

# MANATEE COUNTY AREA TRANSIT



# HANDY BUS CLIENT HANDBOOK

Updated  
January 2025

## 1.0 Commitment and Handbook Statement

Manatee County Area Transit (MCAT) is committed to providing safe, secure, clean, and reliable transportation services to the patrons. This policy statement serves to express management's commitment to and involvement in providing and maintaining a safe and secure transit system.

The MCAT management "team" is responsible for maintaining a coordinated safety system to identify and prevent unsafe acts and conditions that present a potential danger or threat to passenger safety. Management has responsibility for implementing and maintaining a System Safety Program Plan (SSPP) that complies with established safety standards set forth in Rule 14-90, Florida Administrative Code (F.A.C.). All sections, personnel, and operators are charged with the responsibility of adhering to this SSPP. Any violation of safety and security practices is subject to appropriate administrative and correction actions. Management is ultimately responsible for enforcing the SSPP and maintaining a safe and secure system.

The MCAT Handy Bus provides specialized, door-to-door transportation services in Manatee County. In accordance with federal implementing regulations, the Paratransit/Handy Bus service priority are Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) passenger trips. These ADA passenger trips are required for persons with disabilities, who because of their disability cannot utilize the regular bus system. The Handy Bus Transportation Disadvantaged (TD) program is a discretionary program, which provides transportation assistance to those in the community who, because of age, income status, or disability, does not have access to other means of transportation. The TD services are provided through an ongoing funding partnership between the Florida Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged (FCTD) and Manatee County Government.

which serves lower income households who cannot afford transportation and require public assistance. To manage the overall Handy Bus service demand, TD trips are prioritized by trip purpose, and limited to specific days, locations and times to ensure capacity for required ADA passenger trips. Handy Bus is an on-demand service that must be reserved for service pick-ups; and passenger trips are origin to destination and shared ride services. Eligibility is based on inability to use the fixed route for ADA (Americans with Disabilities); and for TD (Transportation Disadvantaged), eligibility is based on the person's inability to use fixed route and household income. All interested parties must apply for eligibility.

Manatee County Area Transit  
January 2025

## **2.0 Table of Contents**

MCAT has developed the following brochures/guidelines for Paratransit/Handy Bus Clients:

- ADA Ride Guide
- Handy Bus Prepaid
- Handy Bus Standard Operating Procedures
- IVR (Interacted Voice Response)
- Transportation Disadvantaged Program
- Travel Training

# HANDY BUS ADA PARATRANSIT SERVICE

Effective January 6, 2025



## Public Works

Manatee County Area Transit  
2411 Tallevast Road  
Sarasota, FL 34243  
(941) 747-8621



[www.mymanatee.org/mcat](http://www.mymanatee.org/mcat)

like us on  
Facebook

[facebook.com/ridemcat](https://facebook.com/ridemcat)

map us on  
Google Transit

[www.maps.google.com](https://www.maps.google.com)

view us on  
YouTube

Ride with Us - MCAT

**Hours of Service varies between 5:30am - 10:30pm**

### Contact/Scheduling Information

Handy Bus Customer Service (8 am – 5 pm)	(941) 748-2317
Before/After Hours & Saturday Cancellations	(941) 748-1135
Dispatch (Saturdays & Sundays)	(941) 748-2317 Ext. 4
Handy Bus Complaints	(866) 642-3318
ADA & Veterans Handy Bus Reservations (Sundays & Holidays)	(941) 741-3572
TTY (for the hearing impaired)	(941) 747-7868
Medical Transportation Management (MTM)	(844) 239-5974
ADA Assistance Line	(888) 446-4511
ADA Complaints	(800) 514-0301 or TTY (800) 514-0383
Lost and Found	(941) 749-7116
IVR Notification Status	(941) 202-0282

### Notifying Public of Right Under Title VI

Manatee County operates its programs and services without regard to race, color, and national origin in accordance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act. Any person who believes she or he has been aggrieved by any unlawful discriminatory practice under Title VI may file a complaint with Manatee County. For more information on the Manatee County Transit Division's civil rights program, and the procedures to file a complaint, contact (941) 747-8621; email [mcat@mymanatee.org](mailto:mcat@mymanatee.org); or visit our administrative office at 2411 Tallevast Road, Sarasota, FL 34243.

A complaint may be filed directly with the Federal Transit Administration by submitting a complaint to the Office of Civil Rights, Attention: Title VI Program Coordinator, East building, 5th floor-TCR, 1200 New Jersey Ave., SE, Washington, DC 20590.

Si necesita información en español, llame (941) 747-8621.



## HANDY BUS — ADA PARATRANSIT SERVICE

### **MCAT, the ADA, AND YOU!** **Public Transportation: For All of Us!**

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires that transit agencies provide services which are accessible to people with disabilities. **The ADA is an important civil rights law passed in 1990** that has greatly increased the transportation options for people with disabilities. The law requires improvements to transportation services, including the provision of paratransit services to complement fixed route services. The ADA does not require a transit agency “to meet all the transportation needs of individuals with disabilities;” however, it does ensure that people with disabilities who cannot utilize regular fixed routes receive **services comparable to those on the fixed route/regular bus system.**

### **What is ADA Paratransit Service?**

The ADA Paratransit service is a **required “safety net” for people who, due to their disability, are unable to ride fixed route buses.** The ADA Paratransit service is a complementary service to fixed route transportation services. This means ADA paratransit services operate in the same area, and during the same days and hours as the fixed route service. **It is an on-demand service that must be reserved at least before 5 pm the day before a trip. The service picks up riders at their home (or origin) and takes them to their destination.** The vehicle may make several stops on the way to a rider’s destination to pick up or drop off other passengers; and just like the regular bus system, **it is a “shared-ride” service.**

**The origin and destination of each trip must**

**be within a 3/4 mile corridor dimension of fixed route service.**

### **What is The Handy Bus Service?**

The Handy Bus service provides the **required ADA paratransit service to “complement” fixed route services.**

### **How Does Someone Qualify for ADA/Handy Bus Service?**

**Eligibility is based upon a person’s inability to use the fixed route system, and riders must apply for eligibility.** Please call MCAT at (941) 747-8621, ext. 3567 for an ADA paratransit service application.

### **What is ADA Paratransit Eligibility?**

Generally speaking, the test for eligibility is the inability to use fixed route buses, due to a person’s disability. The ability to use fixed route transit may be limited by a physical or cognitive disability. Difficulty using public transportation, or being diagnosed as having a disability, is not automatic grounds for ADA paratransit service eligibility. Similarly, **eligibility is not based upon age, income level, or for perceived inconvenience of bus service.**

### **What are the Categories for ADA Paratransit Eligibility?**

There are three categories of ADA paratransit service eligibility:

- 1. Fully eligible riders** may utilize ADA Paratransit when/where the service is available.
- 2. Conditionally eligible** riders may utilize ADA Paratransit for select trips; and utilize

- fixed route transit for other trips.
- 3. Temporarily eligible riders** obtain eligibility for a very limited and specific period of time.

If you disagree with MCAT’s eligibility determination, request an appeal in writing within 60 days of receiving eligibility notification. **Send the appeal to: Customer Service Team Supervisor/MCAT, 2411 Tallevast Road, Sarasota, FL 34243.**

### **Is Subscription Service Available?**

Subscription Service is available for “regularly” scheduled, repetitive trips.

### **Are Pre-Paid Fares Available?**

Handy Bus fares can be paid in advance of your travel. **The minimum pre-pay fare deposit is \$50.00 and can be paid by check or money order.**

### **Is There an Expiration for ADA Paratransit Certification?**

Recertification is typically required every three (3) years from the date approved, or more frequently for those with temporary eligibility.

### **How is an ADA Paratransit Trip Scheduled on the Handy Bus System?**

**You may schedule an ADA trip on the Handy Bus by calling the Handy Bus reservation line at (941) 748-2317.** The ADA trips are scheduled between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m.

- Maximum reservation lead-time: Two weeks before a trip.
- Minimum reservation lead-time: **No later than 5 p.m. the day before your trip.**

- Allow a 2-hour scheduling window – actual pick-up time may be 1 hour before or 1 hour after requested pick-up time.
- **No schedule changes on the day a trip is scheduled.**

### Where/When do the Manatee County Area Transit (MCAT) Fixed Routes Operate?

MCAT offers fixed-route bus transportation that serves Bradenton, Ellenton, Palmetto and the Gulf Beach communities. Buses generally run from 5:30 a.m. to 8 p.m., Monday through Saturday. No fixed route transit service is offered on Sunday except for the Anna Maria Island Trolley and Beach Express.

For most people using public transportation, the most convenient and flexible way to travel is by using MCAT fixed routes. It costs less money and requires less planning than the ADA paratransit service. The fixed route accessibility features include:

- **Wheelchair lifts or low floor ramps, and accessible concrete boarding pads at bus stops**
- Priority seating for persons with disabilities
- Trained, competent, and helpful operators
- Announcement of requested bus stops
- **Individualized Travel Training Assistance**
- Discounted Cash Fares and Multi-Ride Bus Passes

For route and schedule information, please call MCAT at (941) 749-7116 or visit the MCAT website at: [www.mymanatee.org/mcat](http://www.mymanatee.org/mcat).

### What is The Sunday & Holiday Service Schedule?

MCAT fixed route service is not available on the following holidays:

- New Year's Day
- Memorial Day
- Independence Day
- Labor Day
- Thanksgiving Day
- Christmas Day

The Trolley, Beach Express, and Handy Bus are available to serve Anna Maria Island ONLY on these holidays and Sundays.

### What is a Personal Care Attendant (PCA)?

- **A PCA is someone specifically designated to care for personal needs and assists during travel. The PCA travels with a qualified rider at no charge.**
- Personal Care Attendant's (PCA) are welcomed to travel with qualified riders.

### What are Handy Bus Trip Cancellations and No Shows?

A trip cancellation is when the passenger calls at least two (2) hours before a scheduled trip to cancel their ride. To cancel a Handy Bus trip, please call (941) 748-2317 or (before 8 a.m.), (941) 748-1135.

**Failure to give MCAT Handy Bus a minimum of two hours' notice for a canceled trip is considered a "no show."** Handy Bus service may be suspended for a reasonable period of time when there is a "pattern or practice" of repeated no shows.

### How are ADA Complaints Addressed?

Manatee County makes every effort to meet the transportation needs of customers. On occasion, problems arise. Please Feel free to contact the Handy Bus Customer Service Center at (866) 642-3318 to bring any service issues to the attention of staff.

### Are Electronic Notifications Available?

Yes, the Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system provides electronic notifications (**calls, emails, text messages**) regarding **scheduled trips and real-time alerts for Handy Bus arrivals. Please call (941) 748-2317 for IVR registration.**

### Are ADA visitors allowed to ride?

Visitors who are eligible for ADA paratransit service in jurisdictions where they reside and have documentation regarding their eligibility may use the MCAT ADA paratransit service during their visit to Manatee County for up to twenty-one (21) days during any three hundred sixty-five (365)-day period. Visitors who have not been certified eligible by another transit provider and who make the claim that they are unable to use fixed route transit will have presumptive eligibility. They will be required to provide documentation of their place of residence and (if the visitor's disability is not apparent), disability documentation (signed by a licensed professional) prior to the first day of service and may also be provided ADA paratransit service for up to twenty-one (21) days during any three hundred sixty-five (365)-day period. Visitors needing more than twenty-one (21) days of service will be required to apply for MCAT eligibility certification by following the application process.



- To ensure on time arrivals, plan for travel time – up to an hour.
- Pick-up “Window” – the bus may arrive 15 minutes before or after the scheduled pick-up time.
- If the bus has not arrived 15 minutes after the scheduled pick-up time, please call the Handy Bus Contact Center at (941) 748-1135.
- The Handy Bus will park as close to the curb in front of your pick-up location as possible.
- **Once the driver has arrived within the pick-up “window” and the customer is not available to board the vehicle within 5 minutes, the client may be considered a “no-show”.**
- The driver is required to collect all fares prior to starting a trip. Please have exact funds ready when boarding.
- **When a no-show occurs, same day rescheduling is not provided.**
- For safety, passengers in a wheelchair device will have their seat belt and shoulder strap fastened, and their wheelchair device secured.
- Three-wheeled mobility device users and other wheelchair users may transfer to a seat in the bus – the choice to transfer is the passenger’s. Manatee County is not responsible for injuries due to unsecured seating.

- No eating, drinking, chewing tobacco or smoking (this includes electronic cigarettes) is permitted on the bus.
- **The driver is not authorized to make unscheduled stops, provide change or wait while a rider performs an errand.**
- Please cooperate if asked to move temporarily while loading or unloading other passengers.
- **Drivers are not allowed inside the passenger’s residence.**
- Riders may not operate any electronic equipment that may infringe on passenger comfort and safety or impair the driver’s ability to transport riders safely.
- Handy Bus Customers are responsible for their carry-on packages, parcels, and groceries.





## The New Pre-Paid Fare Program for Handy Bus Passengers...

- What is the Pre-paid Fare Program?
- Who is Eligible?
- What if I am not a Handy Bus Customer Currently?
- How does the Pre-paid Fare Program Work?
- What are the Benefits of the Pre-paid Fare Program?
- How does a Handy Bus Passenger Request a Pre-paid Fare Account?
- How many Handy Bus rides would a \$50 Pre-paid Account Purchase?
- What are the current Handy Bus Fares?



## What is the Pre-paid Fare Program?

Manatee County Area Transit (MCAT), Handy Bus has established a program, so that the customer is able to pay their fare in advance, so they do not have to deposit cash into the fare box for their trips. This is available to Handy Bus customers effective November 2, 2015.

The Pre-paid Fare Program allows the customer to make a minimum deposit of \$50 by check or money order, and funds are drawn from their account as Handy Bus trips are booked. Pre-paid funds are established on the customer's account, allowing the participating passengers to board the Handy Bus without any cash handling or on-board fare payment.

## Who is Eligible?

The service is **available to current Handy Bus clients** who currently purchase trips and pay a fare for each Handy Bus trip, including; TD (Transportation Disadvantaged) eligible passengers, ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) eligible passengers.

## What if I am not a Handy Bus Customer Currently?

Citizens are required to apply for Handy Bus eligibility. Please call 941-747-1739, Monday – Friday, 8 a.m. – 5 p.m., if you are interested in applying for Handy Bus services.

## How does the Pre-paid Fare Program Work?

Please contact Handy Bus reservations to request the Pre-paid Fare Program forms, which will be mailed upon the customer's request. After confirmation that funds are available, the specific number of one-way trips purchased are available to the customer, who can then begin booking their trips using Pre-paid funds.

Once a customer begins using Pre-paid funds, notification is then provided when the customer's Pre-paid account balance reaches the \$20.00 threshold. This process allows sufficient time for the customer to replenish their account. If no confirmation is received or the customer has exhausted all funds without replenishing their account, the customer is informed during the booking process to pay a cash fare; however, the customer can still replenish their account in the future, if they choose to do so.

## What are the benefits of the Pre-paid Program?

- Pre-paid fare customers no longer concern themselves with having the cash fare when boarding the bus.
- Regularly scheduled customers, with repetitive trips (work, school, and dialysis) can budget their Pre-paid funds each month for their specific travel needs.
- Passengers using the program just board their bus, as their fare is already paid with funds in their Pre-paid account.



## How does a Handy Bus Passenger Request a Pre-paid Fare Account?

Customers who are interested may call Manatee County Area Transit, Handy Bus Reservations, Monday-Friday 8:00 am-5:00 pm at 941-748-2317.



---

## **How many Handy Bus rides would a \$50.00 Pre-paid Account Purchase?**

A \$50 minimum deposit covers (25) twenty-five one-way rides for ADA & TD clients.

---

## **What are the current Handy Bus Fares?**

- **ADA Passengers= \$2.00 fare/One-way trip** or 25 Pre-paid fare rides with a minimum deposit of \$50.00 into a Pre-paid account.
- **TD Passengers=\$2.00 fare/One-way trip** or 25 Pre-paid fare rides with a minimum deposit of \$50.00 into a Pre-paid account.

---

Public Works  
Manatee County Area Transit  
2411 Tallevast Road  
Sarasota, FL 34243  
Phone: (941) 748-2317  
[www.mymanatee.org/mcat](http://www.mymanatee.org/mcat)



## Handy Bus Standard Operating Procedures



© IZ Adaptive

### *Why are Standard Operating Procedures so important for Handy Bus service delivery?*

The most important reason for standard procedures is to ensure a quality experience for each Customer. This means when every Customer is ready and prepared for their trip, the next Customer has an opportunity for timely service delivery. However, a significant delay while waiting to locate and board a passenger, adversely affects each Customer thereafter.

### *What are the pick-up and Bus Operators wait time service standards?*

The Customer's pick-up window is 30 minutes, and the maximum wait time is 5 minutes after the Operator's arrival. For instance, Operators may arrive 15 minutes before the scheduled pick-up time and up to 15 minutes after the scheduled pick-up time. **Once the Operator arrives within the pick-up window and the Customer is not prepared to board the vehicle within 5 minutes, the Operator will notify Dispatch that the passenger is not ready and will depart.** Of course, circumstances outside of the control of the passenger are considered when establishing "no show" occurrences.

### ***What about early return trips?***

The MCAT operational staff works daily to create individual route Operator pick-up and drop-off schedules that maximize the use of limited resources. **Same day reschedules, such as requests for early returns, adversely affect timely service delivery for subsequent Customers.** When scheduling trips, please ensure the outbound and inbound return trip (pick-up and drop-off) times are consistent with your daily travel needs.

### ***Are carry-on packages allowed?***

**Yes. Handy Bus Customers are responsible for their carry-on packages, parcels, and groceries.** Operators assist Customers with loading and unloading packages; however, they will make a limited number of trips to/from the vehicle when assisting passengers. Customer's should limit the number of carry-on packages or use an escort or a personal care attendant if unable to independently load and unload packages.



*(purchasing a cart is very helpful for passengers with carry-on items)*

### ***5 BASIC RULES TO HELP YOUR HANDY BUS TRIP BE MORE EFFECTIVE:***

- The Operator is required to collect all fares for paying Customers. **Have exact funds ready when entering the bus or utilize the Pre-Paid Fare program.**

- Operators are not allowed inside the residence, so be ready and visible for pick-up.

- Be ready 15 minutes before the scheduled pick-up time.

- For safety, passengers in wheelchairs must have their wheelchair and shoulder strap fastened. This ensures proper securement of both the wheelchair and passenger.

**To Learn more about our service contact:  
Manatee County Area Transit (MCAT)  
2411 Tallevast Rd  
Sarasota, FL 34243  
941-748-2317  
[www.mymanatee.org/mcat](http://www.mymanatee.org/mcat)**



# The MCAT Interactive Voice Response (IVR) System



## What is this new technology?

---

The new technology is known as the Interactive Voice Response or IVR system. This system provides electronic notifications (i.e., calls, emails, text messages) **to Handy Bus and Long Boat Key Shuttle clients** regarding their scheduled trips and real-time alerts for bus arrival times.

## When does use of this new technology begin?

---

The IVR system official launch date is April 15, 2017. **Users can sign up for this service at any time, however.**

## Are customers allowed to customize alerts?

---

Yes, **clients can customize their alerts**, by calling Customer Service Representatives (CSR) to select alerts on pending bus arrivals, as well as receiving periodic updates on pre-paid account balances.

## Does the client define their preferred notification method?

---

**Yes, the client has options regarding their preferred method to receive notifications.** These options include: A phone call, text or email message; or any combination of these notification methods.



## How does the IVR system relate to other transit service improvements?

---

The provision of IVR system technology combined with the recent introduction of fixed route schedule information in accessible format on the Manatee County website are examples of Manatee County's ongoing commitment to improved service delivery. These advancements along with the addition of approximately 400 passenger boarding pads and accessibility improvements at bus stops, new passenger amenities at bus stops, improved service frequency on "core network" routes such as the Manatee Avenue corridor, all fit together very nicely and demonstrate that **Manatee County is committed to continually improving service delivery and providing an array of customer-focused services**, which benefit the community at large, as well as those with special needs and disabilities.



## How does the client inform MCAT about their preferred notification method?

---

Simply call the Handy Bus/Long Boat Key Shuttle Customer Service Center at 941-748-2317 or contact Manatee County Area Transit (MCAT) at [www.mymanatee.org/mcat](http://www.mymanatee.org/mcat)

## How does the IVR system prove beneficial in service delivery?

---

First, the new system will free up the Customer Service Center staff to focus more on client information calls, and next-day service and trip scheduling. Second, the call ahead trip reminders and client notification regarding estimated bus arrivals ensure that Handy Bus clients are aware of their bus arrival time and are already prepared for travel when the bus arrives; and this improves the efficiency of service delivery. Third, passengers will receive prompt notification of cancelled trips, affording dispatch staff the flexibility to adjust client trips "on the fly" during daily service delivery. **Real-time service modifications combined with the IVR system's bus arrival information, and customers waiting and prepared for their rides, will most certainly benefit all end users.**

## What about mass notifications?

---

The new IVR system will also alert passengers when severe weather approaches. Specifically, **the IVR system will notify clients electronically with critical information regarding suspension of regular service and the evacuation of clients to shelter locations. In the aftermath of Tropical Storm events, the IVR system provides the ability to communicate quickly and effectively with all clients regarding the resumption of regular services.**

**Customized Alerts for Handy Bus and Longboat Key Shuttle Clients: Trip Notifications, Confirmations and Real-Time Bus Arrival information.**

Alert	Voice Call	Email	Text Message
Reminder the night before	★	★	★
Imminent Arrival	★	★	★
Confirmation of Booking		★	★
Confirmation of cancellation		★	★
Confirmation of trip change		★	★

- Providing updates about scheduled trips via phone, email, and text.
- Choose which alerts to receive.
- Receive trip reminders the day before a scheduled trip.
- Instead of wondering about your actual pick-up time, receive advance notification on when the bus will arrive.
- Receive email, text and phone messages verifying trips booked, no-shows, trip cancellations, and low pre-paid fare account balances.
- Notifications with critical information regarding the suspension of service for a Tropical Storm event, and evacuation of clients to shelters; and resumption of regular services after the storm event.

# Manatee County

Transportation Disadvantaged Program



Effective July 1, 2023



### Public Works

Manatee County Area Transit  
2411 Tallevast Road  
Sarasota, FL 34243  
(941) 747-8621

[www.mymanatee.org/mcat](http://www.mymanatee.org/mcat)

Paratransit Serving  
All of Manatee County



like us on  
Facebook  
[facebook.com/ridemcat](https://facebook.com/ridemcat)



map us on  
Google Transit  
[www.maps.google.com](http://www.maps.google.com)



view us on  
YouTube  
Ride with Us - MCAT

## PUBLIC NOTIFICATION OF RIGHTS UNDER TITLE VI

Manatee County Government operates its programs and services without regard to race, color, and national origin in accordance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act. Any person who believes she or he has been aggrieved by any unlawful discriminatory practice under Title VI may file a complaint with Manatee County Government. For more information on the Manatee County Government Transit Division's civil rights program, and the procedures to file a complaint, call (941) 747-8621, email [mcat@mymanatee.org](mailto:mcat@mymanatee.org), or visit our administrative office at 2411 Tallevast Road, Sarasota, FL 34243. A complainant may file a complaint directly with the Federal Transit Administration by filing a complaint with the Office of Civil Rights, Attention: Title VI Program Coordinator, East Building, 5th Floor-TCR, 1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE, Washington, DC 20590.

Si necesita información en español, llame (941) 747-8621.

### CONTACT INFORMATION

Handy Bus Registration (8 a.m. – 5 p.m.)	(941) 747-1739 <a href="http://www.mymanatee.org/mcat">www.mymanatee.org/mcat</a>
TD Reservations/Cancellations (9 a.m. – 2 p.m.)	(941) 748-2317
TD Cancellations (Before 8 a.m.)	(941) 748-1135
Customer Service/Complaints	(866) 642-3318
Dispatch (Saturday)	(941) 747-8621 Ext. 0
TTY (for the hearing impaired)	(941) 747-7868
State of Florida Commission for TD Ombudsman Hotline	(800) 983-2435
Medical Transportation Management	(844) 239-5974
Si necesita información en español, llame	(941) 747-8621
Lost and Found	(941) 749-7116

## WHAT IS THE TRANSPORTATION DISADVANTAGED (TD) PROGRAM?

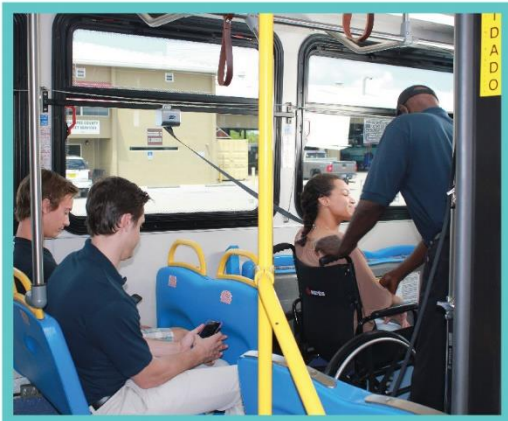
The Transportation Disadvantaged (TD) Program is a **discretionary program which provides transportation assistance to those in the community who, because of age (60 and older), income status, or disability, does not have access to other means of transportation.** The TD services are provided through an ongoing funding partnership between the Florida Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged (FCTD) and Manatee County Government.

## WHO IS ELIGIBLE FOR THE TRANSPORTATION DISADVANTAGED PROGRAM?

**Manatee County residents who, because of because of age, income status, or disability, and cannot access other means of transportation.** The TD transportation benefits must also be utilized for established TD trip priorities.

## WHAT TRANSPORTATION SERVICES ARE AVAILABLE TO TD CLIENTS?

1. Regular MCAT bus service is available at a reduced rate for TD eligible riders.



## Eligibility for a TD Bus Pass is determined by income only.

2. Handy Bus door-to-door services are available to those TD clients who cannot access and use the regular MCAT bus service, due to their age (60 and older), income status, or disability.

## HOW DOES A PERSON UTILIZE THE TD BUS PROGRAM?

1. Complete the TD application form and provide the required household income, residency, travel information, and supporting documentation. Return this to MCAT by mail or in person. Expect written eligibility notification within a two (2) week period.
2. **Provide a \$15 check or money order before the 15th of each month.** This is the cost for a 31-day monthly unlimited ride TD bus pass.
3. Pick up your bus pass at the designated pick up location (designated Transit Station) **between the 1st and the 10th of the month.**

## WHAT ARE THE COST AND TRANSPORTATION ADVANTAGES FOR THE TD BUS PASS?

- The \$15 co-payment entitles the TD client to an unlimited number of bus rides each month.
- **There are no restrictions on the type of trip or number of fixed route bus trips.**
- The \$15 bus pass provides independence and freedom to travel for the entire 31-day activation period for each bus pass.

---

### HOW MUCH COULD A CLIENT SAVE ON THE REGULAR BUS SYSTEM COMPARED TO HANDY BUS?

Each round trip on Handy Bus is \$4.00, so after five round trips the cost is already \$20. **The \$15 TD Bus Pass provides an unlimited number of trips for \$15 each 31-day period. Over the course of one-year, this could equate to significant personal savings, maybe hundreds of dollars in a year.**

### IS IT TRUE THAT THE TD BUS PASS PROVIDES REAL TRAVEL INDEPENDENCE?

**Yes. The TD Handy Bus services are limited, according to available operating resources and trip priorities.** The TD Bus Pass affords travel opportunities that are not limited; and daily bus operations are prescribed in each route schedule.

### IS TRAINING AVAILABLE FOR NEW FIXED ROUTE BUS USERS?

**Yes. Manatee County Government provides travel training so that new clients learn when/where to catch a bus, how to use their bus pass and “swipe” it at the farebox, how to make bus transfers, etc. This is a personalized program tailored to specific travel needs!**

### HOW DOES A TD CLIENT APPLY FOR TD SERVICES?

Riders wishing to benefit from TD services should first call a Customer Service Representative (CSR) Monday – Friday between 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. at (941) 747-1739. **Please provide your name and mailing address and request a TD application form.**

The CSR will help explain TD program

eligibility, the TD application process and the documentation required.

### HOW DOES A TD CLIENT SCHEDULE A HANDY BUS TD TRIP?

Please call (941) 748-2317 Monday – Friday between 9:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. Reservations may be made up to 2 weeks in advance, with a required minimum of 2 business days in advance of your desired appointment notice. Trips are provided on a first-come, first-served basis, pending available resources. Trips may be reserved between 7:30 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. Monday – Saturday, excluding major holidays.

**The TD bus medical trips occur Monday through Friday. Non-medical trips (life-sustaining, food, and nutrition) (these trips are prioritized by trip purpose, days, times, and location).**

These restrictions are in place in order to remain within the available operational and TD funding resources; **and the Handy Bus operational “priority” is the required ADA paratransit service.** If the time requested is not available for TD clients, alternative days and/or times available are offered.



---

## WHAT IS THE HOLIDAY SERVICE SCHEDULE?

The MCAT fixed route and Handy Bus services are not available on the following holidays:

- New Year's Day
- Memorial Day
- Independence Day
- Labor Day
- Thanksgiving Day
- Christmas Day

## WHAT ARE THE TD PRIORITY TRIPS?

The TD services on Handy Bus are limited to only the highest priority trip purposes, due to increasing demand. **The ADA complementary paratransit is a required service, so TD Handy Bus services are limited to the remaining available operating resources.** TD Handy Bus trips are reserved for health care, employment, education, or other life-sustaining activities (grocery, banking, etc.). TD trips are prioritized according to trip purpose, days, times, location, and available resources. These restrictions are subject to change in effort to optimize MCAT's service delivery. If the time requested is not available for TD clients, alternative days and/or times available are offered.

## WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS AND ACCESSIBILITY FEATURES FOR MANATEE COUNTY AREA TRANSIT (MCAT) FIXED ROUTES?

For TD eligible clients using public transportation, **the most convenient and**

**flexible way to travel is by using MCAT fixed routes.** It costs less money and requires less planning than the ADA/TD paratransit service. The fixed route accessibility features include:

- **Wheelchair lifts or low floor ramps, and accessible concrete boarding pads at bus stops**
- Priority seating for persons with disabilities
- Trained, competent, and helpful operators
- Announcement of requested bus stops
- **Individualized Travel Training Assistance**
- Discounted Cash Fares and Multi-Ride Bus Passes

## WHAT ARE THE TD PASSENGER FARES?

The cost for the 31-day TD bus pass is \$15/month. The current fare to ride the Handy Bus is \$2.00 for each one-way ride.

## ARE PRE-PAID FARES AVAILABLE?

**All TD fixed route clients pre-pay for their 31-day bus pass.** Handy Bus fares can be paid in advance of travel; **and the minimum pre-pay fare deposit is \$50.00 and can be paid by check or money order.**

## HOW DOES A CLIENT PROVIDE FEEDBACK?

MCAT makes every effort to meet the transportation needs of its customers. We encourage your feedback and suggestions for potential service enhancements. **Feel free to contact MCAT at (941) 747-8621 ext. 3567 to discuss any service improvements.** The TD customers may also contact the State of Florida Commission for Transportation Disadvantaged Ombudsman hotline at (800) 983-2435.

- The provision of TD program services are not required. **In fact, the TD program is discretionary, and services are curtailed as necessary to match available funding and operational resources.**
- The TD program is based upon three (3) required elements: 1. Eligibility requirements; 2. Residency in Manatee County; and 3. A Travel profile that corresponds with TD Program Priorities.
- **A new element of the TD program is a focus on utilization of the fixed route system.**
- A new discounted 31-day unlimited ride bus pass is available to TD clients on a first come - first served basis.
- The new TD program bus pass requires that TD eligible clients pay \$15/month for their TD bus pass. These payments can be made by check or money order by the 15th of each month (i.e. for a bus pass to be used the following month).
- **Mail the payment to: MCAT 2411 Tallevast Road, Sarasota, FL 34243, Attn: TD Bus Pass Program**
- Bus pass distribution occurs between the 1st and the 10th of the month at the DeSoto and Downtown Bradenton Transit Stations. **Each TD bus pass client**

**must provide a valid picture ID and sign for their bus pass.**

- All fixed route buses and trolleys are wheelchair accessible, priority seating is available for persons with disabilities, and Transit Operators announce major intersections, transfer points, Transit Stations, and requested bus stops.
- **Bus stop accessibility features include 5'x8' concrete boarding pads and passenger seating, with accessible routes to/from adjacent sidewalks.**
- For those unfamiliar with MCAT's fixed route system, please call (941) 747-8621 ext. 7633 for Travel Training assistance.
- **The household income requirement for TD BP program eligibility is 200% of current Federal Poverty guidelines.**

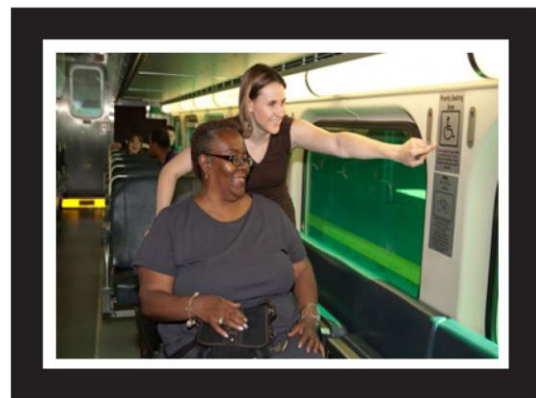


# MCAT Para-Transit Travel Training



## WHAT IS TRAVEL TRAINING?

*Travel Training teaches senior and people with disabilities how to use the fixed route bus system. The training is free and is customized to meet each individual's needs.*



### *What you will learn*

- *Read bus maps and Schedules*
- *Plan your trip and ride your necessary routes*
- *Pay fares and purchase passes*
- *Prepare for the “what ifs” and other concerns.*
- *Ride the bus with confidence*

### ***Getting Started is easy!***

Your training session is as unique as you are. The Travel Trainer will meet you at your home, conduct a travel needs assessment and develop a personalized plan.

The Travel Trainer will accompany you throughout your entire travel training experience. Best of all, the training is self-paced—take all the time you need and ask all the questions you want.



## **5 REASONS TO LEAVE THE DRIVING TO US:**

- You can enjoy the freedom of traveling safely throughout the Manatee County area, without the stress of driving in traffic, finding a parking space or scheduling a ride.
- Seniors and people with disabilities enjoy priority seating.
- MCAT bus is accessible to everyone. Lifts or ramps, as well as two secured wheelchair spaces are available for those using mobility aids.
- It's affordable. Public Transportation costs less than owning a car and there are a variety of passes to meet your needs and budget.
- Expanded travel options increase your social life and ability to meet new people.

## **Contact Us:**

MCAT Handy Bus  
2411 Tallevast Rd.  
Sarasota, FL, 34243  
941-748-2317

Visit us on the Web:  
[www.ridemcat.org](http://www.ridemcat.org)

---

# MCAT Para-Transit Travel Training

**Giving you the Skill,  
Confidence  
and  
Independence  
You need to go.**

