

Policies regarding Driver Assistance Loading/Unloading Wheelchair Passenger

Information compiled August 21, 2007

The Question: What is your policy/practice to provide assistance to a Driver for loading/unloading a large passenger (400+ lbs) in a wheelchair (i.e., send assistance from Trainer, Road Supervisor or another Driver)?

Columbia County Public Transportation says... We send assistance from the office, preferably the Operations Manager; however, sometimes it may be another driver or one of the others of us that is trained here in the office. We not only do this with large passengers, but when there are stairs, or any sort of problem that may require the need of some additional assistance.

CUBS says... Our drivers let us know of any passenger who may require assistance in that way. If/when the driver requests assistance, we would send a supervisor to the location. If none were available at that particular time (because of the size of our site), we would ask the assistance of another driver who might be near the area. I have found that our larger customers often ride in oversized electric chairs or scooters and are able to board with minimal assistance. We have only experienced a small number where it was necessary to get assistance. Have a great day!

Everett Transit says... If a passenger is in a non-motorized chair, our operators are to provide any assistance. They are not to risk injury in doing so. If the chair is motorized, we offer only verbal assistance. We can not accommodate a motorized chair that would require physical or steering assistance. The passenger would require a PCA assist to ride fixed route service. The Bus Operator may request assistance from a road supervisor as necessary if the problem develops after the passenger is boarded. If the incident can't be resolved without a physical effort, the fire department is called.

Grays Harbor Transit says... We do not have a written policy on this but our past practice is the driver will call dispatch if they have a chair they can't handle by themselves and we will try to get another driver in the area or have a supervisor to respond.

Intercity Transit says... If a driver needs assistance with a large passenger, we send a supervisor to the scene. If a supervisor is unavailable, we send another driver.

Island Transit says... We tell the Passengers that if they are unable to get to and from the bus on their own they need to have a personal care attendant to help them. We are curb-to-curb. We have the operator load the wheelchair passenger on the bus (if it does not exceed the 600# limit). If they need to ask the person to get out of their chair and load separate then they should

have someone go with them and have a walker available for the person to use on the lift for support.

Jefferson Transit says... We don't have many supervisors, but in the case of a large passenger, we scramble a qualified supervisor to go assist rather than risk injury to operator or passenger. Sometimes large passenger situations can be predicted, but in cases of new passengers, we have to be able to react quickly. In these instances, ongoing staff meetings and paperwork take a back seat to operational safety.

Kitsap Transit says... Our policy is that in any situation where an operator feels they cannot safely assist a passenger they should call dispatch and then dispatch will typically have a Road Supervisor assist. There have been situations where another operator was near by and could get there easier and so they provided assistance.

ACCESS operators are allowed/encouraged to call for a Supervisor's help while in the field for any difficult passenger situation, including the loading/unloading of large passengers. Part of our Road Supervisor's routine duties is to assess known accessibility situations and work with the passenger or their support person to mitigate any terrain or mobility equipment issues that may impede the passenger's transportation options (or injure a driver during the passenger transport process.)

Pierce Transit says... We have the operator call for assistance from a road supervisor.

Twin Transit says... We don't have road supervisors or trainers at Twin Transit. If a driver requires assistance, another driver is usually available to help. If it is an ongoing situation (e.g. regular rider who consistently needs assistance from driver) then we require a care-giver type person to be available to assist the passenger. Drivers are instructed that they are not to provide assistance to the point that they put themselves in danger of physical injury. There have been instances in which an oversized/overweight chair and passenger have been refused service because the driver could not handle it alone and no additional help was available.

Valley Transit says... In situations where a driver needs assistance in loading/unloading a passenger in a wheelchair, they would call Dispatch and a Road Supervisor would respond. When this happens we evaluate the incident to see if something can be done to avoid needing assistance. The situation you described is certainly a difficult one to deal with.