agencies must maintain a record of the " undeliverable" e-mail notification and confirmation that a facsimile was sent to the number provided by the registered provider.

Subpart D- Registration of Qualified Human Service Organizations and Duties for Recipients With Respect to Charter Registration Web site Section 604.15 Registration of qualified human service organizations.

1. Qualified Human Service organizations not receiving Federal funds must provide the following information:

- a. Name or organization, address, phone number, email address, and facsimile number; The geographic service area of the recipient in which the qualified human service organization resides,
  - b. Basic financial information regarding the qualified human service organization and whether the qualified human service organization is exempt from taxation under sections 501 (c) (1), (3), (4), or (19) of the Internal Code, and whether it is a unit of Federal, State or local government;
  - c. Whether the qualified human service organization receives funds directly or indirectly from a State or local program, and if so, which program(s); and
  - d. A narrative statement describing the types of charter service trips and the qualified human service organization may request from a recipient and how that service is consistent with the mission of the qualified human service organization.
2. A public transit agency may only provide service if the QHSO is registered at least 60 days before the date of the first request for charter service.

#### Registration of Qualified Human Service Organizations (Section 604.15)

This section set forth the registration requirements for qualified human service organizations (QHSO). Besides the basic information of organization name, address, and telephone, etc., the requirements also include basic financial information and a certification that funding received from a state or local program includes funding for transportation.

Charter service is defined as transportation service offered to the public on an exclusive basis (either as individuals or as groups). It is provided with a vehicle that is licensed to render charter service and engaged at a specific price for the trip or period of time, usually on a reservation or contractual basis.

In the event any one exception listed below apply, Rowan Transit System (RTS) will accommodate your charter needs as long as the charter times are incidental to our regular service and both RTS and the local private charter operator, if any, are in agreement to the charter being performed. In the unlikely event the local private charter operator is not in agreement with the charter being performed by RTS, RTS will submit the charter request in writing to the Federal Transit Administration, Region VI Administrator for approval.

#### Exceptions:

- There are no willing and able private charter operators.
- The private charter operator(s) does not have the capacity needed for a particular charter trip.
- The private charter operator is unable to provide equipment accessible to the elderly and persons with disabilities.
- The charter service that would be provided would result in a hardship on users.
- Private charter operators are not capable of providing service for special events.

- Nonprofit social service agencies that are governmental entities or organizations exempt from taxation under Internal Revenue Code 501(C) (1), (3), (4), and (19), provided that the agency is contracting for service for persons with disabilities; is a recipient of funds under certain U.S. Department Health and Human Services (USDHHS) program; or has been State-certified according to the procedure set forth in Section 604.9 (b) (5) (iii) of the Charter Service Regulation.
- Social service agencies that are governmental entities or organizations exempt under Internal Revenue Code 501(c) (1), (3), (4) and (19), provided that the agency is contracting for service for elderly persons.

**Duties for recipient with respect to charter registration web site (Section 604.16)** Each recipient shall ensure that its affected employees and contractors have the necessary competency to effectively use the FTA charter registration web site.

Advisory Opinions (Subpart E) (Section 604.18-24)

The subpart allows for public transit agencies and private operators to request an advisory opinion from the Office of the Chief Counsel at FTA.

- An interested party may request an advisory opinion from the Office of the Chief Counsel.
- A registered charter provider may include in its request for an advisory opinion a request for a cease and desist order (<http://www.regulations.gov;FTA-2007-0023> this docket keeps track of all advisory opinions and cease and desist orders granted or denied).
- Registered charter providers seeking a cease and desist order serve a copy of the request on the affected public transit agency by e-mail or facsimile.
- The registered charter provider must certify that it telephoned the public transit agency and informed an appropriate official of the submission of the request for cease and desist order in its request for an advisory opinion.
- Chief Counsel will make every effort to make decisions 10 days after completed request.
- Complaints and decisions regarding removal of private charter operators or QHSO from registration list (Section 604.26)
- A registered charter provider or a recipient may petition to have a registered charter provider or QHSO removed from the charter registration website.
- Reasons for removal:
  - Bad faith,
  - Fraud
  - Lapse of insurance
  - Lapse of other documentation; or
  - The filing of more than one complaint, which on its face, does not state a claim that warrants an investigation or further action by FTA

#### Complaints, answers, replies, and other documents (Section 604.27)

- A registered charter provider, or its duly authorized representative ("complaint"), affected by an alleged noncompliance of this part may file a complaint with the Office of the Chief Counsel.
- A complaint must be dismissed by the Chief Counsel because it is incomplete (without prejudice) or because FTA does not have jurisdiction (with prejudice).
- FTA has 110 days to investigate the basis of the complaint.
- If complaint has merit, Chief Counsel may decide the complaint based on pleadings or assign the matter to a presiding official for a hearing.
- Chief Counsel's decision may be appealed to the Administrator or the Administrator may review the matter on his or her own initiative.

**Complaints, Answers, Replies and Other Documents (Subpart F Section 604.27)** This section sets out the content requirements for complaints and provides timeframes for the filing of complaints, answers, replies, and rebuttals. This section also allows a complainant to withdraw its complaint at any time.

#### Remedies (Section 604.47)

If the Chief Counsel determines that a violation of this part occurred, he or she may take one or more of the following actions:

1. Bar the recipient from receiving future Federal financial assistance from FTA;
2. Order the withholding of a reasonable percentage of available Federal financial assistance; or
3. Pursue suspension and debarment of the recipient, its employees, or its contractors.

A Pattern of violations can only be established for unauthorized charter service- not for reporting or paperwork.

## Procedure 1.9: Accidents and Incidents Guidelines

### Applies to: Staff and Customers

**Purpose:** To provide guidance to employees involved in vehicle accidents and incidents.

Definitions:

1. An accident is any circumstance involving a transit vehicle, whether in revenue service or not, and/or a secondary vehicle(s) resulting in death, bodily injury resulting in immediate medical treatment away from the scene of the accident, and/or disability damage to one or more vehicles required transport from the scene by tow truck or other vehicle. For purposes of this definition, disabling damage means damage which precludes departure of any vehicle from the scene of the occurrence in its usual manner in daylight after simple repairs. Disabling damage includes damage to vehicles that could have been operated but would have been further damaged if so operated, but does not include damage which can be remedied temporarily at the scene of the occurrence without special tools or parts, tire disablement without other damage even if no spare tire is available, or damage to headlights, taillights, turn signals, horn, or windshield wipers that makes them inoperative.
2. An incident is any circumstance involving a transit vehicle, whether in revenue service or not, resulting in damage to the transit vehicle and/or property, bodily injury to a passenger or employee, or violation of any policy or procedure on prohibited behavior (i.e. disruptive behavior, prohibited items brought on board, etc.).

Guidelines for Accidents:

All employees must report all accidents to their immediate supervisor immediately. The Transportation Manager must complete and submit the RTS/County accident report.

A driver involved in an accident must perform the following actions:

1. Check for personal injury.
2. Check all passengers for personal injury.
3. For all accidents involving secondary vehicles, check the driver and passengers of the other vehicle(s) for injury.
4. If the vehicle(s) is in operational condition, move to a safe area not obstructing the flow of traffic.
5. Notify dispatch of the accident. The driver must then notify local law enforcement and emergency services personnel if required.

6. Remain at the scene of the accident until released by law enforcement or emergency services personnel.
7. If necessary, make tow arrangements.
  - a. If the transit vehicle requires tow service, the responding supervisor or manager will make arrangements.
  - b. If an involved secondary vehicle requires tow services, the driver or owner of that vehicle will be responsible for arrangements.
  - c. If no supervisor or manager is able to respond, inform dispatch that tow services are required.
8. Report for any required drug and alcohol testing as outlined in the agency Drug and Alcohol Policy.
9. Complete any accident documentation required by the County.
10. If an injured passenger wishes to make a claim, drivers should refer them to the Transit Operations Manager who shall record all relevant information relating to the claim and prepare a written description of the incident, the claim, and the need for further action and/or disposition. This report should be transmitted to the Director of Transit within 24 hours after the incident was reported to the Transit Operations Manager. Drivers should not assume any obligations or attempt to settle any claim themselves. Claims involving incidents (described below) should also follow the accident claim protocol.

Guidelines for Incidents:

All employees must report all incidents to their immediate supervisor immediately. If it is not possible to report an incident as it occurs, the driver must report the incident when they return to base or within 24 hours of the occurrence, whichever is most feasible.

A driver involved in an incident must perform the following actions:

1. Check for personal injury.
2. Check all passengers for injury.
3. Notify dispatch of the incident. The driver must then notify local law enforcement and emergency services personnel if required.
4. If passengers are on board and the vehicle is operational:
  - a. Complete the assigned trips, informing dispatch that a vehicle incident as occurred.
  - b. After the final passenger has debarked, park the vehicle in an area where it will not obstruct the flow of traffic.
  - c. Complete an Incident Report form.
  - d. Submit the Incident Report form with the manifest at the end of the shift.
5. If no passengers are on board and the vehicle is operational:
  - a. Park the vehicle in an area where it will not obstruct the flow of traffic.

- b. Complete an Incident Report form.
  - c. Submit the Incident Report form with the manifest at the end of the shift.
6. If the vehicle is inoperative:
- a. Inform dispatch that a vehicle incident has occurred.
  - b. Request a back-up vehicle.
  - c. Inform dispatch that tow services may be required.
  - d. Complete an Incident Report form.
  - e. Submit the Incident Report form with the manifest at the end of the shift.



## Procedure 1.10: Service Animals

### Applies to: Staff and Customers

**Purpose:** To provide guidelines for the transport of animals on RTS vehicles.

RTS shall permit service animals to accompany individuals with disabilities in vehicles and facilities” pursuant to (§ 37.167(d)).

A service animal is defined as:

“Any guide dog, signal dog, or other animal individually trained to work or perform tasks for an individual with a disability, including, but not limited to, guiding individuals with impaired vision, alerting individuals with impaired hearing to intruders or sounds, providing minimal protection or rescue work, pulling a wheelchair, or fetching dropped items.”

RTS does not and cannot have a policy or procedure requiring riders to provide documentation for their service animal before boarding a bus or train or entering a facility; however, personnel may ask riders two questions: (1) is the animal a service animal required because of a disability? and (2) what work or task has the animal been trained to perform?

Service animals (e.g. a guide dog) ride at no additional charge but must be properly controlled. They must ride on the floor, or, if appropriate, on the lap of the customer. They may not use vehicle seats. Customers are responsible for the behavior and hygiene needs of their animals. Service can be refused or discontinued if a service animal is seriously disruptive.

All other animals may travel only in a properly secured cage or travel container.

Other service animal conditions described below:

1. RTS may refuse to transport service animals that are deemed to pose a direct threat to the health or safety of drivers or other riders, create a seriously disruptive atmosphere, or are otherwise not under the rider’s control. For example, a rider with a service dog is responsible for ensuring the dog does not bite the driver or other riders. Conversely, a dog that barks occasionally would likely not be considered out of the owner’s control.
2. A passenger’s request that the RTS driver take charge of a service animal may be denied. Caring for a service animal is the responsibility of the passenger or a PCA.
3. RTS does not prescribe limits on the number of service animals that accompany riders on a single trip. Different service animals may provide different services to a rider during trips or at the rider’s destination.

4. RTS may ask riders for notification of their intent to ride with a service animal in order to help ensure adequate space is available for the animal. (RTS will maintain such information in riders' files.)
5. Other riders' or agency personnel's allergies to dogs or other animals are not grounds for RTS denying service to a person accompanied by a service animal. Federal regulations explicitly state that service animals must be allowed to accompany individuals on vehicles and in facilities. Encountering a service animal in the transit or other environment is an expected part of being in public.

## Procedure 1.11: Packages on RTS Vehicles

### Applies to: Staff and Customers

**Purpose:** To ensure safety of passengers and to provide guidance to drivers on handling articles and packages.

Guidelines:

1. Passengers have a carry-on limit of four items, such as paper or plastic bags containing groceries. Items must be small enough to be controlled by the passenger or secured in a seat or storage area and out of the aisles. No big boxes, bulky items, or large bags that would be considered a “household move” are permitted.
2. Items must be under the control of the passenger or they must be secured to the vehicle. Items must be secured within in the vehicle (for example, using a safety belt) so that they do not move about freely and cause a safety hazard. Items may not block aisles or passenger entry doors.
3. The driver will assist passengers with transferring items between the vehicle and the curb. The driver will, upon request, carry one or two items weighing no more than approximately 10 pounds each to the main entrance door of the passenger’s destination. The driver is not permitted to enter a passenger’s home.
4. Any suspicious package or baggage should be reported to the dispatcher or public safety official.
5. Any non-suspicious package or baggage left on the RTS vehicle will be returned to dispatch and the dispatcher will log in the lost and found item.

## Procedure 1.12: Portable Oxygen Units

### Applies to: Staff and Customers

**Purpose:** To instruct employees on safe transport of portable oxygen units used by passengers.

Guidelines:

1. Passengers are permitted to board with portable oxygen units. Passengers should inform the office staff at the time of the trip request that they will be boarding with a portable oxygen unit.
  - a. Office staff are to advise the passenger of the estimated length of time that the passenger is expected to be on the vehicle. This may impact the quantity of oxygen the passenger requires.
2. The driver should only transport oxygen maintained in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. The instructions and precautions are usually printed on a label attached to the unit. Each unit should be equipped with a valve protection cap.
3. The driver must ensure that the portable oxygen unit is secured. "Secured" means the unit is not free to move when the vehicle is in motion. Passengers may hold the portable oxygen unit, or the driver will secure the unit.
  - a. Containers commonly secured to a mobility device such as a wheelchair may remain in those securements.
  - b. Containers attached to mobility aids such as walkers must be separately secured to the vehicle by the most secure means possible.
4. The driver will secure the portable oxygen unit and any spare tank by the most secure means available within the vehicle.
  - a. The driver should not secure the portable oxygen unit or other medical support equipment in the aisle. The driver should ensure that the seat of the passenger with oxygen does restrict access to exits or use of the aisle.
  - b. Since a release of oxygen could accelerate a fire, the driver should secure the portable oxygen unit away from any source of heat or potential spark.
  - c. The driver is not permitted to connect hoses, disconnect hoses or change oxygen tanks.

## Procedure 1.13: Passenger Assistance

### Applies to: Staff and Customers

**Purpose:** To provide guidance to drivers on passenger assistance.

Guidelines:

1. RTS provides door to door demand-response service. The vehicle stops at the curb in front of the customer's residence or at the main entrance of the building. Drivers are discouraged from backing the vehicle due to the safety and property damage risks inherent in backing a large vehicle. The customer is to board the vehicle at their scheduled pick-up time. The driver is required to wait no more than five minutes past the scheduled pick-up time for the customer to board.
2. Upon the request of the customer, the driver will physically escort the customer between the vehicle and the main entrance of the origin or destination. If a customer anticipates that they will need assistance, they are to request assistance at the time of the reservation, so that drivers can be advised in advance. **In particular, the driver should go to the door to offer assistance to any customer who is elderly or who has a disability.**
  - a. Elderly (age 65 and older) customers are classified as "E" and customers with disabilities are classified as "Dis" on the manifest. A driver who believes that a customer is not correctly classified on the manifest should inform dispatch so the client record can be updated.
  - b. In situations where the driver is unable to go to the door of the pick-up location of an elderly or disabled passenger, and the passenger does not appear after the five-minute wait time, the driver should contact dispatch, who will place a phone call to the customer to inform them that the driver is waiting outside.
  - c. Unless instructed otherwise by management, drivers are not subject to this requirement while there are groups of special needs individuals on the vehicle.
  - d. This requirement includes offering assistance with carrying bags (the customer is required to observe the RTS guidelines for the number and weight of bags).
3. The driver may not pass through the threshold of any building in order to assist a customer unless this has been pre-arranged with management through a request for a reasonable accommodation.

4. The driver should attempt to keep the vehicle in his or her line of sight while providing passenger assistance. The driver is not permitted to lose sight of the vehicle for a lengthy amount of time while providing passenger assistance.
5. Certain customers with disabilities may be unable to adequately care for themselves after arriving at their destinations. The driver will ensure that when dropping off a customer with these needs, the customer is safely inside or is left with a family member or caretaker.
  - a. Scheduling staff will ensure that a trip note is present on the manifest indicating that the customer must be received by a family member or caretaker or must be safely inside their destination before the driver departs.
  - b. When a family member or caretaker is not present, dispatch will attempt to contact the customer's caretaker using the provided phone number(s).
  - c. If dispatch is unable to reach a caretaker, the driver will bring the customer to the RTS office during the next period of availability in the schedule.
  - d. Dispatch will contact the caretaker to discuss arrangements for pick-up of the customer at RTS or an alternate public location that is accessible within the constraints of the driver's schedule.
  - e. Three occurrences within a 90-day period will result in a 15-day suspension of service to the customer unless they are riding with an attendant.
6. Driveways and walkways should be kept clear of ice, snow, and obstructions. The driver should provide passenger assistance unless the condition of a pathway would be reasonably considered too hazardous to traverse.
7. RTS has a "one-step" policy/requirement. A customer using a wheelchair must have a ramp that is clear of hazards and at an angle that does not put the driver at risk of injury. The driver will not provide assistance if there is more than one step with a reasonable height (i.e. a curb) to be maneuvered.
8. RTS may suggest, but not require, that a customer travel with a personal care attendant.
9. The driver is to carry an umbrella, supplied by RTS, on the vehicle to be used while providing passenger assistance during rainy conditions.

### **Other General Driver Expectations When Assisting Passengers With Disabilities**

The goal of RTS is to provide the mobility options that meet the travel needs of the community. To a person who uses a wheelchair or other mobility device, a trained and empathetic driver makes a particularly large difference in their quality of life.

Use the following guidelines when you are interacting with a passenger who has special needs:

1. Treat passengers with disabilities as you would like to be treated
2. Remember that a passenger's disability may not always be visible to others
3. Do not make assumptions about a passenger's abilities or disabilities
4. Any passenger may use the lift if they cannot climb the steps of the vehicle
5. When Assisting Passengers Who are Using Canes or Animals:
  - Always ask the disabled passenger if you can assist her/him prior to assisting the passenger
  - Assist from the opposite side of the cane
  - Amputees should be seated in cool areas during hot weather
6. When Assisting Developmentally Disabled Passengers:
  - Treat the passengers with respect. Be patient and repeat instructions when necessary
  - Be firm if they insist on doing something that will endanger you, them or the other passengers.
7. When Assisting Hearing-Impaired Passengers:
  - Look directly at them so they can see your lips
  - Talk normally (do not shout) and do not exaggerate your speech
  - Be prepared to repeat yourself
  - Get another person to talk to them if the passenger has trouble reading your lips
  - Use a pad and pencil when necessary
8. When Assisting Speech-Impaired Passengers:
  - Do not hesitate to ask speech-impaired persons to repeat anything that you do not understand
  - Be patient; the passenger's speech condition may become more difficult to understand if the passenger is under stress
9. When Assisting Passengers with Visual Impairments:
  - Do not touch the passenger until you tell them who you are and what you intend to do
  - Do not shout at the passenger
  - Before boarding the passenger, take their hand and show them the door openings as well as the seat and mention any hazards
  - When escorting the passenger, remain on the opposite side of their cane and have them hold your arm. Advise the passenger of any changes in ground texture or elevation level
  - When walking with a passenger, call out turns and maneuvers at least five (5) steps in advance
  - If the passenger uses a service animal, it may be helpful to learn the name of the animal for future reference. Avoid any abrupt movements toward the animal or the passengers

- Seat visually impaired passengers against vehicle walls when possible or seat the passengers in seats with arm rests in order to assist them in keeping their balance
10. Use special care in serving elderly passengers:
- Dispatchers need to be especially patient when giving elderly passengers information regarding vehicle routes and schedules
  - Give elderly passengers more time to get on or off the vehicle
  - Ask the passenger if they would like your assistance before assisting them
  - If the passenger refuses assistance, stay close to prevent them from tripping or falling
  - When assisting elderly passengers, do not put too much pressure on the passenger's arm
  - Be sure elderly passengers do not sit too close to heaters or other such hazards
  - Elderly passengers may need to be reminded where to get off of the vehicle
  - Keep temperature controls warm in the winter and cool in summer

#### Communication Tips for Drivers

- When talking with a person with a disability, speak directly to that person rather than through a companion or sign language interpreter who may be present.
- When introduced to a person with disability, it is appropriate to offer to shake hands. People with limited hand use or who wear an artificial limb can usually shake hands. Shaking hands with the left hand is an acceptable greeting.
- When meeting a person with visual impairment, always identify yourself and others who may be with you. When conversing in a group, remember to identify the person to whom you are speaking.
- If you offer assistance, wait until the offer is accepted. Then listen to or ask for instruction.
- Treat adults as adults. Never patronize people who use wheelchairs by patting them on the head or shoulder.
- Leaning or hanging on a person's wheelchair is similar to leaning or hanging on a person and is generally considered annoying. The chair is part of the personal body space of the person who uses it.
- Listen attentively when you are talking to a person who has difficulty speaking. Be patient and wait for the person to finish, rather than correcting or speaking for the person. If necessary, ask short questions that require short answers, a nod, or a shake of the head.



Never pretend to understand if you are having difficulty doing so. Instead, repeat what you have understood and allow the person to respond.

- When speaking with a person using a wheelchair or a person who uses crutches, place yourself at eye level in front of the person to facilitate the conversation.
- To get the attention of a person who is hearing-impaired, tap the person on the shoulder or wave your hand. Look directly at the person and speak clearly in a normal tone of voice. Keep hands, food, etc. away from your mouth when speaking.
- Relax. Do not be embarrassed if you happen to use the accepted, common expressions, such as “See you later” or “Did you hear about this,” that seem to relate to the person’s disability.

## Procedure 1.14: Personal Care Attendants and Accompanying Persons

### Applies to: Staff and Customers

**Purpose:** To provide guidance to passengers requiring a personal care attendant in order to ride RTS.

### **Personal Care Attendants and Accompanying Persons**

In conformity with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), when an RTS customer schedules a trip, the federal guidelines permit additional passenger(s) to travel with the customer based on the following criteria:

**Personal Care Attendant:** During the eligibility process, the RTS customer must have previously identified the need for a Personal Care Attendant (PCA) to RTS dispatchers or management. If the customer previously identified the PCA to RTS staff, the PCA (one person) is permitted to travel with the ADA customer free of charge (ADA 37.131). The PCA's name, current address, and current telephone number must be submitted to RTS. During the trip scheduling process, the customer must inform the RTS's Customer Service Representative of the PCA. RTS staff shall list the accompanying person by name on the trip reservation form to inform the assigned vendor of the approved trip.

**Note:** In accordance with FTA C 4710.1 "an agency cannot deny service to a person with a disability based on what it perceives to be "safe" or "unsafe" for that individual. All riders take on some level of risk when traveling (e.g., standing while riding a bus, crossing busy streets, or walking along roadways with quickly moving traffic). Individuals with disabilities also have the right to decide the level of risk they are willing to take to travel independently and whether or not he/she needs a personal care attendant."

**Accompanying person:** The ADA permits one person to ride with the RTS customer from their point of origin to destination and return with the customer on a space available basis. The accompanying person may not take space intended for another ADA customer (Part 37--Transportation Services for Individuals with Disabilities - 37.125). The accompanying person is required to pay the vendor a regular RTS fare per one-way trip (ADA 37.131). During the trip scheduling process, the customer must inform the RTS's Customer Service Representative of the accompanying person. RTS staff shall list the accompanying person by name on the trip reservation form to inform the assigned vendor of the approved trip.

Both PCAs and accompanying persons must be picked up and dropped off at the same address as the customer. RTS customers are eligible to have both a PCA and an accompanying person on the same trip.

## Procedure 1.15: Seatbelts and Child Safety Seats

### Applies to: Staff and Customers

**Purpose:** To instruct employees on passenger use of seatbelts on RTS vehicles.

**Guidelines:**

1. The driver is required to wear a safety belt while operating an agency vehicle.
2. All RTS employees are required to wear safety belts while riding as passengers in agency vehicles.
3. All RTS passengers must fasten their safety belt before the vehicle is placed into movement.
4. The driver must verbally confirm that each passenger's safety belt is fastened before placing the vehicle into movement.
  - a. If the safety belt is not long enough to be fastened, the driver will provide a safety belt extension. A safety belt extension must be present on each vehicle at all times.
  - b. The passenger will not be required to fasten a safety belt if the extension is not long enough to accommodate the passenger.
5. A passenger is not required to wear a safety belt if they state that a medical condition prohibits the use of a safety belt. The driver is not to ask a passenger if they have a medical condition or disability that precludes the use of a safety belt.
6. The driver must document on the manifest any situation in which a passenger does not fasten their safety belt.
7. The driver must secure all wheelchair passengers according to the Wheelchair Securement procedure.
8. Any child under the age of four and/or under 40 pounds must be properly secured in a child safety seat according to the seat manufacturer's instructions. The parent or guardian traveling with the child must provide a child safety seat that meets federal motor vehicle safety standards.
  - a. The parent or guardian requesting the trip must indicate to dispatch staff that they will provide a child safety seat for their child.
  - b. The dispatcher must inform the parent or guardian that they are required to provide a child safety seat at the time of the trip reservation.

- c. The parent or guardian will be responsible for securing the child safety seat. The child safety seat must face forward and be tightly secured with the safety belts installed in the vehicle. The harness straps of the child safety seat must snugly fit around the child.

## Procedure 1.16: Mobility Device Lift Requirements

### Applies to: Staff and Customers

**Purpose:** To ensure safety of passengers and to provide guidance to drivers on lift operation.

Requirements for Lift Usage:

RTS will attempt to transport any mobility device regardless of shape and size. Only authorized personnel trained in the operation of wheelchair lift equipment are permitted to control the lift platform of any vehicle. RTS will comply with the manufacturer's maximum weight capacity limit when determining if it must refuse operating the lift for a passenger to ensure the safety of the passenger and the driver.

1. Positioning the Vehicle
  - a. Ensure that the vehicle is parked on level ground and not leaning toward or away from the loading ramp.
  - b. For stopping points close to structures, ensure adequate room for platform deployment and passenger maneuverability.
  - c. Lift platform should rest on concrete or pavement when completely deployed. Avoid loading areas which are soft, wet, slippery, etc.
  - d. The driver is not to back the vehicle in order to position the vehicle. Instead, drive forwards around the area (parking lot, block, etc.) in order to properly position the vehicle.
  
2. Lift Deployment
  - a. Set the vehicle parking brake with the transmission in the PARK position and the engine running.
  - b. Open the lift door(s) and locate the controls.
  - c. Ensure that the area is clear, and the passenger is a safe distance from the extended platform.
  - d. Unfold the platform from the stowed position ensuring that, when extended, the lift is level with the ground. (If the lift is not level when fully extended, report the condition to the appropriate maintenance staff person or vendor for repair/maintenance.)
  - e. Lower the platform to ground level until the roll stop unfolds to allow for loading.
  
3. Loading/Unloading the Passenger
  - a. Inform the passenger that loading will begin. It is important to communicate with the passenger at every point in the loading process to ensure that passengers are prepared for the movement of the lift and the necessary maneuvering inside the vehicle prior to securement.

- b. It is preferable that the driver back the passenger onto the platform and secure the wheelchair brakes. (If the wheelchair is electric, ensure that the power is turned off and the transmission is in neutral.). **Note:** If the passenger prefers to be facing the vehicle during the lift operation, then the driver must adhere to the passenger's preference.
  - c. Secure the lift safety belt if provided.
  - d. Always hold the wheelchair armrests when raising and lowering the lift platform.
  - e. Ensure that the passengers' arms and legs are kept as close to the body as possible to avoid injury during operation.
  - f. Do NOT ride the lift but stand alongside the platform while raising and lowering the platform.
  - g. Once the platform is level with the floor of the vehicle, release the wheelchair brakes and back the passenger into position for securement.
  - h. Secure the chair (see procedure on Wheelchair Securement).
  - i. Return the wheelchair to the stow position before setting the vehicle in motion.
4. Standees
- a. Ambulatory passengers will be allowed to use the lift for boarding/exiting the vehicle if requested; a mobility device or aid is not required.
  - b. Ensure that the passenger stands in the center of the platform and holds both handrails while the lift is in motion.
  - c. Follow the operation procedures described above.
5. Manual Operation
- In the event of an electrical malfunction aboard the vehicle, it may be necessary to operate the lift manually by following these instructions:
- a. Locate the manual operation instructions on or near the pump cover.
  - b. To load/unload a passenger from the vehicle using the manual method, locate the hand pump handle (during the pre-trip inspection always check to make sure the manual handle is present).
  - c. Place the slotted end of the pump handle into the pump, release valve, and turn it counterclockwise in one-half turns.
  - d. Let platform fully unfold until it reaches floor level then turn the pump release valve clockwise to stop the platform. The valve must be tight; making sure not to over tighten.
  - e. Place the passenger on the lift platform within the yellow boundary markings and lock the wheelchair brakes.
  - f. Turn the pump release valve one-half turn counterclockwise until the platform reaches the ground and the roll stop fully unfolds.
  - g. Release the wheelchairs brakes and move the passenger off the lift.

- h. To stow the platform back into the vehicle, insert the slotted end of the pump handle into the pump valve and turn it clockwise one-half turns. Remember not to over tighten the valve.
- i. Remove the pump handle from the release valve and place it into the back-up pump and stroke until the platform reaches floor level.

## Procedure 1.17: Securement of Wheelchairs and Other Mobility Devices

### Applies to: Staff and Customers

**Purpose:** to provide instruction to drivers on the securement of wheelchairs and other mobility devices within an agency vehicle.

Guidelines:

1. All passengers using wheelchairs and other mobility devices will be secured using a four-point tie-down system. Per ADA requirements, RTS cannot deny service to any passenger if the wheelchair or mobility device cannot be secured to the satisfaction of the driver. When a wheelchair or mobility device is difficult to secure properly, the driver is expected to make every effort at securing before requesting that the passenger transfer to a regular seat. The driver may request the passenger transfer to a regular seat but will not be permitted to require the passenger transfer if proper securement is not possible.
2. Wheelchairs and other mobility devices are to be secured facing forward.
3. Use the seatbelt (with shoulder restraint), which attaches to the floor if the vehicle is equipped with one. Ensure that the lap belt stays on. If the shoulder restraint cannot be used the lap belt alone will suffice; however, these should be rare occasions.
4. Ensure that the mobility device brakes are applied.
5. Attach the securement straps to the floor connection points first.
6. Connect front tie down straps (pull or cam type; not ratchet) to a T-connector or the wheelchair frame on the front half of the wheelchair.
7. Connect back, ratchet tie-down straps to a T-connector on the back half of the wheelchair. Do not connect straps to the wheels, footrests, armrest or any detachable or flexible part of the wheelchair. Do not pass the straps through the rear spokes.
8. A tightened tie-down strap must form a straight line (no slack) at a 45-degree.
9. Exercise proper bending techniques when securing straps.
10. Unoccupied wheelchairs (when the passenger has transferred to a seat) must be tied down securely.
11. Verify straps are secure and that the device does not move.



12. Electric wheelchairs must have the power turned off while secured.

13. Additional reminders:

- a. Store loose tie-down straps when not in use.
- b. Keep tracks clean and free of dirt and debris.
- c. Pull a wheelchair downhill and push when moving uphill.
- d. Immediately report any malfunctions with lift equipment to dispatch so that repairs can be scheduled as soon as possible.

## Procedure 1.18: Inclement Weather

### Applies to: Staff and Customers

**Purpose:** To ensure the safety of drivers and passengers during inclement weather conditions.

Guidelines:

1. **Tornado/Hurricane/Winds** – if a tornado warning is sounded or broadcast, employees will immediately report to the designated shelter. If drivers are in vehicles, drivers and passengers should exit the vehicle and take shelter in a ditch, under a bridge, in the basement of a nearby building or in the safest possible place given the situation.

The driver will monitor the weather report on the radio if possible. Management will determine when personnel and vehicles can return to normal operations. Sustained winds of 35-40 m.p.h. or gusts 50 m.p.h. or more may warrant ceasing operations but will be determined by RTS management.

If vehicles have sustained any damage from wind or blowing debris, they should be inspected and repaired by maintenance staff before resuming operation.

2. **Flooding** – the Transit Manager, Schedule/Dispatch Supervisor or Dispatchers will inform drivers that the following emergency floor preparedness measures are to be taken:
  - a. The Director of Transit and the Transit Operations Manager will determine if or when transit services need to be discontinued.
  - b. Vehicles that are parked in areas of potential flooding must be moved to high ground if possible.
  - c. In case of flash flood warnings, drivers on the road must avoid known flood areas. Never attempt to travel on roads or bridges that are flooded. If your vehicle stalls because of high water, it is generally safer to stay in the vehicle and call for emergency help rather than try to walk through fast flowing water.
3. **Snow Emergencies:**
  - a. Every effort will be made to provide service during winter weather.
  - b. Based on information provided by local law enforcement, the Director of Transit and the Transit Operations Manager will decide whether to close Rowan Transit System operations or alter service hours.
  - c. It may be necessary to limit service to within County limits or for emergency needs only.

- d. Employees should monitor television and radio stations for service cancellation information.

**Communications with Customers:** RTS management will use all available communication resources (website, emails, telephone calls to passengers already scheduled, etc.) to ensure all RTS passengers are aware of the status of transit services and potential delays or cancellations during inclement weather conditions. RTS will ensure announcements are made on the following local radio stations: WSTP radio station (1490 AM), and Television Stations WBTW 3, WSOC 9, or WCNC 6 for delays or closings.

## Procedure 1.19: Fare Collection

### Applies to: Staff and Customers

**Purpose:** To instruct employees on fare collection procedures to safeguard cash/fares and maintain integrity throughout the fare management and reconciliation process applicable shared ride and dialysis trips.

#### Guidelines:

1. When paying a fare in cash, the passenger must place the money into the farebox. The driver must visually check the amount deposited into the farebox. The only time the driver is permitted to touch the cash is if the passenger is unable to place the cash into the farebox without assistance because of a disability.
2. The driver is to record the amount collected on the manifest and circle the appropriate fare type.
3. The driver is never permitted to make change. The driver cannot open the farebox. If a passenger boards without correct change, the driver is to contact dispatch and obtain further instruction. Drivers and dispatchers should remind passengers that exact change is required.
4. At the end of the shift, the driver will place the farebox in the locked storage area. The driver will total the fares collected on the manifest and complete a farebox slip and deposit it into the farebox.
5. Daily, two staff members, as designated by the Operations Manager, will remove the fareboxes from the locked storage area to count the fares. A farebox income form will be completed indicating the amount collected with both staff initialing the form and documenting the date and time.
6. A driver or other employee may not accept a gift or monetary tip from a passenger. If a passenger chooses to give a “gift” to RTS, it should be considered and entered as a donation.

## **Procedure 1.20: Fueling Vehicles**

### **Applies to: Staff and Customers**

Purpose: To instruct employees on fueling Rowan Transit System vehicles.

#### Guidelines:

1. Drivers must fuel vehicle at the end of each shift. The vehicle must have a full tank at the end of each day. Back-up vehicles must have at least a half tank of fuel at the end of each day.
2. Vehicles may be fueled between pickups, but never when a passenger is on board.
3. The driver must collect a receipt after fueling that indicates the total gallons, cost, vehicle number and date. The driver must sign the receipt and attach to the manifest.
4. The driver may not leave the pump unattended while fueling.

## Procedure 1.21: Mobile Device Usage

### Applies to: Staff and Customers

**Purpose:** to provide guidance to RTS employees on use of cellular phones and other mobile devices and to ensure customer and employee safety.

Requirements:

1. RTS may furnish cellular phones or mobile devices to employees for purposes such as dispatch communications and driving directions.
  - a. Agency-furnished phones or devices are for business use only. Employees may not use an agency-furnished phone or device for any reason not related to agency business.
  - b. While operating a vehicle, drivers may not use agency-furnished phones or devices, including hands-free headsets. Drivers must safely stop the vehicle and place the vehicle in park before using the phone/device.
  - c. Employees must use available charging units to ensure that the device is properly charged. The Transit Administrator will make charging units available to employees.
2. Personal cellular phones or mobile devices must be concealed and stowed with the ringer turned off while the employee is on duty.

## Procedure 1.22: Safety Equipment on Vehicles

### Applies to: Staff and Customers

**Purpose:** To instruct employees on the use of safety equipment (fire extinguishers, triangle reflectors, biohazard spill kits, first aid kits, reflective driver vests, and seatbelt cutters) during roadside emergencies.

Requirements:

Triangle Reflectors:

1. Each vehicle has three red reflectors (triangles) located at the front of the vehicle. The reflectors may be used both day and night.
2. While the vehicle is stopped on the roadside, the reflectors should be placed accordingly:
  - a. One reflector should be placed at the side of the vehicle on the roadway side at a safe distance from the vehicle and oncoming traffic
  - b. One reflector should be placed approximately 40 paces or 100 feet to the rear of the vehicle. If there is a hill or curve, the distance should be greater but no more than 300 feet.
  - c. One reflector should be placed approximately 40 paces or 100 feet in front of the vehicle, again using greater distances if conditions warrant.
  - d. Instructions on where to place the triangles are also located on the lid of the triangle container.
3. The driver must wear the reflective vest during at all times.

Biohazard Spill Kits:

Biohazard spill kits must be on each RTS vehicle for proper clean-up of any bodily fluids that may be discharged by passengers. Drivers must follow training procedures.

First Aid Kits:

All RTS vehicles must be equipped with First Aid Kits in the event of an emergency. Drivers will receive formal training on how and when to use items for passengers needing assistance.

Seatbelt Cutters:

All vehicles must be equipped with at least one seatbelt cutter in the event that an accident occurs that prevents the passenger from being able to unlock their seatbelt. In these instances, the driver will be responsible for using the seatbelt cutter to release the passenger from the seatbelt.

## **Procedure 1.23: Customer Service**

### **Applies to: Staff and Customers**

#### **Customer Feedback**

Customer compliments, complaints and suggestions are an invaluable source of information about the service that the RTS provides and how the County can strive to enhance a high quality of transit services.

Particularly, it is important that complaints are handled professionally in terms of documentation of the complaint, prompt investigative actions, and follow up with the complainant in an expeditious manner. RTS staff is committed to ensure efficient and effective management of all customer feedback.

#### **Compliments**

Compliments received regarding RTS service should be brought to the attention of the RTS Transit Operations Manager. If the compliment pertains to a specific staff member or RTS vendor, the employee or vendor will be informed of the compliment and a record of it will be placed in the employee's or vendor's file.

#### **Complaints**

##### **Complaint Receipt:**

Staff receives the complaint and documents as much detail as possible to include but not limited to the first/last name of the complainant, date and time of the incident, vehicle number or driver involved if applicable, service or vehicle related, etc. Staff receiving the complaint must express the importance of the complaint and that it is taken very seriously.

The staff person receiving the complaint must enter all details of the complaint into the RTS Complaint database.

The Transit Operations Manager must be informed of the complaint the same day the complaint is received. The Transit Operations Manager, or his/her designee, must contact the complainant the day of the complaint or no later than the next County business day to gather any additional information needed and explain the next steps that will be taken on the complaint.

The Transit Operations Manager or designee is responsible for all investigation actions and follow-up communications with the complainant, as well as documentation of such follow up in the Complaint Database.



#### Complaint Resolution Deadline:

1. The Transit Operations Manager will provide a response to the complainant after all investigative actions have occurred with a goal of within two (2) business days but no more than four (4) business days.
2. The Transit Operations Manager or designee will enter the resolution in the Complaint database.

#### Complaint Appeal:

If not satisfied with the response provided by the Transit Operations Manager, the complainant may appeal the decision to the Director of Transit within thirty (30) days.

#### **Suggestions**

Suggestions received from RTS customers (or vendors) should be brought to the attention of the Transit Operations Manager. The Transit Operations Manager is responsible for evaluating the suggestion, and, as appropriate, taking actions or making plans that are necessary and feasible to implement it. Depending on the suggestion, some may require the approval of the Director of Transit, County Manager, or Board of Commissioners.

#### **Customer Satisfaction Surveys**

It is the goal of RTS to conduct formal customer satisfaction surveys at least once every two to three years. Transit staff may opt to use mail-back surveys randomly distributed on vehicles, by telephone or mail surveys of a selected sample of customers, or by such other means as is both effective and practical. Surveys will include solicitation of feedback on service quality areas such as the following:

- Safety
- Driver performance and customer service skills
- Cleanliness of vehicles and facilities
- On-time performance
- Areas served
- Days and Hours of Service
- Frequency of Service
- Reservation Center staff courtesy and efficiency

A summary of the survey results should be prepared by the Transit Operations Manager and submitted to the Director of Transit. The summary should include a description of actions that will be taken regarding the survey findings. A final survey report will be presented to the County Manager and Board of County Commissioners if requested.

## **Procedure 1.24: Demand Response Trip Reservations, Changes and Cancellations**

### **Applies to: Staff and Customers**

#### RTS Demand Response Trip Reservation Process

RTS demand response trips must be scheduled through the RTS system. Reservations must be made at least three (3) operating days in advance. RTS customer trip reservations shall be accepted up to fourteen (14) days in advance. Staff will determine if the requested trip is eligible and will dispatch the service through the approved vendor. Requests for RTS service may be made Monday through Friday (in person by phone, or by e-mail) between 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. by calling 704-216-8899.

The following are Rowan County holidays; trip reservations will be accepted on the preceding day:

- New Year's Day
- Martin Luther King Jr.'s Birthday
- Good Friday
- Memorial Day
- Independence Day
- Labor Day
- Veteran's Day
- Thanksgiving (2 days)
- Christmas (3 days)

#### **Hearing or Speech Impaired**

If hearing- or speech-impaired and TTY (Teletypewriter Service) is available, please call North Carolina Relay at #711 and request a connection to RTS: 704-216-8899.

#### **Cancellations or Changes in Destinations or Pickup Times**

The RTS demand response approved customer must notify RTS reservations staff of any cancellations or changes in destination or pickup time at least one hour before the scheduled RTS trip. For all trips, also inform the RTS program staff of any changes. Changes and cancellations often affect the scheduling of service for other riders so advance notices of changes are critical to the efficient and effective delivery of RTS demand response service. Repeated failure to notify RTS staff in advance of changes in trip plans may be grounds for revoking a customer's right to participate in the RTS program.

## Procedure 1.25: RTS Driver and Staff Training Requirements

### Applies to: Staff

Training and Development

Vehicle Operator/Driver Training

Once qualified candidates are interviewed and hired, RTS provides initial and ongoing refresher training critical to ensure proper operations and adherence to the transit providers' rules and regulations. RTS understands that proper qualification of operating and maintenance personnel is a vital part of a safe transit environment. Driver training addresses specific safety- related Issues appropriate to the type of vehicle and driving assignment. Special consideration is also given to crisis management concerns such as fire and evacuation. Below is a list of mandatory operator training at the time of hire and annually as a refresher. All drivers must sign a statement that they received training after each module or in its entirety.

Mandatory Driver Training - Upon Hire & Annual Refresher Courses
Bloodborne Pathogens/Biohazard Spill Kits
Mobility Device Securement
American with Disabilities Act & Reasonable Modification
Title VI Plan
Defensive Driving
Emergency Procedures
Ride Check Evaluation
Basic First Aid
RTS SSSP
Drug & Alcohol Training
County Policy for Reporting Accidents/Incidents
Customer Service
HR Orientation for New Employees
Winter Weather Driving
Fire Evacuation/Prevention/Fire Extinguisher
Personal Protective Equipment

**Traffic Regulations** - Training addresses state and local traffic rules and regulations, traffic signs and signals, and proper vehicle operations (including proper use of hand signals).

**Defensive Driving and Accident Prevention** - Training stresses defensive driving principles, collision prevention, and concepts of preventable accidents as a measure of defensive driving success.

RTS drivers are taught to always drive defensively. This means driving to avoid and prevent accidents. It means driving with the vehicle under control at all times, within the applicable speed limits, or less if driving conditions so indicate, and anticipating possible unsafe actions of other drivers. Special attention is given in the RTS System safety program to hazardous conditions. These hazardous conditions include but are not limited to:

- Winter Driving
- Rain and Thunderstorms
- Lane changes and turns
- Railroad crossing
- Expressways
- Fog
- Heavy winds
- Flash flooding
- Skids
- Following distance
- Passing
- Pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorcyclists
- Traffic congestion
- Rollovers

**Vehicle Orientation and Inspection** - Training focuses on the type of vehicle that will be used in service. Significant differences can exist among different bus models and among different manufacturers, and equipment may have characteristics that are unique to the service environment.

**Behind-the-Wheel Training** - Training includes all core driving maneuvers for the type of vehicle in service, including the difficulties in backing maneuvers that can lead to accidents, stopping distance requirements, and equipment-specific functions such as door opening and closing procedures for passenger boarding and alighting.

**Passenger Sensitivity and Assistance Training** - Training covers topics ranging from general customer service techniques to elderly and disabled sensitivity to technical skills in lift and securement. The following subjects are included in the training:

- Understanding passenger needs
- Understanding disabilities
- Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)
- Communicating with passengers
- Sensitivity to passenger needs
- Mobility devices
- Lifting and body mechanics
- Providing assistance to passengers
- Wheelchair management/wheelchair management
- Lift and ramp operations
- Emergency procedures

#### Radio Usage or Other Communication Devices

To ensure the safety of our drivers and passengers and to enhance the performance of our operations, all RTS employees are familiar with two-way radio operations. Basic procedures are as follows:

- Staff using the two-way radio will follow the standard use practices of the FCC. Profanity, abusive language, or other inappropriate transmissions are not allowed, and could result in disciplinary action.
- All transmissions will be as brief as possible.
- All base stations and vehicle units shall be tuned to the appropriate assigned frequency at all times.
- Staff will initiate communications by first stating who they are calling, and then who is making the call. At the completion of the transmission both parties will indicate that the transmission is completed by stating their call sign and "clear".
- Except in the event of an emergency, all staff will listen for five seconds before transmitting to ensure there are no transmissions in progress. Other units' transmissions will not be interrupted unless it is an emergency. When an emergency is declared, all non-emergency transmissions will cease until a supervisor clears the emergency.
- In the event of an emergency, establish communications on the primary frequency and immediately shift to the secondary frequency. State the nature of the emergency and what assistance is required. To ensure appropriate help arrives promptly, staff will transmit the following items as soon as possible:
  - Identify themselves by name and their location, in detail,
  - Inform in detail as to what assistance they may need,
  - How many passengers they have and the nature of their condition(s),
  - Staff not involved with the emergency will stay off the radio; communications will be between Dispatch and the unit requesting assistance.

- After initial contact, emergency communications may also take place between a supervisor and the unit, or between Dispatch and a supervisor.

**Crisis Management Training** covers emergencies the driver may face while out on the bus. Topics of this training range from breakdowns to accidents to fire/evacuation to handling violent perpetrators. The following subjects are included, but not limited to, in driver training:

- Accidents
- Sick and injured passengers
- Lift operations
- Fire safety
- Vehicle evacuation
- Blood borne pathogens (bodily fluid spill containment and clean up)
- Handling conflict
- Basic crisis management steps
- Transit security
- Securing the vehicle
- First Aid

RTS provides basic First Aid training to drivers, including triage procedures, focusing on:

- Clearing air passages
- Controlling bleeding
- Bloodborne pathogen protection
- Handling shock victims
- Reacting to seizures

#### Training of Other Personnel

At a minimum, RTS Includes the as part of the training curriculum for agency personnel not directly involved in revenue service:

- Scheduling and Dispatching
- Scheduling and Dispatching Skill development
- Customer Relations
- Radio Usage
- Crisis Management Incident response protocols
- Management and Supervision
- Leadership Skills

- Coaching, Counseling and Discipline
- Crisis Management
- Accident Investigation
- Crime scene Preservation and evidence collection requirements

### Training Documentation

RTS maintains complete and accurate records of all driver training and certification, as well as the training materials and grading mechanism. Drivers are required to demonstrate skill and performance competency in the type of vehicle to which they are assigned as a part of training requirements. Because training transit operations personnel is not a onetime activity, RTS provides ongoing/recurring training necessary to reinforce policies and procedures as well as to provide a mechanism to brief drivers on new policies, procedures and/or regulations.

### Security Awareness

#### Transit Watch

RTS supports Transit Watch and prepares all its employees to help promote safety and security within the community, region, and nation.

Transit Watch was developed by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and encourages transit employees, transit riders and community members to be aware of their surroundings and alert to activities, packages or situations that seem suspicious. If something out of the ordinary and potentially dangerous is observed, it is to be reported immediately to the proper transit supervisor who may Investigate and/or notify law enforcement authorities.

#### Suspicious Items, Vehicles, People And Activities

RTS understands that it has a role to play in being a part of the eyes, ears and liability of the community and a part of the community's first line of defense. Therefore, it is vigilant and is committed to train and encourage all employees to be on the lookout for any suspicious people, activities, vehicles, packages, or substances. Because RTS employees know their operating environment, know what is usual and unusual, they are taught to trust their instincts and report anything unusual, out of place or suspicious to dispatch/management who will then immediately convey the information to dispatch or a supervisor, who will in turn, contact the appropriate public safety or law enforcement authorities.

## **Procedure 1.26: Transit Vehicle Sales Revenues**

### **Applies to: Staff and Customers**

Transit vehicles that have been released from NCDOT are under the ownership of Rowan County. The factory type vehicles (sedans, minivans and 12 passenger) vehicles are listed in the N.A.D.A., Kelly bluebook or similar listings for the resale value of the vehicle. There is no published price guide for the conversion type (cutaway or ramp) vehicles. Transit providers that sell released vehicles must take off all NCDOT required labeling & identifying transit program stickers. Photographs verifying the labeling has been removed will be submitted to NCDOT before RTS sells a transit system vehicle.

If the RTS and NCDOT/FTA-funded vehicle is sold for more than \$5,000, RTS will notify NCDOT – Integrated Mobility Division. RTS understands that sales over \$5,000 are subject to the 80/20 repayment to FTA for their share in the asset. Agencies must submit a copy of the bill of sale on all vehicles to NCDOT for final processing.

RTS understands that if the sale of a vehicle is less than \$5,000.00 that the sales revenues must be deposited into the RTS fund account and used only for public transportation purposes. RTS will maintain documentation of the fund deposit in the transportation system account.



## **Procedure 1.27: Lost and Found Items on RTS Vehicles**

### **Applies to: Staff and Customers**

The following procedure will be followed for any items found on an RTS vehicle.

1. The driver will turn in any items found on their vehicle to the Dispatch/Supervisor at the end of their shift. In-service drivers are only allowed to return a lost item if the person who lost the item returns within the driver's shift to claim it.
2. The Dispatcher, Transit Training & Safety or Transit Operations Manager will tag any lost non-perishable items turned into lost and found and log the item with the corresponding number in the lost and found logbook.
3. If the item is marked with a name, address or phone number, the Transit Operations Manager will contact the owner to let them know that RTS has the item in question.
4. Once tagged and deposited in lost and found, the Dispatch office will take all lost and found calls. When identification is made, the owner should come by the RTS facility to retrieve the lost item(s). The owner must first describe the item and then sign for the lost item.
5. Lost valuables, such as money, jewelry, purses, or cell phones, will be turned over to the Transit Operations Manager for secure storage until the item is retrieved by the owner. The Director of Transit should be notified immediately of any item(s) turned in with an estimated value over \$100.
6. Law enforcement personnel, Transit Operation Manager, and the Director of Transit must be called immediately upon discovery of any weapons, illegal substances, or items of contraband, found on any RTS vehicle.

Lost items will be disposed of according to the following schedule:

- A. All food items – may be disposed of at the end of the workday.
- B. Tangible items – will be disposed of as deemed appropriate by the Transit Director. Items may be donated to charity at the approval of the County Manager and/or BOC.
- C. Items of value will be disposed of quarterly; these items may also be donated to charity at the approval of the County Manager and/or BOC.

## **Procedure 1.28: Telephone Communications Expectations**

### **Applies to: Staff and Customers**

When answering telephone calls both internally and externally, the following basic principles apply:

#### **Quality:**

Quality telephone management shall be the responsibility of each employee. Actions to be taken should be handled promptly. If you are unsure how to respond, indicate to the caller that you will call him or her back with the proper response. Take the name and number and call back within the same day.

#### **Responsiveness:**

Answer the telephone as soon as possible, using the approach described below:

The RTS staff call taker opens all communications with “Good morning/afternoon, Rowan Transit System, how may I assist you today?”.

#### **Respect:**

Speak in a clear energetic voice at a moderate pace. Keep a pleasant tone of voice at all times, articulate well, and be certain to hold the transmitter directly in front of your mouth.

Give the caller your undivided attention and treat him/her as you would wish to be treated and better than he/she would expect. RTS riders can be difficult to understand sometimes. Listen attentively. If you are having difficulty understanding his/her request, ask if there is someone else available who might help you to better understand his or her concerns. Never eat, drink, chew gum or carry on side conversations in the office while on the telephone.

Always address the caller in a friendly, professional manner, acknowledging his or her title (Mr., Mrs., Sir, Madam) such as Mr. or Mrs. \_\_\_\_\_. Never address the caller by his/her first name unless you know the caller well.

#### **Follow-up on Voice Messages:**

Call takers are responsible for ensuring timely action to returning call for those customers that leave messages on the voice mail system. All calls should be returned promptly and logged into a return call log to document staff follow-up.

#### **Dealing with Aggressive Callers:**

If the caller is aggressive, use the following techniques to maintain professionalism during the conversation. Remember, you are there to assist the caller.

- Remain calm.
- Be patient and do not take comments personally.
- Respond with a caring attitude.
- Provide assurance that some action will be taken.
- Always thank the customer for the call.
- Document the call and forward the incident to your supervisor for investigation
- The supervisor will, in turn, notify the Transit Operations Manager for follow-up and response within 24 hours, preferably the same day as the call.

Automated Phone Call Recording System and Evaluation:

RTS may occasionally use an automated phone recording and message system. This system is utilized to ensure that all calls are managed in the appropriate manner.

## **Procedure 1.29: RTS Website and Public Information Materials Requirements**

### **Applies to: Staff and Customers**

To comply with FTA and NCDOT regulations and requirements, RTS will maintain the following information on the RTS website and public information materials such as system brochures:

FTA requirements:

1. Title VI: RTS will notify the public of its protections under Title VI, how to obtain additional information on nondiscrimination obligations, how to file a complaint and obtain a complaint form. The notification will not be limited to a notice on the RTS's website.  
Title VI Notice will be also be provided in different language(s) if the RTS Title VI Plan requires it.
2. Title VI Plan is optional.
3. Americans With Disabilities (ADA) – Information on how to file an ADA complaint, and if ADA complementary paratransit information is provided, how to apply and use the service.

The RTS procedures shall meet the following requirements:

- a. The process for filing a complaint, including the name, address, telephone number, and email address of the employee designated under (a) of this part, must be sufficiently advertised to the public, such as on the public transit agency's website.
- b. The procedures must be accessible to and usable by individuals with disabilities.
- c. The public transit agency must promptly communicate its response to the complaint allegations, including reasons for the response, to the complainant by a means that will result in documentation of the response.
4. Reasonable Modification – RTS will provide a brief description of how the system will provide reasonable modifications to the delivery of service for ADA passengers, and how riders can request modifications.
5. A TTY or relay number (711) for the deaf or hard of hearing is provided to the public on the website, maps, schedules, and system brochures.

NCDOT requirements and recommendations:

1. Hours and days of service
2. Types of service
3. How to plan a trip
4. Bus schedules and maps

5. Public meetings and hearings
6. Route and schedule changes
7. Transit Advisory Board or Committee participation and meetings
8. List of Board members
9. Customer service number
10. Links to other transit system websites (recommendation)
11. Sign up for an email information list (recommendation)
12. Title VI Notice will be posted in all system vehicles and in other languages as required

The Transit Operations Manager and Director will ensure that as system operations or information are revised, the RTS website will be revised or updated promptly to reflect current practices.