



PLUS Paratransit Service Guide

For Customers with Disabilities that Prevent Them from Using Fixed-route Bus Service for Some Trips

This guide is designed to help fulfill EMBARK's mission and promote the broader goal of the **Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990**.

The ADA encourages:
**Independence, Self-sufficiency and
Integration with the Mainstream of Society**

The **Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA)** provides that public entities operating a fixed-route transportation system shall also provide complementary Paratransit services to individuals with disabilities. EMBARK's Paratransit service is called **PLUS**. In accordance with the ADA, Paratransit service is provided to eligible persons who have a medical impairment or condition of such severity as to *prevent* them from independently traveling by regular city bus for most trips. PLUS is a demand-responsive, advance-reservation, shared-ride, address-to-address, curb-to-curb Paratransit service comparable to the EMBARK fixed-route bus service. While PLUS service is available to eligible persons, all persons in the EMBARK service area, including persons with disabilities, are encouraged to travel on EMBARK's fixed-route buses wherever and whenever possible. EMBARK makes accommodations as required by the ADA to facilitate the use of fixed-route bus service by persons with disabilities, and will make or promote additional accommodations to the extent practical. PLUS meets and will continue to meet the U. S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) Rules of 49 CFR Part 37, which implement various provisions of the **Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA)**.

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PLUS Eligibility/Certification

According to ADA guidelines, Paratransit eligibility directly correlates to the inability of a disabled person to use the existing fixed-route transportation service for some or all trips. Eligibility is not simply a matter of whether or not a person has a disability, but instead relates to whether or not an individual can utilize the fixed route transportation system. Thus, ADA Paratransit eligibility is not based solely on a medical or psychiatric diagnosis, but rather it is a determination of a person's functional ability to use the regular transit system.

All available medical documentation and application information are reviewed by EMBARK Special Services staff who will make an eligibility determination. Within twenty-one days of the completed record, the customer will be notified by mail of their eligibility status.

PLUS applications may be obtained from EMBARK Customer Service (405) 297-7443, EMBARK Special Services (405) 297-2891 or may be downloaded from the website at www.embarkok.com.

All documents concerning eligibility will be made available in one or more accessible formats, on request. Accessible formats include computer disks, Braille documents, compact disk (CD), and large print format. A document does not necessarily need to be made available in a format a requester prefers, but it does have to be made available in a format the person can use.

NOTE: A PLUS application form may not be used to apply for Share-A-Fare discount taxi or Reduced Fare for fixed route bus. To apply for Share-A-Fare taxi or Half-Fare for bus, contact EMBARK Special Services and ask for the appropriate application for the service being requested.

Recertification

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, all Paratransit customers are required to recertify their Paratransit eligibility at regular intervals. In 1995, the EMBARK Board of Trustees resolved that the recertification period for PLUS customers would be at least once every 3 years. Recertification attempts to insure that registered customers continue to meet PLUS eligibility criteria and determine any changes to the customer's transportation needs. Customers will be notified approximately forty-five days (45) prior to the expiration date of their PLUS service of the need to recertify. EMBARK may review a customer's eligibility at any time. In such cases, the customer (or representative) may be required to submit additional or corroborating information to maintain eligibility.

Customers are responsible for keeping EMBARK informed of any change that may affect their eligibility status including; significant improvement or deterioration of mobility skills; the presence of a communicable or contagious disease; and the use of adaptive devices or mobility aids; changes in residential address; home or work telephone numbers; emergency contact person(s). If a person designated to act on a customer's behalf is added or changed from the first certification, that information must be submitted to EMBARK. Any changes to **Recertification** applications must be received at least fourteen days prior to the customer's service expiration date. Customers whose applications are not received at least fourteen days prior to the expiration date risk service disruption.

Recertification applications may be obtained from EMBARK Special Services (405) 297-2891 or downloaded from the website at www.embarkok.com. Recertification applications in accessible formats will be made available upon request by contacting EMBARK Special Services (405) 297-2891.

PLUS Appeals Process

PLUS customers and applicants may have the opportunity to appeal any decision concerning their eligibility status. If an applicant is found not to meet **ADA** eligibility criteria for PLUS services, that applicant will be notified of their right to appeal such decision. Applicants are requested to appeal in writing to the manager of Special Services within sixty (60) days of receiving initial notice. Upon receipt of the applicant's written notice of appeal, the Manager of Special Services will conduct an informal review of the applicant's complete record and make a determination regarding **ADA** eligibility. The manager's decision will be made within thirty (30) days of receipt of the written appeal. If the applicant's ineligibility is reaffirmed by the manager, the applicant is provided further instructions on how to appeal to the EMBARK Appeals Review Committee (ARC). The applicant may appear in person before the Appeals Review Committee who will meet with the applicant and anyone they wish to bring to support their position. The ARC decision will be in writing and will be final.

PLUS customers who are determined to no longer be eligible during the Recertification process and who appeal before their service expires may continue to use PLUS until a final decision is made. New applicants who do not appeal within sixty (60) days of their notice and registered customers who do not appeal before their service expires may be required to complete a new application.

PLUS Photo Identification Card

Customers certified to use PLUS must have a PLUS photo ID card. New customers must obtain the Photo ID card before trip reservations can be made. Instructions to obtain a photo ID card are provided in the initial eligibility notice. The initial photo ID card is free; replacement cards are \$5.00.

When notified of eligibility for PLUS, customers can mail a recent photo along with their name, address, and phone number to EMBARK, **300 SW 7th Street, Oklahoma City, OK 73109**. **Your PLUS ID Card will be returned to you by mail.**

If assistance with a photo is needed, photo IDs can be obtained at the EMBARK Downtown Transit Center. The Downtown Transit Center, located at **420 NW 5th Street, 73102 in Oklahoma City**, is open from 5:30 AM to 6:45 PM Monday through Friday. The Downtown Transit Center is the only location where PLUS customers can have their EMBARK photo identification cards made.

PLUS Service Area and Fares

Zone 1 PLUS service is provided within the core area of 3/4 mile of a EMBARK fixed route.

Trips beyond 3/4 mile of a EMBARK Fixed Route within Oklahoma City are considered **Zone 2**. PLUS offers but does not guarantee Zone 2 service. Zone 2 service is based on space and time availability.

Zone 1 fare any location within 3/4 mile of a Fixed Route for a one-way trip is \$3.50. Zone 2 Fare any location beyond 3/4 mile of a Fixed Route for a one-way trip is \$7.00.

PLUS Service Hours

PLUS Paratransit service is provided as a complement to regular city bus service, and as such, parallels the days and hours of fixed route bus service. **PLUS provides service between 5 AM and 7 PM Monday-Friday and 530 AM to 630 PM Saturday.**

Casual and Subscription Services

Casual service is defined as a requested trip to and from a specific location. These trips may be taken on different days, to different locations and at different times of the day. Trip requests will be accepted between the hours of 8 AM and 5 PM Monday – Saturday. To request a casual trip on PLUS, call (405) 297-3808. Reservations must be made at least one day, but not more than seven days, in advance of the desired travel date. Same day reservations will not be accepted.

Customers will need to give reservation agents the following information:

- PLUS ID card number
- Travel date(s) and time(s)
- Trip origin and destination addresses
- Gate or security code, and any other special instructions
- Customers must also state whether they will be traveling with a Companion, a Personal Care Attendant (PCA), working animal, or a child who may need to travel in a car seat. PLUS customers must provide the car seat.

Subscription service or “long-term” service may be available for trips taken from the same place, to the same location, at the same time, on the same day(s) of the week at least three days a week for at least six (6) months duration. If you are interested in requesting Subscription service, call PLUS reservations at 297-3808. Once scheduled, subscription trips are fixed and automatic and additional reservation calls are not necessary.

All Subscription service requests will be authorized based on availability. Any changes to the trip schedule such as a new address, time change, may result in disruption of the existing Subscription service schedule.

Holidays: Because many service agencies and providers close during the holidays, **no PLUS service will be provided on the following dates:**

- ❖ Memorial Day
- ❖ Independence Day
- ❖ Labor Day
- ❖ Thanksgiving Day
- ❖ Christmas Day
- ❖ New Year's Day

In addition to these holidays, PLUS service will not be provided on days when the fixed route service is not operated due to weather or other circumstances.

Customers having Subscription service to and from a workshop or adult care center should contact their center **a few days ahead of the holiday** to ask if they will be open or closed.

PLUS will cancel subscription trips to any center/agency that reports to us they will be closed for one or more holidays. If there are questions about Subscription trips, especially on holidays, contact PLUS Scheduling (297-3808).

NOTE: Subscriptions are Premium services provided by EMBARK. Premium services are not required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 and are therefore not subject to the provisions of the ADA. Continuation of subscription service and other Premium services are at the discretion of EMBARK.

Scheduling a Pick Up Time and On Time Arrival

EMBARK will make every effort to schedule your trip for the time requested. In the event the specified time requested is not available, you may be asked if a pick up time from one hour before to one hour after the requested time is acceptable. When there is an agreed upon pick up time, the definition of an **on-time arrival** is within fifteen minutes before and fifteen minutes after the pickup time. Example: If the pick-up time is 10:30 AM, you must be ready for pick-up from 10:15 AM to 10:45 AM.

Customer Readiness

PLUS customers are expected to be ready to board a PLUS vehicle at least fifteen minutes **in advance** of the previously agreed upon pick up time and to promptly board the vehicle when a vehicle arrives. An operator will wait five minutes to allow the customer to board the vehicle. If the customer is not present or is not ready to board the vehicle after five minutes, the operator will leave and the trip will be considered a **No-Show**. The five minute wait time will not begin more than fifteen minutes before the previously agreed upon pick up time.

PLUS will be considered on time if they arrive no more than fifteen minutes after the agreed upon pick up time. If the van is more than fifteen minutes late customers may call Dispatch at 297-3972 to get an estimated time of arrival. Customers who decline trips because of late vans will not be charged with Late Cancellations or No-show.

Changing or Canceling a Reservation

If travel plans change and there is a need to revise or cancel a trip reservation. IT IS VERY IMPORTANT TO CALL PLUS AS SOON AS YOU KNOW YOUR PLANS HAVE CHANGED.

Changing a scheduled trip must be requested at least twenty-four hours in advance. To change a reservation, call between 8AM and 5PM Monday - Saturday.

Cancelling a trip must be done at least one hour in advance. To cancel a trip reservation, call EMBARK reservations any hour of the day or night.

Call PLUS at 297-3808 or 297-3972 to change or cancel a trip.

Late Cancellation / Cancels at the Door / No-Show Policy

The Late Cancellation/Cancel at the Door/No-Show policy is designed to encourage customers to cancel trips they no longer need as soon as possible but at least one hour in advance. These terms are defined below.

A **Late Cancellation** occurs when a customer does not call PLUS to cancel their trip reservation at least one hour before the agreed upon pick-up time. A **Cancel at the Door** occurs when a PLUS vehicle arrives at the customer's location, and the customer does not make the scheduled trip. A scheduled trip is recorded as a **No-show** if the customer is not at the pick-up location within five minutes after the scheduled pick up time which can be anywhere within the thirty minute ready-window from fifteen (15) minutes before to (15) minutes after the scheduled pick up time.

Customers may cancel a trip reservation, without penalty, by notifying PLUS not less than one hour prior to their scheduled pick up time. Conversely, if a vehicle arrives at an origin address more than fifteen minutes after the scheduled pick-up time, the customer may cancel that trip without penalty. EMBARK will take appropriate action, which may include temporary suspension of PLUS service, in response to customers who repeatedly Cancel at the Door, Late Cancel or No-Show.

When a customer has a third occurrence in one month of the Late Cancellation / Cancel at the Door / No-show policy, they will receive telephone notification that any additional incidents during that month may result in a violation and the customer's service may be subject to suspension. When a customer has **more than three (3)** occurrences per month, the customer will receive written notice of a pending suspension penalty along with a description of each occurrence. A time period will be provided for the customer to question the circumstances surrounding any of the specific occurrences charged to them in any given month. If the customer disagrees with the description of the occurrences, an appeal can be made. Appeals must be in writing and must be received within 14 days of notice of pending suspension. If further investigation indicates that a contested incident was not accurately recorded or was not the customer's responsibility, that specific incident will be removed. If it is determined that the incident occurred as recorded and was the customer's responsibility, the incident will not be removed and the service suspension may be imposed as scheduled.

Suspended service means that PLUS will not accept new reservations for trips during the designated suspension period and any Subscription trips will be suspended. Additionally, EMBARK will cancel any previously made reservations for the designated suspension period.

Each customer's first month of more than three (3) incidents during a calendar year, will be 'excused'. A suspension penalty schedule will not be applied until the next month that more than three (3) incidents occur. After the first excused month, the suspension schedule is as follows:

1. The **first month** after the first excused month that a customer has **more than three (3)** No-shows, Late Cancellations, or Cancellations at the Door in any one month, the customer's PLUS service may be suspended for a period of **seven (7) days**.
2. The **second month** within a **six-month period** that a customer has **more than three (3)** No-shows, Late cancellations, or Cancellations at the Door in any one month, the customer's PLUS service may be suspended for a period of **fourteen (14) days**.
3. The **third month** within a **six-month period** that a customer has **more than three (3)** No-shows, Late cancellations, or Cancellations at the Door in any one month, the customer's PLUS service may be suspended for a period of **twenty-one (21) days**.
4. Subsequent violations within **the same six-month period** may result in **additional or consecutive twenty-one (21) day suspensions**.

To cancel a trip reservation, call EMBARK reservations any hour of the day or night at 297-3972 or 297-3808.

Wheelchair and Scooter Requirements

For purposes of safety and uniformity, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) determines the maximum size and weight of a wheelchair or scooter to be 30 inches wide by 48 inches long, with a total occupied weight not to exceed 600 pounds. Safe operation of a vehicle lift or ramp requires that the exterior dimensions of a mobility device and any attachments should not exceed these capacity constraints. EMBARK reserves the right to not transport persons who use wheelchairs or similar mobility devices that exceed these dimensions or weight restrictions, particularly if such devices do not readily fit on a lift or ramp platform or within a designated area inside the vehicle. A home inspection of the customer's oversized mobility device may be conducted as indicated.

Personal Care Attendants (PCAs) and Companions

EMBARK drivers are not medically trained. A “**Personal Care Attendant**” (PCA) may be authorized to travel with any PLUS customer who, **without the assistance of such an attendant, would be unable to complete the trip successfully or safely.** If the customer is authorized a PCA, it is not mandatory the customer be accompanied by the PCA for all trips. Rather, it is left to the discretion of the customer whether a PCA will be required for a particular trip. The PCA may accompany the customer at no additional cost beyond the customer's fare, and is **responsible for providing any medical and/or personal care for the patron before, during and after PLUS travel.**

One “**Companion**” may accompany the customer on any trip. “Companions” pay the same fare as the customer.

Visitors

For certified ADA PLUS eligible customers, Paratransit eligibility is valid at other transit agencies throughout the country with some limitations. Both eligible certified ADA paratransit eligible, and those that may be eligible, may still be able to use paratransit service when visiting other cities. You will need to contact the transit authority in the city to which you plan a visit to clarify the paratransit visitor policy in that city. Persons with disabilities visiting from outside the EMBARK service area should contact the EMBARK Special Services office at least three (3) days in advance of arriving. Visitors can receive complementary Paratransit service for 21 days out of any 365-day period. Receiving service beyond 21 days requires an application for registration and an eligibility determination by EMBARK Special Services.

Customer Safety

According to Oklahoma law, Customers traveling with children aged 5 or less will be required to provide a car safety seat for the child or children. The customer will be responsible for securing the car safety seat unless assistance from an operator is required. Children cannot be transported in strollers and two or more children are not allowed to occupy one seat. Children cannot ride on customers' laps.

All PLUS customers and their mobility devices **must** be safely and appropriately secured using available lap belt and floor securements. Vehicle operators will appropriately secure wheelchairs and scooters.

PLUS drivers are not medically trained.

Customer Conduct

Violent, seriously disruptive or illegal conduct by PLUS customers or persons associated with PLUS customers, during the course of PLUS transportation, is prohibited. In response to prohibited conduct, EMBARK shall take appropriate and immediate action as deemed necessary, to include the suspension or termination of PLUS service.

Direct Threat

PLUS service may be withheld, modified, suspended or refused in situations where a customer poses a direct threat to the health or safety of others. The existence of a direct threat will be determined by EMBARK, based on current and objective information. A customer will be limited or excluded from PLUS service if a direct threat situation exists and if the threat cannot be eliminated by reasonable accommodations.

Traveling with Animals

Guide dogs, or any other animal specifically trained to assist with activities of daily living or to perform tasks for persons with disabilities are classified as working or service animals and may ride on any EMBARK vehicles when providing assistance to customers with disabilities. PLUS customers must let staff know at the time reservations are made that they will be traveling with a service animal. Small pets not classified as working or service animals must be small enough to be held on the lap of the customer and must be in a cage or pet carrier and fit on the customer's lap.

NOTE: If, at any time, it is the bus Operator's judgment that the service animal is not within the owner's control, or that the animal may pose a direct threat to any passengers, PLUS has the right to refuse or terminate service to that animal.

PREMIUM SERVICES:

EMBARK provides eligible customers some premium services that are not required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990. Under specific circumstances, Operator assistance may be provided to eligible customers who are unable to independently negotiate the path between their residence and the PLUS vehicle. Requests for such additional assistance must be made when the customer is scheduling his/her trip.

Operator assistance for wheelchair dependent customers is called **Door-to-Door** service (DTD). Operator elbow guidance for visually impaired customers is called **Mobility Assistance** (MA). Door-to-door service and mobility assistance may be provided **only** at the customer's residence. These services are not available to customers who reside in group homes, skilled nursing centers, medical clinics, daycare centers, or any other facilities where staff is available to provide such assistance.

If assistance is required at destinations other than the customer's residence, it is the customer's responsibility to arrange for a PCA or companion to travel with them or to have someone meet them at the vehicle at their destination.

PLUS Operators are not permitted to leave their vehicles to ring or knock to announce arrival, provide door-through-door assistance, go inside a home or lock and unlock doors.

Door to Door Operator Assistance - Premium Service

Door-to-door (DTD) Operator assistance is provided only for manual wheelchair-dependant passengers who cannot independently get to or from the PLUS vehicle when no able-bodied party is at home to assist them. DTD service is provided only at the customer's residence. At locations other than the home address, if such assistance is required, it is the customer's responsibility to make arrangements for an able-bodied PCA (Personal Care Assistant) to travel with them or meet the vehicle in order to assist the client to their destination. When a customer applies for DTD assistance, a referral will be made to the EMBARK Safety Supervisor who will conduct an onsite inspection of the customer's home to insure that it meets specific safety criteria. DTD assistance will not be provided until the Safety Supervisor has determined the customer's residence meets the EMBARK safety standards. If a customer is authorized DTD assistance and relocates to a new address, the DTD authorization will be cancelled until the new location is inspected and approved by the EMBARK Safety Supervisor.

Subscription - Premium Service

See **page 5**, for information about Subscription Premium Service.

Mobility Assistance for Visually Impaired - Premium Service

Paratransit Safety Regulations do not permit Operators to provide hand-to-hand balance support assistance to unsteady ambulatory passengers. However, Operators may lend elbow guidance to functionally blind customers. This service is called "Mobility Assistance". Mobility Assistance is provided only for blind ambulatory passengers who cannot independently negotiate the path between their residence and the PLUS vehicle, and for whom no able-bodied party is at home to provide assistance. Mobility Assistance is provided only at the customer's residence. At locations other than the home address; if such assistance is required, it is the customer's responsibility to make arrangements for an able bodied Personal Care Attendant (PCA) to travel with them or meet them at the vehicle to assist them to their destination.

When a visually impaired customer initially requests Mobility Assistance between their residence and the PLUS vehicle, a referral will be made to the EMBARK staff who will conduct an onsite inspection of the exterior path from customer's home to the PLUS vehicle to insure that it meets specific safety criteria. If a customer is authorized Mobility Assistance, they should be ready and visible to the Operator when the vehicle arrives.

Carry-on Items

While our goal at EMBARK is to provide accessible transit service, the safety and comfort of our passengers (Paratransit and Fixed Route alike), is foremost in our concern. For this reason we ask passengers to restrict carry-on items to those that will neatly fit in the space either on the floor between their feet, or on their lap. (No more than three medium sized grocery bags.) Carry-on items must not be allowed to intrude into the seating or floor area of other passengers, and they must at all times remain under the control of the passenger or PCA who brought them on board.

PLUS Fare Structure

Fares must be paid in cash or with Value Card passes purchased from EMBARK. EMBARK operators cannot make change. Instead of change, customers may be given the equivalent amount in passes. The following is the fare structure for PLUS services. **Fares are subject to change.**

	Paratransit Fares
Certified PLUS Customers traveling in Zone 1	\$3.50
Certified PLUS Customers traveling in Zone 2	\$7.00
Companion accompanying a certified PLUS customer	Same fare as the certified PLUS Customer
Age 6 and under companion accompanying a certified PLUS customer	No Charge
Personal Care Attendant (PCA) accompanying a certified PLUS customer	No Charge

The PLUS Service Guide can be downloaded
from EMBARK's official web site:
www.embarkok.com

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