

# DART Reference Guide



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## Table of Contents

Meeting Our Customers' Travel Needs	4
Fixed Route Bus Service	4
DART Transportation Service	4
How to Apply for DART Service	5
Request for Appeal	5
Who is Eligible for DART Service?	6
Category 1 – Eligibility (Unconditional Eligibility)	6
Category 2 – Eligibility (Conditional Eligibility)	6
Temporary Disabilities	6
Service for Visitors	7
Eligibility of Children 5 Years of Age and Under	7
Recertification of Eligibility	7
DART Service Area and Service Hours	7
Sunday and Holiday Service	8
Fares	8
Scheduling Rides on DART	9
How to Reserve a Ride	9
When to Reserve a Ride	10
“Ready Time” and “Ready Window”	10
Travel Time	11
Requesting Rides Outside the Service Area	12
Scheduling Multiple Trips	12
Subscription Service	12
How to Change a Scheduled Ride	
If an Appointment is Running Late	12
How to Cancel a Scheduled Ride	13
No Show Policy	13
Circumstances Beyond Passenger Control	14
Percentage of No Show Trips, Rather than Absolute Numbers	14
Return Trip Cancellations	14
No Shows are Different Than Missed Trips	15
No Show Procedures	15
Suspensions	15
Appeal Service Suspension or Termination	16
When the DART Vehicle Arrives	16
Driver Assistance	17
Paying the Fare	17
To Check On a Ride	18
Personal Care Attendant (PCA)	
Guests/Companions	18
Children	18
<b><u>Table of Contents (continued)</u></b>	18

Wheelchairs, Scooters, and Other Mobility Devices	
Wheelchair Securement and Seat Belt Policy	19
Respirators and Portable Oxygen Equipment	19
Packages and Personal Items	19
Emergency Procedures	20
Service and Inclement Weather	20
Community Disaster Emergency Procedures	20
Passenger Courtesy and Conduct	21
Comments and Complaints	21
Notes	22
DART Calling Log	22
Important Phone Numbers	23
DART Quick Reference	24
	24

## **Meeting Our Customers' Travel Needs**

This DART Reference Guide provides brief information about PSTA's 100% accessible, bus service, as well as detailed information about PSTA's ADA paratransit service called DART: eligibility, operations, fares, and frequently requested information. Reasonable modifications/accommodations to policies, practices, and procedures will be made on all services to ensure accessibility to passengers with disabilities in accordance with the ADA.

### **Bus Service**

The Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority (PSTA) is committed to providing transportation services that can be used by all of our customers. All "fixed-route" buses (buses that operate on set routes and follow a published schedule) in our fleet have lifts or are low-floor vehicles with a ramp serving our passengers who use wheelchairs or have difficulty getting up or down bus steps. Our fixed-route buses are 100% wheelchair accessible.

For everyone's benefit, major stops, intersections, and transfer points will be announced on-board the bus, and each bus's route number and destination will be announced to passengers at bus stops. Reserved spaces with tie-down straps and driver assistance are available to provide a safe and secure ride for passengers who use wheelchairs.

PSTA has available for purchase reduced-fare bus passes, called GO Cards, for senior citizens and persons with disabilities. These cards allow an eligible individual to travel at a discounted rate on the fixed-route buses. We encourage those with disabilities to take advantage of the flexibility, independence, and reduced cost that our fixed-route bus service provides.

For route and schedule information, or any questions you may have about using the PSTA fixed-route bus, please call the PSTA InfoLine at (727) 540-1900 or request free travel training by calling (727) 540-1888.

### **DART Transportation Service**

For eligible individuals who have a disability that prevents them from making some or all of their trips on fixed-route buses, PSTA offers a shared ride, door-to-door service which is often referred to as "DART." It is provided as part of our efforts to meet the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (or ADA). The service is provided with sedans, and wheelchair-accessible vans. DART service operates in the same areas and during the same days and hours as the fixed-route bus services, without trip purpose, restrictions, or priorities. DART service must be reserved at least one day in advance.

If you still have questions after reading this DART Reference Guide, please call the PSTA DART office at (727) 540-1888.

## **How to Apply for DART Service**

Individuals interested in using DART service must first be determined eligible for the service. The eligibility review considers each person's functional ability to use fixed-route buses. If a disability or health condition prevents a person from using fixed-route buses under any conditions, that person might be determined "unconditionally eligible." If a person can use fixed-route buses some of the time, but not at other times, that person may be determined "conditionally eligible" for those trips that cannot be completed by bus.

There are two ways to receive applications: (1) go online at [www.psta.net](http://www.psta.net), click on the DART menu, then click on Demand Response Application to download the application; or (2) call PSTA at (727) 540-1888. Leave your name (spell your last name), address, and phone number after the recorded message. A DART brochure and application will be mailed within two business days.

The first section of the application is to be completed by the applicant, or a representative on the applicant's behalf. The second section is to be completed by a disability, elder, or medical professional to verify disabling conditions. The application is designed to gather information regarding an applicant's disability and assessment of his/her environment and functional ability to use PSTA's fixed-route bus. Once completed and signed, the application should be returned to PSTA for processing.

If a personal interview is required, the applicant will be contacted. A personal interview is designed to review the application and discuss the applicant's travel abilities and needs in more detail. An applicant can also ask any questions they may have about the service. If transportation to the interview is needed, PSTA will make arrangements at no charge to the applicant.

Under the ADA, all eligibility determinations must be made within twenty-one (21) days of PSTA's receipt of a completed application. Once an eligibility determination has been made, the applicant is notified in writing of his or her eligibility status. If you do not agree with the decision that is made, you can appeal the decision within sixty-five (65) days of the date on the letter. For more information, see the Appeal Process section in this guide.

### **Request for Appeal**

An applicant who wishes to dispute an eligibility decision is given a copy of the appeal process with the written response to the application. All responses are to be addressed to:

DART Appellate Reviews  
PSTA  
3201 Scherer Drive  
St. Petersburg, FL 33716

A written copy of the appeal process may be obtained by calling PSTA at (727) 540-1888.

## **Who Is Eligible For DART Service?**

The ADA regulations provide that a person may be eligible for DART services under one of the following categories:

### **Category 1- Eligibility (Unconditional Eligibility)**

The first category of eligibility includes those persons who are unable to use fully accessible, fixed-route bus services.

Included in this category is:

“Any individual with a disability who is unable, as a result of a physical or mental impairment (including a vision impairment), and without the assistance of another individual (except the operator of a wheelchair lift or other boarding assistance device), to board, ride, or disembark from any vehicle on the system which is readily accessible to and usable by individuals with disabilities” [Section 37.123(e) (1) of the ADA regulations].

This applies to an individual who cannot independently negotiate the fixed-route bus system (board, ride, or disembark from a bus).

### **Category 2 - Eligibility (Conditional Eligibility)**

The second category of eligibility includes:

“Any individual with a disability who has a specific impairment-related condition which prevents such an individual from traveling to a boarding location or from a disembarking location on such a system” [Section 37.123 (e) (3) of the ADA regulations].

This applies to an individual who, because of his/her disability, cannot access a bus stop to board the fixed-route bus system, and cannot access his/her final destination after disembarking from a fixed-route bus. Two important qualifiers to this category are included in the regulations. First, environmental conditions and architectural barriers not under the control of the public entity do not, when considered alone, confer eligibility. Inconvenience in using the fixed-route bus system is not a basis for eligibility.

### **Temporary Disabilities**

Temporary eligibility is provided to individuals who have a temporary disability that prevents them from using the PSTA bus system. Eligibility will be provided for the expected duration of the disability.

## **Service for Visitors**

Visitor Eligibility is provided for a period of 21 days per year. Residents of counties other than Pinellas can use their 21 days of non-consecutive DART service by completing one of the following:

- A. Provide documentation that they have been determined eligible for similar ADA paratransit service by a transit agency elsewhere in the United States; or,
- B. Provide proof of residency outside of Pinellas County along with a signed letter stating they need DART service during their visit to Pinellas County due to the limitations of their disability.

**This information can be faxed to PSTA at (727) 540-1916. Please include a Pinellas County address and phone number (or cell), along with the dates they are planning to visit. Visitors requesting more than 21 days' service per year will need to submit a DART application for non-visitor eligibility consideration.**

## **Eligibility for Children Five Years of Age and Under**

Children under 5 years of age are considered for DART eligibility based on the functional ability of both the accompanying adult and child (as a team) to use fixed-route bus service. When an eligible child is traveling with an adult who is serving as a PCA, a fare is paid for the child, and the adult attendant rides at no charge.

Eligibility for children 5 years of age and under will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Parents must be able to submit evidence that they are unable to transport their child on the fixed-route bus, which provides service to children under 5 at no charge.

## **Recertification of Eligibility**

Each DART individual must be recertified upon reaching his/her eligibility expiration date. Individuals with unconditional eligibility will only be required to update their contact information. A form will be sent approximately sixty (60) days prior to eligibility expiration and must be completed and returned to PSTA prior to the eligibility expiration date. It may also be necessary from time to time, or if the condition of the disability changes, to re-evaluate an individual's eligibility. Typically, eligibility extends for three (3) years from certification. An individual's letter of eligibility will indicate his/her DART eligibility expiration date. It is the individual's responsibility to reapply for services prior to the eligibility expiration date. If an individual fails to renew DART eligibility, he/she will be ineligible for service until he/she is determined eligible in the re-certification process.

## **DART Service Area and Service Hours**

The PSTA DART service is designed to be "comparable to" (or similar to) PSTA's fixed-route bus service. For this reason, service is only available to transport individuals to and from locations which are within three-quarters (3/4) of a mile of a bus stop, during the same days and hours of PSTA's existing fixed-route bus service. Points of origin and destination not within this

three-quarters (3/4) of a mile corridor are not eligible for ADA DART service and could require an additional fee as determined by PSTA's provider.

To find out if the places you want to travel to and from are covered by DART service, call PSTA's DART Office at (727) 540-1888, or look at the system map on our website at [www.PSTA.net](http://www.PSTA.net).

## **Sunday and Holiday Service**

On Sunday, DART service is provided only in those areas where fixed-route bus service operates on Sunday. To find out if the places you want to travel to and from are serviced by PSTA fixed routes, call PSTA's InfoLine at (727) 540-1900, or review specific route schedules on our website at [www.PSTA.net](http://www.PSTA.net).

PSTA operates a Sunday schedule on the following holidays:

- New Year's Day
- Memorial Day
- July Fourth
- Labor Day
- Thanksgiving Day
- Christmas Day

## **Fares**

The one-way fare for DART service is twice the full cash bus fare. The fare must be paid when boarding the vehicle. Individuals who do not have fare will not be transported. Fares can be paid in any of the following ways:

**Cash** – Drivers will make change for up to a \$5.00 bill, if necessary. Cash fares may be paid with coins or dollar bills.

**DART single trip tickets** – Each ticket is considered a valid form of payment for each one-way trip. Single-trip tickets may be purchased at the PSTA Administration Building, by mail, and through the online ticket store. To purchase tickets by mail call (727) 540-1888 and ask to speak with a representative regarding DART tickets. To purchase tickets online, go to <http://store.psta.net/> and click the DART option.

**DART 10-ride punch ticket** – If you are a frequent user of DART service, or don't always have exact change available, this ticket provides a convenient method of payment for ten (10) one-way trips. 10-Ride punch tickets may be purchased at the PSTA Administration Building, by mail, and through the online ticket store. To purchase tickets by mail call (727) 540-1888 and ask to speak with a representative regarding DART tickets. To purchase tickets online, go to <http://store.psta.net/> and click the DART option.



Individuals who reside more than 3/4 of a mile outside of our service area or are riding outside of our normal service hours will be charged an additional fee. Contact your provider to determine what the additional cost is.

No other passes are allowed as valid fare payment on PSTA's DART service.

Please note that all fares are set by the PSTA Board of Directors and are subject to change.

Note: Drivers are not permitted to accept tips.

## **Scheduling Rides on DART**

### **How to Reserve a Ride**

Individuals may select the appropriate provider from among these authorized providers, and may call the vendor directly to make a reservation:

**Care Ride @ (727) 536-7433**

Before calling to make a trip reservation, have the following information in hand, to avoid delays:

- Your name, address, and phone number
- The name, address, and phone number of the destination, and any point of reference that might help the driver find the location
- The date, day, and time of the appointment
- The time to be picked up from that location
- Whether the passengers will have a Personal Care Attendant (PCA), a guest, or a service animal for this trip
- Any other pertinent information that would help the contract carrier safely and comfortably serve the passenger

Once an individual has provided the appointment time, the reservationist will inform the caller as to when the ride will arrive for pick up; drivers are given 30 minutes from that point as being "on time." After all this information is provided, the reservationist will summarize the reservation to confirm your trip.

Individuals should record the date, time, and name of the person who took their reservation. As a convenience, a log is available at the end of this manual so that a passenger can keep a handy reference of frequent destinations, addresses and phone numbers. It is helpful to use any log, calendar, or journal, as this will assist the passenger, PSTA, and the provider in researching any concern regarding scheduling errors that may occur.

## **When to Reserve a Ride**

A reservation for a DART ride can be made from one (1) to thirty (30) days in advance of a trip. The DART Scheduling office takes trip requests every day. Ride requests are accepted from 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM Monday through Friday. On Saturday and Sunday, trip requests are accepted from 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM.

Please do not schedule a trip several days in advance if there is any doubt of actually going or the exact time to leave. Reserving rides that are later cancelled reduces efficiency and can significantly increase the cost of the service, and could potentially lead to the suspension of DART service.

**Scheduling Tip:** During the busiest scheduling times of the day (early mornings and late afternoons), a caller may be placed on hold until there is a reservation agent that can assist. It is preferable, if possible, to place your trip requests during the middle of the day (10:00 AM to 2:00 PM), when the phone lines are less busy.

### **“Ready Time” and “Ready Window”**

After providing the above trip information, the reservation agent will inform the individual of the trip options. Because DART is a shared-ride service, and other individuals may need to be scheduled on the same vehicle, it may be necessary to get to the appointment a little early or pick up for return a little later than requested. The provider will make every effort to offer a pick-up and drop-off time that is as close as possible to the times requested.

The actual pick-up time that is offered and accepted will be the “Ready Time.” The reservation agent will then note that a DART vehicle might arrive up to 30 minutes after the scheduled pick-up time. This is to accommodate unexpected traffic conditions, weather conditions, or other delays and schedule changes. It is important that a individual is ready to meet the DART vehicle within five (5) minutes of the driver’s arrival, to avoid delays in the carrier’s schedule.

To ensure that the scheduling options that are offered will meet your needs, PSTA has established the following guidelines for the DART scheduling process:

- Trip reservations can be made up to 30 days in advance. In order to accommodate as many individuals as possible, pick-up times will be negotiated up to one hour before or after the pick-up time requested by the individual. Pick-up times in excess of one hour however, must be agreed to by the individual (i.e., the individual has the right to require a pick-up time within an hour before or after his/her requested time).
- Reservations are to be made no later than 5:00 PM the day before the trip.
- If a ride must be changed, the individual will be notified within 2 hours in advance of the original confirmed time.

- To cancel transportation services, individuals must call at least two hours in advance of the scheduled pick-up time, or the trip will be deemed a “no-show”.

Out of courtesy for other DART individuals who are scheduled in the same vehicle, the driver will wait no longer than five (5) minutes after arriving. The vehicle will depart when the five-minute period is up. You are encouraged to check your clock with the reservation agent when calling in a trip request to make sure the times match.

Individuals must be ready to depart at any time during the thirty (30) minute “Ready Window” described when the reservation is made. The provider will contact you if they are going to arrive outside of this window. If an individual has not boarded the vehicle within five (5) minutes after the vehicle arrives, the vehicle will depart and a “no show” will be assessed to the passenger’s record. If the trip is the originating trip of the day (first trip of the day), a vehicle will not be sent back. Exceptions are made if there was an error in the provider’s scheduling or the driver was at the wrong location.

## **Travel Time**

“Travel time” is how much time passes from the actual pick-up time to the actual drop-off time. For ADA paratransit service, travel time is meant to be compared with the time the same trip would take by bus. In order to accommodate additional riders, the following travel time guidelines are provided to assist reservationists and passengers. When scheduling a trip, first allow for the 30-minute “Ready Window”. Then allow for enough travel time for yourself and other passengers along the route, based upon trip distance and time of day, using the following maximum travel time criteria:

Up to 3 miles = 30 minutes, 45 minutes during rush hour  
4-7 miles = 45 minutes, 67 minutes during rush hour  
8-11 miles = 60 minutes, 90 minutes during rush hour  
12-15 miles = 75 minutes, 112 minutes during rush hour  
More than 15 miles = 90 minutes, 135 minutes during rush hour

For example, if a passenger in downtown Tarpon Springs is requesting transportation for an 11:30 AM in Gulfport, this 35-mile trip should have a travel time up to 90 minutes. Therefore, the pick-up should be scheduled for 9:30 AM, allowing for the 30 minute “ready window” in addition to 90 minutes for travel time. The same trip would take three hours by bus.

## **Requesting Rides Outside the Service Area**

Trips to parts of Pasco and Hillsborough Counties can be arranged if scheduled far enough in advance. Such trips typically require individuals to transfer vehicles and pay both DART and the other county's fares. Service beyond the DART service area and hours within Pinellas County are private trips and thus are at the discretion and price of the private provider.

## **Scheduling Multiple Trips**

DART individuals can schedule up to three (3) round trips per call. If a individual has more than three round trips to schedule, please call back to schedule the other trips. This limit on scheduling has been set to minimize the telephone hold times for all customers. It can sometimes take 5 to 8 minutes to schedule each trip, or even longer if a individual has conditional eligibility and the trip requires a transfer to regular fixed-route service.

## **Subscription Service**

If a individual needs to take the same trip at the same time one or more times every week, then subscription service is available. This service allows a individual to schedule these recurring trips with one call and be automatically placed on the schedule each week. Ask the reservationist about this option.

If a individual is receiving Subscription Service, it is important to let the reservation agent know immediately if a ride is not needed on a particular day. This way, the provider can make a change in their schedules. For example, if a individual has scheduled a Subscription Service to work, keep the provider updated on holiday or vacation times, to avoid drivers making unnecessary trips.

Depending on demand, it may sometimes be necessary to limit the overall number of subscription trips. This is to ensure that there are drivers available to meet all individuals' needs.

## **How to Change a Scheduled Ride**

Individuals needing to change an existing reservation must call the provider before 5:00 PM, the day before the scheduled trip.

Tell the reservation agent that a change needs to be made in the scheduled trip. The reservation agent will ask you:

1. First and last name
2. The date and time of the trip that is being changed
3. The new date and time you would like to schedule

The reservation agent will always try to accommodate a individual's needs, but changes to the original order may result in adjustment to the pick-up times.

Note: The provider cannot change pick-up times, or pick-up/drop-off locations on the day of the ride.

## **If an Appointment is Running Late**

Everyone has occasional circumstances outside of their control that can cause delays at a scheduled appointment. If the appointment is running later than was expected, and there is a chance that the individual will not be ready for a scheduled return trip, call the provider as soon as possible. The request will be coordinated with the Dispatchers, who stay in radio contact with drivers. The caller will be asked:

1. The individual's name, and
2. The time of the scheduled return trip pick-up.

Every effort will be made to adjust the return trip pick-up time. Because schedules are set the day before, there may be a delay of up to one (1) hour before another vehicle is available to accommodate an individual's adjusted trip.

Remember to allow extra time for medical appointments or other appointments that may take longer than expected. This will reduce the unnecessary cost of sending another vehicle.

NOTE: If a vehicle is sent and the individual is not ready within five minutes of announcing its arrival, a "No Show" will be assessed. If a individual calls less than two hours prior to a scheduled trip to change the pick-up time, a No Show may be assessed.

## **How to Cancel a Scheduled Ride**

Late cancellations are costly to the provider and affect their ability to provide that trip opportunity to other individuals. If a ride is scheduled that is no longer needed, please call the provider as soon as possible to cancel, but no later than 5:00 PM the day before your scheduled trip. Trips cancelled at least 2 hours in advance of the scheduled pick up time will not be assessed as a "No Show".

During regular business hours, trip cancellations can be taken by the provider's reservation agents. After business hours, the dispatcher will take the call.

## **No Show Policy**

### **CIRCUMSTANCES BEYOND PASSENGER CONTROL**

There are several circumstances where a DART passenger is a No-Show for a scheduled trip. Each No-Show is to be carefully reviewed to ensure that a No-Show is not credited to a passenger, due to circumstances beyond the passenger's control. In fact, it is important to review

No-Shows on a case-by-case basis. The following are situations that are deemed to be beyond the control of the DART passenger:

- Family emergency
- Sudden personal illness
- Personal Care Attendant (PCA) did not arrive or was too late to assist the passenger
- Passenger's mobility aid failed
- Other circumstances

Other situations where DART service provision resulted in a "missed trip" **are not** counted as a DART passenger No-Show. Such situations include the following:

- Late DART vehicle arrival (after the 30-minute pickup window)
- DART vehicle never arrived
- DART driver did not follow proper procedures to locate the passenger
- Timely trip cancellation; however, the cancellation was not recorded correctly or was not transmitted to the DART driver in a timely manner
- Other circumstances independent of the passenger where service provision did not occur, resulting in a "missed trip"

Each DART passenger is encouraged to contact PSTA any time that they receive a No-Show notification letter and identify all No-Show trips that are beyond the passenger's control. It is important for PSTA staff to carefully investigate No-Show trip occurrences and ensure that they are legitimate, particularly if the passenger has a pattern or practice of repeated No-Shows and a service suspension could be imposed. No-Show information will be conveyed to DART passengers in No-Show letters, suspension warning letters, and suspension letters.

## **PERCENTAGE OF NO-SHOW TRIPS, RATHER THAN ABSOLUTE NUMBERS**

Previously, transit providers including PSTA developed a number of No-Show trip occurrences over a specified time frame in order to curb No-Show offenses. Passengers would then be warned that they are approaching a number which represents a pattern of repeated No-Shows and could ultimately result in a service suspension. The problem with such an approach is that the use of an absolute number does not take into consideration the number of total scheduled trips. PSTA will continue to use a specific number of No-Show trip occurrences **only as a starting point for analysis**. Then, this number will be divided by the total number of scheduled trips (excluding cancellations) to ascertain the percentage of total No-Shows. The following are prescriptive No-Show percentages that can be utilized for potential action by PSTA:

- 20%-24% -- Warning Letter
- 25%-29% -- One Week Suspension
- 30%-34% -- Two Week Suspension

## **RETURN TRIP CANCELLATIONS**

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) has made the policy interpretation that if a DART passenger misses a scheduled outbound trip, PSTA may not automatically cancel the return trip. In this way, each leg of a trip is treated separately. In fact, without an indication from the DART passenger that the return trip is not needed, it should remain on the trip manifest. If there is no communication with the passenger or their representative, the return trip should not be canceled.

### **NO-SHOWS ARE DIFFERENT THAN “MISSED TRIPS”**

The ADA distinguishes between trips where the passenger is not available at the pre-scheduled pick-up time and location (No-Shows) and trips where the passenger is available, and service was not provided by PSTA contract carriers.

It is the responsibility of PSTA to ensure that scheduled trips are provided to DART passengers. If, for instance, the DART vehicle arrives outside the 30-minute pickup window, and the passenger cannot complete their trip, it is not a No-Show. This is also true if the DART vehicle never arrives, or if the vehicle arrives outside of the 30-minute pickup window and the passenger is not there or decides not to take the trip; it is coded as a “missed trip” by PSTA.

### **NO-SHOW PROCEDURES**

PSTA and PSTA’s contract carriers will continue to work with riders in a positive way to reduce no-shows. The PSTA No-Show administrative procedures include these steps:

1. Notify DART passengers via door hangers after each No-Show (already done).
2. PSTA will apprise DART passengers of recorded no-shows. Since passengers may be unaware of No-Shows on their record, notification will provide an opportunity to correct No-Show trips, which are actually system errors.
3. Periodically, PSTA staff will list riders with the most no-shows and calculate the percentage of No-Show occurrences to total scheduled trips.
4. DART passengers with a significant percentage of No-Show occurrences, particularly a percentage which could trigger a suspension, will be listed for follow-up action. This follow-up will result in a thorough review of No-Show occurrences to exclude trips that were actually coding errors or “missed trips.”
5. If the review verifies enough No-Shows to constitute a pattern, PSTA will notify the passenger about the No-Shows and any warning or potential suspension. This can provide an opportunity to identify any remaining No-Show occurrences that were outside the control of the DART passenger.
6. Any suspension will be done in writing (accessible formats used as needed) with phone call verification. Each suspension notice will also include the opportunity for an appeal, with instructions on how to instigate an appeal.

## **SUSPENSIONS**

PSTA will continue to alert riders about No-Shows trips as they occur, restate the No-Show policy and inform passengers that they can contact PSTA if any of the No-Shows were not in their control and/or were charged to the passenger in error.

### **Written Notification Before Suspensions**

Before any suspension of service due to No-Shows, PSTA will notify the individual in writing, citing specifically the full reason for the proposed suspension and its length, including the exact No-Show occurrence dates, times, and pickup locations on which the proposed suspension is based, using accessible formats when necessary. Also, each suspension will include the information about the appellate process, including how to file an appeal.

None of the No-Show occurrences from which the suspension is proposed will include No-Shows beyond the passenger's control, nor any "missed trips" that are the responsibility of DART contract carriers. Again, passengers will have the opportunity to contact PSTA about No-Shows beyond their control. PSTA will allow at least 15 days between receipt of a notice of a proposed suspension of service and the proposed date on which the suspension becomes effective.

### **Length of Suspensions**

PSTA will provide for a suspension on a progressive system whereby the first suspension is for a one week, with subsequent suspensions in the same year being for two weeks, so that repeat offenders do not create problems that affect other DART passengers and overall service.

## **Appeal Service Suspension or Termination**

A individual who wishes to dispute any suspension or termination of service may do so in writing, addressed to:

DART Appellate Reviews  
PSTA  
3201 Scherer Drive  
St. Petersburg, FL 33716

## **When the DART Vehicle Arrives**

The vehicle may arrive before a scheduled pick-up time; however, the individual is not required to leave the location until the scheduled pick-up time. The driver will announce his/her arrival, but must stay within sight of his vehicle. If a individual lives in a multi-floor unit, they must come to the ground floor prior to the scheduled pick-up time. Please be ready to go when the vehicle arrives, so that the driver can stay on schedule for all individuals. (Passenger should be



visible to the driver). The individual should wait where the vehicle's arrival can be detected, or where the driver will be able to see the individual.

NOTE: The vehicle may arrive anytime within the 30-minute "Ready Window." Drivers will only wait five (5) minutes after arrival. If a individual is not ready, the driver may leave after the 5-minute wait, resulting in a "No Show".

Example: A individual is scheduled for a 9:00 AM pick-up time. This means that the individual should be ready for the vehicle to arrive between 9:00 AM and 9:30 AM. If the vehicle arrives at 9:05 AM, the driver will wait for the individual until 9:10 AM. If the vehicle arrives at 8:50 AM, the passenger is not required to board the vehicle until 9:00 AM.

## **Driver Assistance**

Drivers are not permitted to lose sight of their vehicle.

Drivers will

- assist individuals to and from the threshold of a location, when the thresholds are within sight of the vehicle
- assist individuals in boarding and de-boarding a vehicle
- operate a wheelchair ramp or lift
- assist with the securement of wheelchairs and mobility devices
- assist with fastening of seat belts

It is the individual's responsibility to carry his/her own belongings. If the individual is unable to carry these items, a personal care attendant (PCA) may travel with the individual, at no charge. Individuals must limit their number of packages to only what they can carry when boarding a vehicle without affecting seating capacity.

***If a individual brings more than they can carry, or cause the delay of the departure of the vehicle due to the extra items being carried, the individual will be assessed a "No Show."***

Drivers do not provide assistance in loading and unloading packages. If you need assistance getting packages to the door of your destination, arrange to have someone assist upon your arrival at the destination. A rolling cart waiting by the destination's door is also helpful.

## **Paying the Fare**

Fares must be paid before boarding the vehicle. The driver will make change for up to a \$5.00 bill, if necessary. If the correct fare is not paid, the driver may refuse to provide the ride, and a "No Show" will be assessed.

DART single-ride and multi-ride tickets are available for purchase at PSTA. To purchase tickets by mail call (727) 540-1888 and ask to speak with a representative regarding DART tickets. To purchase tickets online, go to <http://store.psta.net/> and click the DART option.

## **To Check on a Ride**

Unexpected delays occur due to road construction, traffic conditions, inclement weather, or occasional mechanical problems. If a DART vehicle has not arrived within 30 minutes after the scheduled pick-up time, the provider is required to contact you. If they do not, you may call the provider. A reservationist will speak with the dispatcher, who will radio the driver and provide an estimated time of arrival. While making your call, stay within sight of the pick-up location since the vehicle may arrive while you holding.

## **Personal Care Attendant (PCA)**

A Personal Care Attendant (PCA) is someone who assists a DART individual with travel, appointments, or activities. One (1) PCA may travel with a individual at no charge. When making a reservation, inform the provider that a PCA will be traveling with the individual. This assures that there will be room in the vehicle for the individual, the PCA, and other scheduled individuals. PCAs must have the same origin and destination as the individual.

## **Guests/Companions**

A guest/companion is someone travelling along to share the trip, not someone brought to assist the DART individual. Guests/companions must pay a fare when accompanying a DART individual, and would board and de-board the vehicle at the same place and time as the DART individual.

Passengers using DART service are entitled to bring one guest/companion. Additional guests/companions are accommodated and pay the DART fare only if there is enough space in the vehicle. When making a trip request, tell the reservationist that you will be traveling with a guest/companion. Drivers cannot add guests who do not have a reservation.

## **Children**

All children under five (5) years of age must be accompanied by an adult. Children under 5 years cannot ride unattended. If traveling with an eligible fare-paying adult, one child under 5 years travels at no charge.

The adult accompanying a child is responsible for the child. Drivers can assist with securing a child's seatbelt, but drivers will not secure a child's car seat. The driver is also not permitted to carry a child on or off the vehicle. If assistance with the child is needed, please bring someone else along to help you.

## **Wheelchairs, Scooters, and Other Mobility Devices**

DART vehicles are designed to accommodate wheelchairs and mobility devices. Wheelchairs are mobility aids belonging to any class of three or more wheeled devices, used indoors. As long as the passenger is able to safely navigate the manual or motorized mobility aid on and off of the ramp or lift without exceeding the manufacturer's maximum weight limit, PSTA can transport the device.

If your wheelchair or mobility device exceeds the size that can be accommodated on a wheelchair lift or ramp, transportation with DART service will be denied until you are able to obtain a mobility device that meets these criteria. An assessment may be necessary if there is a question regarding the compliance of a mobility device.

### **Wheelchair Securement and Seat Belt Policy**

It is the driver's responsibility to ensure that mobility devices are properly secured. All wheelchairs and scooters must be secured in the vehicle's four point securement system at all times during the ride. All individuals are required to comply with Florida's seatbelt law. (If an individual's mobility device has a built in lap belt, an additional lap belt is not required. The lap belt should be secured before the individual boards the vehicle, and may be removed after the individual de-boards at their destination).

### **Respirators and Portable Oxygen Equipment**

Portable oxygen equipment and portable respirators are permitted on all PSTA vehicles. The driver will assist in securing this equipment in the vehicle. Drivers are not permitted to assist individual in the use of the equipment. If assistance with portable life-support equipment is necessary, please arrange to have a PCA on the trip.

### **Service Animals**

Individuals may travel with a service animal. Service animals include guide dogs, signal dogs, and other animals as defined by the FTA that are individually trained to work or perform tasks for persons with disabilities. Please inform the reservationist if traveling with a service animal.

The individual is responsible for the care and supervision of a service animal while on board. If an individual is traveling with a service animal:

- The animal must be on a leash or in a container, remain under the individual's control and behave appropriately. The animal cannot display aggressive behavior toward other people or animals.
- The service animal must remain at the individual's feet or lap. The animal may not sit on a vehicle seat.
- The individual is responsible for any damage or soiling caused by the animal.
- The animal must be clean and well groomed.
- DART drivers do not handle or secure service animals.

- Birds, reptiles, amphibians, and rodents are not considered service animals and must be kept in enclosed carriers/containers, as must other pets that are not service animals.

### **Packages and Personal Items**

DART service allows individuals to bring packages and personal items. The load they bring, however, must be limited to what they can carry themselves without affecting seating capacity; typically, it is comparable to the size of three brown paper grocery bags. Because drivers cannot assist individuals with loading and unloading of these packages and/or personal items, it is important that an individual unable to manage the packages or personal items themselves travel with a PCA.

Personal, two-wheeled, collapsible grocery carts are permitted. The individual must unload the packages from the cart before the driver loads the empty cart into the trunk. Please tell the reservationist if an individual will bring a cart on the scheduled trip, in order to allow for room in the vehicle. Individuals in wheelchairs will often have their PCA hold the cart in the back of the van.

### **Emergency Procedures**

In the event of an accident or emergency, please remain calm and follow the instructions of the driver.

An individual who becomes ill, or notices another individual who may be ill, should inform the driver immediately.

If an individual, due to their disability, is supposed to be met when the individual reaches their destination, and the person meeting the passenger is not there, the driver will notify the dispatcher, who will make a call to the individual's emergency contact. If the emergency contact cannot be notified, the proper authorities will be notified.

### **Service and Inclement Weather**

PSTA reserves the right to suspend, modify, or cancel DART service during times of hazardous weather conditions. If severe weather is imminent, individuals will be notified if DART service may be suspended.

### **Community Disaster Emergency Procedures**

Preparing for a community emergency such as a major storm event, may result in trip prioritization. If PSTA's fixed-route bus service is suspended, modified, or cancelled, DART

service may be suspended, modified, or cancelled. If a individual is at a location away from home during the suspension of service, every effort will be made to get the passenger home.

By keeping emergency contact information up-to-date, PSTA and our providers are able to provide better service to our individuals in times of emergency. As part of our emergency preparations, reservationists will periodically ask you to update your emergency contact information, including telephone and cell phone numbers, and the emergency contact's name and phone number(s).

### **Passenger Courtesy and Conduct**

These common-sense rules ensure the safety of all individuals and drivers:

- No smoking in the vehicles.
- Individuals shall maintain appropriate and reasonable personal hygiene.
- Shirts and shoes are to be worn.
- No eating or drinking on board (unless required for health reasons).
- Abusive, threatening, or obscene language or actions are not allowed.
- Fares are paid before the vehicle departs.
- Service animals are the responsibility of the owner. Drivers and other individuals must refrain from touching the service animal.
- Parents are responsible for the children in their care.
- Use of radios or other music players which other passengers can hear is prohibited.
- Contents of strollers and two-wheeled grocery carts are to be loaded and unloaded by the individual, or a personal care attendant (PCA).
- Individuals are limited to packages and personal items that they can carry themselves without affecting seating capacity. Individuals or their personal care attendant (PCA) are responsible for loading and unloading the packages and personal items.
- Front passenger seat occupancy is on a first-come, first-seated basis.

Individuals, PCAs, or travel companions may be subject to suspension of service if they violate these rules of courtesy and conduct; engage in physical abuse or cause physical injury to a driver or individual; engage in any other illegal activities; engage in activity that disrupts the safe or effective operation of DART services; or engages in violence, illegal conduct, or seriously disruptive behavior.

Any individual, PCA, or travel companion who is suspended from service will be notified in writing, and will be given the opportunity to appeal the suspension. PSTA reserves the right to *require* that a personal care attendant (PCA) travel with a individual, in lieu of suspension.

### **Comments and Complaints**

PSTA welcomes feedback, comments, and complaints regarding DART service. Please call (727) 540-1888, submit a Public Comment Form through our website [www.psta.net](http://www.psta.net), or write to:





DART complaints or commendations; DART Hotline (727) 540-1888  
PSTA bus information: PSTA Info-Line (727) 540-1900

**For trip reservations:**

Wheelchair and sedan Provider  
Care Ride (727) 536-7433

**DART Quick Reference**

A Personal Care Attendant (PCA) travels with passengers who require special assistance or cannot travel independently.

Fares are paid when boarding; drivers will make change for up to a \$5.00 bill, if necessary.

Drivers do not carry packages, parcels, luggage, or groceries.

Drivers do not lose sight of their vehicle when picking up or dropping off passengers.

Drivers are not permitted to wait for the passenger to board the vehicle more than 5 minutes after the driver attempts to announce to the passenger their on-time arrival.

DART service allows individuals to bring packages and personal items. Passengers must limit the number of packages and parcels to only what they can carry when boarding a vehicle without affecting seating capacity.

Failing to cancel a trip at least 2-hours in advance of scheduled pick-up results in a “No Show.”