

Demand-Response Informational Guide and
Massachusetts Access Passes

Southeastern Regional Transit Authority

SERVING THE COMMUNITIES OF:

 *Acushnet Dartmouth
 Fairhaven Fall River
 Freetown Mattapoisett
 New Bedford Somerset
 Swansea Westport*

...since 1974

OPERATING FACILITIES:

**SCTM New Bedford SCTM Fall River**65 Potomska Street 601 Brayton Avenue
New Bedford, MA 02470 Fall River, MA 02721
Phone: (508) 999-5211 Phone: (508) 999-5211

For relay service, please refer to:
[www.mass.gov/eopss/agencies/massrelay](http://www.mass.gov/eopss/agencies/massrelay)
or Dial 711 to use MassRelay

SRTA Administrative Offices

700 Pleasant Street, Suite 530
New Bedford, MA 02740
Phone: (508) 997-6767
Website: [www.srtabus.com](http://www.srtabus.com)

History of SRTA

The **SOUTHEASTERN REGIONAL TRANSIT AUTHORITY** (SRTA) was established in 1974 by an act of the Massachusetts Legislature under Massachusetts General Law 161B. It has provided fixed-route bus service to its member communities since 1974. It operates 23 fixed routes throughout its service area. In 1979, SRTA established a demand-response service to meet the needs to the disabled community, many of whom have transportation needs that are not adequately met by fixed-route buses.

SRTA provides both demand-response for and reduced fare service on its fixed-route buses in compliance with the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act, (ADA, as amended), Federal Transit Administration (FTA) regulations governing Medicare recipients, and various Massachusetts regulations regarding services for people with disabilities. SRTA’s demand-response service exceeds ADA complementary paratransit requirements.

SRTA has set forth the following guidelines for registering with and using demand-response service and its Statewide Access Pass Program for fixed-route buses.

Service Area

Demand-response service can be used anywhere in the SRTA service area. The SRTA service area is the cities of **New Bedford** and **Fall River**, and the towns of **Acushnet, Dartmouth, Fairhaven, Freetown, Mattapoisett, Somerset, Swansea, and Westport.**

Eligibility

Under ADA policies, there are three categories of individuals who may use demand-response service. They are:

1. **Individuals who cannot independently use any part of fixed-route service**

*"Any individual with a disability who is unable, as a result of physical or mental impairment (including 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."* (ADA, 1990)

This includes people with mental and visual impairments who cannot recognize destinations, understand bus changes, or distinguish between buses on different routes at terminals and/or on routes.

1. **Individuals using routes that are not accessible**

*"Any individual with a disability who needs the assistance of a wheelchair lift or other boarding assistance device and is able, with some assistance to board, ride and disembark from any vehicle which is readily accessible to and usable by individuals with disabilities if the individual wants to travel on a route of the system during the hours of operation of the system at a time, or within a reasonable period of such time, when such a vehicle is not being used to provide designated public transportation on the route."*

Because all of SRTA’s fixed-route vehicles are accessible, anyone who qualifies under this category will be entitled to a Massachusetts Statewide Access Pass. This entitles the person receiving this pass to access fixed-route bus service at the reduced fare of $0.75. It also allows the person to receive the “disabled” fare from ANY public transit agency in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. To receive the reduced fare outside of SRTA’s service area, simply show the Access Pass ID to the driver when boarding the bus.

1. **Individuals who do not have the ability to access a fixed route at all times**

*"Any individual with a disability who has a specific impairment related condition which prevents such individual from traveling to a boarding location or from a disembarking location on such system."*

Conditions that make getting to and from stops more difficult DOES NOT make one eligible for demand-response service. Distance from a fixed route DOES NOT make one eligible for demand-response service. Architectural barriers not under the control of the Authority DO NOT make one eligible for demand-response service. Weather conditions or terrain alone DO NOT make one eligible for demand-response service. These factors, IN COMBINATION with a person's impairment, MAY make them eligible.

Types of Eligibility

**To be eligible for demand-response service (ADA Paratransit), a person must be unable to ride our accessible fixed-route system and must meet one or more of the following criteria:**

* **Unconditional Eligibility:** Your disability or health condition always prevents you from using fixed-route buses and you qualify for ADA Paratransit service for all your trips.
* **Conditional Eligibility:** You are able to use fixed-route buses for some of your trips and qualify for ADA Paratransit service for other trips when your disability or environmental barriers prevent you from using fixed-route buses.
* **Temporary Eligibility:** You have a health condition or disability that temporarily prevents you from using fixed-route buses.

There are several ways to receive a demand-response (ADA Paratransit) application:

* Call SRTA’s administrative offices at (508) 999-5211 and request one be mailed to you.
* E-mail maquino@srtabus.com and request one be mailed to you.
* Download a copy from the SRTA website ([www.srtabus.com](http://www.srtabus.com)).
* Pick one up in person at the New Bedford or Fall River Terminal.

If you have difficulty filling out the application, please contact the administrative offices and we will help. If you wish to receive an application in an **ACCESSIBLE FORMAT** other than those mentioned above, we will provide a CD version of the brochure, instructions, and application UPON REQUEST. Please contact the administrative office to discuss your needs.

Fill out pages four through 12 of the application and have a health care professional complete pages 13 through 16. It does not need to be a doctor. A visiting nurse, physical therapist, or counselor may fill out the health care professional’s portion. When the application is completed and ALL necessary questions are answered, mail the completed form to:

**Southeastern Regional Transit Authority
700 Pleasant Street, Suite 530
New Bedford, MA 02740**

When the application is received, SRTA will review it for completeness and a determination of eligibility will be made.

Certification Process

The applicant will receive either a letter of approval, a letter explaining the need for additional information, or a letter of rejection. This process will take no more than 21 business days.

If additional information is needed to determine eligibility, the certification process stops and the 21-day clock begins again with receipt of the additional information. A person is registered for demand-response service for a maximum of four years.

It is possible that SRTA will ask to schedule a call or in-person meeting, should questions arise from reviewing your application. If an in-person meeting is needed, SRTA will provide zero-fare transportation to and from our offices, at no cost to the applicant and caregivers or personal care attendants (PCAs) who may need to attend.

Demand-response service may be used for any type of trip in SRTA’s service area. The service may be used for **shopping, medical appointments, employment, education, social functions, etc.**

Re-Certification Process

All customers will need to re-apply for demand-response service on or before the expiration date on their eligibility approval letter. Three to four weeks before to the expiration date, SRTA will notify customers via mail of their re-certification.

ADA Appeals Process

If you are granted less than unconditional eligibility for or are suspended from demand-response service and you feel that this determination has been made in error, you have the right to appeal.

To file this appeal, you must notify the SRTA either in writing or person, within 60 days of the date on the letter advising you that you are ineligible for services. Your written appeal may state your reasons why you feel the determination of ineligibility issued is unjust and state how your disability prevents you from utilizing or accessing fixed-route buses. All appeals shall be addressed to:

**SRTA Administrator
700 Pleasant Street, Suite 530
New Bedford, MA 02740**

The denied individual shall be given the opportunity to be heard before an appeals committee. After your appeal is received, a hearing will be scheduled to evaluate your case. This hearing process will allow you to present information and arguments on your behalf. You may have others who are knowledgeable of your physical and/or mental limitations speak on your behalf.

Applicants who require special accommodations should make this request this in advance. SRTA will make every effort to ensure the proper resources are available for your hearing.

After the hearing, you will be advised in writing and accessible formats as appropriate and within reason, of the decision of the appeals committee. For determinations other than ADA Paratransit eligibility, the appeals committee will present its decision to the SRTA Administrator for confirmation. If an appeals committee’s negative decision is confirmed by the Administrator, the ruling is final.

SRTA is not required to provide you with demand-response service while your appeal is under consideration. However, for suspension appeals, service will be provided from the day after SRTA receives a letter appealing the suspension until the appeals committee has made its decision. If the appeals committee has not made a decision within 30 days of the date on your written request for appeal, you are entitled to demand-response service from that time until a final decision is made.

You may reapply at any time if you feel your condition has changed.

If you receive notice of a warning or temporary suspension based on violation of program rules, you have the right to appeal that determination as well, and to use the same process described above.

Hours of Paratransit Operation

SRTA’s demand-response service (ADA Paratransit) is required by ADA to operate the same days and hours as fixed-route bus service.

Demand-Response Service Hours:

**Weekdays:** 5:20 AM through 10:10 PM
**Saturdays/Holidays:** 6:10 AM through 8:05 PM
**Sundays:** 9:00 AM through 6:00 PM

Reservations/Scheduling a Ride and Negotiation of Trips

Demand-response reservations can be made on Monday through Saturday between the hours of 8:00 AM and 4:00 PM. Reservations may be made up to seven days in advance but no later than the previous day at 4:00 PM. All ADA trips must be within ¾ of a mile of our fixed-route corridor and travel times must fall within the hours of a SRTA bus route. We are committed to providing trips that are not excessive in length (time) and have adopted the standard that no ADA Paratransit trip will take more than twice the amount of time a trip on SRTA’s fixed-route service would take, including transfers and wait times. The ADA allows for the Operator to negotiate a scheduled pick-up time, up to one hour before or one hour after the requested time, but there are times when cooperation is needed to meet many simultaneous requests.

To make a reservation, please call dispatch at (508) 999-5211 and press option #2. After hours, please leave a voicemail with your name, phone number, and a detailed message.

If you are making a cancellation for Sunday service, contact on-call staff:

* New Bedford phone number (508) 958-6456
* Fall River phone number (508) 509-9272

SRTA has a notification system that calls the night before to confirm your trip for the next day and when your demand-response vehicle is approaching. We also offer this notification system as text messages and email. All newly subscribed customers are automatically enrolled in this system. If you wish to opt out, please contact SRTA.

Fare Information

Demand-response fare is $3.00 for a registered user. For trips beyond the two-mile radius of a fixed route, add $1.00. Fare-related questions can be answered by the dispatcher when you call to book your ride.

Ten-trip discount books can be purchased for $25 at both the New Bedford and Fall River terminals, as well as onboard demand-response vehicles. If you wish to buy tickets onboard a vehicle, please request your tickets through the dispatcher when booking your ride. Our drivers only carry requested tickets.

**Companion fare:** Same fare as rider
**Children (age five and under) fare:** No fare (free)
**PCA fare:\*** No fare (free)

\*Customer eligibility file must designate that the customer requires a PCA.

Standing Orders/Subscription Services

Standing orders/subscription service is for SRTA customers who make a reservation to and from the same locations at least once per week. Call dispatch to request that these trips be automatically scheduled, which eliminates the need to call individually for each trip. **Subscription service is subject to availability**. Multiple no-shows or late cancellations may result in discontinuation of the standing order. The customer will be notified by phone or in writing prior to discontinuation of the standing order.

**Standing orders/subscription service trips are not available on holidays**; therefore, you are responsible for reserving your trips on holidays, which are:

*New Year's Day, Martin Luther King Day, Presidents’ Day, Patriots’ Day, Memorial Day, Juneteenth, Independence Day, Labor Day, Columbus Day, Veterans Day, Thanksgiving Day, and Christmas Day.*

Door-to-Door Service

Drivers will assist customers, upon request, with boarding and exiting the vehicle and/or with travel to and from the ground-level exterior door of a building. Riders who require door-to-door assistance must call dispatch only once to notify them that they are require this assistance. This notice will be added to their customer file. Drivers cannot escort customers past the ground floor of any building and are not allowed to enter residences.

Paratransit Customer Accommodations

Personal Care Attendants

A personal care attendant (PCA) is any individual who serves as an assistant to the customer. To ride SRTA demand-response service with a PCA, the customer must have their certifying health care professional indicate the need for such assistance at the time of application.

Each registered user is allowed to have ONE person accompany them on the service. If the registrant uses a PCA, they may have one other person accompany them. If the registered user wishes to have more than one person, it may be accommodated only IF SPACE IS AVAILABLE. Anyone accompanying an individual and not considered a PCA will be charged at the same rate as the customer.

A PCA does not have to pay to accompany a registered user, but ONLY if the certifying health care professional indicated on the customer’s application the need for a PCA. For this service, there is no children’s fare. This is in accordance with current FTA guidelines.

Reasonable accommodation requests can be made in writing, on the phone, or in person to SRTA staff, reservationists, supervisors, or drivers.

**If a PCA is needed for safety:** When it is noted by the driver that a customer cannot be left alone, SRTA will contact the customer (or caregiver) to determine what difficulties they may be experiencing. If suitable arrangements cannot be made to ensure the customer will have a caregiver waiting at the drop-off location, the customer will be notified that SRTA will be unable to transport them without the assistance of a PCA. Service could be suspended for those customers who have been notified of the need to travel with a PCA and continue to try to travel without a PCA. SRTA’s primary concern in this situation is the customer having difficulty after the driver leaves them, which could create a safety hazard for the customer. SRTA is committed to providing our customers with the safest transportation possible.

Companions

Customers may have one companion accompany them. If you will be traveling with a companion, you must notify the reservationist at the time you schedule your ride. Companions are charged the same fare as the customer and must be picked up and dropped off at the same location. Additional companions can travel with a demand-response customer on a ‘space-available basis’ and will pay the same fare as the customer.

Wheelchair/Mobility Aid

If an individual would like to use the lift, they simply ask the driver. The driver must be able to safely secure any mobility device. Customers who use a three-wheeled scooter may be asked to transfer to a regular seat, as three-wheeled scooters are difficult to secure. However, the choice to transfer to a regular seat is the discretion of the customer.

For safety reasons, the American Safety Council recommends that customers in wheelchairs board by backing onto the lift.

Use of Lift by Standees

Any person can request to use the lift or ramp. They do not need to have a mobility device or mobility impairment.

Oxygen, Respirator, and/or Concentrators with Oxygen

Any individual who needs to use oxygen, respirators, and/or concentrators with oxygen are welcome to bring those devices on both paratransit and fixed-route vehicles.

Disruptive Behavior Policy

SRTA has established an administrative process through which individuals who engage in violent, seriously disruptive, or illegal conduct can be suspended or prohibited from using SRTA service.

The use of alcohol, or riding under the influence of intoxicating drugs or alcohol, is prohibited at all times.

Transporting Children

* ADA-eligible children must pay the full fare and be accompanied by an adult.
* Children age six and over traveling as companions must also pay the full fare.
* Children under six years old, or who weigh less than 40 pounds, must be secured in an approved child safety seat provided by the customer.
* Strollers must be collapsed to fit between the seat and the customer. Non-collapsible strollers are prohibited.
* Children capable of sitting on their own must sit in a seat.

Transporting with Service Animals

* Service animals are welcome to ride for zero fare.
* A disruptive animal is subject to suspension of service.
* Service animals must sit on the floor or on the passenger’s lap.
* They may not occupy a passenger seat.
* Passengers must be in control of their service animals at all times while on the vehicle.

Inclement Weather

In the event of severe weather, such as snow, ice, or flooding, SRTA’s ability to provide transportation may be reduced. If you do not need to travel during severe weather, please call dispatch to cancel your trips in a timely manner. SRTA will make every effort to provide transportation but safety considerations may prevent trips from being provided.

No-Show Policy/Late Cancellation Policy

Under the current no-show/late cancellation policy, service will be suspended for passengers who book trips and repeatedly fail to board the vehicle and/or cancel trips less than one hour before the beginning of the pick-up window. Adherence to this policy benefits all passengers because no-shows and late cancellations prevent other passengers from receiving fast and reliable service.

Definitions

* **No-Show:** A ‘no-show’ occurs when a passenger does not board the vehicle within five minutes of the vehicle’s arrival within the 20-minute pick-up window.
	+ Example: The passenger’s 20-minute pick-up window is 9:55 AM to 10:15 AM. The driver arrives at 10:00 AM. The driver will wait five minutes for the passenger to board the vehicle. If the passenger does not board the vehicle by 10:05 AM, the passenger is considered a ‘no-show’.
* **Late Cancellation:** A ‘late cancellation’ occurs when a passenger cancels a trip less than one hour before the beginning of the scheduled pick-up window. This includes canceling with the driver at the door.
	+ Example: If the passenger’s scheduled 20-minute pick-up window is 9:55 AM to 10:15 AM, the rider must call before 8:55 AM to avoid a late cancellation.

No-Show/Late Cancellation Penalties

A customer will receive a warning or suspension if they miss 25% or more of their trips in a 30-day period, or three consecutive trips, and use the service at least once a week. If a customer uses the service less than once a week, missing three or more consecutive trips will not result in a warning or suspension. However, the customer may be contacted to discuss options for improvement. Return trips which are not taken as a result of missing the first leg of the trip will not be counted as part of the three consecutive trips.

Trips that are cancelled more than one hour before the beginning of the scheduled pick-up window are not considered a late cancellation or no-show.

A passenger will receive a warning or suspension if the above characteristics are met. All suspensions will begin on a Monday. The length of the suspension will adhere to the following schedule:

Violation Schedule

1. **First violation in a rolling 12-month period:** Counsel phone call
2. **Second violation in rolling 12-month period:** Warning letter
3. **Third violation in rolling 12-month period:** Three-day suspension
4. **Fourth/subsequent violations in a rolling 12-month period:** Seven-day suspension

If a passenger no-shows or late cancels because of circumstances beyond their control, they can contact SRTA at (508) 999-5211 to explain the circumstances. At that time, the customer can request the trip not be considered a no-show or late cancellation.

No-shows or late cancellations may be disputed within 15 days of the infraction. Before sending a suspension letter, SRTA will review all no-shows and late cancellations in the customer’s account to ensure the process and guidelines were properly followed. Any no-show or late cancellations found to be recorded in error will be removed from the customer’s file.

Appeals Process

If a customer disputes a warning letter or suspension, they have the right to file an appeal. Appeal requests must be filed in writing and mailed to SRTA’s offices at:

**Southeastern Regional Transit Authority
Service Appeals
700 Pleasant Street, Suite 530
New Bedford, MA 02740**

Upon receipt of the appeal, the passenger’s suspension will be put on hold for a period not to exceed one week. During this time, SRTA staff will review the appeal and determine if the appeal has merit. If SRTA staff determines the appeal has merit, service will continue and the no-shows/late cancellations will be removed from the customer’s record. If the appeal is found not to have merit, the suspension will continue on the following Monday. Missed trips or trips not taken due to an error by the bus operator will not be held against the customer.

**SPECIAL CONSIDERATION: ‘NO SHOW’ POLICY FOR TRIPS STARTING OR ENDING AT A SOCIAL DAY-CARE PROGRAM, JOB TRAINING SITE, OR JOB LOCATION.** SRTA will not suspend customers from taking trips that they or their guardian make that begin or end at a training location, a care facility, or a job site. Those trips will be honored. Trips for other purposes, however, will be subject to the suspension and service will not be provided on those trips until the end of the suspension period.

Visitors

Any visitor who presents ADA-eligibility documentation from another jurisdiction will be provided service. We will accept a certification by the visitor that he or she is unable to use fixed-route transit. The visitor will be provided 21 days of service within a 365-day period.

Statewide Access Pass (fixed-route bus service)

In accordance with the FTA and Massachusetts Department of Transportation guidelines, SRTA recognizes that some people with disabilities are still able to use fixed-route services. People who are certified as demand-response eligible and can also use fixed-route buses are strongly encouraged to use fixed-route buses when they are able. These people may receive reduced fares on fixed-route buses. SRTA’s current disabled fare on fixed routes is $0.75. If you use a wheelchair and wish to use regular service, the driver will deploy the lift or ramp and secure your wheelchair on board the vehicle.

If you have one of the following, you could obtain a reduced-fare Transportation Access Pass (TAP) CharlieCard:

* Medicare card
* Veterans ID from the Dept. of Veterans Affairs with a disability rating of 70% or greater
* Senior ID
* Certificate of blindness
* Demand-response certificate letter
* Transportation Access Pass ID from any Regional Transit Authority in Massachusetts
* A letter on agency letterhead, from authorized agency representative (or vendor) verifying status as current customer of:
	+ Department of Developmental Services (DDS)
	+ Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC)
	+ Department of Mental Health (DMH, and/or DMH vendors)

Photo IDs are taken Monday through Fridayduring hours of operation at the Fall River and New Bedford terminals, as well as at the SRTA Administrative Offices. The photo ID costs $5.00. If your ID is lost or stolen the 2nd copy costs $3.00. A 3rd copy costs $5.00.

Complaints

SRTA Complaints, ADA Complaint Policy, and Resolution Procedures

If you experienced a problem with a demand-response ride, you may wish to file a formal service complaint. All formal complaints are investigated. To file a formal complaint, customers can contact the SRTA Customer Service Manager at (508) 999-5211 ext. 3309, by email at info@srtabus.com, or online at [www.srtabus.com/contact-us](http://www.srtabus.com/contact-us). To file the complaint, you will be provided a copy of the complaint form to complete. Alternatively, you can download the complaint form [here](https://www.srtabus.com/wp-content/uploads/SRTA-ADA-Complaint-Form-Updated-by-SMT.pdf) and return the form via e-mail, mail, or in person to SRTA’s administrative offices.

SRTA is committed to protecting the confidentiality of its riders. Anonymous service complaints will be investigated but will not receive a response.

When a customer submits a complaint, the complaint is put into a feedback software by a customer service representative immediately after being received. SRTA’s contractor, South Coast Transit Management (SCTM), will review, investigate, and respond to the complaint within three to five business days of receiving the complaint, and will provide any supplementary information to determine the validity of the complaint. Complaints related to ADA, security, and those considered severe will receive additional review by SRTA. Feedback from SCTM or SRTA will be provided to the individual and they will have the opportunity to discuss any service changes or scheduling arrangements made in response to the incident.

Complaint Tracking and Record Retention

The SRTA Title VI Coordinator will be responsible for tracking Title VI complaints and the SRTA ADA Coordinator will be responsible for tracking ADA complaints, for the purpose of establishing trends in allegations of discrimination.

The Title VI Coordinator will maintain a summary log of all Title VI complaints. The ADA coordinator will maintain a summary log of all ADA complaints. All complaint documents and materials gathered during the investigation are maintained for at least seven years.

Lost and Found

Lost and found property is stored in a locked area. Every reasonable effort is made to keep the property in the same condition in which it was recovered. Articles will be held for 10 days. To claim a lost article, please call (508) 999-5211. Customers are responsible for claiming lost articles.

Customer Responsibilities

No service can be successful if it does not have both parties working together. You can help by following the procedures listed below:

* Inform SRTA of address changes, emergency contact changes, or any other information regarding accessibility needs or changes.
* Read all sections of this informational guide carefully.
* Be prepared when calling for appointments and have necessary information available. This will keep the process moving quickly.
* Make every effort to be on time when using demand-response service. This will help ensure timely trips for everyone.
* Pay the correct fare in cash or tickets (drivers do not make change). You will not be transported if the fare is not paid before leaving your pick-up location.
* Maintain wheelchairs and other mobility aids in a safe condition, according to manufacturer specifications.
* If you have a companion animal, keep your animal under control for the safety of yourself, the animal, and others on the service.
* When booking for a doctor appointment, please indicate a pickup time for your return trip if possible. This allows for better service to all users. In the event designating a specific pickup time is not possible, please call dispatch when you are ready and a vehicle will return for you as soon as possible.
* Expect shared-ride service; other people may be picked up after or dropped off before you reach your destination.
* Call to cancel unneeded rides to avoid a ‘no-show’ infraction.
* Maintain acceptable standards of personal hygiene.
* Wear seat belts.
* Call to inquire if the vehicle has not arrived by the end of the 20-minute pickup window.
* No eating, drinking, or smoking on SRTA vehicles. No riding under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs.

*This demand-response informational guide was last updated in February of 2022.*

*This document will be reviewed every two years for completeness and accuracy, unless major changes in service or policy take place, in which case it will be reviewed sooner.*

*TO BE USED ALONG WITH FORMS SRTA ADA 10/2016*