



**Johnson County SEATS**

**REASONABLE MODIFICATIONS**

**FOR PASSENGERS WITH**

**DISABILITIES**

**July 2015**

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## Background

Fixed Route Transit's Directors are the designated responsible employee to determine requests for reasonable modifications. Requests for reasonable modifications can be made by calling 319-248-1790 or emailing [vrobrock@ci.coralville.ia.us](mailto:vrobrock@ci.coralville.ia.us) or 319-356-5151 for Iowa City. When an ADA paratransit application is submitted, a reasonable modification may also be requested.

Per federal guidelines, beginning July 13, 2015, Johnson County SEATS Paratransit will consider requests for reasonable modifications as follows:

- The individual requesting the modification will describe what they need in order to use the service.
- The individual requesting a modification is not required to use the term "reasonable modification" when making a request.
- Whenever feasible, requests for modifications will be made and determined in advance, before the paratransit service is expected to provide the modified service.
  - Requests can be made during the ADA paratransit (SEATS) eligibility process
  - If you are Coralville or North Liberty resident requests can be made by calling 319-248-1790 or by emailing [vrobrock@ci.coralville.ia.us](mailto:vrobrock@ci.coralville.ia.us)
  - If you are an Iowa City or University Heights resident request can be made by calling 319-356-5151.
- Where a request for modification cannot practicably be made and determined in advance (because of a condition or barrier at the destination of an SEATS or fixed route trip of which the individual with a disability was unaware until arriving), operating personnel will make a determination of whether the modification should be provided at the time of the request. Operators will consult with a supervisor before making a determination to grant or deny the request.
- Requests for modifications of policies and practices may be denied only on one or more of the following grounds:
  - Granting the request would fundamentally alter the nature of Johnson County SEATS Paratransit service, programs, or activities
  - Granting the request would create a direct threat to the health or safety of others
  - Without the requested modification, the individual with a disability is able to fully use local transit services, programs, or activities for their intended purpose
  - In determining whether to grant a requested modification, Johnson County SEATS Paratransit or Coralville Transit or Iowa City Transit will be guided by the provisions of United States Department of Transportation 49 CFR Appendix E to Part 37.169.
  - In any case in which Johnson County SEATS Paratransit or Coralville Transit or Iowa City denies a request for a reasonable modification, Johnson County SEATS Paratransit or Coralville Transit or Iowa City will take, to the maximum extent possible, any other actions (that would not result in a direct threat or fundamental alteration) to ensure that the individual with a disability receives the services or benefit provided by Johnson County SEATS Paratransit or Coralville Transit or Iowa City Transit.

The following are examples offered as guidance when making reasonable modification determinations:

### **Snow and Ice**

Except in extreme conditions that rise to the level of a direct threat to the driver or others, a passenger's request for SEATS to walk over a pathway that has not been fully cleared of snow and ice should be granted so that the driver can help the passenger with a disability navigate the pathway. If snow or icy conditions at a bus stop make it difficult or impossible for a passenger with a disability to get to a lift or for the lift to deploy, the driver should move the bus to a cleared area for boarding, if such is available within reasonable proximity to the stop.

### **Multiple Entrances**

For pickup and drop off locations with multiple entrances, an SEATS passenger's request to be picked up at home, but not at the front door, should be granted as long as the requested pick-up location does not pose a direct threat. In the case of frequently visited public places with multiple entrances (schools, malls, employment centers, hospitals, airports), the SEATS operator should pick up and drop off the passenger at the entrance requested by the passenger, rather than meet them in a location that has been predetermined by SEATS, again assuming that doing so does not involve a direct threat.

### **Private Property**

When accessing private property, even if it requires authorization, Johnson County SEATS Paratransit will make every reasonable effort to gain access to such property. However, the driver is not required to violate the law or lawful access restrictions to meet the passenger's requests. A public or private entity that unreasonably denies access to a SEATS vehicle may be subject to a complaint to the U.S. Department of Justice or U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development for discriminating against services for persons with disabilities.

### **Obstructions**

A passenger's request for a driver to position the vehicle to avoid obstructions to the passenger's ability to enter or leave the vehicle at a designated stop location (such as parked cars, snow banks, and construction) should be granted so long as positioning the vehicle to avoid the obstruction does not pose a direct threat. To be granted, such a request should result in the vehicle stopping in reasonably close proximity to the designated stop location. Johnson County SEATS Paratransit is not required to pick up passengers with disabilities at non-designated locations.

## Fares

A passenger's request to handle the fare media when the passenger with a disability cannot pay the fare by the generally established means should be granted in the situation where a bus passenger cannot reach a fare. Johnson County SEATS Paratransit personnel are not required to reach into pockets or backpacks in order to extract the fare media.

## Eating and Drinking

If a passenger with diabetes or another medical condition requests to eat or drink aboard a vehicle in order to avoid adverse health consequences, the request should be granted. An example is a person with diabetes who needs to consume a small amount of juice in a closed container or a candy bar in order to maintain blood sugar levels.

## Medicine

A passenger's request to take medication while aboard SEATS Paratransit vehicle or in a transit facility should be granted. An example would be allowing individuals to administer insulin injections and conduct finger stick blood glucose readings. Johnson County SEATS Paratransit staff will not provide medical assistance as this would be a fundamental alteration of their function.

## Boarding Separately from Wheelchair

A wheelchair user's request to board a Johnson County SEATS Paratransit vehicle separately from his or her device when the occupied weight of the device exceeds the design limit of the vehicle lift will generally be granted.

## Dedicated Vehicles or Special Equipment in a Vehicle

A passenger's request for special equipment (such as the installation of specific hand rails or a front seat in a vehicle for the passenger to avoid nausea or back pain) can be denied so long as the requested equipment is not required by the Americans with Disabilities Act or the USDOT's rules. Likewise, a request for a dedicated vehicle can be denied. In all cases, the USDOT views meeting the requests as involving a fundamental alteration of Johnson County SEATS Paratransit service.

## Exclusive or Reduced Capacity

A passenger's request for an exclusive SEATS trip may be denied as a fundamental alteration of Johnson County SEATS Paratransit services. SEATS is a shared-ride service.

### **Outside of the Service Area or Operating Hours**

A passenger's request for service may be denied when honoring the request would require travel outside of Johnson County SEATS Paratransit or Coralville Transit or Iowa City's service area or to operate outside of its operating hours. This request is not a reasonable modification because it would constitute a fundamental alteration of Johnson County SEATS Paratransit or Coralville Transit or Iowa City's service.

### **Personal Care Attendant**

While PCA's may travel with a passenger with a disability, Johnson County SEATS Paratransit is not required to provide a personal care attendant or personal care attendant services to meet the needs of passenger with disabilities. For example, a passenger's request for Johnson County SEATS Paratransit driver to remain with the passenger who, due to his or her disability, cannot be left alone without an attendant upon reaching his or her destination may be denied.

### **Intermediate Stops**

USDOT views granting an SEATS passenger's request for a driver to make an intermediate stop, where the driver would be required to wait, as optional. For example, a passenger with a disability arranges to be picked up at a medical facility and dropped off at home. On the way, the passenger with a disability wishes to stop by a pharmacy and requests that the driver park outside of the pharmacy, wait for the passenger to return, and then continue the ride home. While this can be a very useful service to the rider, and in some cases can save Johnson County SEATS Paratransit time and money, such a stop in the context of a shared ride system is not required. Since SEATS is, by its nature, a shared ride system, requests that could disrupt schedules and inconvenience other passengers could rise to the level of a fundamental alteration.

### **Payment**

A passenger's request for the driver to provide the transit service when the passenger with a disability cannot or refuses to pay the fare may be denied. Since Johnson County SEATS Paratransit charges payment to ride, to provide a free service would constitute a fundamental alteration of Johnson County SEATS Paratransit or Coralville Transit or Iowa City's service.

### **Caring for Service Animals**

A passenger's request that the driver take charge of a service animal may be denied. Caring for a service animal is the responsibility of the passenger or a PCA.

## **Opening Building Doors**

For SEATS services, a passenger's request for the driver to open an exterior entry door to a building to provide boarding and/or alighting assistance to a passenger with a disability should generally be granted as long as providing this assistance would not pose a direct threat or leave the vehicle unattended or out of visual observation for a lengthy period of time. A request for "door through door" service generally would not need to be granted because it could rise to the level of a fundamental alteration.

## **Exposing Vehicles to Hazards**

If the passenger requests that a vehicle follow a path to a pick up or drop off point that would expose the vehicle and its occupants to hazards, such as running off the road, getting stuck, striking overhead objects, or reversing the vehicle down a narrow alley, the request can be denied as creating a direct threat.

## **Hard-to-Maneuver Stops**

A passenger may request that a SEATS vehicle navigate to a pick-up point to which it is difficult to maneuver a vehicle. A passenger's request to be picked up in a location that is difficult, but not impossible or impracticable, to access should generally be granted as long as picking up the passenger does not expose the vehicle to hazards that pose a direct threat.

## **Specific Drivers**

A passenger's request for a specific driver may be denied. Having a specific driver is not necessary to afford the passenger the service provided by Johnson County SEATS Paratransit.

## **Luggage and Packages**

A passenger's request for a driver to assist with luggage or packages may be denied in those instances where it is not the normal policy or practice or is outside the normal policy or practice to assist with luggage or packages.

## **Request to Avoid Specific Passengers**

A SEATS passenger's request not to ride with certain passengers may be denied. SEATS is a shared-ride service. As a result, one passenger may need to share the vehicle with people that he or she would rather not.

## **Navigating on an Incline or Around Obstacles**

A SEATS passenger's request for a driver to help him or her navigate an incline (such as a driveway or sidewalk) with the passenger's wheeled device should generally be granted. Likewise, assistance in traversing a difficult sidewalk (such as one where tree roots have made the sidewalk impassible for a wheelchair) should generally be granted, as should assistance around obstacles (such as snowdrifts and construction areas) between the vehicle and a door to a passenger's house or destination. These modifications would be granted subject to the provision that such assistance would not cause a direct threat or leave the vehicle unattended or out of visual observation for a lengthy period of time.

## **Extreme Weather Assistance**

A SEATS passenger's request to be assisted from his or her door to a vehicle during extreme weather conditions should generally be granted so long as the driver leaving the vehicle to assist would not pose a direct threat or leave the vehicle unattended or out of visual observation for a lengthy period of time. For example, in extreme weather, a person who is blind or vision-impaired or a frail elderly person may have difficulty safely moving to and from a building.

## **Unattended Passengers**

Where a passenger's request for assistance means that the driver will need to leave passengers aboard a vehicle unattended, Johnson County SEATS Paratransit should generally grant the request as long as accommodating the request would not leave the vehicle unattended or out of visual observation for a lengthy period of time, both of which could involve direct threats to the health or safety of the unattended passengers. It is important to keep in mind that, just as a driver is not required to act as a PCA for a passenger making a request for assistance, so a driver is not intended to act as a PCA for other passengers in the vehicle, such that he or she must remain in their physical presence at all times.

## **Need for Return Trip Assistance**

A passenger with a disability may need assistance for a return trip when he or she did not need that assistance on the initial trip. For example, a dialysis patient may have no problem waiting at the curb for a ride to go to the dialysis center, but may require assistance to the door on his or her return trip because of physical weakness or fatigue. To the extent that this need is predictable, it should be handled in advance, either as part of the eligibility process or SEATS's reservation process. If the need arises unexpectedly, then it would need to be handled on an ad hoc basis. SEATS should generally provide such assistance, unless doing so would create a direct threat or leave the vehicle unattended or out of visual observation for a lengthy period of time.

### **Notification of Arrival Calls**

A passenger's request for a telephone call 5 minutes (or another reasonable interval) in advance or at a time of vehicle arrival generally should be granted. As a matter of courtesy, such calls are encouraged as a good customer service model and can prevent "no shows." In situations where automated systems are not available and SEATS drivers continue to rely on handheld communication devices (such as MDTs and radios), drivers should comply with any State or Federal laws related to distracted driving.

### **Hand-Carrying**

Except in emergency situations, a passenger's request for a driver to lift the passenger out of his or her mobility device should generally be denied because of the safety, dignity, and privacy issues implicated by hand-carrying a passenger. Hand-carrying a passenger is also a PCA-type service which is outside the scope of driver duties, and hence a fundamental alteration.

**Passenger's Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date Received:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Phone Number:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Best time to call:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Email address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Permanent Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Location to be accommodated:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Frequency (circle):** One Time Permanent Specific Time Period \_\_\_\_\_

**Customer's Request (as many details as possible):** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Person recording accommodation request (please print):** \_\_\_\_\_  
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**1<sup>st</sup> attempt to reach passenger:** Email  Phone  Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Passenger Reached  Left Message  No Voicemail  Wrong Number

**2nd attempt to reach passenger:** Email  Phone  Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Passenger Reached  Left Message  No Voicemail  Wrong Number

**Decision:** Approved  Not Approved

	Modification request denied
	Fundamentally alters service
	Creates a direct threat to health and safety of others
	Customer can fully use service without modification
	Causes undue financial or administrative burden

**Describe other actions taken to ensure access:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Supervisor:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_