

Transportation Disadvantaged



**Lake County
Public Transit Services**
for Transportation Disadvantaged

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Transportation Disadvantaged Program

ADA Program

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Program is a complimentary service for passengers who travel along the LakeXpress fixed route corridors, but due to a disability are not able to utilize this service. In order to utilize ADA service the person must first complete an ADA eligibility application to determine if they qualify for this service.

The ADA Program is similar to the Transportation Disadvantaged Program but has different trip scheduling requirements and a eligibility procedures.

For a complete overview of the ADA Program please refer to the ADA Paratransit Service Rider's Guide.

Transportation Disadvantaged Program

The Lake County Transportation Disadvantaged Program was established for individuals who do not have access to any other means of transportation, including public bus service (LakeXpress), because of age, disability or income. It is also provided to those who do not receive services from a sponsoring agency. A "sponsoring agency" is an agency that pays for transportation services for their clients, such as Medicaid. Transportation Disadvantaged services are provided primarily for senior citizens and at-risk children who are mobility and developmentally impaired.

This Rider's Guide is designed to help passengers understand Lake County's paratransit service, which operates under the name of Lake County Connection (LCC.)

This document will provide passengers with information about the policies and procedures that govern the provision of both TD and ADA transportation services. This guide is available online at www.ridelakexpress.com. It is also available on audiocassette and may be obtained by calling Lake County Connection at 352-742-2612.

The Lake County Board of County Commissioners (LCBCC) contracts with a private transportation provider to operate Lake County Connection. The Lake County Transit Division provides management and oversight of the Contracted Operator and its provision of federally-funded public transit service.

The Transportation Disadvantaged and ADA Programs provide transportation service for eligible individuals and is funded through the following agencies: Lake County Board of County Commissioners; Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT); the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Agency for Persons with Disabilities; Agency for Health Care Administration (Medicaid); Florida Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged (CTD); Mid Florida Community Services and Elder Affairs.

Lake County Connection provides more than 400 scheduled passenger trips per day, using a variety of vehicles specifically equipped to transport individuals

with disabilities. Due to the high demand for this special transit service, it is important that each passenger carefully follow the guidelines established for this program.

Cooperation and flexibility from passengers will allow Lake County Connection to meet each passenger's needs more effectively and efficiently.

Customer Service

Lake County Connection Customer Service handles all applications for service and processes all reservation requests, which includes scheduling and dispatching of all approved trips.

To contact Lake County Connection Customer Service, please call 352-742-2612 [Florida Relay voice: 800-955-5770; TTY: 800-955-8771]. Trip requests may be made Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

For after-hour services or for after-hour hospital discharges, please call 352-742-2612. For all emergencies, dial 911.

When calling Customer Service, choose from one of the following options or simply remain on the line and your call will be answered in the order in which it was received.

- Press "2" to speak with a Customer Service Representative to schedule, confirm or cancel a trip (The best time to call to schedule a trip or travel is between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m.)

- Press “2110” to speak with the General Manager
- Press “2113” to speak with the Operations Manager
- Press “2113” to register a complaint

All other comments about Lake County Connection should be reported to Lake County Transit Division at 352-323-5733 or at www.ridelakexpress.com/contact.

If an issue remains unresolved after contacting the Lake County Transit Division, you may contact the Florida Commission for Transportation Disadvantaged Helpline at 800-983-2435.

Eligibility & Hours of Operation

Individuals who are interested in using the Lake County Transportation Disadvantaged Program must apply for services by completing an eligibility application. To receive an eligibility application, call 352-742-2612 or download an application at www.ridelakexpress.com/forms.

Applicants must provide all of the required information as requested on the application, including proof of income. **Incomplete applications will be denied.**

Applications are evaluated and eligibility is determined based upon Florida Statutes, Chapter 427, and the sponsoring agency guidelines and based upon a determination by the transit provider that the passenger does not have the access, or ability to use the fixed-route bus system (LakeXpress.) The eligibility application process may take up to 21 days to complete.

Lake County Transportation Disadvantaged Program transportation is provided Monday through Friday from 6 a.m. to 7 p.m. Dialysis and other Life Sustaining trips may start earlier if necessary.

Transportation service is provided on Saturday and holidays for dialysis treatment, Prescribed Pediatric Extended Care (PPEC) and hospital discharges only. Regular Transportation Disadvantaged services will not be provided on the following observed holidays:*

- New Year's Day
- Martin Luther King Day
- Memorial Day
- Independence Day
- Labor Day
- Thanksgiving Day
- Christmas Day

* *Other holidays may be observed if approved by the Lake County Board of County Commissioners.*

Individuals who live along the fixed route (LakeXpress) who are not able to utilize LakeXpress because of a disability must complete an Americans with Disabilities (ADA) Application. An ADA application may be obtained or downloaded at www.ridelakexpress.com/forms.

To schedule an ADA trip, please contact Lake County Connection Customer Service at 352-742-2612 [Florida Relay voice: 800-955-5770; TTY: 800-955-8771]. Trip requests can be made Sunday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. ADA passengers can only be provided trips that are along the LakeXpress route.

Please contact Lake County Connection Customer Service at 352-742-2612 [Florida Relay voice: 800-955-5770; TTY: 800-955-8771], or the Lake County Transit Division at 352-323-5733 or visit www.ridelakexpress.com, for more information on ADA Transportation services.

Making A Reservation

Lake County Transportation Disadvantaged (TD) Program is a limited-ride program with reservations taken on a first-come, first-served basis. Passenger's must make reservations at least 2 business days prior to the date service is being requested. ADA clients must make their reservations one day before the desired date of transport.

EXAMPLE: If a TD passenger is requesting transportation on Monday, reservations must be made no later than 5 p.m. the Thursday before.

Transportation services are available for Lake County residents only (for ADA Eligibility and Service for Visitors please go to pages 10 through 14 of the ADA Rider's Guide), unless arrangements are made with another Community Transportation Coordinator (CTC.) Due to the limited availability of daily trips, all trips are prioritized based on the following needs:

- Critical medical care
- Other medical
- Nutritional (grocery shopping, meal sites and food stamps)

- Employment
- Education
- Other

To make a reservation, please call Lake County Connection Customer Service at 352-742-2612.

- Passengers may schedule trips from two to 14 days in advance.
- Passengers may schedule up to 3 round trips per call.
- Passengers will be limited to no more than three round trips provided in a given day.
- There is a minimum one hour stay for all appointments.

When making a reservation, have the following passenger information ready:

- Passenger's first and last name
- Home address
- Whether the passenger uses a wheelchair or other personal mobility device
- Home telephone number, work and/or cell phone number
- Date of Birth (an adult must accompany any child age 15 and under)
- Whether there are any other special considerations that must be considered to provide transportation
- Whether a service animal will be accompanying the passenger

- Date transportation is needed
- The time of the appointment or time the passenger needs to be at their destination
- The time the passenger will need to be picked up for their return trip
- The destination address, zip code, county and telephone number
- The general purpose of the appointment
- The drop-off and pick-up location (When making a reservation, please give the customer service representative detailed information about the location. However, at larger facilities, such as hospitals, the customer service representative may request that the passenger wait in a common pick-up area that has been prearranged with the facility.)
- An escort or companion is permitted to travel with the passenger. Please inform the customer service representative if an escort will be accompanying the passenger at the time the reservation is made. All escorts must be at least 16 years of age and will not be charged a fare.
- Users of this service must provide their own child restraint devices and the device must meet the requirements of the Florida Child Safety Seat Law.
- Trips for day care may be provided when the parent is gainfully employed, attending school or the child has been court-ordered to attend a day care program. No minor child will be transported

without an accompanying adult or guardian (The individual must be 16 years or older.)

A “standing order” is for passengers who travel to the same place at the same time on the same day or days of the week.

Passengers with regular appointments may request a standing order. Request for service may or may not be granted depending on the availability of funding.

A passenger cannot change a standing order more than once per month or this privilege may be revoked. However, personal circumstances may arise that may require a change. If your situation changes, please notify the customer service representative immediately at 352-742-2612. All efforts will be made to accommodate such requests, but are not guaranteed.

If a passenger has a standing order and will not be using it for one or multiple days, please contact Lake County Connection Customer Service to cancel or suspend services to avoid having a “no-show” recorded against the passenger.

Lake County Connection relies on the cooperation of all the passengers to make the system run smoothly. If a passenger must cancel a trip, it is important to inform Lake County Connection Customer Service at 352-742-2612 at least two hours before the scheduled pick-up time. **Failure to call at least two hours in advance will constitute a “no-show.”**

Because so many people depend on the Lake County Transportation Disadvantaged and ADA Programs,

changes in a person's scheduled return time are very limited. If a passenger is ready to return more than 2 hours earlier than originally scheduled, he or she may call and ask for an earlier pick-up. Every attempt will be made to honor the request, however, earlier pick-up times are not guaranteed.

Lake County Transportation Disadvantaged Program does not provide same-day service and is not liable or responsible for providing same day transportation in the event of a passenger being in a distressed situation. Please call 9-1-1. If a passenger is in a distressed situation.

Estimated Pick-up Times

When calling to schedule a trip, the customer service representative will provide the caller with two estimated pick-up times for all round trips. The first estimated pick-up time will be from the passenger's home to their destination. The second estimated pick-up time will be the return time from the passenger's destination back to their home.

Each pick-up time is the start of a one hour window. A passenger should expect the driver to arrive within the one hour window. A passenger will need to be ready to travel at any time within that one hour window. Schedules are developed to allow passengers to get to their destinations on time when they are picked up within the pick-up window.

Under certain circumstances pick-up times may be negotiated with passengers to allow more efficient

scheduling. Pick-up window adjustments of up to one hour may be required. Each estimated pick-up time includes:

- The one hour window
- Additional time for the trip distance.
- Additional time for peak periods (rush hour.)
- Additional time for other passenger's scheduled on the vehicle.
- Additional "negotiated" time of up to one hour if necessary.

Multi-legged trips will be treated as round trips with multiple return (second, third, etc.) windows based on requested return times.

Please wait at least one hour past the scheduled pick-up time before calling Lake County Connection Customer Service at 352-742-2612.

The driver can arrive up to one hour after the scheduled pick-up time and still be considered "on time" as long as the passenger arrives at their destination on time. Please remember the pick-up time is based on factors such as the time the passenger needs to reach their destination, traffic delays, inclement weather conditions and multi-loading of other passenger's.

The one-hour return window does not apply to dialysis passengers. It is the goal of Lake County Transit Division to pick up all dialysis passengers within 30 minutes of their scheduled return pick-up time.

Will Call

Sometimes a passenger is not ready to be picked up at the scheduled return time. When this happens the driver places the passenger on “will call.” The driver must notify the passenger that they have been placed on will call if the passenger can be located. The driver shall also notify dispatch when a passenger is placed on “will call”.

This means that the passenger “will call” Lake County Connection Customer Service when they are ready to be picked up. Once Lake County Connection has been notified, the passenger will be taken off “will call” and reasonable efforts will be made to pick the passenger up within 90 minutes. If the passenger is a dialysis patient or taking chemotherapy treatment, efforts will be made to pick them up as soon as possible.

If the customer cannot be found at the scheduled destination, they will be considered a “no-show”. If the customer requests a return trip after the “no-show” has been issued, the return trip will be scheduled with no set time frame.

Fares

The driver will collect the appropriate fare from each passenger when they board the vehicle. The customer service representative will remind each passenger of the amount of their fare in advance of their scheduled trip. The fare will be based upon the requirements of the

agency sponsoring the trip. Lake County Connection does not establish fares or rates.

Passengers must have the exact change because drivers do not carry money and are not allowed to make change or to stop for passengers to get change. Fares must be paid in advance for each trip. All fares are expected to be paid at the time of service. Drivers are not allowed to accept tips. Please notify Lake County Transit Division if any driver asks for, or accepts a tip.

The fare for the Lake County Transportation Disadvantaged Program is as follows:

- **Within Lake County** — \$2 each way.
- **Orlando** — \$5 each way (This service is provided for medical appointments only on Tuesday and Thursday. The bus will depart Orlando at 2 p.m.)
- **Gainesville** — \$10 each way (This service is provided for medical appointments only on Monday, Wednesday and Friday. The bus will depart Gainesville at 2 p.m.)

No-Shows & Tardiness

Lake County Transportation Disadvantaged and ADA Programs are a shared ride system; therefore, it is important that each passenger is ready to board the vehicle when it arrives.

It is the County's policy that the drivers wait only five minutes for a passenger to board the vehicle because

there are other passenger's waiting for their scheduled ride or to get to their appointments.

If a vehicle arrives to pick up a passenger and he or she is not there or does not board the vehicle by the scheduled time, the passenger will be considered a "no-show."

If a passenger places a child or other property on a vehicle and returns inside their home and causes the bus to wait longer than five minutes, the passenger's transportation services will be suspended for 10 days.

Multiple "no-shows" will result in a suspension of the passenger's transportation service. The steps leading up to a suspension of service are as follows:

- The first "no-show" is recorded in the passenger's file and a door hanger is placed on his or her door.
- A second "no-show" within 90-days of the first "no-show" will result in a letter being sent to the passenger warning that the next "no-show" will result in a 30-day suspension.
- A third within 90-days of the first and second "no-show" will result in a 30-day suspension.
- A 4th within 90-days of the first 3 "no-shows" will result in a 60-day suspension.

Passengers may appeal their "no-show" if they have information that is contrary to that noted above.

While waiting for the bus, please do not leave the area. If a driver is unable to find a passenger within five minutes

of arriving, or if a passenger does not cancel a trip at least two hours before the scheduled pick-up time, the passenger will be considered a “no-show.” If the driver is late, the passenger will not be considered a “no-show.”

Repeat “no-show” offenders may be assessed a \$2.00 “no-show” fee.

Suspension from Services

Passengers may have their transportation services suspended for violating the following conditions and any other policy that can be detrimental to the welfare of the program, other passengers, staff or the public.

- 1. Verbal Abuse:** Verbal abuse is defined as any oral presentation that is offensive to another passenger, transit employees, public, elected or appointed official or Community Transportation Coordinator (CTC) staff.
- 2. Disruptive Behavior:** Disruptive behavior is defined as a passenger who engages in violent, seriously disruptive or illegal conduct directed at other passengers, transit employees, the public, elected or appointed official or CTC staff.

Such conduct includes but not limited to: threats or fear of physical or verbal abuse; unlawful harassment; including unwelcome verbal, nonverbal, or physical behavior having sexual or racial connotations; unauthorized use of equipment on the vehicle; voluntarily

and repeatedly violating vehicle-riding rules, including smoking in the vehicle, eating or drinking without prior medical approval, or defacing equipment or property.

3. Dangerous Behavior: Dangerous behavior is defined as any threat or action that could cause direct or indirect physical harm to the driver, vehicle, other passengers, to one's self, the public and elected or appointed official or CTC staff.

4. Physical Abuse: Physical abuse is defined as any action that may cause direct or indirect physical harm to a passenger, driver or other staff.

The driver may refuse transportation to an individual or a group that defies these rules, behaves offensively or could endanger the safety, health, welfare or comfort of other passengers.

5. Late Cancellation Notice: Any scheduled trip that is not canceled at least two hours prior to the scheduled pick-up time is considered a late cancellation. Late cancellations will adhere to the same suspension guidelines as the "no-show" policy.

If the passenger cancels when the driver arrives then the passenger will be considered a "no-show" and is subject to the "no-show" suspension policy as previously stated.

Suspensions will not be imposed for circumstances that are beyond the passenger's normal control. Examples of situations beyond the passenger's control are:

- A sudden verified personal emergency.
 - Sudden or worsening illness.
 - Death in the passenger's immediate family.
 - Late arrival of the vehicle.
 - Disruptive behavior caused by a disability.
- 6. Excessive Timely Cancellations:** Any scheduled trip that is canceled at least two hours before the schedule pick-up time will not be considered a Late Cancellation or a "No-Show." However, if you cancel your trips regularly this will be considered Excessive Timely Cancellation and may be subject to the following actions.
- Ten late cancellations in a calendar month - warning letter will be issued.
 - Eleven late cancellations in a calendar month - 14 day suspension.
 - Twelve late cancellations in a calendar month - 30 day suspension.
 - Lake County Connection is a multi-loading service and the consideration and cooperation of all the riders is imperative for the system to work efficiently and be cost effective.
- 7. Providing False Information:** Providing false information on the application for services or regarding the nature of a trip.
- 8. Service Animals:** Do not interfere with a service animal without the permission of the owner.

9. Other Actions: Other actions not specified but that are determined by the CTC to be an interruption to service.

10. Failing to submit an application: Passengers may be suspended for not recertifying or providing additional information to determine passenger eligibility.

Safety Tips & Customer Responsibilities

The Lake County Transit Division offers the following safety tips:

- Wait in a safe, well-lit location while waiting for the vehicle.
- Choose a pick-up and drop-off location that allows the driver to not lose sight of his or her vehicle when assisting you to or from the door.
- Let the vehicle come to a complete stop before approaching it.
- Allow the driver to assist you in boarding and de-boarding from the vehicle.
- Ask for special boarding assistance if you need it; we are here to serve you.
- Always wear your seat belt.

Passengers of the Lake County Transportation Disadvantaged and ADA Programs are responsible for the following:

- All personal belongings are the responsibility of the passenger.
- Passengers are responsible for loading and unloading their belongings. Under limited circumstances the passenger may request the driver to assist with their belongings. **However, there is a five bag limit and the bags cannot weigh more than 20 pounds each.**
- Bringing an approved child safety seat for children less than five years of age.
- Not eating, drinking or smoking in the vehicle.
- Using a headset for personal video or audio equipment so it does not distract the driver or fellow passengers.
- Shirts, pants, skirts, dresses and shoes are required to utilize this service.
- Drivers are not permitted to make any unscheduled stops or allow special requests without approval.

Passengers are requested to respect others by maintaining a good standard of personal cleanliness and hygiene as well as to practice common health courtesy when traveling with such illnesses as the common cold.

Passengers are requested not to wear strongly scented personal care products while on the vehicle. This will help ensure that the vehicles are accessible for passengers with multiple chemical sensitivity or environmental illnesses.

Drivers

The drivers are employees of Contracted Operator and are trained by Contracted Operator according to Lake County Board of County Commissioners and Contracted Operator specifications and guidelines. Drivers must have a safe driving record, pass a criminal background check, pass a U.S. Department of Transportation physical and test negative for drugs and alcohol.

Drivers are trained in defensive driving, passenger sensitivity and how to safely transport individuals with special needs. Drivers are selected based on their ability to provide the specialized service needed to serve the citizens of Lake County.

Drivers are not required to assist wheelchairs up or down more than one step, push wheelchairs through grass or sand or to lift the passenger into or out of their mobility device, with the exception of stretcher clients.

Driver Responsibilities:

- Be courteous.
- Drive safely.
- Wear a seat belt.
- Securely tie down mobility devices.
- Wear a photo identification attached to their uniform that can be seen easily by the passenger.
- Be in uniform.
- Make a good faith effort to find a passenger.

- Not to honk the horn for a passenger unless there is a dangerous animal or unsafe condition or the fence is locked or other barriers prevent them from accessing the passenger's home.
- May assist passengers with up to five bags that do not exceed 20 pounds each.
- Not use a text or talk on a cell phone while transporting passengers.

Traffic delays, tight schedules, weather conditions, passenger's running late and other factors can cause stressful situations that could affect the quality of service for passengers.

If a driver or other passenger acts in an unreasonable manner (or against these policies and procedures), please report the problem immediately by calling Lake County Transit Division at 352-323-5733.

Other Considerations

Lost and Found

If a passenger loses a personal item and believes it may be on a Lake County Connection vehicle, please call Customer Service at 352-742-2612. If the item is found, the passenger may be asked to travel to a central pick-up point to retrieve it. If the item is not located in the vehicle, Lake County Transit Division, Contracted Operator and their employees will not be held responsible for replacement of the lost items.

All lost and found items will be subject to Florida Statute 705.103 and will be held for 90 days.

Wheelchair Service

Lake County Transportation Disadvantaged Program service is “door-to-door” unless otherwise noted. When making a reservation, be sure to mention if the passenger has any of the following concerns:

- Difficulties walking.
- Uses a mobility device or a wheelchair.
- Use of a service animal.

The passenger must provide wheelchairs and mobility devices, and the passenger must be on the ground floor at the time he or she is to be picked up.

A wheelchair is a mobility aid designed for and used by individuals with mobility impairments, whether operated manually or powered. Lake County Transportation Disadvantaged and ADA Program vehicles are equipped to transport “common wheelchairs” which do not exceed 30 inches in width and 48 inches in length measured 2½ inches above the ground, and do not weigh more than 600 pounds when occupied.

Service Animals

Lake County Transportation Disadvantaged and ADA Program will accommodate any service animal as defined by the American with Disabilities Act (ADA.)

Passengers are asked to refrain from interfering or petting a service animal without prior permission from the animal's owner.

Service animals are welcome on all vehicles. In accordance with the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) CFR 49, Parts 37, (Part 37- Transportation Services for Individuals with Disabilities), LakeXpress and Lake County Connection provide ADA-accessible transit service to all patrons. All of our buses are lift-equipped to allow access and boarding for patrons with mobility devices and service animals.

A service animal must be allowed to board with a passenger with a disability. A service animal is defined as an animal that is individually trained to perform a specific task for a person with a disability. Service animals include, but are not limited to, animals that guide individuals who are blind, that alert individuals with hearing disabilities, that pull wheelchairs or carry and pick up things for persons with mobility disabilities, that assist a person who has difficulties with balance, or that alert an individual of an oncoming seizure. Comfort or therapy animals which are used solely to provide emotional support are generally not considered service animals under the ADA. The transit provider cannot require that a person with a disability provide evidence of certification or any identification papers indicating the legitimacy of the service animal. In addition, the animal cannot be required to wear a special vest or harness which identifies it as a service animal. All service animals and owners must comply with any local licensing laws.

A service animal must be under the control of its owner at all times. To establish that an animal is a service animal, a transit provider can ask two questions:

1. Is this a service animal?
2. What task has this animal been trained to perform? If a service animal displays any aggressive or seriously disruptive behavior, a transit provider may require that the animal be removed from the vehicle or facility. Transit providers may exclude any service animal (but not the rider) from vehicles or facilities when that animal's behavior poses a direct threat to the health or safety of others. Allergies to or fear of animals does not constitute a direct threat.

Oxygen Requirement

Traveling with oxygen equipment is permitted, but the equipment must be small enough so the driver does not have to assist with the loading and unloading of it. The safety and use of this equipment is the sole responsibility of the passenger.

Medicaid Overview

For persons who receive Medicaid benefits, please contact your Medicaid Representative (telephone number located on the back of your Medicaid Card) to acquire the telephone number for the appropriate Medicaid Broker.

Lake County connection



LakeXpress

COMMUNITY SERVICES DEPARTMENT
Transit Division

352-323-5733

www.lakecountyfl.gov

