



County of Lackawanna Transit System

***COLTS' Complementary ADA  
Paratransit Service***

*Special Efforts Accessibility  
Transportation Service (SEATS)*

*SEATS Trip Tips*

*(570) 963-6795*

June, 2016

## **Welcome to SEATS!!!**

COLTS provides Complementary ADA Paratransit Service, called Special Efforts Accessibility Transportation System, or SEATS. This service complements COLTS' fixed route service in Lackawanna County.

To use this service, you must qualify for service under the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and your origin and destination must be within three-quarters (3/4) of a mile from a regular COLTS bus route.

### **Where is the SEATS Central Office?**

The SEATS program is managed from the central COLTS office.

Our mailing address is:  
800 North South Road  
Scranton, PA 18504

### **What is SEATS?**

The SEATS program is part of COLTS' family of services that includes fixed route and Shared Ride programs, such as SEATS, Medical Assistance Transportation Program (MATP), and Persons with Disabilities (PwD). Shared Ride services are available to anyone, regardless of age, income, or disability. However, people who do not qualify for the reduced fare must pay a full \$25 fare because of the highly personalized nature of the trip.

**SEATS service is available for any purpose – it is not restricted to medical appointments or shopping trips.**

COLTS services are accessible to people with a variety of disabilities. All COLTS buses and vans are equipped with wheelchair lifts or ramps.

### **Where and when does SEATS provide service?**

SEATS is provided within ¾ mile of the COLTS regular Fixed Route service, six days a week. The hours and areas match the Fixed Route service areas and times Monday through Saturday.

## **Telephone Numbers**

SEATS: (570) 963-6795

TDD: (570) 963-6484

COLTS Fixed Route Service: (570) 346-2061

## **Applying for SEATS ADA Eligibility**

### **Who is eligible?**

Anyone whose disability prevents them from independently using COLTS bus service, either all of the time or under certain circumstances, may be eligible for SEATS ADA service. Anyone with a disability may apply for SEATS ADA service, even if they are eligible for other transportation programs (such as MATP or PwD).

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) specifies how transit agencies should determine eligibility for SEATS services. Under the ADA, you may be eligible for SEATS service if you have a disability that prevents you from independently using COLTS buses.

Presence of a disability by itself does not make you eligible. Eligibility is also not based on your age, inability to drive, or the inconvenience of bus services. Your independent ability to use the bus is the basis for eligibility.

### **Process**

To apply for SEATS ADA paratransit eligibility, you must submit an ADA application form, which includes a section to be completed by a health care professional. To request an application, call SEATS at (570) 963-6795 or download the application form from the COLTS Web site. In order to be considered, your submitted application must be complete; answer all of the questions and include required information from professionals.

The application contains a Part A (to be completed by the applicant) and a Part B (to be completed by a health care professional.) Applications must be submitted by mail; faxes are not accepted. Applications received which are missing Part B, which are unsigned, have a substantial number of questions unanswered are returned to the applicant with written instructions.

### **Timeline**

Once a completed application is received by SEATS, you will be notified of your eligibility within 21 days. If you do not receive written notification of your eligibility within 21 days, you have the right to use SEATS until you receive written notification of your eligibility.

If an eligibility decision cannot be issued within 21 days, the SEATS ADA eligibility coordinator will contact the applicant by phone on the 21<sup>st</sup> day and advise them of their presumptive eligibility and right to use the service until such time as the applicant is notified of his or her eligibility.

## **Visitors**

Visitors to the COLTS service area who have current certified ADA/Paratransit eligibility from another transit authority in the United States may reserve COLTS rides for up to 21 days per year. The visiting Rider must call the COLTS Customer Service representatives and request visitor ride service. The Rider will be required to provide a local address that is within the COLTS service area and fax or send a copy of their current Paratransit ID card or documentation of disability to COLTS for approval.

After approval, the Rider may reserve trips and use the Paratransit ID card issued from his or her home transit authority when boarding. All other policies and procedures governing COLTS Riders will apply to visiting Riders. This same service can be used by COLTS Riders going to other cities which have a similar paratransit bus service. Contact those transit administrators for details.

### **If you are eligible:**

Once your eligibility application and documentation is provided, you will receive a letter confirming your eligibility. When you are confirmed, you can begin making reservations through the Shared Ride Program. (Shared Ride refers to the fact that you must be willing to share the vehicle with another person or persons.)

### **If you are denied eligibility:**

You have the right to appeal the decision. Appeals must be filed within 60 days of the date of the eligibility determination. You will have the opportunity to submit additional written information if you wish, and to appear and be heard in person by the Appeals Committee. Anyone whose eligibility is denied or conditioned will be notified of the right to appeal the decision including information about the process.

The Appeal Committee, through the Release of Information Consent, will have access to the applicant's entire application for ADA paratransit eligibility. It is the job of the Appeal Committee to make a recommendation concerning eligibility and to outline their decision as it relates to the eligibility criteria.

The applicant is notified of their preliminary decision within twenty (20) days of the receipt of the completed appeal form.

If the applicant has been deemed anything less than fully eligible by the members of the Appeal Committee, the applicant is advised of the right to an in-person hearing. The applicant and any other persons of his/her choice may attend the meeting to state the case for paratransit eligibility.

This is an opportunity to present information and arguments in person. Hearings are held on the second and fourth Wednesday of each month at COLTS' administrative offices. The applicant may choose either of the next two available appeal hearing dates. If requested, transportation to the hearing will be provided at no cost.

The applicant will be notified of the decision of the Appeal Committee and the paratransit eligibility determination no more than ten (10) days from the date of the appeal hearing. The notification will be provided in writing and will include the specific reason for the decision.

**To request an application or for more information:**

Contact SEATS at (570) 963-6795 or TDD (570) 963-6484 Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. through 4 p.m., or visit the COLTS Web site at coltsbus.com.

## **Cost**

A one-way SEATS ticket is \$3.50 each, or \$17.50 for a book of five (as of July 1, 2013).

A monthly ADA pass is \$112.

You can purchase tickets at the COLTS main headquarters at 800 North South Road, Scranton, PA. You can also call the SEATS program or COLTS and ask that tickets be mailed to you and you can mail in payment.

COLTS accepts cash or checks. COLTS does NOT accept credit card payment.

SEATS tickets must be purchased in advance, as drivers do not carry cash or change. The SEATS ticket must be given to the driver prior to boarding the van.

## **What information you need when making a reservation**

You will need:

- your full name, phone number, and pick-up address. Please include any special neighborhood or entrance instructions.
- the date of your trip and your requested pick-up time
- your appointment time
- your destination address, including the entrance at a public building. The operator will advise you which entrance to use if you are going to a mall or a hospital.
- the phone number at your destination, whenever possible
- return time (only trips to appointments with a non-predictable ending time may be scheduled with a “will-call” return
- if you use a wheelchair or require special assistance (for example, “I am blind.”)
- if a personal care attendant will travel with you
- the reservationist will tell you the fare, verify the information and give you his/her name. You should always make a note of the operator’s name.

## **Reservations**

All trips must be reserved in advance. Reservations must be made by 4 p.m. on the day prior to the trip. Clients requesting service can call between the hours of 8 a.m. and 4 p.m. up to two weeks in advance of the trip, or by 4:00 PM, on the day before they would like to travel. Please note that calls for Monday trips must be made by prior to the Monday trip.

On the day of the trip, the van will pick you up at your scheduled location and take you to your destination. The van will then return to pick you up.

COLTS' fixed route service does not operate on New Year's Day, Memorial Day, July 4, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, and Christmas Day.

COLTS' administrative offices are closed New Year's Day, Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, President's Day, Good Friday, Memorial Day, July 4, Labor Day, Columbus Day, Veterans Day, Thanksgiving Day, the day after Thanksgiving, and Christmas Day. COLTS Administrative Offices are open 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m., Monday through Friday. COLTS does not operate on Sundays.

## **Response Time**

Reservations are accepted for SEATS service on Monday through Friday and on Sunday (for Monday or the following week) and on the holidays listed above between the hours of 8:30 a.m. and 4 p.m. Reservations placed on Sunday and on these holidays for next day trips will be accepted via answering machine and will be scheduled and provided at the pick-up times requested. Reservations placed on Sunday for Tuesday and beyond may be subject to call backs in the event the exact pick-up time requested is not available.

## **Call Backs**

It is the policy of COLTS to honor pickup times negotiated with the customer, and to minimize adjustments to reservations following the customer's initial call and to obtain the customer's consent to any changes prior to scheduling the trip.

Changes to reservations made after the initial negotiation are recorded in Route Match and reports are available for review by management.

ADA-eligible customers who leave messages on Sunday and holidays for trips from home to appointments and return trips the following day will receive a call back within 45 minutes of the initial call informing them of the pick-up time and the thirty (30) minute on-time window within which the vehicle will arrive for the customer to arrive before the appointment time. If needed, COLTS will negotiate the pickup time for the return ride during the call back.

### **Changing Reservations**

Changes to a SEATS trip can be made a day in advance by calling the SEATS program at (570) 963-6795. You may not change your destination or time once you have boarded the vehicle. Drivers are not permitted to accept information regarding changes or cancellations.

### **Will-Call Returns**

If you are traveling to an appointment with a non-predictable ending time, you may choose to call for a return when you are ready to leave. The operator may have questions, so please make the call yourself and go directly to the entrance specified to wait for the vehicle.

If you choose to call for a return, you can expect to wait anywhere from 5 to 45 minutes. There are no "will-call" returns on weekend, or after 4 p.m.

### **Assistance**

The SEATS program provides door-to-door service, in which passengers are picked up at the curb of their boarding location and dropped off at the curb of their destination. If an individual needs assistance the driver will assist the individual from their home to the van and from a facility to the van.

The driver cannot assist passengers due to liability purposes. Drivers are **not** permitted to enter residences or other buildings to assist passengers at any time. Drivers are allowed to assist, but we do not permit the driver to enter residences or other buildings.

When your scheduled van arrives, the dispatcher from COLTS will call you and let you know that your ride has arrived; your driver will not come to your door.

### **Packages**

Customers may have up to three (3) reasonably sized packages on a vehicle. Passengers or caregivers are responsible for their own packages. The driver will assist with the packages.

### **Safety**

All COLTS paratransit vehicle are equipped with a lift to assist you in accessing the vehicle. The vans also have safety straps for mobility devices. All passengers who use mobility devices must be properly secured before boarding the vehicle.

Passengers using a mobility device must board the vehicle backwards.

All passengers and escorts are required to wear a seat belt if one is available.

## **Vehicle Lift Limitations**

COLTS paratransit vehicles can accommodate up to a total combined weight of up to 600 pounds, including both the mobility device and the customer. The lift can accommodate wheelchair dimensions of 30" by 48" chair size. COLTS vehicles cannot accommodate anything heavier.

## **Personal Care Attendants (PCA)**

If you require the assistance of another person to complete your trip or its purpose, you may take one personal assistant (PCA) at no additional charge. A PCA is anyone who provides the eligible rider with assistance with a daily life activity necessary to complete the trip or at the destination.

There are no restrictions on who may serve as a PCA as long as they are over the age of six and are able to perform the necessary assistance. An ADA-eligible customer may require a PCA for every trip, or only occasionally as needed. A companion is someone whose presence is desired but not required to complete the trip

You must pre-schedule your PCA and she/he must be picked up and dropped off at the same point as you.

If you are being accompanied by someone whose presence is desired but not necessary, that person will be your companion.

You may take one companion who must also be pre-scheduled. You will pay a fare equal to yours for your companion. Additional companions may be scheduled on a space available basis.

It is your responsibility to call in advance to cancel a reservation for a PCA or companion if they will not be accompanying you on your trip. Those seats may be used for other customers.

## **Telephone Hold Time**

It is COLTS' policy for our SEATS program to have minimum telephone hold times, and no busy signals for reservations or "where's my ride?" calls from our clients.

SEATS calls will be answered in three to five rings during business hours.

## **Standing Trips**

Anyone who has a routine trip can set up a "standing trip" instead of calling for reservations each time. A standing order is automatically scheduled on the appointed day and time, unless it is cancelled by the passenger.



## **On-Time Window**

An on-time pickup is one in which the vehicle arrives not more than 15 minutes prior and not more than 15 minutes after the scheduled pickup time. If your ride does not show 15 minutes after the scheduled pick-up time, you should call the SEATS program at (570) 963-6795.

An early trip is one in which the driver arrives more than 5 minutes prior to the on-time window. Customers requesting a will call return will be picked up within 45 minutes of their call in order to comply with on-time performance standards.

A missed trip is one in which the vehicle does not arrive at all, or arrives outside the on-time window (more than 15 minutes early or late) and the client is not transported or chooses not to take the ride.

## **On-Time Arrivals**

An on-time arrival is one in which the customer arrives at the destination not more than 30 minutes prior to the appointment time and 0 minutes after the appointment time. Reservationists will work with customers to determine the correct pickup time for an on time arrival, including any negotiation which may be necessary. On-time arrivals apply to trips from home to a destination, not to return trips which have no appointment time. In order to set the proper time for a return ride – the reservationist must determine the earliest time the customer can be ready to leave.

The on-time performance standard may be relaxed at the discretion of COLTS in circumstances where situations beyond the control of the provider negatively impact on-time performance, such as severe winter weather.

## **Cancellation Policy**

All clients are required to cancel their trips through the COLTS office, at a minimum of two (2) hours prior to their scheduled, trip pick up time. A consumer who fails to notify our office in the event of a cancellation, unless the cancellation involves a medical emergency, other documented emergency/crisis or other special circumstance, may result in a temporary discontinuation of service.

Anytime you schedule a pick-up, you must be at the address in which you scheduled your trip; and, if this changes for any reason you need to give us at least two (2) hours notice of the change.

If a COLTS-provided vehicle comes for a scheduled pick-up and you are not there or decide not to go, you will be considered a NO SHOW.

## **No-Show Policy**

A No-Show is defined as any scheduled trip that is not taken and not canceled by the client.

All clients are required to cancel their trips through the COLTS office, at a minimum of two (2) hours prior to their scheduled trip pick-up time. A client who fails to notify the COLTS office in the event of a cancellation, unless the cancellation involves a medical emergency, other documented emergency/crisis or other special circumstance, may result in a temporary discontinuation of service. If a COLTS provided van comes for a scheduled pick-up and you are not there or decide not to go, you will be considered a No-Show.

Anytime you schedule a pick up, you must be at the address in which you scheduled your trip; and, if this changes for any reason you need to give us at least two hours' notice of the change.

Consumers have the right to appeal or dispute the no show findings.

**NO-SHOW POLICY:** Sanctions could be imposed if a pattern or practice of missed trips occurs. A pattern or practice involves intentional, repeated or regular actions, not isolated, accidental, or a singular incident.

A review of an individual's No-Shows could occur if there are at least three (3) No-Shows within a thirty (30) day period and a sanction could be imposed if more than 50% of all trips scheduled were No-Shows.

After one (1) No-Show an individual will be given a documented verbal warning.

After two (2) No-Shows within thirty (30) days, an individual will be given a written warning along with a copy of the No-Show Policy.

After three (3) No-Shows within thirty (30) days, and exceeds more than 50% of all trips scheduled, a five (5) day suspension of service may occur.

The cooperation of SEATS riders is vital. By working together, we keep no-shows to a minimum and continue to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of your transportation.

## **Children**

Children are allowed on COLTS paratransit vehicles but must be accompanied by adult until the age of 18.

In accordance with Pennsylvania state law, child safety seats for children under age 4 and a booster seat for children between ages 4 and 7 must be used.

## **Service Animals and Pets**

Service animals are allowed on COLTS paratransit vehicles. Domestic pets are allowed on the vehicles as long as they are in carriers.

## **Registering a compliment or complaint**

Your comments and suggestions help us continue to improve our service. Please let us know promptly if you have a problem so that we can try to prevent it from happening again. Every complaint is reviewed the same day as it is received. All complaints are investigated and responded to, usually within two weeks.

The following are some examples of when you should file a complaint:

- when your pre-scheduled vehicle is more than 20 minutes late.
- when the telephone operator or driver is rude or fails to provide assistance
- you waited more than 45 minutes for a will call return
- you cannot get through to the SEATS program on the telephone within 15 minutes
- your ride took well over one hour

When you have a positive experience, we appreciate hearing from you as well. Compliments are passed along to management to highlight superior performance.

We have a brochure available called "***How to Register a Complaint or Compliment.***" Please be ready to provide as much detail as possible about the incident, including your name, address, day and date of trip, scheduled pick-up time and return time, and the address of your destination. You may obtain a copy of this brochure by calling the SEATS program at (570) 963-6795.

## **USEFUL INFORMATION TO KEEP HANDY**

### **SEATS Program Hours of Operation:**

Service hours and areas match the  
COLTS Fixed Route hours and areas of service

**5:30 a.m. to 12:55 a.m.**

Monday through Friday

**7 a.m. to 6 p.m.**

Saturday

(not all COLTS fixed routes operate during this time; ADA service is provided for the routes that run during these hours)

### **Contact Information:**

800 North South Road  
Scranton, PA 18504

**Phone:** (570) 963-6795

**TDD:** (570) 963-6484

**Fax:** (570) 496-7726

**E-mail:** [info@coltsbus.com](mailto:info@coltsbus.com)

**Web site:** [www.coltsbus.com](http://www.coltsbus.com)