

# NWTHRA

## Public Transportation Program

### Customer Handbook

The Northwest Tennessee Human Resource Agency operates the Public Transportation Program in Benton, Carroll, Crockett, Dyer, Gibson, Henry, Lake, Obion, and Weakley Counties. We provide services utilizing large passenger vans, minivans, and wheelchair lift-equipped vehicles. Priority service is given to those individuals requesting trips to medical appointments within the service area and to Jackson, Memphis, and Nashville. Other common destinations include, but are not limited to, employment opportunities, educational facilities, shopping centers, and airports. Although the service is not free, it is very affordable and available to everyone, regardless of age or income status.

NWTHRA has designed this Customer Handbook to assist all transit service customers while taking advantage of our services. Please take a moment to read this booklet so that you may understand better how we operate.

To schedule a trip, or simply find out more information, please call...

**1-877-557-4337**

Trips should be scheduled by calling our Scheduling Office between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m., Monday through Friday. We recommend calling at least 2 working days in advance to schedule a trip.

# Riding the Nwthra Van...

## **Pick up/Drop-off Procedures**

Our service is characterized as door-to-door. This means that although most of our customers do not require physical assistance, there are many that need help getting to and boarding our vehicles. **Nwthra drivers cannot enter a customer's home**, but they are allowed to help push a wheelchair from the entrance of the pick-up location to the vehicle, or assist a walking customer up or down a flight of steps. It is the rider's responsibility to let the scheduler know if such assistance is required so that sufficient time is allotted in the driver's schedule to make sure the customer can safely board the vehicle. For those customers who do not require assistance, he/she will be expected to be able to board/exit the vehicle unassisted.

Passenger Assistance by Van Drivers **DOES NOT** include:

- Locking/unlocking doors or activating/deactivating alarms to any facility or residence.
- Loading and unloading personal items (except as explained in the Packages section of this guide – see page 5).
- Handling service animals.
- Handling the controls of electric wheelchairs or scooters.
- Providing medical treatment.
- Scheduling trips, changing schedules, confirming future trips, making change for fares or keeping track of fare overpayments.

## **Waiting Time**

There is a 30-minute arrival window at each pick-up location. Passengers must be ready to board the van ANYTIME within the 30-minute pick-up window. Out of courtesy for other riders who are scheduled on the same vehicle, the van will wait no longer than 5 minutes at each pick-up location. If a rider does not show up to board the vehicle during the 5-minute wait time, the rider will be marked as a No-Show and the van will leave the location.

The van driver and/or dispatcher will not call the customer to advise that the vehicle has arrived. It is the responsibility of the customer to be at the location, prepared to board, when the vehicle arrives. **If you are unsure of your pick-up window, please call the Dispatch office at 1-877-557-4337 the afternoon before your scheduled trip.**

### **When To Be Ready**

A Nwthra vehicle may arrive any time within the 30-minute arrival or pick-up window. You must be ready to board the vehicle immediately upon arrival. After waiting 5 minutes, the vehicle will leave. If you did not board the vehicle you will be marked as a No-Show.

When the van arrives, you are required to have exact change or must be identified as a contract service rider, which pays for your trip. The van driver cannot take you to your destination without the required fare or payment for your service. Due to tracking issues, customers are not permitted to pay for more than one trip at a time, i.e., pay for all the day's rides at once. Exceptions to this rule may be established for certain facilities, at Nwthra's discretion.

### **Late Vehicles**

Nwthra vehicles experience the same traffic and weather conditions as the rest of the commuting public. Occasionally, our vans may be late for a pick-up. If the vehicle has not arrived by the end of your 30-minute pick-up window, please call Nwthra Public Transportation Program at 1-877-557-4337. **Please wait until the 30-minute window expires before calling.**

We will advise you of the status of the vehicle and what time to expect its arrival. If the van fails to arrive within 60 minutes from the beginning of your 30-minute pick-up window, Nwthra will **not** charge a fare for the ride.

### **Use of Wheelchairs and other Mobility Devices**

Nwthra will make every attempt to accommodate common wheelchairs, scooters, and other mobility devices. As defined by the ADA, these devices are not to exceed 48 inches in length, 30

inches in width, and 600 pounds in total weight (occupied). Mobility devices exceeding these standards may be denied service. For passenger safety, Nwthra will not transport riders using broken mobility devices. Since DOT ADA regulations' definition of a common wheelchair does not include a requirement for brakes, working brakes on wheelchairs and similar mobility devices CANNOT be required. However, for safety reasons, Nwthra strongly recommends that wheelchairs and similar devices be equipped with working brakes. Please be sure that wheelchairs, scooters, and other mobility devices are clean, safe, and in good working condition before using the service. Individuals who cannot board the vehicle using the steps may use the wheelchair lift.

### **Securing of Wheelchairs and other Mobility Devices**

Nwthra will make every attempt to secure standard wheelchairs and scooters. If it is too difficult or impossible to secure the wheelchair or mobility device, the van driver may suggest that the rider transfer to a van seat. It is the rider's choice to transfer or remain in their mobility device. The FTA has advised that the ADA does not allow transportation to be denied if the mobility device cannot be secured. However, Nwthra does not recommend transporting a customer in a mobility device that cannot properly be secured for safety reasons.

### **Use of Portable Oxygen**

The ADA provides that transportation service must be provided to a rider who needs to bring along an oxygen bottle. For safety reasons, it is the policy of Nwthra to require the rider to maintain control of the oxygen bottle. If the rider cannot pull an oxygen bottle cart or carry or maintain control of the bottle by himself or herself, then the rider shall provide a Personal Care Attendant to perform those functions. When choosing to ride public transportation, it is the responsibility of the rider to select a size oxygen bottle they can manage.

## **Personal Care Attendant**

A Personal Care Attendant (PCA) may accompany a rider at no additional charge. However, you must notify Nwthra when your trip reservation is made that you need a PCA to travel with you. A PCA must be a responsible adult age 18 or older. If a person demonstrates they do not have the skills required for “door-to-door” service, and arrangements have not been made with persons at both the pick-up and drop-off location to provide needed assistance, Nwthra will require a PCA travel with the person. If the person elects not to provide a PCA, then Nwthra Public Transportation Program is not the correct transportation service for them. In this case, the person will need to seek alternative transportation.

## **Guests**

One guest is welcome to ride with you as a companion and will be required to pay the appropriate fare. In addition, you must reserve seating for your guest when scheduling your trip. Guest seating is based on the availability of space. Children accompanying you are considered guests. Children age 5 and under travel free.

## **Children**

An adult must accompany all children age 11 and under. They cannot ride unattended. If traveling with an eligible fare-paying adult, children age 5 and under travel free.

When a child is traveling to an appointment with an adult (who is serving as a PCA), a fare must be paid for the child and the adult attendant rides free.

Nwthra requires child safety seats be used in accordance with Tennessee Child Passenger Safety Law. Such safety seats will be furnished, when possible.

An adult accompanying a child on Nwthra vehicles is responsible for the child. Drivers are not permitted to carry children on or off the vehicle. If you will need assistance with the child, please bring someone else along to help you.

## **Packages**

Packages are limited to two grocery bags or similar sized packages. Van drivers may help a rider carry two packages on and off the vehicle, and to the door. However, a van driver is not allowed to enter the customer's residence. Any packages handled by the driver shall weigh no more than 20 pounds each. When on the van, it is the responsibility of the passenger to maintain control of packages. If the passenger is unable to control the packages by themselves, then a Personal Care Attendant (PCA) needs to be provided to perform that function.

## **Service Animals**

Guide dogs and other service animals are allowed to accompany you if this need is indicated on your customer file. Please inform the Scheduling Office if a service animal will be accompanying you on your trip. All service animals must be leashed or harnessed during the entire trip. Animals must not pose a threat to any passenger or the van operator. Animals shall not block or in any way obstruct aisles or doorways.

## **Pets**

No pets are allowed on Nwthra vehicles.

## **Rider Conduct**

In order to ensure the safety and comfort of all riders, including van drivers, customers, their personal care attendants, and companions, all riders must adhere to the following rules of conduct:

- No eating, drinking, or smoking while on board the vehicle.
- No riding under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs as defined in Tennessee Statutes governing operation of motor vehicles.
- No abusive, threatening or obscene language or actions.
- No deliberate fare evasion.
- No operating or tampering with any equipment while on the vehicle.

- Unless a headset or earphones are used, radios, cassette tape players, compact disc players, or other sound generating equipment shall not be played on the vehicle.
- No petting guide dogs or other service animals without the permission of the owner.
- Baby strollers, walkers, canes, and other similar mobility aids must be folded and stowed so as to not block the aisle or cause injury to persons on the van.
- Heads, arms, and other body parts must be kept inside the van and objects must not be thrown from van windows.
- Except when they are boarding or exiting, passengers shall remain seated and shall refrain from actions that divert or distract the van driver from operating the vehicle.
- For safety reasons, passengers may not transport on transit vehicles car batteries, fireworks, flammable liquids, or propane bottles.

### **Denial of Service Policy**

Riders, their personal care attendants or companions traveling with riders who violate rules of conduct are subject to penalties, including suspension of service. Riders, their personal care attendants, or companions traveling with riders who engage in physical abuse or cause physical injury to another rider or van driver, or who engage in illegal activities, may be subject to immediate suspension, and possible criminal prosecution. Riders, their personal care attendants, or companions, who engage in activity that disrupts the operation of the service, may also be subject to a suspension of service. If a rider is disruptive to service, Nwthra reserves the right to require that a Personal Care Attendant (PCA) travel with the rider as an option to service suspension.

In addition, Nwthra van service will be denied to any person who poses a potential public health threat. The existence of excrement on clothes or on hands poses the potential for the spread of diseases. Contact with other bodily fluids, such as blood or vomit, poses an HIV or Hepatitis B and/or C threat.

If the van arrives for a pick-up and the passenger or his or her clothing is soiled with feces, urine, vomit, or blood, or the

passenger displays a draining sore or an open wound, which is not dressed in a manner that prevents seepage of bodily fluids, the passenger has the choice of:

1. Canceling the trip and rescheduling. A No-Show will not be issued.
2. Having the incident considered as a “refusal of service”.

In case of canceling the trip and rescheduling, the passenger must call the Scheduling Office, and request a ride on another day. In the case of “refusal of service”, the van driver shall seek prior approval from a Supervisor before refusing service to any individual. If the Supervisor determines that a potential threat to public health exists as described above:

1. Service will be refused,
2. A “No-Show” will not be recorded, and
3. The van driver or Supervisor will present to the person a *Notice of Opportunity for a Grievance Hearing*. A copy of that notice is included below, and the policy and procedure statements included are made a part of this policy by reference.

### **Notice of Opportunity for a Grievance Hearing**

If a passenger feels he or she has been mistreated or not given adequate transportation service, he or she has the right to file a written grievance within 60 days of the incident to the following address:

Transportation Director  
Northwest Tennessee Human Resource Agency  
P. O. Box 963  
Martin, TN 38237

This grievance must be specific as to the incident, including date, time, location, persons involved, and any possible witnesses. If a fair and equitable resolution cannot be reached, a grievance hearing may be conducted within 30 days of the date on which said hearing is requested. **If the person is a “no-show” for the hearing, the person will be deemed to have waived their right to a hearing.**

**NWTHRA**  
**Public Transportation Program**  
**Fare Schedule**

In-Town	\$ 0.50
In-County	\$ 1.50
Adjoining County (Inside NW District)	\$ 3.50
Non-adjoining County (Inside NW District)	\$ 5.00
Adjoining County (Outside NW District)	\$ 5.00
Non-adjoining County (Outside NW District)	\$ 7.50
Jackson (or <b>5.00</b> if adjoining county)	\$ 7.50
Memphis or Nashville	\$12.50

**Personal Care Attendants (PCA) – No charge**  
**Children Age 5 and Under – No charge**

The Northwest Tennessee Human Resource Agency Public Transportation Program strives to provide quality transportation service for the citizens of the Northwest Tennessee region. We hope you have a pleasurable experience when you use our service. Our goal is to make sure our customers have access to medical and educational facilities, employment sites, shopping centers, and various other businesses and services, in an affordable manner.

We always welcome suggestions and comments about our service. Input from our customers is vital in making sure this service is user friendly. **To learn more about us, please call 1-877-557-4337.**

This service is funded by the Federal Transit Authority, the Tennessee Department of Transportation, contract revenues, and fares.

3/30/2010