



ADDENDUM

Meeting of the Connect Transit Board of Trustees

January 26, 2016

Supporting documentation and correction to:

- F4. Americans with Disability Act (ADA) Eligibility Policy



MEMO

DATE: January 26, 2016
TO: Board of Trustees
FROM: Isaac Thorne, Chief Operating Officer
SUBJECT: ADA Eligibility Certification Policy and Appeals Board Appointees

RECOMMENDATION: That the ADA Eligibility Policy be approved.

BACKGROUND: Connect Transit partnered with LIFE Center for Independent Living in September 2015 to conduct ADA eligibility certification process that includes fixed route training, and ADA policy guidance.

DISCUSSION: Connect and LIFE CIL has created an ADA Eligibility Certification policy that meets Americans with Disabilities Act and Federal Transit Administration regulation. LIFE CIL will start the ADA Eligibility Certifications with individuals who have applied for Connect Mobility service and gradually schedule current customers for recertification of eligibility. The recertification process will take eighteen to twenty-four months to complete all seven hundred active riders.

Training will also be provided for customers on Connect Mobility and Connect fixed route service. These training classes will be offered on a monthly basis or more frequently with demand. This training will be in both a group setting and individual basis depending upon needs of the customer.

All applicants can file an appeal which will then be determined by an Appeals Board. The General Manager has recommended the following:

Greg Troemel	Town of Normal, Director of Inspections
Laura Dick	Show Bus, Director
Mary Riddle	Marc First, Senior Vice President
Susan C. Real	ECIAAA, Executive Director
Vickie Hightower	YWCA, Senior Director –Adult Services

Proposed Connect Transit Paratransit Eligibility Policy

Overview

Connect Transit provides fixed-route bus services within Bloomington and Normal. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) states that fixed-route bus service should be fully accessible and should be the primary means of public transportation for everyone, including people with disabilities. In compliance with the ADA, Connect Transit also provides a complimentary paratransit option, called Connect Mobility, for eligible individuals with disabilities.

To be eligible for Connect Mobility services, an individual must be certified as eligible for paratransit services. He/she must have a disability and not have the functional capability to independently ride, get on or off fixed-route buses, or must be unable to travel to or from a bus stop. More details are provided below.

Connect Mobility provides services in the same area and during the same days and times as Connect Transit's fixed-route buses, but are provided based on ride reservations. Their companions, personal care attendants, and service animals are also allowed to ride with them.

Connect Transit has updated its paratransit eligibility policies and practices to ensure that all persons utilizing Connect Mobility services are ADA eligible for paratransit services and to ensure that all those who need paratransit services will be able to receive them.

This policy is based on U.S. Department of Transportation's ADA regulations, 49 CFR Subtitle A (10-1-07 Edition), Part 37 - Transportation Services for Individuals with Disabilities (ADA). Should any discrepancies be found between these policies and the above-referenced regulations, the regulations shall prevail.

Accessibility of Connect Mobility eligibility and training services

All information and forms related to Connect Mobility services will be available in accessible formats. Sign Language and foreign language interpreting and translation services and other disability accommodations are available upon request

for completion of applications, eligibility certification appointments, appeals, bus orientation classes and fixed-route bus training.

Eligibility

In order to use Connect Mobility, a person must be certified as eligible. Eligibility is determined on a case-by-case basis. According to ADA regulations, eligibility is strictly limited to those who have specific limitations that prevent them from using accessible public transportation. Eligible individuals will fall under one of these three major categories:

1. CAN'T NAVIGATE THE SYSTEM INDEPENDENTLY (see Sect.37.123(e)(1)).
Example: Any individual who is unable as the result of a physical, visual or mental impairment, to independently board, ride or exit from any vehicle on the fixed-route bus system even if it is readily accessible to and usable by individuals with disabilities.
2. NEEDS AN ACCESSIBLE VEHICLE (see Sect. 37.123(e)(2)).
Example: Any person with a disability who could use accessible fixed-route transportation, but an accessible vehicle is not available on the route they need to travel or the bus stop is not accessible due to physical characteristics of the stop.
3. OBSTACLES PREVENT REACHING THE BUS (see Sect. 37.123(e)(3)).
Example: Any person with a specific disability that prevents traveling to or from a bus stop.

Visitor Policy

Out-of-town visitors are eligible to ride Connect Mobility if they are eligible to use the ADA paratransit services provided by their home transit system. Visitors must provide proof of ADA paratransit certification from their home system and proof of residence outside of Connect Mobility's service area. These individuals are eligible for temporary visitor status and do not need to apply for certification unless they will be using the service more than 21 days during the calendar year.

Application for Certification for Connect Mobility Services

Connect Mobility is provided for individuals whose disability or health condition prevents them from using the Connect Transit fixed-route services for some or all of their travel. Individuals who are interested in using Connect Mobility service must apply and be found eligible according to ADA guidelines. Both temporary and permanent disabilities may qualify an individual for ADA paratransit services.

To apply for Connect Mobility services, an individual will obtain an application form (which includes a Professional Release of Information form), and application instructions from Connect Transit's website, www.connect-transit.com or by calling (309) 828-9833. The completed application and Professional Release of Information form must be delivered or mailed to:

Paratransit Application
Connect Transit
351 Wylie Drive
Normal, IL 61761

When Connect Transit receives the completed application, it will be reviewed. Connect Transit will then contact the applicant's chosen professional to obtain verification of disability. Once the verification is received, an in-person interview will be arranged with the Transportation Specialist. This specialist is employed by LIFE Center for Independent Living (LIFE-CIL), which has been contracted by Connect Transit to determine eligibility under ADA guidelines.

The interview will usually take place within 7 to 10 days of receipt of the application. Upon request, round-trip transportation from and address within Connect Transit's service area to the interview site will be provided free of charge. Applicants must bring a photo ID or other proof of identity with them to the interview.

Applications are not considered complete until the professional verification has been received and the interview is completed. In most cases, applicants will receive a written determination of eligibility within 21 days of their eligibility interview.

If a decision is not made within the 21 days, Connect Mobility service will be provided until a final decision is made. Applicants will be notified of eligibility by letter and/or in another accessible format as requested.

If applicants are determined to be eligible for Connect Mobility Services for some or all of their trips, they will receive a Certification Letter and a Connect Mobility brochure with information about how to use the service.

Types of Eligibility

There are three types of eligibility:

- **Unconditional Eligibility** – The disability or health condition of the applicant always prevents them from using fixed-route buses and they qualify for ADA paratransit service for all of their trips.
- **Conditional Eligibility** – The applicant is able to use the fixed-route buses for some of their trips and qualify for ADA paratransit service for other trips when their disability or environmental barriers prevent the use of fixed route transit service.
- **Temporary Eligibility** – The applicant has a health condition or disability that temporarily prevents them from using the fixed-route buses.

Eligibility Period

The time period for conditional and unconditional certification ranges from three to five years. Temporary certification is less than one year. Connect Mobility riders will need to re-apply for certification before their eligibility expires. Connect Transit will notify individuals when they need to begin the recertification process, or at least 30 days before their certification is set to expire.

Recertification of Connect Mobility Riders

Persons who were previously deemed eligible for Connect Mobility services will be required to submit a new application and follow the new applicant process for certification to continue receiving paratransit services.

Applicants due for recertification will be given 30 days to return their completed application. Connect Transit will make good-faith efforts to contact the applicant if their application has not been received in the 30 day period. If unable to reach the applicant, there may be a lapse in service until the recertification can be completed under the normal process outlined above. Active riders will be contacted in order to initiate the re-certification process.

Eligibility certifications and re-certifications will be conducted in the following priority order:

1. New applicants
2. Riders with temporary eligibility
3. Current active riders, in approximate alphabetical order.

Change of Location or Disability Status

It is the responsibility of the rider to notify Connect Transit if they have moved or if the status of their disability has changed in any way. The individual may then be requested to complete a new application, which also may include an interview to validate current eligibility status.

Learning How to Use Connect Mobility Services

Applicants who are certified eligible for Connect Mobility services are encouraged to participate in a free orientation class that explains how to use Connect Mobility services. Participants will learn how to schedule and cancel trips, how much rides cost, who can ride with you, as well as other topics of interest. These classes are provided by LIFE CIL through a contract with Connect Transit.

Learning How to Ride Fixed-Route Buses

Applicants who receive conditional eligibility or who are denied eligibility to use Connect Mobility services will be offered free training on how to ride fixed-route buses. This training will be provided by LIFE CIL through its contract with Connect Transit.

How to File an Appeal

An applicant may appeal a denial of eligibility or the category of certification given by making a written request for appeal within 60 calendar days of the written notification of determination. The appeal should tell why the applicant believes that he or she was incorrectly denied. More detailed information about how to prepare an appeal is included in the eligibility determination letter sent to each applicant. The request should specify any disability accommodations that are needed for the applicant to participate fully in the appeal hearing.

All requests for an appeal must be in writing and should be mailed to:

Connect Transit Chief Operating Officer
Paratransit Eligibility Appeals Committee
351 Wylie Drive
Normal, IL 61761

Upon receipt of an appeal request, Connect Transit will convene an appeals committee, whose members have been recommended by the General Manager and approved by the Board of Trustees of Connect Transit. This committee may include the General Manager or designee, an independent clinical professional, an ADA certified paratransit rider, and other community members. All committee

members will have received training in ADA paratransit eligibility criteria and in Connect Transit's paratransit policies and procedures.

The hearing will be set within thirty days of the receipt of the appeal request. The person who is appealing and his or her advocates are entitled to attend the hearing. If the rider was previously eligible, Connect Mobility service will continue for the rider until a decision is communicated by the appeals committee.

The decision of the appeals committee will be given within thirty days of the hearing date, and will be provided in writing (and/or other accessible formats, as requested) to all parties. The decision of the appeals committee shall be final. If a decision on the appeal is not made within thirty days of the completion of the appeal hearing, the applicant will be provided paratransit services on the presumption of eligibility until a final decision on the appeal is communicated.