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**Erie Metropolitan Transit Authority  
Paratransit Services**

# **The LIFT Transportation Program**

**Policies & Procedures Manual**



## Erie Metropolitan Transit Authority

127 East 14<sup>th</sup> Street- Erie, Pennsylvania 16503

CEO, Jeremy Peterson

# PARATRANSIT SERVICE (The LIFT)

The LIFT Program is Erie County's safe, reliable, shared-ride, advanced-request transportation system with a customer-friendly goal to provide you with all your transportation needs. This service is designed for residents of Erie County who are unable to utilize bus services and consists of several different programs to subsidize the cost of transportation.

### MISSION:

To provide integrated mobility solutions to safely connect people to places and contribute to the region's economic and environmental sustainability.

### PROGRAMS:

Different programs offered for LIFT funding include the Senior Citizen Program, Rural Transportation Program for Persons with Disabilities, Medical Assistance Transportation Program (MATP), and Customers with Disabilities. Please note, for some programs, your medical condition must be verified by a professional. The application for each program, as well as a list of professionals who can verify your condition can be found at <https://ride-the-e.com/paratransit-service/>.



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# Definitions

## **AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (ADA)**

The Americans with Disabilities Act is a civil rights law that prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities in all areas of public life, including jobs, schools, transportation, and all public and private places that are open to the public.

## **PARATRANSIT**

Paratransit is transportation services for people with disabilities, often provided as a supplement to fixed-route bus and rail systems by public transit agencies.

## **FIXED-ROUTE**

Fixed-route transit is public transportation that operates along designated routes according to a set schedule.

## **DOOR TO DOOR SERVICE**

Paratransit Drivers will assist passengers from the outermost door of their home, apartment building, or point of origin, to the outermost door at their point of destination. Service is the origin of the destination for Riders unless they decline the service. Operators are required to stay within the “line of sight” of their vehicle; therefore, rider’s assistance will be given only to the outermost door of the residence or building destination. Please see our Driver Assistance/Boarding Protocol Policy for more information.

## **PERSONAL CARE ATTENDANT (PCA)**

Personal Care Attendants assist with the daily tasks of elderly, mentally disabled, chronically ill, or physically challenged clients, as well as hospice patients and those in various stages of rehabilitation or recovery.



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### **COMPANION OR ESCORT**

A companion or escort is someone who accompanies a paratransit-eligible passenger, but who does not have specific transit training assistance for a passenger.

### **NO-SHOW**

A No-Show occurs when a customer does not present themselves for boarding the paratransit vehicle within five minutes of the vehicle's arrival within the 30-minute pick-up window.

### **LATE CANCELATION**

A Late Cancellation occurs when a customer cancels a trip less than one hour before the start of the 30-minute pick-up window.

### **ADVANCE RESERVATION**

Reservation made to ride on the LIFT at least 1 day in advance prior to 4:30 pm.

### **PICK-UP WINDOW**

LIFT schedule pickups within a 30-minute window to allow for traffic and other delays. You will be given a time frame during which your driver should arrive. For example, 8:05am – 8:35am. You will need to be ready when the driver arrives.

### **FARE**

The amount of money or ticket to be paid to the driver upon boarding the bus.



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# ADA Eligibility Status

The LIFT uses eligibility criteria established under the Federal Regulations. The LIFT does not discriminate against the age of ADA individuals.

The LIFT's eligibility determinations may fit within four (4) different categories, as follows:

1. **Category one (1): Unconditional Eligibility** – People who can't travel on the bus or train, even if it's accessible, because of a disability. This category includes people who are unable - due to a mental or physical impairment (including a vision impairment) - to board, ride, or disembark from an accessible bus or train without assistance. For example:
  - a. People with cognitive disabilities; if they do not know where to get off the bus, or how to go to their destination from the bus stop.
  - b. People with visual impairments if they do not have the travel skills needed to navigate the route to their destination.
  - c. People with visual impairments that allows them to see well enough to travel independently during the daytime but not at night.
  
2. **Category two (2): Conditional Eligibility** – People who need an accessible bus or train. This category includes wheelchair users and other people with disabilities who can use an accessible vehicle, but who want to travel on a route that is inaccessible (not served by accessible buses or accessible trains and key rail stations). For example:
  - a. People can reasonably expect to make some trips on the fixed route service.



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- b. A person may have access to reach a fixed route bus stop safely in most instances; however, paratransit services may be required due to distance, travel obstacles, and/or inclement weather barriers.
  - c. A person may have a variable health condition where fixed route services is appropriate some days while others it is not.
3. **Category three (3): Temporary Eligibility** – People who have a specific disability-related condition.  
This category includes people who have a specific disability-related condition that prevents them from traveling to a boarding location or from a disembarking location of fixed route services. Environmental barriers (for example, distance, terrain, or weather) or architectural barriers not under control of the transit agency (such as lack of curb ramps) that prevent an individual from traveling to or from the boarding or disembarking locations may form the basis for eligibility. For example:
- a. A person who uses a wheelchair may be able to negotiate a trip to the fixed route bus stop up a moderately sloped hill on a summer day, but not in the winter after a heavy snowfall.
  - b. A person may be eligible if architectural barriers present safety hazards on the only route to the train station or bus stop.
  - c. A person who walks with a cane and would need to travel  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile to the regular fixed route bus stop, but they cannot walk that great of a distance.
  - d. People with disabilities that affect them differently over time, such as multiple sclerosis. During some periods, they are able to go to the fixed route bus stop or train station. During other periods they may not be able to do so.
4. **Category Four (4): Not Eligible** – Persons who are not eligible for Paratransit Services.



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All categories include people who may be able to ride mainline transit for some trips but not for other trips.

### **APPEAL PROCESS:**

If a passenger wishes to appeal the Authority's denial of a request for ADA eligibility status, or would like to request a copy of the LIFT's Appeal Process Policy, please contact:

Molly Kohler  
127 East 14<sup>th</sup> Street  
Erie, PA 16503  
Phone: (814)459-8922, extension 109  
Email: [mkohler@ride-the-e.com](mailto:mkohler@ride-the-e.com)

### **FTA COMPLAINT PROCESS:**

An individual may file a written complaint to the Federal Transit Administration not later than one hundred eighty (180) days after the date of the alleged discrimination.

## **Reasonable Modification Policy**

### **Notice to the Public**

The LIFT will make reasonable modifications to its policies, practices, or procedures when requested to do so by individuals with disabilities when such accommodations are necessary to avoid discrimination based on disability.

To ensure that programs and services are accessible to customers with a disability, an individual may request that a modification to LIFT's policies, practices, and procedures in certain instances be made to allow them to access and utilize the services. There are no restrictions on when a customer can request a reasonable modification, although the LIFT supports and encourages customers to place a written request as soon as possible.





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### **EXCEPTIONS:**

Reasonable modification requests to the LIFT must consider any and all requests for reasonable modifications but shall take into account the following exceptions:

Reasonable modifications –

- Will not place an undue financial and/or administrative burden on the LIFT and/or their transportation contractors;
- Will not constitute a fundamental alteration of LIFT's current transportation services, programs, or activities;
- Cannot cause a direct threat to the health or safety of others;
- Cannot adversely affect the service provided to other LIFT customers;
- Cannot jeopardize the functionality or use of equipment used to provide LIFT's transit services; and
- May not be approved if the individual with a disability is still able to fully use LIFT's services, programs, or activities for their intended purpose without the requested modification.

### **PUBLIC REQUEST PROCESS:**

Whenever feasible, requests for modifications should be made in advance. This is particularly appropriate where a permanent or long-term condition or barrier is the basis for the request. In the ADA paratransit context, requests can be made in conjunction with the LIFT's ADA complementary paratransit service eligibility process.

LIFT's process for public submittals of requests for reasonable modifications are as follows:

- Requests should be as specific as possible and include information on why the requested modification is needed to allow the individual to use LIFT's services.
- Requests should be made in writing or by email, but LIFT will accept a request by phone, if needed.



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- If a phone request is made and the ADA Coordinator is unavailable, the request will be directed to a designee. Phone requests to the LIFT must be made during normal business days and hours of operations of LIFT's administrative offices (currently Monday-Friday, 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM).
- "On-the-spot" requests will be accepted for circumstances that may arise while utilizing LIFT's transportation services by making a request to the driver. Such requests should be made as soon as the circumstance is known to the requestor. The driver may make the determination or request a supervisor to review the request depending upon the situation.
- Alternative means of filing a request, such as personal interviews or taped requests, if the requestor is unable to communicate their request verbally or in writing. The reasonable modification process starts as soon as the request is made.

All requests/documentation shall be maintained in a designated file at LIFT's Administrative Office for a minimum of five (5) years from the date of request.

Requests can be made through the ADA Coordinator:

Julie Meyers

127 East 14<sup>th</sup> Street

Erie, PA 16503

Phone: (814)459-8922, extension 227

Email: [jmeyers@ride-the-e.com](mailto:jmeyers@ride-the-e.com)

### **APPEAL PROCESS:**

If a passenger wishes to appeal the authority's denial of a request for accommodations, please contact the ADA Appeal's Agent to advise your appeal:

Molly Kohler

127 East 14<sup>th</sup> Street

Erie, PA 16503



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Phone: (814)459-8922, extension 109

Email: [mkohler@ride-the-e.com](mailto:mkohler@ride-the-e.com)

# About Shared Ride Services

Shared ride services provide a valuable service to those who cannot access the fixed-route system; however, it does not work for everyone in every situation. Due to the nature of shared ride services, paratransit customers may ride with other customers. Your ride will often involve deviations to pick up or drop off other customers before taking you to your destination. This is important to keep this in mind when making a reservation. LIFT Paratransit systems are pre-scheduled arrangements with riders; therefore, our drivers are not required to make stop announcements. Individuals requiring a nonstop trip to or from their destination are encouraged to consider other options, such as a public bus, Uber, or volunteer driver.

Paratransit is not emergency medical transportation. Our drivers are not medical professionals. Please call 911 if you are having a medical emergency. We are unable to transport individuals needing to ride on a stretcher, or customers who are too physically frail or ill to safely complete their trip on the LIFT paratransit service. Additionally, we are unable to transport individuals who have a medical condition that requires them to be isolated for their health or the health and safety of others.

When certain criteria are satisfied, oxygen tanks are permitted on the Authority's vehicles; however, our operators are not trained to change tanks, monitor oxygen levels, or assist with tank defects. Riders should ensure that they are prepared for their entire trip duration when using oxygen and that oxygen tanks are properly secured.

Please understand that paratransit drivers are not caregivers. Drivers are there to safely transport you from your origin to your destination. Behaviors that keep drivers from being able to perform this duty may be grounds for removal from this service; for example: removing one's seatbelt, moving about the vehicle while it's in motion, uncontrollable screaming, and any other



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disruptive behavior. In addition, while a driver may provide an arm for stability, you cannot support your weight on drivers. If you need more assistance than we can provide, we highly recommend you bring a Personal Care Attendant (PCA).

Finally, while the Authority cares for the wellbeing of all its passengers, once the passenger is off the vehicle, we do not have control of their movements or safety. Drivers are unable to restrain passengers; so, if you have a concern for a loved one's independence, you should work with a PCA for your post trip needs.

## Riding The LIFT

### PROFESSIONAL OPERATORS

To ensure the best customer service, all LIFT employees complete comprehensive training which includes classroom training, testing, LIFT policy reviews, PAD testing, and live road observations. LIFT drivers are not released onto solo routes unless all training objectives have been satisfied.

### HOURS OF PARATRANSIT OPERATIONS

The LIFT operates Monday through Saturday, 5:30 a.m. to 10:30 p.m. within the urbanized area. County times vary. Please visit <https://ride-the-e.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/LIFT-COUNTY-ROUTE-TIMES.pdf> for the county schedule, or contact a reservationist for county service hours.

### WEBSITE COMPLIANCE

To fully comply with WCAG and ADA standards, EMTA and LIFT have adopted an AI-powered widget from AccessiBe to ensure website compliance is met, even when legislation changes. AccessiBe is a small application the end-user clicks on to modify EMTA/LIFT's website to fit their accessibility needs. A code runs in the background and updates daily to ensure the application is constantly running and any necessary updates are applied. AccessiBe's product was created to specifically target website accessibility challenges to ensure equal access to all customers, regardless of physical or cognitive





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challenges. You can learn more about LIFT's Paratransit services at <https://ride-the-e.com/paratransit-service/>

### **CUSTOMER SERVICE HOURS**

To schedule or cancel transportation on the LIFT paratransit, reservationists are available Sunday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Please have the reservationist read back your times and destinations to confirm your trip.

Customers should keep their updated phone number on record in case we need to contact the customer or an emergency contact person. To cancel transportation on Saturday, the LIFT dispatcher is available 5:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.

### **PAYING THE FARE**

Fares will be quoted to the customer when scheduling their trips. The exact fare is to be paid to the driver upon boarding the vehicle. Drivers do not give change. Customers who travel under ADA funding can purchase and pay the driver with an ADA ticket or cash. Although no other forms of payment are currently available, LIFT customers will soon be able to utilize a diminishing balance payment system. Additional information will become available once this system becomes live. Failure to pay the fare is a violation of LIFT policies and may result in service suspension.

### **PURCHASING PASSES**

Passes can be purchased at the Erie Intermodal Center, located at 208 East Bayfront Parkway, Erie, PA 16507 for \$3.30.

### **ACCESSABILITY (Mobility devices)**

The LIFT possesses hydraulic LIFT equipped buses. While our buses vary in sizes, the LIFT does not accommodate requests for specific buses. Our buses hold mobility devices 33" inches wide by 48" long, up to 850 lbs. If the combined weight of the passenger and mobility aid or dimensions exceed this ability, we may not be able to transport. LIFT reserves the right not to transport if deemed unsafe. Please make sure that brakes, batteries, and other



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parts of your mobility device are in working order. Drivers are not permitted to push power wheelchairs.

Examples of aides that are not allowed include geriatric chairs and shopping carts. Drivers are also not permitted to push customers seated on a walker. Passengers who are unable to use the stairs are permitted to use the LIFT ramp to board the bus and should use the handrails provided for safety.

### **CLEAR-SAFE PATHWAY**

Customers are required to have a clear, safe pathway to the bus. Drivers are not permitted to assist customers across ice, rough terrain, through snow, mud, or otherwise unsafe pathways. Likewise, drivers are not permitted to assist passengers who use wheelchairs up or down stairs or curbs. If ramps or curb cuts are not available, the customer must meet the driver at ground level.

### **RESTRAINTS/POSITIONING AIDS**

LIFT drivers will assist, if necessary, with seat belts. All passengers are required to wear seat belts when traveling in a LIFT vehicle. Drivers are not permitted to place any other restraints or positioning aides on a passenger.

All children under the age of 4 must be secured in an approved car restraint system while riding the LIFT vehicle. It is the responsibility of the guardian to provide and install the car seat on the vehicle. Strollers must be folded and secured out of the aisle. Children will not be transported or secured in a non-medical stroller.

### **LIFE SUPPORT EQUIPMENT**

You may bring portable oxygen tanks or other life-support equipment on the bus if it does not violate the hazardous materials transportation laws. Equipment must be small enough to fit in the vehicle and not interfere with the transportation or safety of other passengers. All equipment brought onto the vehicle must be secured.



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### **ANIMALS ON BOARD**

Animals that meet the Americans with Disabilities Act definition of a service animal are welcome on the LIFT. Pets are welcome on board when secured in an animal carrier and are not disruptive.

### **EATING, DRINKING AND SMOKING**

Eating, drinking and smoking are prohibited on LIFT vehicles. If medically necessary, eating or drinking may be allowed for extenuating circumstances. If possible, please notify the driver in this situation.

### **WEAPONS**

All weapons are prohibited on LIFT vehicles including, but not limited to firearms, ammunition, sharp objects of any kind, knives, blades, brass knuckles, bows & arrows, or toy-like weapons.

### **PACKAGES/GROCERIES ON BOARD**

Passengers may board the LIFT vehicle with as many packages as they can carry themselves. Bags should be tied to prevent items from rolling out inside the vehicle. All packages need to fit in the passenger's space, not taking up additional seating space or in aisleways. If customers anticipate purchasing more than they can carry they should schedule a companion to ride with them or arrange to have packages delivered. If scheduling a companion to ride with them to the store, you must notify the reservationist at the time you schedule the ride. LIFT does not provide this service. The driver will assist with only one trip to the door with packages. Please make sure packages are not excessive in weight. Arrangements for large items to be delivered by the store should be made.

### **RETURN RIDES FROM NON-MEDICAL TRIPS**

All return rides must be scheduled at the time the reservation is being made, at least 1-day in advance. Customers are required to be ready and board the vehicle when the LIFT arrives for their ride. If a customer misses the return from a non-medical trip and requests the LIFT to come back for them, the full fare will be charged. If the customer does not have the full fare, the customer



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will be taken home, and immediately suspended from the LIFT until payment is made to the LIFT administration. Trips scheduled for the same day will not be automatically canceled in case the customer needs the ride home. The customer would need to cancel any rides scheduled if they are not required.

### **RETURN RIDES FROM MEDICAL TRIPS**

All return rides must be scheduled at the time the reservation is made, at least 1-day in advance. If the return ride from a medical appointment is missed, please contact the LIFT office when you are ready during regular business hours. The LIFT will return to pick you up once available at no additional charge.

### **READY EARLY FOR RETURN RIDES**

If a customer is ready more than two (2) hours prior to their scheduled pick-up time on a return trip, or if a customer is ready early to return to a rural area, they may contact the LIFT and let the staff know they are ready. An attempt will be made to pick the customer up sooner. This will depend on vehicle/driver availability. Please be patient, the LIFT will arrive as soon as it can.

### **CHILDREN FIVE (5) YEARS OLD AND UNDER**

Children five (5) years old and under cannot ride the LIFT alone and must be accompanied by an adult, guardian, older sibling, companion, or Personal Care Attendant. Should a child aged five (5) years or younger board the LIFT, or if a child above the age of five (5) has a limited understanding of where they are going or purpose of their trip, the bus operator will reach out to dispatch for further instruction.

### **PCA/COMPANIONS ACCOMPANYING CUSTOMERS IN NEED OF ASSISTANCE**

A Personal Care Attendant (PCA) may accompany a customer at no charge. A PCA is defined as someone specifically designated or employed by the disabled customer and is required by the customer to complete the trip or its purpose past the point where a driver can assist them. There are no





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restrictions on who may serve as a PCA as long as they are age six (6) or older and are able to perform the necessary assistance. Please notify the reservationist when you schedule your ride that a companion/escort or PCA will be traveling with you. This may be completed upon a customer's initial application or at any time afterwards by requesting an Attendant Approval Form. This form must be completed by a Medical or Social Service professional and returned to the LIFT Administration office. Please note that a companion is defined as someone whose presence is desired but not required to complete the trip.

For persons with disabilities riding under the **ADA Complimentary Paratransit Program**, the customer may have a companion accompany them for the same fare that the customer is paying. More than one companion may accompany an ADA customer on a space available basis, but it is important to note that each additional companion(s) will need to pay the same fare as the customer. A PCA accompanying an ADA eligible rider pays no fare.

Customers who need assistance with their bags after shopping may have a companion accompany them at no charge without completing the Attendant Approval Form. Customers must inform the reservationist when scheduling if they plan on having a companion accompany them. It is the responsibility of the customer to cancel a reservation for a companion should they no longer be available to travel so these seats can be used for other customers.

### **Duties performed by a PCA, Customer or Companion - not by a LIFT driver - include but are not limited to:**

- Assisting a customer in removing a jacket and/or repositioning in a wheelchair.
- Providing physical support for a customer to walk or get out of their seat.
- Assisting a customer with changing oxygen canisters.
- Administering medication.
- Traveling with a customer who cannot be left unattended.
- Assisting a customer using a wheelchair up or down any steps or curbs.



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- Operating the controls of an electronically operated mobility device.
- Carrying large heavy packages.

### **DRIVERS WILL NOT:**

- Enter or unlock the door to a passenger's private residence at any time.
- Handle service animals.
- Perform any medical assistance tasks.

### **CUSTOMERS WHO CANNOT BE LEFT UNATTENDED**

Family members and/or attendants must be at the customer's home and ready to receive them if a customer cannot be left unattended when dropped off. This includes all minors and people with one or more disabilities who are unable to attend to themselves upon reaching their destination.

Once a customer has been dropped off, LIFT is no longer responsible for their safety. This includes if no one is home or available to receive a customer once their trip has ended. **OPERATORS ARE NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR CUSTODIAL CARE AFTER A RIDER REACHES THEIR DESTINATION.**

If no one is at the destination to receive a customer two times in a one-month period, the customer will be suspended from LIFT services. The suspensions for repeat occurrences throughout the calendar year are as follows:

- The first occurrence in one calendar year will result in a one-week suspension from LIFT services.
- The second occurrence within one calendar year will result in a two-week suspension from LIFT services.
- The third occurrence within one calendar year will result in a three-week suspension from LIFT services.
- The fourth occurrence within one calendar year will result in a one-month (30 days) suspension from LIFT services.
- The fifth occurrence within one calendar year will result in a two-month (60 days) suspension from LIFT services.



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- The sixth occurrence within one calendar year will result in a three-month (90 days) suspension from LIFT services.

Any customer receiving a suspension will receive a written notification of suspension dates. All customers have the right to appeal.

### **MEDICAL EMERGENCY DISCLOSURE**

The LIFT does not provide any emergency medical services. If you are experiencing a medical emergency, please call 911 or an emergency medical service. LIFT cannot provide you with emergency transportation or provide medical action. If an emergency happens on board or on the premises of the Authority's property, LIFT will contact the appropriate emergency services. LIFT personnel are prohibited from performing any medical tasks including but not limited to CPR, administering epinephrine, Narcan or other medications, defibrillators, or additional medical devices.

### **DISRUPTIVE OR INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR**

The LIFT may refuse service to any individual who engages in violent, seriously disruptive, illegal conduct, or acts as a direct threat to the health or safety to others, using the same standards for exclusion that would apply to any other person who acted in such an inappropriate way. The LIFT has a specific Disruptive Passenger policy that outlines penalties for violations and appeals processes. Please see the Suspensions for Repeat Offenses section below for more specific information. The LIFT will not refuse service to an individual with disabilities solely because the individual's one or more disabilities result in appearance or involuntary behavior that may offend, annoy, or inconvenience employees of the LIFT or other customers.

If a passenger violates the disruptive passenger policy, they will be asked to stop immediately and to correct the offending behavior. Police assistance may be sought if necessary. If the customer refuses to stop the behavior, they will be issued a letter detailing the incident. The letter will also outline the LIFT's "refusal to provide service" information. In the event the passenger has a guardian or service provider, a copy of this letter will be provided to that



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person, as well. Any such letter may be appealed pursuant to the process outlined in this policy.

Examples of such behavior may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Failing to appropriately exit the vehicle at the appropriate stop or destination
- Disrupting the driver while they are driving the vehicle
- Making physical or verbal threats to drivers or other passengers
- Damaging or destroying vehicle equipment or any employee's or passenger's property
- Unfastening their wheelchair or mobility device while the vehicle is operating
- Swearing, name calling and/or abusive language
- Personal hygiene condition that results in a public health hazard or discomfort to other passengers

\*This policy pertains to undesirable pets that can cause discomfort to others.

### SUSPENSIONS FOR REPEAT OFFENSES

Any customer receiving a suspension will receive a written notification of suspension dates. All customers have the right to appeal. Please see the Right to Appeal process below.

The suspensions for Repeat Offenses throughout the calendar year are as follows:

- First occurrence in one calendar year will result in a one-week suspension from LIFT services.
- Second occurrence within one calendar year will result in a two-week suspension from LIFT services.
- Third occurrence within one calendar year will result in a three-week suspension from LIFT services.



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- Fourth occurrence within one calendar year will result in a one-month (30 days) suspension from LIFT services.
- Fifth occurrence within one calendar year will result in a two-month (60 days) suspension from LIFT services.
- Sixth occurrence within one calendar year will result in a three-month (90 days) suspension from LIFT services.
- Aggressive behavior, violence, threats of violence or terroristic threats will incur longer suspensions and will be evaluated at the time of the occurrence.

### **RIGHT TO APPEAL PROCESS:**

If a passenger wishes to appeal the authority's denial of a request for accommodations, please contact Molly Kohler to advise your appeal using the below information:

Molly Kohler

127 East 14<sup>th</sup> Street

Erie, PA 16503

Phone: (814)459-8922, extension 109

Email: [mkohler@ride-the-e.com](mailto:mkohler@ride-the-e.com)

### **ONGOING PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

LIFT participates in an ongoing public participation plan which includes, but is not limited to outreach, consultation with individuals with disabilities, opportunity for public comment and public hearings.

- Outreach: LIFT continuously enhances notifications to the public and our customers through the website, e-newsletter, mail, phone and email systems.
- Consultation with Individuals with Disabilities: LIFT is in contact with several local organizations to ensure customers are satisfied with services. LIFT members are present, along with the public, during quarterly Transportation Council for the Elderly and Disabled of Erie County meetings to answer questions and provide insight into company developments.



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- Opportunity for Public Comment: LIFT understands it is important to make company plans transparent to those who use our services. Quarterly Transportation Council for the Elderly and Disabled of Erie County meetings, as well as monthly EMTA Board of Director meetings, offer a chance for public comment and ask questions regarding upcoming projects. In addition, existing customers and the general public are welcome to comment on EMTA social media outlets and company website. Public comment may be submitted to [emtamedia@ride-the-e.com](mailto:emtamedia@ride-the-e.com).
- Public Hearings: EMTA Board of Director meetings are announced on [ride-the-e.com](http://ride-the-e.com) where public inquiries are encouraged and documented.

# How To Use Paratransit

## SCHEDULING A TRIP

Paratransit rides **must** be scheduled in advance. The LIFT accepts reservations no later than 4:30 p.m. on the day **before** the trip. If you call on Sunday, you will only be able to schedule for the next day. The LIFT does not accept same day reservations.

During regular business hours, Sunday through Friday, please call (814) 456-2299 and press 1 to speak with a reservationist. Please remain on the line as calls are answered in the order they come in. Please advise the reservationist if you require assistance in another language other than English. The reservationist will contact the Multicultural Community Resource Center to aid in translation services so you may continue scheduling your LIFT appointment.

You must have the following information on hand when you call:

- Your name
- Telephone number
- Appointment time or preferred pick-up time
- Pick-up address



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- Destination address
- Return address and time
- Any new mobility devices
- If you are taking a PCA or companion

The reservationist will read back the date, time, and addresses of your trip to confirm your reservation is correct. Any fare for the trip will be quoted when the ride is scheduled.

Please write down your scheduled date and times to refer to later.

If due to unforeseen circumstances beyond your control you must have a scheduled trip altered the same day of the trip, please contact the reservations department as soon as possible. The alterations of the trip may be granted; however, the cost may be significantly higher if the funding source you normally use is unavailable for a same day ride.

Drivers will wait a maximum of 5 minutes once they arrive to pick you up and are only permitted to go to the outermost door of a building. Drivers are not permitted to lose sight of their vehicle for the safety of those remaining on board.

Remember, you will be sharing the ride with others. Please allow extra time to reach your destination.

### **TO CHECK ON YOUR TRIP SAME DAY**

If the LIFT has not arrived in the prescribed window of time, you may check the status of your trip by calling (814) 456-2299, phone menu option 2.

### **IF YOU ARE READY EARLY**

If you are ready 2 hours early for your return ride in the rural area, or you are 1 hour or more early in the urban area, please call (814) 456-2299, phone menu option 1.



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### MAKING A CANCELATION

To cancel a trip, you must call (814) 456-2299, Option 1. Cancellations that are called in less than an hour in advance will be considered a no-show. Please see the LIFT's Late Cancellation and No-Show Policy listed below.

Cancellations may be made twenty-four (24) hours a day. An answering machine is available for after-hours cancellations.

### SUBSCRIPTION SERVICE

If you currently take the same trip on the same day of the week at the same time you can set up pre-arranged trips. Once a subscription is started you will not need to call in and continually schedule these trips. Subscription service will continue until you call to cancel unless you arrange an end date at the time you make the subscription. The subscription service may also be placed on hold or ended if your circumstances change. You are responsible to call and cancel your ride for the day at least 1 hour in advance on any day you decide not to take the trip.

Please note, subscription trips are automatically cancelled on the following major holidays: **New Year's Day, Easter, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, and Christmas.**

### LATE CANCELATION AND NO-SHOW POLICY

The Authority understands that because the LIFT requires trips to be scheduled in advance, riders may sometimes miss scheduled rides or forget to cancel rides they no longer need. LIFT also understands that riders may sometimes miss scheduled trips or be unable to cancel trips in a timely way for reasons that are beyond their control. However, repeatedly missing scheduled trips (or failing to cancel trips in a timely way) can lead to suspension of service. The following information explains LIFT's no-show policy:

- A "NO-SHOW" occurs when a customer does not present themselves for boarding the vehicle within five (5) minutes of the vehicle's arrival within the pick-up window.





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- A “Late Cancellation” occurs when a customer cancels their trip less than one (1) hour before the start of their pickup window.
- A “Cancellation at The Door” occurs when a customer cancels a trip after the driver arrives. This includes canceling by phone.

### **A Late Cancellation or a Cancellation at the door will be considered a NO-SHOW under the NO-SHOW policy.**

- The LIFT driver will attempt to locate the passenger at the pickup address within the 30-minute window. The driver will wait 5 minutes for the customer. If the customer is not present at the end of that time, the driver will mark the customer a NO-SHOW and move on to their next destination.
- Trips scheduled for the same day will not be automatically canceled in case the customer still needs the ride home. The customer would need to cancel any rides scheduled if they are not required.
- The LIFT uses a point system to establish patterns of excessive no-shows.
- An excessive pattern of no-shows involves intentional, repeated, or regular actions, not isolated, accidental, or singular incidents.
- Warnings will be issued when a customer accumulates 3 points in a calendar month.
- Suspensions will be implemented when a customer reaches 6 points (1 violation) in a calendar month.
- Suspensions are only imposed for a true pattern or practice of missing scheduled trips. Reasons beyond a rider’s control, such as scheduling problems, appointments that run late without notice, late pickups, internal operational issues, family emergencies, and/or medical emergencies, or operational errors will not be counted against the rider.
- Each time a customer receives a violation the length of suspension will increase.
- No shows and late cancellations can be disputed within 2 business days after the end of the calendar month in which they occur.



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- A letter will be sent to the customer when a suspension occurs listing the length of time, and the dates of suspension. A copy of the appeal process and contact information will be sent with the letter of suspension.
- Appeals must be filed within 14 calendar days of the notice of suspension in writing or by phone.
- If an appeal is received within 14 calendar days, service will continue until a decision is made.

If you no-show or late cancel because of reasons out of your control, please contact the LIFT administration office at (814) 455-3330 to explain the situation and request the removal of the “No-Show.”

### FILING A COMPLAINT

To file a complaint, please contact the LIFT Administration Office and ask for a supervisor. The supervisor will record the complaint and forward it to the LIFT Administrator. All complainants must identify themselves when filing a complaint. The supervisor taking the complaint will keep the identity of the complainant confidential when forwarding the complaint. The complaint will be researched, and the complainant will receive follow-up if necessary.

ADA complaints can be filed with the ADA Coordinator by emailing [jmeyers@ride-the-e.com](mailto:jmeyers@ride-the-e.com), or by calling Julie Meyers at 814-455-3330, extension 227.

### RIGHT TO APPEAL

Any customer has the right to appeal if they disagree with a decision or sanction made by the LIFT Administration. This includes, but is not limited to eligibility determinations, suspensions, “no shows,” etc.. To file an appeal, a customer must do so in writing within fourteen days of the notification of the decision or sanction. If a person is unable to file an appeal in writing due to a disability, the customer may contact the LIFT Administrator to file the appeal. If the appeal is received by the LIFT Administration office within fourteen days, service will continue until a decision is made regarding the appeal.



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A complaint may also be filed directly with the Federal Transit Administration at the following address:

Federal Transit Administration  
Office of Civil Rights  
Attention: Complaint Team  
East Building, 5th Floor – TCR  
1200 New Jersey Ave., SE  
Washington, DC 20590

If you have questions on how to prepare a complaint, please contact the FTA toll-free civil rights hotline at (888)446-4511.

# Mobility Device Securement Policy

## LIFT SECUREMENT REQUIREMENT:

The LIFT requires all common wheelchairs, and/or mobility devices, along with the individual to be secured with all provided securement devices and seatbelts. **All passengers are required to wear seatbelts.**

Those individuals who do not want their wheelchair secured, but are physically able to transfer to a seat, will be asked to do so and to wear the appropriate seatbelt. The wheelchair, or mobility device, must then be either secured or folded and placed in a position as to not allow freedom of movement while the bus is in motion.

Any individual with a common wheelchair or mobility device that can be secured, but refuses to allow the device to be secured, will have potential hazards explained to them. These hazards may include, but are not limited to:

- damage or injury to themselves
- damage to their mobility device from not being properly secured while in transit should an accident or incident occur
- injury to other customers and/or the bus operator on board
- damage to other customer's mobility devices



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Customers who refuse to allow their wheelchair or mobility device to be secured during transit may have service declined to them.

If a particular type of common wheelchair or mobility device cannot be secured, the individual will not be denied transportation. Instead, if the individual is physically able to, they will be asked to transfer to a seat and will be required to wear a seatbelt. If physically unable, they will be asked to remain in their mobility device and will be asked to be secured, at a minimum, with the shoulder harness seatbelt.

If medical circumstances prohibit securement, a reasonable modification request will be processed.

## Applying For Visitor Status

Visitors to the area, who are unable to use the accessible fixed route service because of their disabilities, are eligible to use the LIFT service for 21 days in a rolling 365-day period. To apply for visitor's status, please provide paratransit eligibility verification to our office. To process your request, we will need to obtain the following information:

1. Your full name
2. Your full address and phone number
3. Your paratransit ID number and expiration date
4. Documentation of your disability (if it is not apparent)
5. Type of mobility aid used, if applicable
6. If you are authorized a Personal Care Assistant (PCA)
7. If you use a service animal

If you do not have paratransit in your home area, you will need to have your healthcare provider provide a certification of your disability. We will also require you to provide items 1, 2, 5, 6, 7 as stated above. Once we receive the information, we will enter you into our system and mail you an authorization letter with instructions



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about how to use our service. Alternately, we can email a PDF copy to your home or work email address if supplied. To process this information, please alert EMTA within a reasonable amount of time prior to your visit.

## Adverse Weather Policy

You are responsible for snow and ice removal to make your home accessible to the LIFT driver. If you do not have sidewalks the pathway cannot be muddy. If the home is not accessible, the ride will be considered a “Cancel at the Door.” If you live in an apartment complex, it is your responsibility to make the apartment manager aware of this policy.

In the event of snow or ice accumulation, where the LIFT ramp is unable to be safely deployed, the driver will not attempt a pick-up. Please keep your phone number updated so that you may be contacted.

If the conditions allow the LIFT ramp to be deployed safely, but the pathway to the bus is not sufficiently clear of snow, ice, or mud to enable the driver to safely assist the customer to the bus the trip will be canceled at the door.

If the pathway at your pickup location is impassable, you are encouraged to notify the LIFT before the scheduled pickup time.

### CANCELLATION OF SERVICE

The LIFT reserves the right to modify, suspend or cancel service during hazardous weather conditions that may jeopardize the safety of riders, employees, or equipment. During times of inclement weather, please check [ride-the-e.com](http://ride-the-e.com). EMTA social medias, local news outlets, or call 814-455-3330 x119 for more information. If the LIFT is operating on the Emergency service plan, efforts will be made for life sustaining trips only. All other trips will be cancelled for that day.

If you are traveling during times of inclement weather, be prepared for longer ride times. Bring any medications and an ample supply of oxygen. If you are



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diabetic or hypoglycemic, bring a small snack with you in case it is needed due to longer ride times.

# Paratransit Maintenance Policies

## INSPECTION OF ADA VEHICLE COMPONENTS

To keep LIFT services reliable and safe, the LIFT inspects each vehicle every 5,000 miles and follows all manufacturer's recommendations.

## OUT OF SERVICE POLICY

While the LIFT strives to prevent breakdowns, unforeseen maintenance issues may still happen. Should a vehicle require sudden maintenance, the LIFT will notify dispatch immediately and send a mechanic out with a replacement vehicle as quickly as possible. The LIFT strives to reduce any interruption regarding regularly scheduled services.

If the lift platform is inoperable, the LIFT will hold the vehicle until it is deemed safe and operable by the maintenance department. Should the lift platform be inoperable and out of service for a long period of time (5+ days), and the Authority is facing challenging circumstances delivering service, LIFT has the right to put the vehicle in service with an inoperable lift platform. If a person with a disability requires the lift platform to board, the LIFT will find an alternative method of transportation.

## EQUIPMENT MAINTENANCE

The LIFT strictly follows all manufacturer's recommendations regarding vehicles, equipment, and ADA-style equipment.



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# Rider Rules of Conduct

LIFT asks that all riders, their Personal Care Attendants, and any Companions traveling with them to observe the following RULES OF CONDUCT:

- Be ready throughout your scheduled pick-up window and board the bus promptly.
- Have the exact fare or ADA ticket ready when boarding the bus. Drivers do not carry change.
- Cancel reservations at least 2 hours in advance, preferably the day before the ride.
- Smoking and vaping are prohibited on the bus.
- Wear all provided safety restraints.
- Remain seated while the bus is in motion.
- No eating or drinking on the bus, except in extenuating health circumstances.
- Keep personal assistive devices in good condition and be able to operate them without driver assistance.
- Customers with disabilities who use an EPAMD (Electronic Personal Assistive Mobility Device) may travel on LIFT modes with this device. Please reach out to the ADA Coordinator for further information, or to request a copy of this policy.
- Always keep service animals under control.
- No petting or feeding service animals without permission from the owner.
- No operating or tampering with any vehicle equipment.
- No abusive, threatening, or obscene language or actions.
- No physical or verbal abuse of other passengers or driver.
- Weapons are prohibited on the LIFT including, but not limited to firearms, ammunition, sharp objects of any kind, knives, blades, brass knuckles, bows & arrows, or toy-like weapons.



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- Do not board with Hoverboard or One-Wheel Skateboards due to risk of fire.
  - Exception: Segways, if used as a personal mobility aid, may be reasonably accommodated per the Americans with Disabilities Act
  - To receive a full copy of the LIFT's Segway Policy, please reach out to the ADA Coordinator
- No flammable or explosive materials (other than batteries on mobility devices).
- No playing loud music or other noisy equipment on the LIFT. Headphones are permitted.
- No open containers of alcohol or any illegal drugs on board.
- Riders shall maintain appropriate, reasonable hygiene.
- Shoes or another footwear if ambulatory must be worn.
- Shirts and pants or shorts/dress must be worn.
- Littering is prohibited.
- Adults must control children.
- Make sure ramps, sidewalks and walkways are maintained and clear for safe transport.
- Treat all drivers and other riders with respect.
- Exit vehicle when instructed to do so by driver, authorized LIFT representative, or emergency personnel.
- Keep LIFT up to date on addresses and phone numbers.

### **VERBAL OR PHYSICAL VIOLENCE**

Riders, Personal Care Attendants and Companions traveling on the LIFT who engage in verbal or physical abuse, violence of any kind, cause physical injury to another rider or driver, or who engage in other illegal activities will be subjected to immediate and permanent suspension from LIFT services. They may also be subject to criminal prosecution.





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### EXCEPTIONS

LIFT recognizes that some disabilities and health related conditions may cause people to act in ways that break some of the LIFT rules. While the LIFT team will take a person's one or more disabilities into consideration, suspension is still an option if it is necessary to maintain safe paratransit service. In such cases, service may be reinstated when the rider as well as the riders' care givers develop a plan to ensure that the LIFT safety is not compromised.

## How to Contact Us

You may contact the LIFT via phone, fax, email, or U.S. mail. Phone reservationists are available to answer your questions and book paratransit trips Sunday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. through 4:30 p.m. Calls are answered in the order in which they are received. Monday through Friday trips may be scheduled up to 2 weeks in advance. Please note that on Sunday you may only schedule for the next day.

Before or after regular business hours, customers may check on or cancel their rides by contacting the LIFT Dispatcher at (814) 455-3330 extension 229 or 221.

**SCHEDULING LINE:** (814) 456-2299

**FAX:** (814) 455-3530

**ADDRESS:** LIFT 127 East 14<sup>th</sup> St, Erie, Pa. 16503

**LIFT ADMINISTRATION:** Molly Kohler, (814) 455-3330 extension 109;  
[mkohler@ride-the-e.com](mailto:mkohler@ride-the-e.com)

**ADA COORDINATOR:** Julie Meyers, (814) 455-3330 extension 227;  
[jmeyers@ride-the-e.com](mailto:jmeyers@ride-the-e.com)

**ONLINE:** <https://ride-the-e.com/contact-us-2/>

**LOST AND FOUND:** 814-455-3330, extension 229 or 221.

***\*LIFT is not responsible for items left on a LIFT vehicle.***

