



# Customer Service Guide

October 2016

# Mountain Lynx Transit *formally known as* District Three Public Transit (DTPT) Service Guide

Our goal is to provide high quality, safe, and friendly public transit services. If you have any questions after reading this guide, please contact the District Three Central Office.

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## PART 1. GENERAL GUIDELINES

### **1.01 Office Hours and Contact Information**

**District Three Central Office** operates from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm weekdays (except holidays) and is located at 4453 Lee Highway, Marion, VA 24354.

- Local 276-783-8157
- Toll Free 800-541-0933
- TTY users should call The Virginia relay at 711

**Dispatch** services operate from 8:00 am to 4:00 pm weekdays (except holidays)

- Abingdon 276-676-0700 (Serving Abingdon and Washington County)
- Galax 276-236-3055 (Serving Galax, Carroll and Grayson Counties)
- Marion 276-782-9300 (Serving Marion and Smyth County)
- Wytheville 276-228-7433 (Serving Wytheville, Wythe and Bland Counties)

Please check our website <http://www.district-three.org/transit/index.php> or call for a schedule of services as days and times vary by location and may extend beyond office and dispatch hours.

### **1.02 Holidays – Scheduled Closings**

DTPT will not operate on the following holidays:

- New Year's Day
- Lee-Jackson Day
- Martin Luther King Day
- President's Day
- Memorial Day
- 4<sup>th</sup> of July
- Labor Day
- Columbus Day
- Veteran's Day
- Thanksgiving Day and the Friday that follows it
- Christmas Eve
- Christmas Day
- Other days as may be announced. Refer to the DTPT website for a complete list

### **1.03 Unscheduled Closings**

Due to emergencies, inclement weather or mechanical failure, service may be suspended. If such circumstances arise during the day, DTPT will make an effort to help passengers return to their homes before ceasing operation for the day. The decision to close routes is made by the local dispatcher. During inclement weather passengers should contact their local dispatcher to determine if a route is operating.

#### **1.04 Eligibility**

DTPT is a service brought to you by your local government in cooperation with federal, state, and regional organizations. It is provided for the benefit of all citizens, without regard to age, income, functional ability, or any other such factor.

#### **1.05 Customer Rights**

DTPT customers have a right to:

- Be treated with courtesy, dignity and respect
- Be served without discrimination or partiality
- Be transported in a safe manner
- Travel in a clean, well-maintained vehicle
- Be picked up on time within a reasonable pick up window
- Be heard and expect DTPT to address and attempt resolve concerns or complaints
- Have calls answered promptly and courteously
- Travel with a Personal Care Attendant (PCA) or service animal, if needed
- Be notified if DTPT is unable to make a scheduled pick-up

#### **1.06 District Three Public Transit Rights**

DTPT service staff has a right to expect customers to:

- Abide by the guidelines established in this service guide
- Maintain good personal hygiene
- Adhere to safety requirements such as wearing safety belts
- Assure that driveways and walkways will be safe and clear
- Cancel trips they do not plan to make so others may have their seat
- Be ready for pickup throughout the pick-up window of the scheduled trip
- Upon boarding, present a pass to the driver or pay the fare in exact change
- Treat staff and other customers respectfully and not engage in disruptive or abusive behavior

#### **1.07 Fares**

The fare per one-way trip is \$0.50 for all passengers over six years of age. All children under six are free and are required to travel with their parent or guardian. Exact change is required: drivers do not carry change. Passes may be purchased from the driver.

#### **1.08 Safety Belts**

For safety and security, all customers on DTPT vehicles are required to remain seated with their safety belt secured during transport. This includes the use of DTPT provided safety belts for customers seated in personal wheelchairs. DTPT will accept a physician's note authorizing an exemption to wearing a safety belt (lap &/or shoulder belt). For comfort, safety belt extensions are available by request to the driver.

#### **1.09 Traveling with Children and Babies**

Passengers bringing children or babies on board during their trip are required to bring an approved child safety seat as required by Virginia state law applicable for private vehicles. DTPT is not responsible for installing and placing children in the car seat. Children six years and younger may ride without charge and must be accompanied by an adult.

### **1.10 Prohibited Items**

- Food and drinks are prohibited while traveling on DTPT vehicles
- Tobacco products, alcohol and all illegal substances are prohibited on DTPT vehicles
- Hazardous materials including, but not limited to, car batteries, explosives, and flammable liquids are not permitted on board DTPT vehicles

### **1.11 Carry-on Limits**

Passengers are permitted to transport bags of groceries, laundry or other purchases, etc. But are limited to the amount they can safely carry onto and off the vehicle in a single trip. Packages must be stowed neatly either beneath the seat or in the passenger's lap.

An exception to the limit is made for passengers with disabilities and all passengers on county and regional routes who may transport more but not more than can be safely stored on the vehicle ensuring that the aisle and access to emergency exits remain clear at all times.

### **1.12 Lost & Found**

If something is believed to be lost on a DTPT vehicle, please contact the appropriate dispatch office. District Three is not responsible for lost or stolen items.

### **1.13 Complaints, Commendations and Suggestions**

DTPT employees are trained to provide safe, reliable and courteous on-time service. We always want to hear from our riders, whether it's a compliment, suggestion, or complaint. We encourage customers to work with their local dispatcher to resolve issues. If this method does not work, customers may contact the District Three Central Office:

- **By telephone:** 276-783-8157 or 800-541-0933 weekdays 8:00 am to 5:00 pm (except holidays)
- **TTY users:** call The Virginia relay at 711
- **By mail:** District Three Public Transit, 4453 Lee Highway, Marion, VA 24354

## PART 2. SERVICES PROVIDED

District Three Public Transit (DTPT) provides more than 4,200 passenger trips each week. DTPT is not a taxi service, but rather a shared-ride service that carries multiple customers to different destinations on a first-come first-serve basis. Every trip is important and customers may schedule a trip for any purpose. The dispatcher will work with a customer to select the type of service and route and the nearest pick-up time available. The cooperation of each passenger is essential in enabling DTPT to provide the best service to all of its passengers.

### 2.01 Types of Services Defined – Deviated (Flexible) Fixed, Request-Based, Contracted

DTPT operates the following types of services and reserves the right to assess each customer's individual situation in order to determine if service can be safely and efficiently provided under agency guidelines:

- **Deviated (Flexible) Fixed:** While traveling a deviated (flexible) fixed loop, the driver can be “deviated” and change the course a pre-specified distance in any direction to service passengers
- **Request-Based:** Customers phone in a “request” for service to a given destination and dispatchers schedule the closest pick up time available at that time for the customer
- **Contracted:** DTPT provides transportation to certified human service agencies on a contractual basis. For example, District Three Senior Services contracts with DTPT to provide its clients transportation to medical appointments. Also, a Center for Independent Living contracts for persons with disabilities to attend advocacy meetings. In these cases the agency provides a list of its approved riders and DTPT serves them in the manner agreed upon in the contract. These services may take place outside of the core hours of operation. Please contact the District Three Central Office to ask about eligibility for contracted service

### 2.02 Types of Routes – Town or County

DTPT routes are either deviated (flexible) fixed service, request-based service or a combination and are divided into the following types:

- **Town Transit:** These routes typically operate a combination of request-based and deviated (flexible) fixed route services. During operation of deviated (flexible) fixed or “loop” routes, request-based service is limited to customers needing transportation within town limits but outside the boundaries of the deviated (flexible) fixed route. Please call the appropriate local dispatch office or visit the DTPT website for a schedule of services
- **County Transit:** All these routes operate as request-based service due to the wide coverage area. Customers must call to schedule trips no later than 3:00 pm on the last business day before the scheduled trip to be sure of being on the schedule on a given day. County transit routes serve most parts of our member counties at least once per week

### **2.03 Curb-to-Curb Service**

DTPT provides curb-to-curb service for those customers that do not require special assistance from the driver to board or exit the vehicle. DTPT defines curb-to-curb service as pick-up or drop-off for customers at the end of their driveway, the nearest curb, or next to a public road depending upon the type of service used. Customers must be waiting for pick-up in a location visible to the driver.

Persons with disabilities who are not able to use curb-to-curb service will be served with door-to-door service (see Part 3).

### **2.04 Transit Drivers' Responsibilities**

The driver's first responsibility is for the safety and security of all the customers and the vehicle. Drivers are encouraged to stay within sight of the vehicle whenever possible. Passengers may be left alone on the DTPT vehicle anytime that the driver assists other customers to and from the door. The vehicle will not always be visible to the operator at those times.

- Drivers should not engage in conversations that are not related to the transit trip. In order to help the driver focus on his/her driving, please limit conversation to questions or concerns about the trip
- Drivers are not authorized to pick up packages (such as prescriptions) or to handle medications or money, other than fare. Please do not request that they dispense or hold on to such items
- Drivers cannot accept tips, but they do appreciate letters of praise for good service

### **2.05 Scheduling a Pick-up**

You may meet the transit vehicle at any scheduled stop along a deviated (flexible) fixed route, or you may call the local dispatch office to schedule a pick-up for town or county service or call the District Three Central Office for contracted service.

- Be prepared to give the dispatcher your name, desired time and the exact addresses of pick-up and drop-off locations. We recommend leaving a phone number in case of delay or cancellation of routes
- The dispatcher should be advised of a customer's special needs and whether they will be riding with a mobility aid, service animal, personal care assistant (PCA) or companion (see Part 3)
- If a pick-up location is at a building with more than one entrance, it is important to specify which entrance will be used
- If possible, arrange return trips at the same time outgoing reservations are made. If you cannot make the time of your return trip, please call the appropriate office to reschedule

### **2.06 Deadlines for Scheduling a Pick-up**

#### **Town route deadlines:**

- For best availability, customers should schedule pick-up no later than 3:00 pm on the last business day before the desired travel time if needing transportation for known times such as work or appointments
- For same day calls, passengers should expect pick up no sooner than one hour as determined by the deviated (flexible) fixed route schedules and existing reservations for request-based service
- Depending upon demand, we may not be able to accommodate same day calls

### **County route deadlines:**

- These routes must be scheduled no later than 3:00 pm on the last business day before the scheduled day of the route to ensure service.
- Please note that if there are no reservations by the close of business the day prior to the route running, the route will be cancelled

### **2.07 Multiple Trips**

- **Town transit routes:** A separate trip and fare from each pick-up location to each drop-off destination will need to be scheduled. DTPT recommends no less than one hour be allowed between each scheduled pick-up time
- **County routes:** Customers who board a county shopping route outside of a town's service area are permitted to embark and disembark multiple times paying a single fare into town and one fare back out of town. For nutrition routes, customers may transfer to the town transit system and pay the per-trip fare if additional destinations are desired. In-town customers may board any DTPT vehicle, paying the standard fare for each boarding, but stops on county routes are based on the needs of the county customers

### **2.08 Pick-up Time Frame and Vehicle Wait Time**

**Deviated (flexible) fixed route service:** These routes run on published schedules, however, due to the flexibility of these routes, customers should allow a reasonable wait time. Customers who call to schedule a pick-up along the route must be waiting in a location visible to the transit driver. Deviated (flexible) fixed route drivers are not able to wait on customers that are not prepared to board immediately.

### **Request-based and contracted service:**

- DTPT schedules pick-ups within a 30-minute time frame to allow for traffic and other delays. Customers should be ready to leave as early as 15 minutes prior to or as late as 15 minutes after the scheduled pick-up time. The standard vehicle wait time is one minute. Dispatchers are not able to call to notify a customer that a driver has arrived

### **2.09 Cancelling a Trip**

- **Town routes:** Riders are expected to cancel trips at least one hour before the beginning of their pick-up window by calling the local dispatcher
- **County routes:** Riders should cancel trips no later than 3:00 pm on the last business day before the scheduled trip by calling the local dispatcher

### **2.10 Late Cancellation and No-Show Policy**

A late cancellation is when a requested trip is cancelled without giving the proper notice based on the type of route (see 2.09). A second late cancellation occurring within the same month will be treated as a no-show.

- A "no-show" is when a driver arrives at the customers requested location in the appropriate time frame (see 2.08) and waits the standard wait time, but the customer does not ride

- Three no-shows and each additional no-show within that quarter (Jan–Mar, April–June, July–Sept, Oct–Dec) may result in suspension of riding privileges for one calendar week within the town systems and one calendar month within the county systems. A customer that continuously abuses these services could be subject to additional suspension of riding privileges at the discretion of the Transit Director.

## **2.11 Suspension of Services to a Customer**

Public Transportation services are designed to serve persons who are able to function independently or with moderate supervision. Under certain circumstances as described below, it may be necessary to suspend a person's eligibility for some services if a customer's incapacity or behavior poses a health or safety threat to them self or to others.

Eligibility for services aboard DTPT vehicles may be suspended if a customer:

- Is incapacitated mentally or physically to the degree that an individual companion is required and is not provided by the service recipient
- Has a communicable disease that is a threat to the health and safety of others
- Will not take medically necessary precautions to protect themselves or others, for instance, person with diabetes should wear footwear to protect against scrapes and bumps to feet
- Refuses proper securement of a wheelchair or refuses to wear the DTPT provided safety belt. DTPT will accept a physician's note requesting an exemption to wearing a personal securement (lap or shoulder belt). No exceptions are made to the requirement that mobility devices be secured
- Is incapable of maintaining minimal hygiene standards, or unwilling to do so, to the extent that the health and safety of others is threatened
- Is disorderly or disruptive to a degree that threatens personal safety or interferes with the provision of services to others, including inappropriate, aggressive or abusive behavior toward drivers, dispatchers, or other passengers and/or staff
- Has a pattern of no-shows and late cancellations (see 2.10)

## **2.12 Travel Training**

Travel training helps customers gain more independence by assisting them in becoming transit customers. Trainers familiarize individuals with how the system works, from routes to fares etc. If someone is hesitant to ride public transportation, travel training will give them the confidence needed to be comfortable and in control of their schedule. If interested in travel training, contact the District Three Central Office.

## **PART 3. GUIDELINES FOR CUSTOMERS WITH DISABILITIES & OTHER SPECIAL NEEDS**

### **3.01 Eligibility**

In order to be eligible for door-to-door service, a customer **must meet one** of the following criteria

- Have a disability as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)
- Need to use a ramp or wheelchair lift to board or exit a public transit vehicle
- Be unable to travel to or from a designated stop due to a disability

### **3.02 Weight and Dimension Limits for Lifts**

Customers must inform dispatchers when scheduling a trip if use of a lift is required:

- DTPT vehicles will hold wheelchairs and scooters up to 48" long x 30" wide and weighing no more than 600 pounds when occupied
- If a customer's wheelchair exceeds the measurements of a common wheelchair as defined in the ADA, please contact our office
- Customers who do not use wheelchairs may request use of the lift to board the van. For example, a person with arthritis who is not able to climb steps may use the lift
- For the shopping convenience of our customers with special needs, customers may request use of the lift to transport wheeled personal shopping carts

### **3.03 Door-to-Door Service Defined**

Drivers will escort passengers from the outermost exterior door of the customer's pick-up address into the vehicle and from the vehicle to the outermost exterior door of the customer's destination address. Passengers may receive additional assistance as determined by transit staff. (See 3.05). Customers receiving door-to-door service are subject to the same vehicle wait time as standard curb-to-curb service (see 2.07)

### **3.04 Conditions for Door-to-Door Service**

Customers are responsible for ensuring both their pick-up and destination locations meet the below requirements. DTPT will provide an assessment in advance of the scheduled trip, if requested. To receive door-to-door service, the following conditions must be met:

- There must be a safe and accessible place to park where the lift can be safely and fully deployed – in the customer's driveway, on a public roadway or public parking lot
- The parked vehicle must not block or impede traffic
- There must be a safe and accessible path of travel within 100 feet from the vehicle to the door and be clear of ice, snow and debris
- Private driveways and lanes leading to houses must be clear of overhanging limbs or other debris that may damage a vehicle
- Wheelchair ramps must be cleared of any obstructions and safely constructed
- Animals must be restrained and under control at all times

Upon arrival, if a driver determines either the location or a ramp does not meet the above conditions of safety and accessibility for door-to-door service, the driver must contact the dispatcher to report the reason

and seek guidance for alternatives. If an acceptable alternative cannot be found for that particular trip, service will not be able to be provided. DTPT will arrange for a safety officer to evaluate the location to try to reach a solution for future service. DTPT reserves the right to refuse any destination deemed inaccessible or unsafe for passengers, the driver, or property of DTPT.

### **3.05 Assistance Provided by Transit Driver**

The assistance provided by our Drivers will vary depending on the routes and time schedule. If riding on a deviated fixed route the Driver must maintain a published time schedule. Therefore passengers must be able to load and unload only what they can carry on themselves. DTPT drivers will provide the following assistance to customers:

- Asking the customer, "How may I assist you?"
- Accompany and assist the customer along the path of travel between the vehicle and the outermost exterior door of the residence
- Guide customers who have a vision impairment (per customer's approval/request)
- Maneuver the customer's wheelchair (per customer's approval/request) between the outermost exterior door of the residence to the vehicle and from the vehicle to the outermost door of the destination
- Assist customers on and off the wheelchair lift, and will fasten and unfasten the required wheelchair securement inside the van
- Assist with the placement of passenger restraints (combination lap and shoulder safety strap)
- Allow customers to hold the driver's arm for balance
- Assist customers with their packages(see 1.11) to their door (at no more than 25 lbs per bag)
- Use the lift to load and secure a wheeled personal shopping cart of up to 100 lbs
- Provide limited simple services, e.g. help locking an exterior door
- Call emergency medical personnel and wait with a customer until it is safe for them to leave
- Please note that DTPT drivers are not trained to provide medical assistance

### **3.06 Driver-Prohibited Activities**

Additionally, drivers are prohibited from:

- Entering a customer's private residence at any time, even to assist with wheelchairs
- Assisting a customer using a wheelchair up or down more than a single step or curb
- Maneuvering a vacant wheelchair up or down more than a single step or curb
- Searching a customer's person or personal belongings, e.g. to locate a fare
- Providing duties of a Personal Care Attendant (see 3.07 below)
- Waiting with customers at their destination
- Handling a service animal
- Assisting with activities of daily living
- Assisting with the operation of a power wheelchair or scooter
- Assisting customers who use mobility devices over rough terrain or steep slopes
- Repairing or "rigging" a mobility device to make it functional
- Pushing a power wheelchair that is not operating
- Providing assistance beyond what is outlined in this guide

### **3.07 Traveling with a Service Animal or Personal Care Attendant**

Some customers have a level of disability that necessitates their use of a service animal or Personal Care Attendant (PCA). All customers have the right to travel with a service animal or PCA free of charge and should indicate their intent to do so when making a reservation.

A service animal:

- Must remain well-behaved and under the control of the handler at all times
- Is not permitted to ride in a seat
- Will not be tolerated if poorly disciplined and causing disruption to the driver or other customers

A PCA is someone who assists customers requiring attendant-to-attendant care. DTPT drivers cannot fulfill PCA duties.

Duties which may be performed by a PCA and **not** by a DTPT driver include, but are not limited to:

- Assisting a customer in removing their jacket and/or repositioning in their wheelchair
- Providing physical support for a customer so they may walk between the vehicle and the first exterior door of their pick-up or destination
- Assisting a customer with changing oxygen canisters
- Traveling with or meeting a customer who cannot be left unattended for a brief time on a DTPT vehicle or at their destination without risk to themselves or others
- Assisting a customer who travels with a service animal but cannot board or disembark that animal from the vehicle without assistance
- Assisting a customer inside their destination
- Searching for a passenger inside any building
- Assisting a customer into their private residence
- Assisting a customer using a wheelchair in navigating up or down more than one step or curb

### **3.08 Traveling with a Wheelchair or Other Service Aids**

Wheelchairs and other mobility aids must be kept clean and in good condition. It can be a hazard to the passenger using it or to the driver and other customers if, for example, the wheels or other parts are loose or the brakes do not hold the wheels securely. If a mobility aid becomes disabled while out in the community and a ride is already scheduled, please call the appropriate dispatch office (see 1.01).

DTPT requires that customers who use wheelchairs also use the vehicle's integrated lap belt and shoulder strap restraint system. Lap belts and postural support belts attached to wheelchairs do not provide effective occupant restraint in the event of a collision.

Walkers, plus any attachments such as baskets, bags, or water bottles, should weigh no more than 25 pounds total. The driver will secure walkers inside the vehicle.

Life-support equipment, e.g. respirator or portable oxygen, must not violate hazardous material transportation laws and must fit into the vehicle and be secured. Oxygen cylinders must be transported in a cylinder holder, be attached firmly to a mobility aid, or be in a wheeled cylinder cart. Customers must ensure that there is an adequate oxygen supply to last the entire length of the trip before boarding.

### **3.09 Traveling With Companions**

Companions such as family or friends who are not PCAs (see 3.07) may travel with a customer being transported through contracted services when space is available and at all times on town, county and regional transit routes. Be sure to notify your dispatcher if a companion will ride with you and if your companion uses a mobility device. Companions, including children age six and older, must pay the full fare.

### **3.10 A Note to Caregivers and Social Service Agencies**

We know that caregivers and others may assume the responsibility for reading and understanding this information as well as making reservations and other arrangements for the customer. Please ensure the person you care for is able to follow basic customer responsibilities and to ride independently if attendant care is not provided.