

**HUBBARD COUNTY HEARTLAND EXPRESS
PUBLIC TRANSIT OPERATING POLICY
(Updated January 2021)**

1.01 INTRODUCTION

This document outlines specific service standards for the operation and management of the Hubbard County Heartland Express Transit service. These standards have been developed through the review of previous service guidelines, present service capacities, and previous experience with the provision of transportation services for persons with a disability, and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 transportation final rule. The following are only basic service standards. More detailed operating procedures may exist with regard to specific protocol for employee management issues, accident/emergency management, fiscal accountability and other operational matters.

2.0 SERVICE STANDARDS

2.1 GENERAL INFORMATION

2.1.1 Service Availability:

Passenger pick-ups will occur between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 4:30p.m.

There will be limited service for passenger pickups from 7:30 to 8:00 a.m. and 4:30 to 6:00 p.m.

There shall be no service on Sundays and recognized Hubbard County Holidays.

2.1.2 Service Area:

It shall be the intent and design of the transit system to provide limited transportation service to eligible riders within Hubbard County and Park Rapids City.

Services extending beyond the city limits of Park Rapids shall be subject to the review of Hubbard County Heartland Express.

2.1.3 Fares:

Each fare is applicable to one-way complete trip. Once the passenger disembarks from the vehicle, or arrives at a destination, one trip is completed. Upon entering the same vehicle again, a new trip commences, and the passenger will be required to pay a new fare. It shall be the responsibility of the driver to make certain that customers pay all fares and that customers insert all fares into the fare box.

Passengers are responsible for having exact change or ride ticket.

Drivers are not to make change, extend credit or allow free ride.

Tickets may be purchased at Hubbard County Social Services, 304 Court Ave, Park Rapids.

2.1.4 Same Day Reservations:

Trip requests for same day service are subject to availability and wait time. Two hour advanced notice is preferred. All requests for service and changes to service must be placed with the dispatcher.

2.1.5 Fare Payment:

It is the responsibility of the passenger or passenger's companion to properly pay each one-way trip fare by means of cash, ride ticket or token. The smallest coin accepted is a quarter. Failure to properly adhere to the fare requirements may result in denial of a ride.

2.1.5.1 Ticket Responsibility:

It is the responsibility of each rider to manage his/her ride tickets. The public transit drivers and support staff shall not be responsible for managing passenger tickets

2.1.5.2 Prepayment & Refunds:

There shall be no advance payment of fares without a special contract arrangement. No Refund of fares shall be provided.

2.1.6 Fare Box Policy:

All buses are equipped with cash vaults that require two keys. Key "A" is used to remove the vault from the bus, Key "B" is used to open the vault and remove the cash. Passenger will deposit all cash, checks, tickets or vouchers directly into the fare box.

Drivers are not to make change. After drivers complete their assigned routes, they are to report to Hubbard County Social Services or other area designated by the Transit Coordinator. The driver will use key "A" to remove the vault from their bus. The vault is then delivered to the Fiscal Clerk (Social Services Administration office).

The Fiscal Clerk unlocks the vault with key "B", removes the money and places it in a bank bag with the driver's name. The funds placed in separate bank bags are counted daily. Any discrepancies are brought to the attention of the Transit Coordinator immediately. The daily receipt tapes and money are kept in the office until the deposit is made. After making the deposit, the original bank receipt is returned to the Social Services Office.

2.1.7 School Transportation:

Transportation to or from school (grades K-12) and/or school related activities are generally the responsibility of the school district. In the event public transit is transporting students to and from all passenger guidelines apply.

2.1.8 Program Evaluation:

Operating statistics will be generated and reported to the Transportation Committees and the Governing Bodies upon request.

2.2 TRIP RESERVATION PROCEDURES

2.2.1 Hubbard County Heartland Express Transit Phone # (218) 732-3500

When requesting service, give the dispatcher your name, origin address, destination address, desired pick-up times and any other details related to the ride including special assistance requirements. Return trip requests should be called into the office by the passenger. Whenever practical the return trip should be scheduled in advance.

When boarding a bus, the driver may verify that the passenger has scheduled a return trip. The passenger is responsible to reserve the return trip with the dispatcher.

2.2.2 Advance Notice:

Dial-A-Ride trips can be scheduled up to 45 days in advance. Same Day Rides shall be placed two hours in advance.

2.2.3 Dispatch Hours:

All trip reservations and changes must be placed with the dispatcher who will take reservation calls between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday and between 8:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. Saturdays. No Appointments taken on Sundays or Holidays.

2.2.4 Service Requests:

Requests for service must be placed with the dispatcher on the day prior to the desired trip. Service requests for same day service will require two hour advance notice. Service requests for same day service will be accommodated based on the availability of buses within the system.

2.2.5 Shared-Ride System:

Hubbard County Heartland Express transit service operates on a "shared ride" basis. Shared Ride means that all trips will be coordinated to carry as many passengers as possible as inexpensively as possible, e.g.: As many as ten people (or more) could be included in one trip, depending on the pick-up and drop-off points.

2.2.6 Scheduling:

When the reservation call is made, the dispatcher will attempt to fit the desired pick-up or drop-off time into an existing trip. If there is a similar trip origin/destination at an earlier or later time, the dispatcher will offer an alternate pick-up time to the person, 15 minutes earlier or later than the pick-up time requested. All attempts shall be made to provide service within a period of 45 minutes of the time requested.

2.2.7 Scheduling Limitations:

Every practical effort will be made to schedule trip requests at the specific time desired. However, due to system capacity and operational matters, it may not always be possible to meet all trip requests. In such cases, an effort will be made to arrange an alternative travel time which is mutually agreeable to the passenger.

2.2.8 Subscription Trips / Standing Orders:

Same time, same origin/destination trips are eligible for Subscription status. Subscription service is limited due to capacity constraints. Those passengers who register for subscription service may receive scheduling priority. Subscription service will be issued to passengers on a "first come, first served" basis. Subscription service may be at a premium fare.

2.2.9 Group Travel:

Whenever transportation is being scheduled for more than three persons to be picked up at the same location or traveling to the same location it will be defined as a group. When scheduling service for a group, the dispatcher must be given status of each passenger, i.e., wheelchair or ambulatory. This information is vital for vehicle capacity purposes.

2.3 PICK-UP AND TRAVEL PROCEDURES

2.3.1 Passenger Preparedness:

Passengers must be readily prepared (coat on, packages together, in the lobby, etc.) to leave at the scheduled pick-up time. There shall be a maximum wait for passengers of 3 minutes for boarding. Passengers should allow 15 minutes to pass beyond their pick-up time before calling the dispatcher to inquire about their ride.

2.3.2. Driver Assistance:

This transit service is designed to be a “curb to curb” service as opposed to a “door to door” service and drivers are discouraged from backing up the bus. Riders are expected to be in an accessible area for the bus (curb side or end of driveway).

However, when conditions allow, drivers will assist passengers to and from buildings. The driver will also assist the passenger onto the vehicle. Drivers are prohibited from crossing the threshold of a doorway to enter a passenger’s home, other than what may be necessary to push a wheelchair through the doorway. In no instance shall a driver lose sight of his/her vehicle.

2.3.2.1 Personal Care Attendant:

Passengers who are unable to independently conduct or care for themselves must have a Personal Care Attendant or companion present to assist the passenger. The driver, after first receiving approval from the dispatcher, shall have authority to deny the passenger the scheduled trip if a personal care attendant is not present and is required.

A Personal Care Attendant (PCA) may accompany a rider at no additional charge. However, you must notify the transit dispatcher when your trip reservation is made that you need a PCA to travel with you.

2.3.2.2 Young Children Riders:

Consistent with Minnesota Statute 626.556 as amended, unattended children age seven (7) and older may ride the bus alone without a parent or older sibling. (Consideration should be given depending on developmental abilities)

Children under the age of seven (7) and at least four (4) may ride with a sibling who is at least eleven (11) years of age or older. All children may ride with a responsible guardian, adult, or parent.

Unattended children below the age of (7) but not less than (4) shall be permitted to ride the bus to and from contractual locations (daycare, pre-school, home) with arrangements from both guardians for pick-up and drop-off. Seatbelts (lap belts) are provided and can be assisted with by driver. If a child is not staying seated and it becomes a safety concern, the driver will pull over the bus and try to resolve the issue. If they cannot resolve simply with the lap belt a more advanced Safety belt shall be suggested for the child’s safety and others. (Over the shoulders seatbelt) The driver should contact the supervisor, document the incident, and inform guardian on either end of pick-up drop-off points or contractual provider of service. Service may be suspended due to repeated infractions. No outside pick-ups or drop-offs allowed onboard during these trips.

2.3.3 Use of Wheelchair Lift and Securements:

The driver will always operate the wheelchair lift and will keep the passenger under surveillance at all times. Passengers who use a lift will be assisted onto and off the lift by the driver. Powered chairs will be loaded onto the lift with the weight closest to the bus. Passengers will be secured with the wheelchair tie downs in accordance with manufacturer and State & Federal

requirements. Drivers may assist with fare handling if asked to do so by a person with a disability.

2.3.3.1 Mobility Aids and Devices:

Individuals with mobility disabilities are permitted to use wheelchairs and manually powered mobility aids such as walkers, crutches, canes, braces, or other similar device designed for use by individuals with mobility disabilities, unless the mobility aid or device cannot be operated in accordance with legitimate safety requirements.

All common mobility aids and devices shall be transported and properly secured. If the passenger cannot be safely secured on the device with approved securements the passenger may be required to transfer to a seat or waive liability.

2.3.4 Seat Belts:

State law requires that bus drivers and passengers wear seat belts at all times while the vehicle is in operation. Passengers are required to remain seated with seat belt fastened until vehicle stops at the rider's destination. It shall be the passenger's responsibility to use the seat belt and request any assistance if necessary.

2.3.4.1 Child Seats:

It is the responsibility of the legal parent or guardian to provide child restraint devices. It shall also be the responsibility of the parent or guardian to secure such child in said restraint and to remove child from restraint. The driver shall not be responsible for assisting with securing or removing a child from a restraint nor shall the driver be responsible for securing or removing the restraint itself. See 2.3.2.2 for unattended child passengers.

2.3.5 Packages:

Riders may bring up to four paper grocery-size bags or the equivalent. Items carried on to the bus such as groceries, packages, backpacks etc., must remain with the passenger at all times and may not obstruct the aisle or wheelchair securement areas. Drivers are allowed to carry a total of two packages. Passengers/Companions are expected to assist the passenger and/or the driver with packages. Abusers of this policy will receive one written warning and then are subject to suspension of transit services for 30 days.

2.3.5.1 Hazardous or Oversized Items:

Transport of materials classified as hazardous is prohibited. These may include but are not limited to the following: acids, combustible liquids, compressed gases, explosives, fireworks, flammable liquids, furniture, hazardous materials and materials with a disagreeable odor. Protruding or oversized items are also prohibited.

2.3.6 Pets:

No pets are allowed on the bus unless they are contained in a pet carrier. Passengers must receive approval from the dispatcher, prior to transporting an animal on the bus. Use of a service animal by a person with a disability is not restricted.

2.3.7 Gratuities:

Accepting tips, gifts or gratuities and solicitation of any kind while on duty or upon city property is not permitted. Passengers wanting to reward an employee with a gift or tip will be told that it is against city policy. Small unsolicited gifts such as baked goods or candy that would typically be given during a holiday season are acceptable.

2.3.8 Route Changes:

Drivers shall take the most time efficient route to the destination. The driver cannot change a route or make detours upon passenger request without first informing the dispatcher and receiving authorization.

2.4 PASSENGER CONDUCT & RESPONSIBILITY

2.4.1 Intoxicated Passengers: No person who appears noticeably intoxicated shall be permitted to board a vehicle, nor shall any person be allowed to consume intoxicating beverages while on a public transit vehicle. If an intoxicated person succeeds in boarding a vehicle, he/she may be permitted to ride, but if he/she becomes incapacitated, displays inappropriate or unsafe behavior toward other passengers or the driver, law enforcement will be notified, and the individual may be removed from the vehicle. The dispatcher shall be responsible for notifying law enforcement and will document all such incidents.

2.4.2 Passenger Personal Hygiene:

The Hubbard County Heartland Express service may deny rides to passengers who emit foul odors which reasonably annoy other passengers and the drivers. Odors may include but are not limited to scents related to unlaundered clothing, lack of bathing, animal related odors, and excessive perfumes.

2.4.3 Disruptive Passengers:

Hubbard County Heartland Express Public transit reserves the right to deny entrance into a vehicle if the passenger appears disorderly or leads the driver to conclude that the passenger will exhibit disruptive behavior that would pose a safety threat not only to the driver but also the passengers. Bus drivers shall notify the dispatcher when entry has been denied. The dispatcher shall document such incidents and notify law enforcement when appropriate.

2.4.4 Criminal Activity:

All passengers are expected to be orderly and courteous while using the service. Persons who intentionally interfere with or obstruct the operation of a transit vehicle may be charged in accordance with MS 609.855 and other applicable laws. Other prohibited activities punishable under the law and resulting in the possible loss of riding privileges may include:

- (1) Operates a radio, television, tape player, electronic musical instrument, or other electronic device, other than a watch, which amplifies music, unless the sound emanates only from earphones or headphones and except that vehicle operators may operate electronic equipment for official business.
- (2) Smokes or carries lighted or electronic smoking paraphernalia.
- (3) No food or beverages, except when authorized by the operator or other official of the transit system.
- (4) Throws or deposits litter.
- (5) Carries or is in control of an animal without the operator's consent. (reference 2.3.6)
- (6) The discharge of a firearm at or in any portion of a public transit vehicle or facility is a felony offense.
- (7) MN STATUTE 624.714: A transit rider may conceal and carry a handgun with a permit to carry but may not discharge a firearm on any transit vehicle which is considered a felony offense.

2.4.4.1 Unlawful Interference:

Whoever intentionally commits an act that interferes with or obstructs, or tends to interfere with or obstruct, the operation of a transit vehicle is guilty of unlawful interference with a transit operator and may be sentenced to imprisonment and/or fines.

2.4.5 Canceled Trip Notification Requirement:

A scheduled trip will be considered canceled if dispatcher notice is given prior to the bus in route for the trip thus allowing the vehicle to be rerouted for another rider. A cancellation made after the bus is in route will be considered a no-show as described in Section 2.4.6 below.

2.4.6 No-Show Policy: The bus will arrive within a pickup time window of zero minutes before to 15 minutes after the scheduled pickup time (reference 2.3.1). A no-show occurs when an individual misses his or her scheduled pick-up time window or does not give sufficient cancellation notice (reference 2.4.5 above) such that it does not allow the vehicle to be rerouted. If a passenger is not ready to board the bus, the driver will wait three minutes and then leave. wait time is both gps and time stamped via electronic recording. After 3 no-shows in a period of 90 days from the date of the first no-show, the individual will be suspended from the service for 30 days.

2.4.6.1 Appealing a No-Show Procedure:

If an individual receives a no-show and feels it was not justified, the no-show may be appealed. The Hubbard County Heartland Express Transit system provides administrative due process to any individual who wishes to appeal a no-show. For each no-show the individual will receive written notice from the transit office explaining that a no show has been given. The individual receiving a no-show has 10 days from receipt of the written notice to notify the Transit Coordinator that they wish to appeal the no-show. The appeal needs to be in writing or in person. The Transit Coordinator will reply to the individual within 10 days of receipt of the appeal notice to make a determination of the validity of the no-show and respond to the individual in writing. If the decision of the Transit Coordinator is not satisfactory, it may be appealed to the respective Transportation Advisory Committees or Hubbard County in writing or in person at the Transit Office.

The Transportation Advisory Committee will either uphold or overturn the suspension. Following review by the TAC an individual may ask that the appeal be forwarded to the County Board. The County Board will make a determination on the validity of the suspension. All decisions of the County Board are final.

A person appealing a no show which would result in a suspension will be allowed to continue the use of the service pending the outcome of the appeal process.

3.0 COMMENTS/COMPLAINTS

The Hubbard County Heartland Express Public Transit system is committed to providing exceptional service and maintaining high standards within the transit System. All comments and complaints will be handled in a professional manner. Complaints will be documented in the transit office on a complaint form and will be followed up on in a timely manner.

4.0 INTERAGENCY AGREEMENTS

Hubbard County and Heartland Express Transit are committed to providing and maintaining the current level of transit services to its citizens. The governing bodies reserve the right to terminate any and all cooperative agreements for services that are determined to adversely affect its residents.

5.0 EMERGENCY/INCLEMENT WEATHER SERVICE INTERRUPTIONS

From time to time it may be necessary to cancel service due to unforeseen circumstances. These decisions may be made by the Transit Coordinator, City Engineer and Contract Operator. It shall be the responsibility of all staff to keep the Dispatcher and/or Transit Coordinator advised of deteriorating road conditions that may pose serious safety risks.

6.0 BUS CAMERA POLICY

All buses are recording audio and video. There is a public notice placed in all of the buses stating that cameras are in use. The recording will be viewed by the Social Services Director and Transit Coordinator or designee on a periodic basis and when there are reported incidents on the bus. The recording will be preserved for viewing up to 90 days. All incidents must be reported to the Transit Coordinator immediately. Transit will save incidents that are recordable to law enforcement agencies and MnDOT until the file is closed. Hubbard County Heartland Express will consider written requests to Social Services Director for viewing up to 90 days after the incident. All viewing of recorded incidents will take place in the Social Services offices once prior arrangements have been made with the Social Services Director.