

# Paratransit

Ridership Policies



For Information / Para información en español:  
**707-576-RIDE • 576-7433 • 800-345-7433**  
Monday - Friday / lunes a viernes  
Telephone / Telefono: 8:00am - 5:00pm  
**Hearing Impaired (TDD): 707-585-9817**  
SCHEDULES AVAILABLE IN ACCESSIBLE FORMAT UPON REQUEST

**Sonoma County Paratransit**

**Sonoma County  
Paratransit**

Welcome to  
**Sonoma County**  
**Paratransit**  
ADA Service

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*Para información en español,  
por favor, contacte  
connosotros en (707) 576-7433*

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*The County of Sonoma offers Paratransit transportation service for person who are unable to independently use the fixed route system due to a disability or health related condition some or all of the time. This service is provided as part of the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).*

*There are specific eligibility requirements for ADA paratransit service. All applicants must come in for an in-person interview to determine eligibility. Call (707) 541-7180 to schedule your assessment.*

## AREAS SERVED

Currently, Sonoma County Transit contracts with Volunteer Wheels to provide its door-to-door, ADA paratransit service within Sonoma County. This includes service between the County's nine incorporated cities. In addition, local service is provided within the following cities and areas: Cloverdale, Healdsburg, Russian River Area, Windsor, Sebastopol, Sonoma, Sonoma Valley (including Agua Caliente and Boyes Hot Springs), Cotati and Rohnert Park.



## SCHEDULING A TRIP

Sonoma County's Paratransit service time varies by location, as it follows our fixed-route schedules. Volunteer Wheels will assist you with this information at the time of your trip request. Service is provided every day except the following holidays: New Year's Day, Easter Sunday, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving and Christmas. Limited service is available on the following holidays: Martin Luther King Jr. Day, President's Day, Day after Thanksgiving, Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve.

Reservations can be made between 8:00am and 5:00pm on weekdays and from 9:00am through 5:00pm on weekends by calling Volunteer Wheels at (707) 573-3377. Rides can be schedule the day before the requested trip, up to 7 days in advance. Please keep in mind, trips requiring transfers must be arranged at least 48 hours in advance.

Depending on your location, you may be able to arrange your ride directly with the transferring provider to pick you up at your residence. If this is not possible, you

*continued >>>*

## SCHEDULING A TRIP

>>> *continued*

will call your primary provide and give all pertinent trip information such as appointment time, physical address and telephone. Your primary provider will then fax this information to the transferring provider, who will, by return fax, advise a meeting time window, return pick up time and fare. The transfer locations vary by location. Volunteer Wheels will provide you with that information upon your initial trip request.

Should you be unable to reserve the ride 48 hours in advance, you would be required to reserve the individual rides with both your primary provider and the transferring provider separately. This simplest way to do this is to arrange the ride with the transferring provider so you have their pick up and return time when you call your primary provider.

For travel within areas not listed under **Areas Served**, please contact the providers on the following page.

- » For trips within the City of Santa Rosa call:  
**MV Transportation (707) 546-1999**
- » For trips within the City of Petaluma call:  
**MV Transportation (707) 778-4460**
- » For trips to Marin County, San Francisco or the East Bay call:  
**Whistlestop Wheels (800) 454-0964**



# PASSENGER RESPONSIBILITY AND GUIDELINES

It is the policy of Volunteer Wheels to ensure the safe and effective transportation of all its passengers and the safe and effective operation of all its vehicles. To this end, the following passenger responsibilities have been established to fairly represent actions that would ensure the safe and effective transportation of all riders; however, they are not meant to be all inclusive.

Sonoma County Paratransit reserves the right to deny service for non-compliance of the passenger responsibilities and guidelines contained herein.

## 1 APPROPRIATE SOCIAL BEHAVIOR

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All passengers, employees, and volunteers have the right to participate with Sonoma County Paratransit without the threat or fear of physical or verbal abuse and with the maximum of personal comfort. Passengers are therefore expected to exhibit appropriate social behavior while interacting with other passengers and with Volunteer Wheels staff.

## DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR

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- Sudden or loud verbal outbursts which could threaten the health of fragile riders or the driver's safe attention on driving.
- Soiling the vehicle with bodily fluids or waste, or thereby creating a hazard to others, including the vehicle operator.
- Failing to maintain reasonable personal hygiene resulting in excessive body odor.



## **DANGEROUS BEHAVIOR AND PHYSICAL ABUSE**

Dangerous behavior and physical abuse are defined as any threat or action that could cause direct or indirect physical harm to the driver, other passengers, the client themselves or Volunteer Wheels staff or equipment, including the vehicle.

The penalty for a proven incident of dangerous or unsafe behavior or physical abuse will be determined between Volunteer Wheels and Sonoma County Transit staff. The penalty will range from a warning letter to permanent suspension from Sonoma County Paratransit service.



## **VERBAL ABUSE**

Verbal abuse is defined as any oral presentation that is offensive to a passenger, driver, or Volunteer Wheels staff.

The penalty for a proven incident of verbal abuse will be determined by Volunteer Wheels and Sonoma County Transit staff. The penalty will range from a warning letter to temporary suspension from Sonoma County Paratransit service.

## **CAUSES FOR REFUSAL OF SERVICE**

Dangerous behavior or physical or verbal abuse towards drivers or other passengers on the vehicle by a passenger are grounds for immediate refusal of Sonoma County Paratransit Service.

## ACCESSIBILITY

Drivers will escort passengers to and from the front door of the primary building upon arrival at both origin and destination with the following limitations:

- Drivers cannot cross the threshold of homes or apartments to enter interior areas of the living accommodations.
- Driver cannot leave the line of sight of a vehicle or leave a vehicle unsupervised with passengers aboard.
- Drivers cannot assist passengers in wheelchairs or other mobility devices upstairs.

Drivers are prohibited from doing any lifting, pushing or pulling to accommodate barriers. Any barriers that might substantially risk the health or safety of a passenger, Volunteer Wheels staff or volunteers must be removed.

If safe access is not available, Volunteer Wheels will provide curbside service only.

## FARES

All passengers are expected to pay the full fare each time he or she rides. Full fares are mandatory in order to ensure continuation of service. Fares charged are compatible with ADA guidelines and are twice the cost of comparable fixed route service. A trip on Sonoma County Paratransit can include service within one zone or encompass up to eight zones for a completed trip. Every additional zone you travel through will incur a zone charge to be added onto your base fare. When you schedule your ride, the scheduler will inform you of your fare. You may pay your fare with cash or you can purchase prepaid tickets from Sonoma County Transit. For information about the prepaid tickets please call (707) 576-7433 or (800) 345-7433.







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

Passengers are permitted to bring along one Personal Care Attendant (PCA) to assist them during their trip. Clients may also bring along friends and family members. Everyone accompanying the client, except the PCA, is required to pay the full fare, only the PCA travels for free. Reservations are required for everyone traveling with the client. The client can reserve space for themselves, their PCA and one guest. Additional guests are welcome provided space is available in the vehicle. Volunteer Wheels schedulers must be informed of the total number of people taking the trip at the time the trip is scheduled. Everyone traveling with the paratransit client is required to disembark at the same destination.

## RIDING WITH A SERVICE ANIMAL OR PET

A service animal is defined by the ADA as any guide dog, signal dog, or other animal individually trained to provide assistance to an individual with a disability. If the meet this definition, animals are consider service animals under the ADA regardless of whether they have been licensed or certified by a state or local government.

When scheduling a trip with Volunteer Wheels, please advise the scheduler that a service animal will be riding. The service animal must be under control at all times while in the vehicle. The service animal cannot wander around at will, must stay on the floor of the vehicle, and will be removed if it shows signs of aggression, i.e., growling, snarling or biting.



Pets will be allowed provided that they are secured, and remain secured, in a hand-carried commercial pet container which can be held on the passenger's lap or stored under the seat. Carriers must not block the aisle and cannot be stored on the seat or in a wheelchair securement area.

## PACKAGES

Passengers are advised to limit their carry-on bags or packages to four, with each package no heavier than twenty pounds. One small (see dimensions below) shopping cart is allowed.

- Cart is 37" high from the floor to the top of the handle.
- Large basket area measures: 13" side to side, 11½" front to back and 20½" top to bottom.
- Small basket are measures: 12½" side to side, 5" front to back and 11½" top to bottom.
- Fold for easy storage.

## LUGGAGE

Luggage that can be stowed in front of or on the lap of the passenger is allowed. This luggage must comply with the same guidelines as airline carry-on luggage:

- Carry-on Bags: one carry-on bag not to exceed 22"x9"x14".

## **CANCELLATIONS / NO-SHOWS**

Call Volunteer Wheels as soon as possible if you need to cancel your reservation. By canceling well in advance, you help Volunteer Wheels improve service to all of our customers.

Cancellations made less than 1 hour in advance of your schedule pickup time are considered a “no-show.” Volunteer Wheels staff will attempt to contact you to see if you still require your return ride, but if they are unsuccessful, it will be cancelled. If after this process, you find you still need the return ride, you must then call Volunteer Wheels to reschedule.

A no-show occurs when riders do not cancel a schedule trip at least one hour in advance, are not at the designated pick-up location at the scheduled time or are not available to board within five minutes of the vehicle’s arrival within the stated pick-up window. Volunteer Wheels will take extensive steps to contact the passenger when a no-show occurs.

Riders can avoid no-show situations when they:

- Review times and dates with the schedulers to be sure the information is correct.
- Call Volunteer Wheels and cancel rides as soon as the ride is no longer needed.
- Cancel at least one hour in advance of the scheduled pickup time.

- Are prepared to board at the beginning time of the pickup window and within five minutes after you are notified of the vehicle’s arrival within that pickup window.

Riders who accumulate 3% of all schedule trips within a 6 month period as no-shows will be notified in writing of a warning of possible suspension of service if they reach a no-show rate of 5% or greater within that same time frame.

Riders who accumulate 5% of all scheduled trips within a 6 month period as no-shows will be notified in writing and receive a five (5) consecutive day suspension of service. Each successive no-show within the 6 month period that calculates to a 5% or greater no-show rate, carries longer suspensions (i.e., 2nd occurrence is fifteen (15) consecutive days and 3rd occurrence is thirty (30) consecutive days). Volunteer Wheels will contact the passenger to determine the dates of the suspension. The suspension is applicable to both standing and demand-response trips.

Riders are encouraged to contact Sonoma County Transit if they feel that the no-show occurred for a reason beyond their control, i.e., illness, hospitalization, confusion on pickup location, etc. Any no-shows determined to be beyond a rider’s control will be excused and expunged from their record.

## MEETING THE VAN

All passengers are expected to be ready at the beginning of the scheduled half hour pick-up window confirmed at the time of the reservation to prevent other passengers from facing unnecessary delays. Sonoma County Paratransit will only wait for a passenger for **5 minutes** from the time of arrival within their pickup window, after they are notified of the vehicle's arrival.



## RIDING YOUR ASSIGNED SCHEDULE WITH YOUR ASSIGNED VEHICLE OPERATOR

Sonoma County Paratransit is a shared-ride service. You will usually be traveling with other riders and you generally will not travel directly from your origin to your destination. Because other people are also scheduled to use this service, we cannot make trip changes on short notice or once your trip has started. All passengers are expected to ride with the assigned vehicle operator. A paratransit ride may take as long as the same trip on the fixed-route service, including travel time to and from stops and transfer time, if necessary.

Complaints regarding a vehicle operator's performance should be reported immediately to the Volunteer Wheels Program Director (707) 573-3375 or Sonoma County Transit (707) 585-7516 for investigation and appropriate action.



## MOBILITY AIDS / DEVICES

Mobility aids or devices that are not safe to carry on the lift will not be allowed. Negotiations will take place on a case-by-case basis. Every effort will be made to find a safe way to accommodate the passenger. If using a scooter, it is strongly encouraged that you transfer to a seat if possible. If a rider needs assistance with transferring from a scooter or wheelchair to a seat, it is strongly encouraged that he/she bring along a PCA to perform this service as Volunteer Wheels are not allowed to assist. The overall intent of this guideline is to try to find a safe way to accommodate each passenger.

## CHILDREN

Children must be placed in an approved safety seat in accordance with state and federal laws. No child may ride on a passenger's lap. The client is responsible for bringing and setting up the child safety seat.



## SEAT BELTS

All passengers are required to wear seat belts at all times and follow other safety precautions given by the driver and/or required by law enforcement or safety officers. All passenger using mobility devices are required to use the provided lap belts. It is strongly recommended that shoulder belts be utilized as well.



## HELPFUL HINTS FOR RESERVING A RIDE

1. Before calling Volunteer Wheels, write down the:
  - Date and time of your trip.
  - Name of person you are going to see.
  - Complete street address, including apartment number of suite number of your destination.
  - The phone number at your destination.
  - The time you will be ready to return, if requesting a round trip.
2. A ride request may be made for the next day, or up to 7 days in advance and all rides are scheduled on a first come, first served basis, regardless of trip purpose.
3. If you have flexibility in scheduling your requested ride, please let Volunteer Wheels schedulers know this at the beginning of your call.

## REASONABLE MODIFICATION FOR ADA

The Department of Transportation is revising its rules under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended (section 504) specifically to provide that transportation entities are required to make reasonable modifications/accommodations to policies, practices, and procedures to avoid discrimination and ensure that their programs are accessible to individuals with disabilities.

Sonoma County Transit will make all reasonable modifications to policies and programs to ensure that people with disabilities have an equal opportunity to enjoy all of its programs, services, and activities. Exceptions would include modifications that:

- » Cause a direct threat to the health or safety of others.
- » Result in a fundamental alteration of the service.
- » Are not actually necessary in order for the individual with a disability to access the entity's service.
- » Result in undue financial and administrative burden.

All requests for reasonable modifications and/or complaints (e.g. fixed route, paratransit, or facilities) may be submitted in the following manner via the website at [sctransit.com](http://sctransit.com), by email at [comments@sctransit.com](mailto:comments@sctransit.com), by telephone 707-585-7516 or written by mail to:

**Sonoma County Transit**

Reasonable Modification Coordinator  
355 W. Robles Ave.  
Santa Rosa, CA 95407

# NO SERVICE

***THERE IS NO PARATRANSIT  
SERVICE ON THE  
FOLLOWING HOLIDAYS:***

- » New Year's Day
- » Easter Sunday
- » Memorial Day
- » Independence Day
- » Labor Day
- » Thanksgiving
- » Christmas Day

***LIMITED PARATRANSIT  
SERVICE IS AVAILABLE ON  
THE FOLLOWING DAYS:***

- » Martin Luther King Jr. Day
- » President's Day
- » Day after Thanksgiving
- » Christmas Eve
- » New Year's Eve

# LIMITED SERVICE

# LET US KNOW HOW WE ARE DOING!

Feedback from our riders is one of our most valuable sources of information. Comments and suggestions can be delivered to us by mail, email, the phone or in person. If you would like a response to your comment or suggestions, include your complete name and phone number and we will contact you within 14 days. If you are unhappy with the service you received, please be specific and include the time, date, vehicle number, driver name and nature of your concern.

**Sonoma County Transit**

355 West Robles Avenue

Santa Rosa, CA 95407

707-585-7516

[comments@sctransit.com](mailto:comments@sctransit.com)