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Note: The information contained herein is subject to change without prior notice. Please call SporTran at 673-7403 (Extension 115) for the latest Paratransit Service information. Updated information may be found on our Internet site at www.sportran.org.

SPORTRAN

PARATRANSIT RIDER HANDBOOK

Introduction

The SporTran Paratransit Handbook is designed to inform ADA paratransit eligible consumers about SporTran's special transportation service - LiftLine. This handbook includes policies and procedures, rules and regulations, and guidelines for use of the LiftLine system. The handbook will answer most questions about LiftLine operations. All SporTran paratransit customers should review this handbook carefully and refer to it whenever questions arise. For additional information, please contact the ADA Coordinator.

SporTran Paratransit Service

SporTran's paratransit service is called LiftLine. This service is designed to meet the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). LiftLine is a paratransit van service that is specially equipped with wheelchair lifts and other accessibility features that allow for maximum mobility for customers with disabilities.

LiftLine operates on a demand-response basis for residents and visitors within the Shreveport/Bossier City limits who are certified as ADA paratransit eligible. LiftLine operates between the hours of 5:30 a.m. - 12:15 a.m. on weekdays, 7:15 a.m. - 12:15 a.m. on Saturdays, and 8:00 am – 5:00 pm on Sundays.

LiftLine is available only to customers whose functional limitations prevent them from using the regular fixed-route buses. The ADA is a civil rights law, not a transportation law, or a social program law. The ADA clearly requires non-discriminatory access to fixed-route service, with complementary paratransit service acting as a "safety net" for people who cannot use the regular bus system. Under the ADA, complementary paratransit service is not intended to be a comprehensive transportation system for individuals with disabilities. In other words, the ADA does not attempt to meet all the transportation needs of people with disabilities. Instead, the ADA is intended simply to provide individuals with the same mass transit opportunities that everyone else gets. In fact, the paratransit

system must be equivalent in service criteria to the fixed-route system. For example, the service area and days/hours of service for paratransit and fixed-route service must be comparable.

As of July 1996, all SporTran buses are equipped with wheelchair lifts, “kneeling” mechanisms, and other accessibility features. Many people who formerly used LiftLine are now able to ride the regular buses.

Eligibility Standards

Individuals are eligible for SporTran paratransit service if there is some part of the regular fixed-route system that they cannot use because of a disability. An individual is eligible if he or she has a permanent or temporary disability as described below.

Permanent Disabilities

CATEGORY 1

Category 1 consists of persons who are unable to board, ride, or disembark from the bus even if they are able to get to the stop and the bus is accessible. Persons in this category include individuals with mental or visual impairments who cannot navigate the bus system. Examples of navigating the system include recognizing destinations and understanding the transfer process.

CATEGORY 2

Category 2 consists of persons who cannot use buses without wheelchair lifts or other accommodations. These persons are eligible for paratransit service if accessible buses are not available on the fixed-route on which they want to travel.

CATEGORY 3

Category 3 consists of persons with specific impairment-related conditions who cannot travel to a bus stop or from a bus stop to their final destination. The specific impairment-related condition must prevent the person from using regular, fixed-route transit. A person is eligible if traveling to and from a bus stop is impossible when architectural and/or environmental barriers are combined with the specific impairment-related condition.

Temporary Disabilities

Persons with temporary disabilities may be eligible for SporTran paratransit service. The standards for eligibility are the same as those for permanent disabilities. Persons with temporary disabilities who are eligible for service will be provided service only for the duration of their disability.

Conditional/Unconditional Eligibility

In all cases, eligibility will be determined either “conditional” or “unconditional.” An individual with “conditional eligibility” is one who is approved for some trips or under certain conditions. An individual with “unconditional eligibility” is one who is approved for all trips.

Application and Certification Process

To apply for the LiftLine program, the prospective user must complete an application packet. Application packets may be obtained through the ADA Coordinator’s office at 673-7403 (Extension 115). Application packets are also available at the downtown terminal located at 400 Crockett Street. Only original applications will be accepted, no duplicated or photocopied packets. Prospective riders must contact SporTran for an original application packet.

The ADA Paratransit Eligibility application is divided into seven (7) sections:

Part 1 and 2 - General Information/Applicant Certification

These sections must be completed by the applicant or their representative. The applicant **MUST ANSWER ALL QUESTIONS** in this part and the applicant’s signature is required. The applicant must provide all requested information including identifying persons (if any) who assisted them with the application. All information given will be verified, and providing false or misleading information will result in denial/termination of service.

Part 3 and 4 - Applicant’s Disability/Ability to Use Bus Service

These sections ask specific questions concerning the applicant’s functional limitations and their ability to utilize the regular bus service. Applicants must answer all questions. For those questions that offer multiple answers,

please check only those that apply to you. Failure to complete all questions will result in the application being returned to you - incomplete applications will not be accepted for processing.

Part 5 and 6 - Travel Information/ Travel Training

These sections ask specific travel related questions. Please provide information about the trips that you make/will make frequently. In addition, if the applicant has received travel training (offered by many programs) please indicate in the appropriate section. If the applicant would be interested in attending travel training they should indicate it.

Part 7 - Professional Verification

This section must be completed by a professional familiar with the applicant's disability. This professional can be a physician, nurse, occupational or physical therapist, QMRP, QMHP, rehabilitation counselor, independent living specialist, etc. licensed by the state of Louisiana. An applicant should choose the one individual most familiar with the disability that prevents them from riding the regular buses. The professional who verifies the applicant's disability should consider only the presence of a disabling condition, not the applicant's age or economic status.

Application Policies and Procedures

Within twenty-one (21) days of receiving a completed application, the ADA Coordinator will inform the applicant of the results of their eligibility determination. Please note that an application is only considered complete when all information is provided, any omission renders an application incomplete. Incomplete applications will be returned to the sender, and the 21 days will not start until the completed application is returned to SporTran.

If an application is approved, the applicant will receive an approval letter and a LiftLine ID Card. This card allows an applicant to schedule rides with LiftLine. Each rider is given a registration number that appears on the ID Card. This number must be given to the scheduler when a reservation is made. In addition, the card must be presented to the driver when you are picked up. If you cannot produce your card you will not be allowed to board the van. The card can also be used as identification for paratransit service on other systems if you are traveling out of town.

The ID Card will be wallet-sized, and will contain the following information:

1. Name of the eligible individual
2. Name of the transit provider (SporTran)
3. Telephone number of the ADA Coordinator
4. Expiration date
5. Conditions - including the use of a Personal Care Attendant (PCA)

If the application is denied, the applicant will receive a letter of denial with an explanation of reasons for the decision. This letter of denial will include instructions on filing an appeal.

If SporTran has not made a determination of eligibility within 21 days following the receipt of a completed application, the applicant will be treated as eligible and provided service until and unless the individual is determined to be ineligible for paratransit service.

Recertification

All SporTran paratransit customers will be required to recertify at reasonable intervals. A recertification packet will be mailed to you well in advance in order to allow maximum time for the process. If your card has an expiration date and you have not received a packet from SporTran six (6) weeks prior, please contact the ADA Coordinator to request that one be mailed to you.

Important Points to Remember

- 1) LiftLine is a limited, special transportation service for persons with disabilities who, because of a mental or physical disability, find it impossible to use regular public transit.
- 2) LiftLine eligibility does not include persons who find it uncomfortable or difficult to get to and from bus stops.
- 3) The professional who verifies the applicant's disability should consider only the presence of a disabling condition, not the applicant's age or economic status.
- 4) Only those persons who qualify as ADA paratransit eligible will be able to use LiftLine.

- 5) Paratransit eligibility is a transportation decision, not a medical one. A doctor's letter certifying disability will no longer be the sole criteria for riding LiftLine. SporTran alone will determine paratransit eligibility.

Fares

Every ADA paratransit certified customer is required to pay a fare for each one-way trip. The base fare is \$2.00 and is payable in cash or ride tickets. LiftLine tickets are available in books of ten one-ride tickets and sold for \$20.00. Ticket books can be purchased from the driver. All fares are subject to change. Cash paying riders should have exact change.

Visitor Policy

SporTran will honor paratransit certifications from other transit systems. An individual from out of town requesting service must present proof of their certification. A letter stating paratransit eligibility is acceptable. Documentation must include the name of the eligible individual, the name of the certifying paratransit provider, the telephone number of the provider's paratransit coordinator, an expiration date (if any), and any conditions or limitations on eligibility. If the individual has indicated the need for a Personal Care Attendant (PCA), this must be noted in the documentation.

If the person does not have an identification card or other documentation from their local area, SporTran will require the person to provide the scheduler with documentation of their place of residence, and their disability if the disability is not apparent. LiftLine will not provide service to a visitor for more than twenty-one (21) days from the date of the visitor's first paratransit trip; visitors will be required to apply for LiftLine in order to receive transportation beyond this twenty-one (21) day period. However, the twenty-one (21) days can be consecutive or divided over several shorter visits. A visitor who expects to be in the Shreveport/Bossier area for more than twenty-one (21) days should apply for a LiftLine card as soon as possible after arriving in the area served by SporTran.

Description of LiftLine Paratransit Service

LiftLine is a paratransit van service that is specially equipped with wheelchair lifts and other accessibility features that allow for maximum mobility for customers with disabilities.

LiftLine operates on a demand-response basis for residents and visitors within the Shreveport/Bossier City limits who are certified as ADA paratransit eligible. LiftLine operates between the hours of 6:15 am - 7:00 pm on weekdays, 7:15 am - 6:45 pm on Saturdays, and 8:00 am – 5:00 pm on Sundays - excluding holidays observed by SporTran.

All rides must be scheduled by calling the LiftLine scheduler. The number to call is 673-5316. Ride reservations are accepted from 8:00 am to 4:15 pm, Monday through Friday. Same-day rides may be arranged on a space-available basis by calling dispatch at 222-9010.

Scheduling Trips

When scheduling a paratransit trip, the following information is required: name; pick-up date and time; pick-up address; destination address; number of guests (companions), if any; accompanying Personal Care Attendant (PCA), if applicable; and, if a return trip is desired, the pick-up time for the return trip.

LiftLine provides “next-day service.” This means that requests for service for a particular day may be made any time during the preceding day. However, LiftLine requests a minimum of two to three day notice be given for adequate scheduling of a trip. Customers may make ride reservations up to fourteen (14) days in advance. Limited “same-day” trips (on a space-available basis only) may be scheduled through dispatch by calling 222-9010. No more than four trips may be scheduled by any rider in one day.

A trip is defined as beginning with the pick-up location and ending at the destination location. No individual or agency can request trips for several riders at one time.

There will be no “set” schedules (subscription rides) for LiftLine riders. A rider must call in each day or at least once per week to update repeat rides.

Riders should be ready to go fifteen (15) minutes prior to their scheduled pick-up time. A pick-up is considered “on-time” if it occurs within fifteen (15) minutes before or fifteen (15) minutes after the scheduled time. This is consistent with the average SporTran bus service interval. The driver will notify the dispatcher if the van will be more than fifteen (15) minutes late, so that the dispatcher can attempt to contact the rider and inform them of the new estimated pick-up time.

Trip Purpose

There are no restrictions on trip purpose. All requests for trips are accepted on a first-come, first-served basis. According to the ADA, no trips can be given priority. Medical trips, work trips, and recreational trips are handled on an equal basis.

Rules of the Road for LiftLine Customers

Operator Assistance Provided

The driver:

WILL assist a rider into, and out of the van only (curb to curb service).

WILL pull into apartment complex areas, parking lots, or behind commercial buildings if the van can safely park and deploy the lift.

WILL for the sake of time, assist a passenger by placing any articles, i.e. shopping bags, grocery bags, etc. in a safe location outside the van. **AT NO TIME WILL THE DRIVER TAKE ARTICLES INTO A RIDER'S HOUSE.**

WILL NOT wait longer than five (5) minutes for any rider to appear for their scheduled pick-up.

WILL wait two (2) minutes, and then attempt to signal the rider (sounding the vehicle's horn) that their ride is waiting.

WILL NOT leave a scheduled rider if the rider is within sight of the van and is attempting to make their way to the vehicle.

WILL NOT leave the van unattended, out of sight, with the engine operating.

WILL NOT assist any rider into or out of their house or any other facility (curb to curb service). Instances of this should be reported to the ADA Coordinator.

WILL NOT Transport any rider that is too ill to sit up and be secured in their seat, nauseous, vomiting, or bleeding.

WILL first notify dispatch of the rider's condition and then, if necessary, advise medical authorities of either the rider's need for medical attention or that they must remain at the medical unit until they are well enough to travel on the van.

Restrictions on Customer Behavior

Neither profanity or abusive language/conduct will be permitted on the LiftLine vans, or when communicating with LiftLine dispatch or scheduling. Weapons of any type will not be allowed on LiftLine vans. Radio/tape/CD players must be equipped with headphones to be used on the vans. Eating, drinking, or smoking will not be allowed on the vans. Medical exceptions may be made to the no eating rule, with appropriate documentation from a physician.

Depending on available space, an average of four (4) bags of groceries or other articles may be carried by a LiftLine rider. The vehicle operator will not go into a store or into a customer's home. If assistance is required, a customer may bring a guest (companion) or a Personal Care Attendant (PCA). An approved LiftLine rider may not ride free as a PCA for another LiftLine rider. The driver will assist, if required, to place bags on the curb near the lift area. The rider will be responsible for transporting bags or other items to and from the lift area.

Guests (companions)

Customers who are ADA paratransit eligible will be allowed to travel with at least one guest (companion), such as a friend or relative. The fare for the companion will be the same as the fare for the ADA paratransit eligible customer. Additional guests accompanying the customer will be allowed on a space available basis only. Please note that SporTran requires that the LiftLine customer reserve a space for the companion when the customer reserves their own ride. The companion must have the same trip origin and destination as the customer. An approved LiftLine rider may not ride free as a PCA for another LiftLine rider. Infants and small children who would normally require the use of a car seat may not ride.

Personal Care Attendant (PCA)

A Personal Care Attendant (PCA) is someone designated or employed specifically to assist the paratransit eligible individual in meeting their needs. SporTran recognizes that a PCA is a mobility aid to the eligible customer. The PCA must have the same trip origin and destination as the customer. In addition, SporTran requires that space for the PCA must be reserved at the same time that the customer reserves their ride. No fare is required for a PCA. However, an approved LiftLine rider who decides to act as a PCA for another LiftLine rider must pay a fare.

The customer may take along a companion in addition to the PCA. It should be remembered that a family member or friend is regarded as a companion accompanying the customer, and not as a PCA, unless the eligible customer regularly makes use of a PCA and the family member or friend is acting in that capacity. SporTran may determine that a PCA or companion is required for persons who repeatedly become ill or suffer behavioral problems while riding in the LiftLine vehicle.

Securement/seat belt use

SporTran paratransit customers are required to use seat belts or securement devices at all times. Refusal to use seat belts or the appropriate securement system will result in the suspension of service. However, if a particular mobility device cannot be secured by the existing securement system, services will not be suspended.

All common wheelchairs and their users can be transported by LiftLine. A common wheelchair is a wheelchair that does not exceed thirty (30) inches in width, forty-eight (48) inches in length, and does not weigh more than six hundred (600) pounds when occupied. All wheelchair users must ride in designated securement areas only. Persons who are not wheelchair users, but use other mobility aids will be allowed to use the lift mechanism provided that the mobility aid can be physically accommodated by the vehicle and its equipment.

Collapsible (folding) wheelchairs will be carried on all vans. Ambulatory customers who require the lift to board may use these wheelchairs to facilitate entry into the van.

Other mobility aids/equipment:

Customers may travel with service animals trained to assist them. Service animals include guide dogs used by persons with vision or hearing impairments, as well as dogs or other animals that provide aid to customers with mobility impairments. The customer must inform the scheduler that they are traveling with a service animal when they make their ride reservation. Customers may also travel with portable oxygen or other equipment, provided that the equipment does not violate rules concerning transportation of hazardous materials.

No-shows/Cancellations/Destination Changes

A no-show is when a customer misses a scheduled pick-up without giving the scheduler at least a two (2) hour advance notice of cancellation. No-shows include cancellations at the door. No-shows and cancellations can result in a denial of service to other customers. That is, a no-show or a cancellation is a “wasted trip” that could have been provided to another customer. Same-day cancellations are limited to 30 percent of a customers total trips for the month (see *below).

No-shows do not include trips that are missed for reasons that are beyond the customer’s control for, instance; scheduling problems, late pick-ups, and other operational problems. An example of a no-show beyond the customers control would include a situation where the van is an hour late and the customer has found an alternate source of transportation.

Three (3) no-shows within a one month period will be grounds for suspending customers from LiftLine for one (1) week. The decision to suspend riding privileges will be made by the ADA Coordinator. The Notice of Suspension will include the reasons for denial of service and the sanction imposed. The notification will also include the procedures which may be utilized to appeal the decision. It should be noted that the suspension will not begin until the appeals process is complete.

* Example: A customer who schedules 10 trips for the month can have 3 (30% of 10) cancellations. The 4th and subsequent cancellations will be counted as no-shows. Same-day destination changes may also be subject to this limitation.

If a paratransit customer violates a SporTran policy that requires suspension of service, the customer will be notified in writing within ten (10) working days of the incident. The notice will describe the violation and the sanctions imposed. The customer will be given an opportunity to be heard and to present information and arguments. If the customer does not respond to the notice within ten (10) working days after receipt of the notice, the ADA Coordinator will make a default finding and impose sanctions accordingly. Initial offenses will carry a one (1) week suspension penalty. Subsequent offenses will carry penalties of one (1) month, three (3) months, and six (6) months in duration.

Illegal or disruptive conduct

Service will be suspended or refused to customers who engage in violent, seriously disruptive or illegal conduct. The severity of the incident will determine whether an individual is suspended temporarily or permanently. For example, a person whose behavior threatens or has threatened the safety of paratransit personnel or other customers may be refused service (permanent revocation of eligibility). An individual who contests a refusal of paratransit service may appeal the decision through the administrative appeal process described on the next page.

Non-eligibility Appeal Process

Because ADA paratransit eligibility is established as a civil right, there is a special obligation to ensure that “due process” is observed. Therefore, every application for eligibility will be processed by the ADA Coordinator who will make the initial determination. If the decision is made to deny eligibility, a Notice of Denial is sent to the applicant. This notice will include the reasons for denial and the procedures which may be used to appeal the decision. An individual who wishes to appeal a decision of non-eligibility has sixty (60) days to make a written request to the ADA Coordinator. SporTran will respond by setting an Appeals Hearing within thirty (30) days.

The administrative appeals process will include a hearing where the applicant can be heard and present information and arguments. The Appeals Board conducting this hearing will be made up of three (3) persons not involved in the initial decision to deny eligibility. One member will

be from SporTran and two will be persons from the community who are knowledgeable about disabilities and the ADA. The Appeals Board decision shall be issued to the individual in the appropriate accessible format and shall include reasons for the decision.

SporTran will not provide service to individuals who are pursuing an appeal. However, if the Appeals Board has not made a decision within thirty (30) days after the hearing, temporary service will be provided. This temporary service will continue until a decision on the appeal is reached.

Suspension of service appeal process

The appeal process for suspension of service is the same as that used for eligibility determination denials. A customer who wishes to contest a decision to suspend services has sixty (60) days to file a written complaint with the ADA Coordinator. The individual making the appeal has the right to be heard in person and may be represented by an individual of their choice. The ADA Coordinator will make a complete investigation of the reason for suspension and will notify the customer of the decision to suspend in writing within ten (10) days of receiving the complaint. The written notice will include the procedures which may be utilized to appeal the decision.

SporTran shall provide the customer who has been notified of suspension an opportunity to be heard as well as to present written and oral information and arguments. Copies of all relevant SporTran documentation shall be made available to the customer. Additional witnesses shall be permitted to testify. However, an individual may waive the hearing and proceed on the basis of a written presentation. If the individual does not respond to the written notice of suspension within a reasonable time, SporTran shall make a default finding and impose sanctions.

If there is a hearing, and the individual needs LiftLine to attend the hearing, LiftLine will provide this service. In cases of suspension of service for other than illegal, disruptive or safety issues, SporTran will not suspend service while the appeal is pending - suspension of service will not begin until the appeals process is complete. If a decision is not made within thirty (30) days of the completion of the appeal hearing, the individual appealing the suspension shall be granted service until a final decision has been reached.