CITY OF BILLINGS
MET SPECIAL TRANSPORTATION (MET PLUS)

Passenger Handbook
January 7, 2019

A Guide for Riders, Operators, Agencies....

Contact Numbers

Schedule Rides
248-8805

Paratransit Coordinator
248-8805

Met (Fixed Route) Information
657-8218

MET TRANSIT
1705 Monad Road
Billings, MT 59101
Mettransit.com
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INTRODUCTION

The City of Billings Transit Division (a division of the Aviation and Transit Department) is the public transportation provider for the city. Our goal is to provide the best possible transportation service to our residents. Our vehicles are clean, safe, comfortable, well-maintained, and our drivers are trained to serve you.

MET Transit is pleased to provide, for the public, transportation for all of the area’s citizens, including those with disabilities. To accomplish this goal, MET Transit operates two types of service:

- Accessible fixed-route bus service; and
- ADA complementary paratransit service Met Special Transportation (Met Plus)

MET Transit’s fixed-route buses are lift- or ramp-equipped so they are accessible for people who use a mobility device or cannot climb stairs. Our drivers receive special training in assisting people with disabilities. Drivers announce stops at key destinations and upon request to assist passengers with visual or mental impairments. Our goal is to make our fixed-route accessible to the general public and convenient for everyone.

MET Transit’s – referred to as Met Special Transportation (Met Plus)— ADA complementary paratransit service provides comparable service to our regular fixed-route service for citizens whose disabling conditions prevent their use of the regular bus service. The service is provided according to the guidelines set forth by the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) and as outlined in this handbook. Persons who use this service must be certified as ADA complementary paratransit eligible. A person may be eligible for all or some of their trip needs.

If you have any questions on this handbook or our services, please call MET Plus at 248-8805.

APPLICATION PROCESS

Any individual wishing to apply for ADA complementary paratransit eligibility may pick up an application at the MET Transit office at 1705 Monad Road, Billings; or call 248-8805 from 7:00 am to 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday to obtain an application by mail. Our applications are also available at mettransit.com.

On the application form, each applicant must provide the name and address of a social service professional, rehabilitation counselor, physician, or other health care professional who is familiar with the applicant’s disabling condition, and how that condition prevents the applicant from using fixed-route service. The MET Plus office will then mail a Professional Verification Form to the authorized professional for additional information regarding the functional limitations due to the applicant’s disability.

Under ADA, the standard for determining eligibility is not whether a disabling condition exists, but whether (or under what circumstances) the applicant’s disabling condition prevents them from using the regular fixed-route bus service. In some cases, eligibility is established for certain circumstances only.
An eligibility determination will be made, and the applicant will be notified in writing, within twenty-one (21) days after both the properly completed application form AND the Professional Verification Form have been received.

If you are dissatisfied with your eligibility determination, you may appeal within sixty (60) days of the date of the letter notifying you of your eligibility status. Please review the section on how to file an appeal later in this document.

VISITORS

Visitors from out of town who are certified ADA-eligible by another transit provider, provide documentation of a disability, or self certify that they have a disability that prevents them from using the scheduled, fixed-route buses may use the ADA complementary paratransit service for up to twenty one (21) days in a year without going through the application process. The Met Special Transportation (MET Plus) office may request proof of residency. Please call 406-248-8805 for a visitor’s pass. A visitor who needs ADA complementary paratransit service for more than twenty one (21) days in a year must apply for eligibility.

SERVICE AREA

Met Special Transportation (MET Plus) provides ADA complementary paratransit service within ¾ - mile of a MET Transit fixed-route. Trips outside the ¾ mile but within the city limits will be provided on a time and space availability. The MET Plus office will determine whether your trip is eligible when you call to schedule a ride.

SERVICE HOURS

Met Special Transportation (MET Plus) ADA complementary paratransit service operates the same days and hours of service as our fixed-route service.

No service is provided on Sundays and the following holidays:

New Years Day    Labor Day    Memorial Day    Thanksgiving Day
4th of July     Christmas Day

TRIP RESTRICTIONS

Met Special Transportation (MET Plus) ADA complementary paratransit service is designed to be comparable to fixed-route service. Just as with our fixed-route service, there are no trip restrictions or ranking of trips by trip purpose.
FARES
The ADA complimentary paratransit service fare is twice the fixed-route bus fare, as allowed by ADA regulations. A fare is charged for each leg of a trip. Payment is required at the time of boarding.

Fares may be paid with cash or with a ten-ride ticket. Ten-ride tickets may be purchased on board the bus, at the MET Transit office at 1705 Monad, or by calling 248-8805. If a passenger does not have cash or a ten-ride ticket, service will not be provided.

ORIGIN TO DESTINATION SERVICE
Met Special Transportation (MET Plus) ADA complementary paratransit service is curb-to-curb service. MET Special Transportation (MET Plus) staff asks that passengers be ready for pick up at the curb.

If help is needed from the door to the vehicle, you may request door-to-door service. We will not provide door-to-door service if barriers such as stairs, ramps, doors, snow, and ice prevent us from helping you to the vehicle. We ask that you request door-to-door service; MET Special Transportation (MET Plus) staff may make an on-site examination.

The following guidelines will be followed to allow door-to-door service to be provided safely and efficiently:

- Drivers will provide assistance to and from the ground floor of homes and destinations.
- Drivers will not enter private homes for any reason.
- Drivers will assist passengers into and from the main entrance door of hospitals, offices, and shops. If there is a main entrance foyer with two sets of doors, the driver will assist passengers through the second door. Drivers will not assist passengers past this point.
- Drivers will not enter nursing homes, medical facilities, shopping centers, businesses, or other public buildings in an attempt to find passengers.
- Drivers will not carry passengers up or down steps.

PERSONAL CARE ATTENDANTS and COMPANIONS
If we have determined during the application process that you require the assistance of a personal care attendant, the attendant travels with you at no charge. At the time of scheduling a ride, please indicate if you will have a personal care attendant with you. Of course, the attendant must get on and get off at the same locations as you do.

At least one companion, more if space is available may accompany you. Each companion will pay a fare. At the time of scheduling a ride, please indicate the number of companions who will accompany you. Of course, companions must get on and get off at the same locations as you do.

A person requiring the services of a personal care attendant may also be accompanied by one or more companions.
SERVICE ANIMALS

Service animals are always welcome. The passenger must have the service animal fully under control at all times so as not to disrupt other passengers or the schedule. Drivers cannot and will not assume any responsibility for service animals. At the time of scheduling a ride, please indicate if a service animal will accompany you.

SCHEDULING RIDES

Rides on the ADA complementary paratransit service can be scheduled the day before the trip or up to fourteen (14) days in advance. To schedule a ride, please call 248-8805. To speak to a dispatcher, call Monday through Friday between 7:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. A telephone answering service is available on Sundays and holidays between 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. No requests for rides are accepted on Saturdays.

To help serve you better, we ask that you observe the following four (4) tips:

1. Prepare for your call.
2. Have your trip information ready and organized.
3. Schedule the return trip up front.
4. Be ready to go at the scheduled time.

PREPARE FOR YOUR CALL

- Name
- Date of travel
- Origin address
- Destination address
- Desired arrival time
- Desired pick-up time
- Whether help is needed from your door to the van
- Whether you use a wheelchair or walker
- Whether a personal care attendant, one or more companions, or a service animal will accompany you

The Met Special Transportation (MET Plus) staff will let you know your pick-up and return times, or may call back later with the times. Met Special Transportation (MET Plus) staff will make every effort to schedule your trip at the desired times. The ADA allows the ride to be scheduled up to one (1) hour before or one (1) hour after the requested times.

NOTE YOUR TRIP INFORMATION

Have a pencil and paper ready to write down your pick-up and return times. This will help you remember them. If you have a calendar, write the times on it.
SCHEDULE YOUR RETURN TRIP UP FRONT

For non-medical trips, Met Special Transportation (MET Plus) staff requires return trips to be scheduled at the same time original trips are scheduled. Passengers should anticipate the latest possible time needed for their return and schedule a return trip for that time. If you are ready to return before your scheduled time, please call the Met Special Transportation (MET Plus) office. We will make every effort to pick you up at the earlier time.

For medical trips, you may request the return trip to be listed as a “to be scheduled” (TBS). When listed as TBS, please call the MET Plus office at 248-8805 when you are finished with your medical appointment. The next available vehicle will be dispatched to pick you up.

BE READY TO GO AT THE SCHEDULED TIME

Please be ready to go ten (10) minutes before the scheduled pick-up time. Met Special Transportation (MET Plus) drivers make every effort to arrive as close to the scheduled pick-up time as possible. However, Met Special Transportation (MET Plus) drivers may arrive up to ten (10) minutes before or twenty (20) minutes after the scheduled pick-up time.

- Example: If you schedule a 9:30 a.m. pick-up, the vehicle may arrive between 9:20 a.m. and 9:50 a.m.

This thirty (30) minute window (of ten (10) minutes before to twenty (20) minutes after the scheduled time) is called the pick-up time period.

Drivers, after arriving within the pick-up time period, will wait up to five (5) minutes. Any passenger, who is not at their scheduled pick-up point and ready to go by that time, will be considered a “no-show”, and the driver will leave to pick up other riders. The driver will not return for a second attempt. The only exception will be passengers who have been detained during a medical appointment. If you know that you will be detained during a medical appointment, please call MST at 248-8805 as soon as possible. When you are ready, call the Met Special Transportation (MET Plus) office and we will dispatch the next available van to pick you up.

LATE CANCELLATIONS

A late cancellation occurs when a rider cancels a reservation, but fails to do so within 2 hours prior to the scheduled pick-up time of the ride. If you are unable to make your scheduled ride for any reason, please call the office at 248-8805. Met Special Transportation (MET Plus) drivers cannot make schedule changes for you.

NO-SHOW POLICY

MET Transit understands that because Met Special Transportation (MET Plus) requires trips to be scheduled in advance, riders may sometimes miss scheduled rides or forget to cancel
rides they no longer need. MET Transit also understands that riders may sometimes miss scheduled trips or be unable to cancel trips in a timely way for reasons that are beyond their control; however, repeatedly missing scheduled trips or failing to cancel trips in a timely way can lead to suspension of service. The following information explains MET Transit’s no-show policy.

In order for a passenger no-show to be recorded all of the following conditions must be met:

1. The rider must have a scheduled Met Special Transportation (MET Plus) trip.
2. The driver must arrive at the scheduled pick-up point 10 minutes before and no later than 20 minutes after the scheduled pick-up time.
3. The driver must wait at least 5 full minutes beyond the scheduled pick-up time or 5 minutes beyond the time the vehicle arrives, whichever is later, and the rider fails to approach the vehicle.
4. If you are a no-show for your “going” trip, your return trip will remain unless the client calls to cancel.

Each leg of a rider’s trip will be treated separately. If a rider misses a scheduled pickup, MET Transit will not cancel the rider’s return trip. If the client does not appear for that return trip, that incident will be counted as a second no-show. A rider will be counted as a no-show for each leg of any trip for which they fail to cancel and do not appear.

MET Transit will not penalize a rider for a no-show or late cancellation beyond the rider’s control or due to MET Transit error.

**PASSENGER NO-SHOWS AND LATE CANCELLATION**

MET Transit will track scheduled trips, no-shows, and late cancellations by rider. MET will identify riders who, within a 30-day period, have no-shows and late cancellations that meet both of the following criteria:

- No shows/ late cancellations represent 10% or more of the rider’s scheduled trips and
- The rider has 3 or more no shows.

Each late cancellation will be counted as one-half (1/2) of 1 no-show for the purposes of this policy.

Riders who meet the above criteria will be in violation of the no-show/late cancellation policy. Riders will not be penalized for no-shows or late cancellations due to circumstances beyond their control or due to MET Transit.

When a rider violates the no-show/late cancellation policy the following progressive action will be taken:

1. First violation- a warning letter is issued advising the rider that he/she has violated the Met Special Transportation (MET Plus) no-show/late cancellation policy.
2. Second violation within a 30-day period- a second warning letter is issued.
3. Third violation within a 30-day period- rider receives a 7-day suspension.
4. Fourth violation within a 30-day period- rider receives a 14-day suspension.
Riders with questions regarding no-show warning letters or riders who feel that a no-show/late cancellation was beyond their control or a result of MET Transit error are encouraged to call the Paratransit Coordinator at (406)-248-8805.

WHEELCHAIRS and MOBILITY DEVICES

The ADA no longer uses the term “Common Wheelchair” because the requirements for lift platforms, and wheelchair spaces specify the appropriate dimensions for wheelchairs. Therefore, a device used by individuals with disabilities for mobility must fit an “envelope” which is 30 inches wide by 48 inches long.

Passengers must be in an upright sitting position for transport.

All mobility devices must be in safe operating condition, including handgrips, locking brakes, and inflated tires, and should have footrests to safeguard passengers’ feet while being wheeled to or from the vehicle.

DRIVER ASSISTANCE

Met Special Transportation (MET Plus) drivers are specially trained to serve you. Drivers will:

- Deploy lifts and ramps for persons using mobility devices and those without mobility devices who cannot navigate the bus steps upon request.
- Secure passengers using mobility devices.
- Announce stops.

To ensure your safety and the safety of our drivers, Met Special Transportation (MET Plus) has the following restrictions:

- Drivers will not assist passengers using wheelchairs up or down steps. Please arrange with someone else to assist you.
- Drivers will not carry packages.
- Drivers will not dress passengers.
- Drivers will not search a passenger’s body for the appropriate fare or ticket.
- Drivers will not clear pathways of ice, snow, or other barriers.

GENERAL RIDERSHIP POLICIES

Met Special Transportation (MET Plus) has established the following general ridership policies for ADA complementary paratransit service. Many of the policies also apply to MET Transit service.

- If a passenger uses oxygen, the tank must be portable, i.e., the passenger must be able to carry the tank into the vehicle themselves. If the passenger is in a wheelchair, the tank must be attached to the wheelchair. Once on board, the portable oxygen tank must ride in a secure location, for example, in the passenger’s lap, in front of the passenger on the floor between seats, or on the floor behind the modesty panel.
- All passengers must wear seatbelts.
• All passengers using a wheelchair or scooter must use the restraint system that is used to secure the wheelchair or scooter to the floor of the vehicle.
• The number of packages a passenger can have along is limited to the number of packages that the passenger can carry.
• Drivers cannot accept tips.
• For safety reasons, Met Special Transportation (MET Plus) staff may request that passengers be accompanied by a personal care attendant.
• Met Special Transportation (MET Plus) staff may suspend or refuse service to any individual whose behavior and/or actions are violent, seriously disruptive, or illegal; interrupt service; or cause safety concerns.

APPEALS PROCESS

You may appeal your eligibility determination or suspension from the program for violating MET Transit policies. In accordance with the ADA, Met Special Transportation (MET Plus) allows two appeals.

FIRST APPEAL

Your request may be submitted in writing or presented in person. Your request must describe why you disagree with the determination or suspension. You or a representative of your choosing may present on your behalf. A first appeal is decided by the Aviation Transportation Director and a written decision will be made within 30 days after receiving the written request for an appeal.

SECOND APPEAL

Your request may be submitted in writing or presented in person. Your request must describe why you disagree with the appeal decision. You or a representative of your choosing may present you on your behalf. The second and final appeal is decided by an Appeal Committee. MET transit will notify you of the date and time of the Appeal Committee meeting and you or a representative of your choosing may be present. A written decision will be issued within 30 days of the written request of appeal.

Send appeal requests to:
Aviation Transportation Director
P.O. Box 1178
Billings, MT 59103-1178