

Special Transportation Service

Rider's Guide



TABLE of CONTENTS

Introduction	1
Eligibility	2
Bill of Rights	2
Code of Conduct	3
Rules	4
Fares	4
Assistance	5
Seatbelts	5
Lifts	5
Securements	6
Packages	6
<i>Oxygen and life support equipment</i>	
Companions/Attendants	6
Service Animals	7
Scheduling	8
<i>Cancellations No Shows No Strand Policy</i>	
Trip review	11
Suspensions	12
Appeals	13
Feedback	13

APPEALS

A customer who receives a Notice of Denial or Suspension and may request an appeal. The applicant will receive a packet mailed through the United States Postal Service which includes a formal letter defining the reasons for the denial of service. The packet also includes an appeal form so the applicant can provide additional information for an appeals committee to consider overturning the decision.

If an appeal is made, CATS will postpone the suspension until a determination is made by the STS Appeal Board. The customer will be invited to attend the STS Appeal Board meeting to present their case. Appeals should be returned within 60 days of receipt of the notice, and can be mailed, faxed or scanned and emailed to one of the following:

Appeal forms can also be obtained in person at Special Transportation Service, 901 N. Davidson Street, Charlotte, NC 28026 or by phone, 704-336-5055.

Mail: **STS Appeals Coordinator**
901 North Davidson Street
Charlotte, NC 28206

Fax: **704-336-5119**

E-mail: **CATSADAEligibility@charlottenc.gov**

If the appeal is upheld (maintained), STS will mail a new notice. As necessary, the letter will include any corrected information and a copy will be placed in your record.

FEEDBACK

CATS values your input. You're able to submit commendations, recommendation, or concerns regarding your service with STS by contacting CATS customer service at:

Telephone: **704-336-RIDE (7433)**
• then select 0 to connect with a live representative.

E-mail: **telltransit@charlottenc.gov**



INTRODUCTION

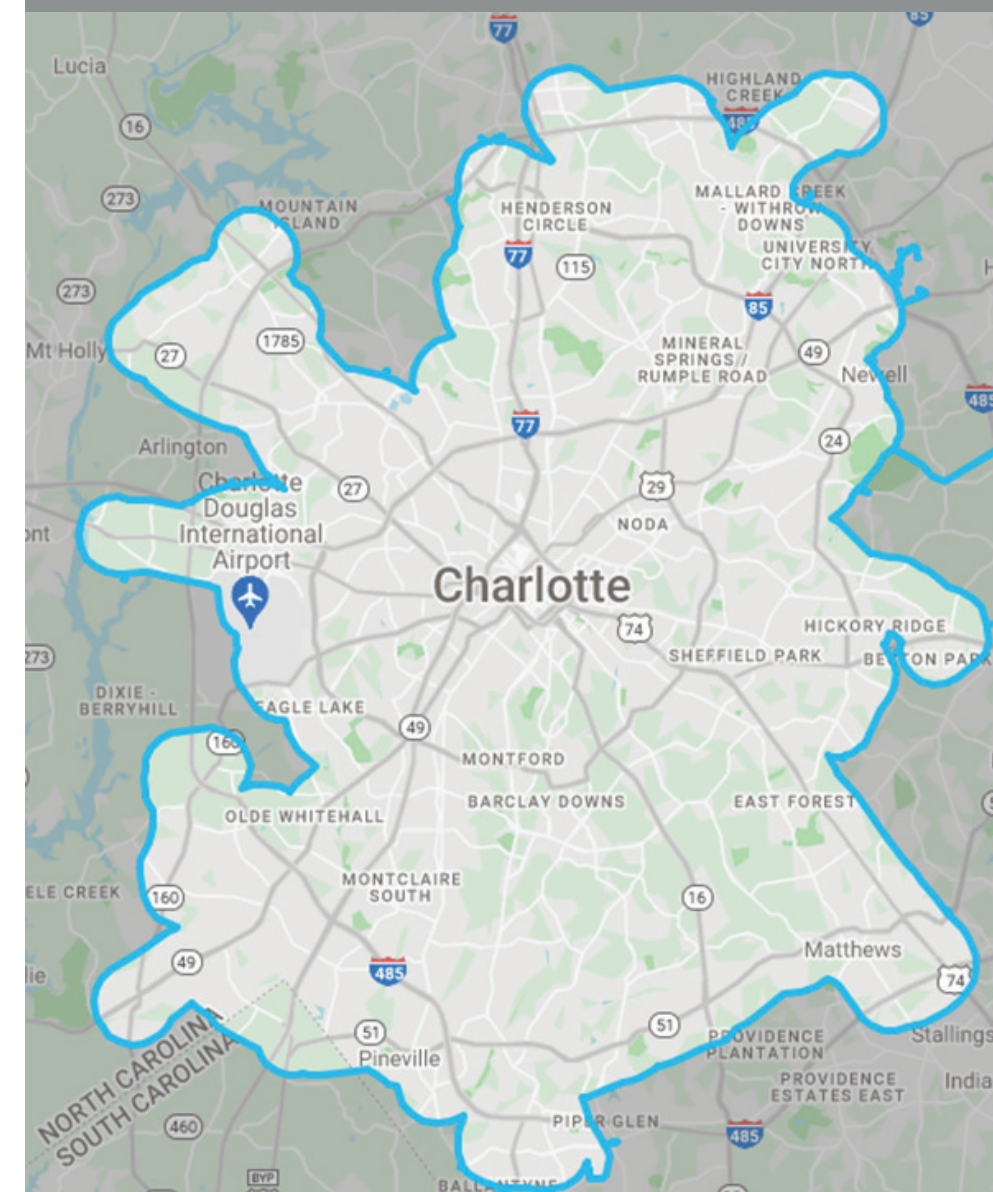
In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), CATS offers paratransit service to individuals who, because of a disability (physical, cognitive, or visual), cannot access fixed route buses. CATS Special Transportation Service (STS) operates the complementary paratransit system, which is a pre-scheduled, shared-ride, curb-to-curb service. STS operates the same hours of service as CATS fixed route bus and rail service, from 5:00 a.m. to 2:00 a.m. Monday through Saturday and 6:00 a.m. to 2:00 a.m. on Sundays and holidays.

STS service operates under the ADA law, which guarantees all trips within the system's service area. The STS service area is defined as the area up to ¼ of a mile on either side of an existing fixed or local bus route. Service is available on the same days and times that the fixed route in the area is operating.

If you have a disability that prevents you from using a fixed route bus, some or all trips may be eligible for paratransit service. You are eligible for Special Transportation Service even if your residence is outside of the service area. Under such circumstances, STS can accommodate any pick up or drop off location that is within ¼ mile of the service area.

At times, CATS makes changes to the fixed route bus service area, which may cause impacts to the ADA ¼ mile service area for STS customers. When a fixed route service area changes, the ADA zone also changes. Service to your pick up or drop off location may be affected.

STS Service Area



Suspensions

A suspension warning letter will be mailed informing the customer of infractions or patterns that have been identified. If no-shows or late cancellations continue, a suspension notice letter will be mailed.

A suspension will begin ten (10) calendar days from the estimated date of receipt of the notice of warning/suspension letter unless the customer appeals the decision. Repeated violations of the Rider Guide policies that occur within the same rolling 12-month period will cause the length of suspensions to increase as follows:

- 0. Warning letter**
- 1. First suspension – Three (3) days**
- 2. Second suspension – Five (5) days**
- 3. Third suspension – Ten (10) days**
- 4. Fourth or more suspension – Twenty (20) days**

ELIGIBILITY

Eligibility is determined by three factors:

1. Your ability to get to and from the bus/rail stop
2. Your ability to board and exit the bus/rail vehicle
3. Your cognitive ability to navigate the fixed route bus/rail system

Operational issues that are not used to determine eligibility include:

1. Age
2. Distance to and from a bus stop
3. Lack of bus service in an area
4. Overcrowded buses



BILL OF RIGHTS

STS is committed to providing a quality service to all CATS clients. Therefore, our commitment to you is:

- Safe, prompt, and courteous transportation
- Timely pickup within a 30-minute window
- Clean and well-maintained vehicles and personnel
- Timely response to concerns and a commitment to investigate, address, and resolve concerns in a prompt manner
- Respectful, prompt, and courteously answered calls
- Quality transportation equivalent to the service offered by CATS fixed route and light-rail services.

No Strand Policy

The No Strand policy guarantees any customer taken to a destination will receive a way home, on the scheduled day, no matter the situation.

NO-SHOWS OR LATE CANCELLATIONS TRIP REVIEW

Customers who incur five (5) or more occurrences of no-shows or late cancellations in a rolling month will trigger a review of their trips to determine if a pattern or practice exists. A pattern or practice is defined as the rate of no-shows or late cancellations represent ten percent (10%) or more of the total trips scheduled. Only no-shows or late cancellations that are within the customer's control will be counted.

Customers will receive written warning after each no-shows or late cancellations. Customers that are found to have a pattern or practice of no-shows or late cancellations will be subject to a suspension of service.

However, it is the customer's responsibility to notify STS of circumstances beyond the customer's control, by phone or in writing, to:

Telephone: 704-336-6103

E-mail: CATSADAEligibility@charlottenc.gov

Mail: STS Scheduling Manager
901 North Davidson Street
Charlotte, NC 28206

Subject Line: "Excused No-Show" or "Excused Late Cancellation"

Body of Letter:

- Customer name
- Contact information
- Brief description of the no-shows or late cancellations reason and why the occurrence should be excused.

Cancellations

If you are unable to travel at your scheduled time, please call 704-336-2637 and select menu option “1” to cancel your appointment. Customers are required to cancel at least one hour prior to your pickup time **to avoid a late cancellation**. A late cancellation occurs when a customer cancels a trip less than two (2) hours before the scheduled trip or at the door when the operator arrives.

Please be courteous to other customers by canceling in advance. Calling at least one hour prior to your pick up time may allow us to accommodate another client.

No Shows

A no-show is defined as a customer failing to appear and board the vehicle for a scheduled pick up time. The pick up window is defined as the scheduled pick up time and up to 30 minutes after the scheduled pick up time. Upon arrival, the operator will wait at least five (5) minutes for the customer to appear for vehicle boarding. Vehicle arrival within the 30-minute pick up window is considered an on-time pick up. As a reminder, a vehicle arriving in the pick up window will only wait five (5) minutes for the customer to board.

- The STS operator will leave a yellow door tag at the client’s residence for any no-show trips originating from the client’s home.
- If a customer has a no-show or late cancellation for one trip and has one or more additional trips scheduled on the same day, STS will not automatically cancel the remaining trip(s).
- If the operator arrives later than the scheduled pick up window and you decide not to ride or can’t be located, you will not be charged for a no-show.
- If the operator arrives early you are under no obligation to board before your scheduled pickup time. The 5-minute window will not begin until the start of your 30-minute window. However, you may board the vehicle early or call us at **704-336-6103** and we will alert the operator.

It is the customer’s responsibility to either take the later trip(s) or cancel it/them in a timely manner to avoid being charged with any additional no-shows or late cancellations. To encourage STS customers to promptly notify CATS when they need to cancel a scheduled trip and to reduce no-shows and late cancellations, CATS will review no-shows and late cancellations routinely.

CODE OF CONDUCT

Expectations of our customers:

- Be ready to board within your given pickup window
- Follow the rules stated in this guide
- Have fare ready to pay at time of boarding
- Don’t eat or drink in the vehicle
- No use of any alcohol, tobacco product, or vaping in vehicle
- Use headphones at all times when listening to music or other audio
- Treat CATS employees and others with respect

How you behave on our vehicles is important, and we reserve the right to refuse transportation to customers who are disruptive or pose a threat or danger to themselves or to other passengers.

It is unlawful and a violation of CATS riders Rules of Conduct for any person to commit the following acts on a CATS or LYNX vehicle:

- Smoke or carry any lighted tobacco product or expel the residue of any other tobacco product including chewing tobacco
- Consume any alcoholic beverage or possess an open container of any alcoholic beverage
- Engage in disruptive, disturbing behavior including loud conversation, profanity, or rude insults, or operating any electronic device used for sound without an earphone(s)
- Take any animal onto a vehicle unless its purpose is to assist a person with a disability or in training activities
- Carry, possess, or have within immediate access any dangerous weapon
- Possess or transport any flammable liquid, combustible material, or other dangerous substance such as gasoline, kerosene, or propane
- Litter
- Vandalize the vehicle or station platform by writing, marking, scribbling, defacing, or causing damage to the vehicle or platform facilities in any manner
- Beg by forcing yourself upon another person
- Excrete any bodily fluid or spit upon or at another person on the vehicle or station platform
- Possess, use, or sell any controlled substance
- Standing, sitting, or lying within two feet of the edge of the rail station platforms except for boarding and exiting the light rail vehicle
- Trespassing in any area not open to the public and posted as such.

RULES

Please be prepared to board on time and have your fare ready for the operator. Due to traffic, weather, and other unforeseen events, STS may experience delays. STS strives to arrive within your 30-minute pickup window. In the event anticipated delays exceed 30 minutes, STS will attempt to reach you by the phone number listed in your customer account.

- If your pick up location is a high-rise building, STS will meet you in a ground floor lobby at your scheduled pick up time
- STS provides curb-to-curb service
- STS operators are unable to enter your residence and are restricted from assisting with anything inside the residence

Visitors (Non-Residents of Charlotte)

CATS Special Transportation Service in accordance with ADA regulations will provide paratransit service to any Charlotte visitor that has been certified as ADA paratransit eligible in the jurisdiction in which they reside or documentation of residence and disability, if the disability is not apparent. Visitor status allows the use of CATS Special Transportation service for up to 21 days within any 365-day period.

This information can be faxed to (704) 336-5119 or emailed to: CATSADAeligibility@charlottenc.gov

If you have any questions, please contact the STS eligibility and certification office at (704) 336-5055.

FARES

STS tickets are sold in a book of ten one-way tickets for \$35.00. You must have a STS ticket or STS Monthly Pass to ride. Our operators cannot accept cash or make change.

- You may buy tickets in person at the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Government Center located at 600 East 4th Street or at the Customer Service window at the Charlotte Transportation Center (CTC) located at 310 East Trade Street.
- Tickets can be ordered online at ridetransit.org or by mail. Send a check or money order payable to City of Charlotte to: **Charlotte Transportation Center, 310 East Trade Street, Charlotte, NC 28202.**

Only certified eligible customers can schedule ADA compliant rides, either with STS scheduling representatives or the web scheduler. Once your ride is scheduled, you will receive an automated reminder call the evening before your trip. There is an option to cancel your ride if you should decide not to travel.

Please be ready to board within your scheduled pickup window and have your fare ready to pay at time of boarding. Due to traffic, weather, and other unforeseen events, STS may experience delays. STS endeavors to arrive within your 30-minute pickup window; delays anticipated to exceed more than 30 minutes; STS will attempt to reach you by the phone number listed in your customer account.

If your pick-up location is a high-rise building, STS will meet you in a ground floor lobby at your scheduled pick-up time. STS provides origin to destination service. STS operators are unable to enter your residence and are restricted from assisting with anything inside the residence.

If you use a wheelchair and there is not a ramp at your pickup location or home, you must make arrangement for a private person or entity to assist you. STS drivers are not permitted to assist with stairs or non-ramp access. STS vehicles are equipped with a maximum 800 lb. lift capacity.





SCHEDULING

- STS Service operations begins at Monday-Saturday 4:50 AM to last pickup at 2:13 AM and Sundays and holidays 4:55 AM to last pickup at 1:32 AM.
- STS trip scheduling office hours are 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., 7 days a week, 365 days a year. We accept trip requests for next day service or up to five (5) days in advance.
- You cannot request an operator to schedule or reschedule a trip. You must call our reservations number or use our web-based or mobile scheduling.

STS trips can be scheduled by phone or online:

1. Speaking directly with a reservationist; or
 - a. Please call **704-336-2637** and select menu **option “2”** to schedule a ride by speaking with a reservationist.
 - b. Option “1” to cancel same day rides or to check on your ride.

If you plan to ride more than 40 one-way trips during a month, the STS Monthly Pass may be a better value since it provides UNLIMITED rides. The cost of the monthly pass is \$140.00. Note, the pass cannot be shared with friends or family, or returned for a refund. You may purchase a monthly pass at CTC, online, or at participating Harris Teeters, Food Lions, and Compare Foods. We recommend calling the grocery store in advance to inquire about availability of the STS one-way tickets or monthly passes. A list of participating locations can be found online at ridetransit.org under “Fares & Passes”.

ASSISTANCE

For your safety and security, STS operators will offer to assist you in and out of the vehicle. You are free to decline the offer, but the operator will remain close to assure your safety. If you require extra accommodation, please include special request details at the time of booking or with the operator directly. You may also contact the eligibility department at (704) 336-5055, so extra accommodation requests can be added to your customer file. Note, extra accommodations may take the operator away from view of the vehicle or inside buildings.

SEATBELTS

STS policy requires seatbelts be used by all customers, personal care attendants (PCA), and companions who use wheelchairs and mobility devices or vehicle seats.

- Seatbelts are provided at all seating locations.
- Federal Transit Administration (FTA) policy prohibits the use of seatbelts in lieu of securing the mobility device. Tiedowns are required to secure a mobility device.
- Medical waiver accommodations will be reviewed and approved on an individual basis.
- Refusal to abide by the seatbelt policy can lead to ride denial and program access unless an approved accommodation is made.

LIFTS

The ADA mandates the combined weight of a passenger and mobility device (e.g., manual wheelchair, electric wheelchair, scooter, etc.) cannot exceed the lift’s capacity. All STS lifts are rated for up to 800 pounds if the combined weight exceeds the 800 pound weight limit, you may be certified, but cannot ride until the combined weight is at or below 800 pounds or board separately from your device. Clients will be offered the use of a Posey belt to provide increased safety while using the lift or ramp.

SECUREMENTS

STS complies with all FTA guidelines including the use of a securement system to anchor wheelchairs within the designated securement area. STS requires all mobility devices to be secured. STS can secure all standard sized wheelchairs and most mobility devices. Devices must meet the weight and size requirements of the lift/ramp and securement area. Customers are permitted to transfer from the mobility device to a seat on the vehicle following securement.

PACKAGES

You may board the vehicle with groceries or lightweight packages/bags. The operator may assist you with up to **four lightweight** packages/bags with a total weight up to 50 pounds. Additional packages/bags must be handled by the customer, PCA or companion. Packages/bags must not block the aisleway or interfere in boarding/exiting the vehicle.

STS will not transport any hazardous chemicals or machinery.

Oxygen And Life Support Equipment

You may bring medical items and equipment with you, but they must be secured and not block the aisleway or interfere in boarding/exiting the vehicle.

The transportation of walker/rollators/canes/crutches or any mobility device must be secured and not block the aisleway or interfere in boarding or exiting the vehicle.

PERSONAL CARE ATTENDANTS & COMPANIONS

- If your eligibility application indicates that you have a Personal Care Attendant to travel, that PCA may qualify for travel without having to pay a fare. The PCA must be present through the duration of the trip and board at the same pick up and drop off locations.
 - Children 12 and under acting as the PCA must be accompanied by a customer who is an adult (18 years or older).
- **Companions are required to pay full fare**
 - STS may limit the **number** of companions based on seating availability. Companions must be present through the duration of the trip and board at the same pick up and drop off locations.
 - Customers must disclose the number of companions when booking a reservation.
 - North Carolina law requires that children who weigh less than 40 pounds travel in a car seat. STS customers must supply their own car seat.
 - In addition to a PCA, you may also request to take a companion (friend or relative).



- **What if I need someone to assist me?**
 - Your operator is available to assist you in and out of your seat and to the curb. If you need extra accommodations, please submit a request when scheduling your trip or with the operator directly.

SERVICE ANIMALS

Service animals are authorized to ride on all CATS vehicles. The ADA defines a service animal as [A]ny 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.

Service animals must always be under the handler's control and cannot take up additional seats in the vehicle or block the aisleway. Service animals must have a harness, leash, or other tether unless the handler's disability prohibits said use or if the animal's work or tasks would be adversely impacted by a restraint. The use of a service animal cannot be denied based on the objection of another passenger.

If an animal cannot be controlled by their handler, the animal will be required to exit the vehicle.

Non-service animals that provide emotional support, crime prevention, or comfort and companionship are not considered a service animal, because the animal has not been individually trained to perform specific tasks associated with a person's disability. All non-service animals must be transported in an animal carrier and cannot take up additional seats in the vehicle or block the aisleway.



www.ridetransit.org

Special Transportation Service
901 N Davidson St
Charlotte, NC 28206