

## Policies regarding pets on the bus

Information compiled July 18, 2005

**The Question:** Do you have any policies regarding animals on the buses when the passenger says the animal is a pet? Do you require it to be in something or restrained? If you have a written policy, please include it in your reply if possible.

**Ben Franklin Transit says... 2.7.3 Prohibited Items.** The operators should not allow the following items on board BFT vehicles:

Animals - Animals not secured in approved airline type carrying cases or a container, which confines the animal and has a solid bottom, except for service animals (see section 3.6).

### **3.6 SERVICE ANIMALS AND AMERICAN DISABILITIES ACT (ADA)**

The ADA defines service animals in the following way:

*Service animal means any guide dog, signal dog, or other animal individually **trained** to work or perform tasks for an individual with a disability, including, but not limited to, guiding individuals with impaired vision, alerting individuals with impaired hearing to intruders or sounds, providing minimal protection or rescue work, pulling a wheelchair, or fetching dropped items.* - 49 CFR 37.3

**3.6.1 Service Animals.** Allow people with disabilities to bring their service animals into all public areas of the vehicle or facility.

*(Public and private entities providing public transportation) shall permit service animals to accompany individuals with disabilities in vehicles and facilities.* - 49 CFR 37.167(d)

**3.6.2 Definition of Service Animal.** The ADA defines a service animal as any guide dog, signal dog, or other animal individually trained to assist an individual with a disability. If they meet this definition, animals are considered service animals under the ADA regardless of whether they have been licensed or certified by a state or local government.

The operator may not insist on proof of certification before permitting the service animal to accompany the person with a disability. However, the operator may ask, "Is this a service animal?"

**3.6.3 Denial of Service.** Any animal, including a service animal, may be excluded when the animal's behavior poses a direct threat to the health or safety of others. However, do not assume that a particular animal is likely to behave badly, based on experience with other animals.

**3.6.4 Types of Service Animals.** There are many types of service animals including:

- Guide dogs (or dog guides) for persons who have visual impairments.
- Service animals (e.g., dogs, cats, monkeys, pigs) for persons who have physical disabilities.

- Hearing and signal animals (e.g., dogs and cats) for persons who are deaf or have hearing impairments.
- Seizure-response/alert animals (e.g., dogs, cats, birds) that alert individuals with seizure disorders to oncoming seizures and/or help the individual during and following the seizure.
- Emotional support animals (e.g., dogs and cats) that provide assistance for persons with severe emotional impairments or mental disabilities.

**3.6.5 Identification of Service Animals.** Some, but not all, service animals wear special collars and harnesses. Some, but not all, are licensed or certified and have identification papers. If you are not certain that an animal is a service animal, you may ask the person who has the animal if it is a service animal. If the person says it is a service animal and the animal is under the control of the handler, then treat them as a service animal team and welcome them aboard.

**3.6.6 General Rules in Dealing with Service Animals**

- Do not touch or give the service animal any commands unless asked to do so by its handler.
- If necessary, remind passengers that the service animal is working and not to distract it.
- In most cases, because of safety concerns, service animals should not be allowed to ride on wheelchair lifts. Their tails, paws, heads or equipment may catch in the lift mechanism, causing severe injury to the animal. An exception might be a standee traveling with a service animal who boards using a lift.
- Service animals should sit or lie on the floor. Animals should not occupy a passenger seat. However, if the handler insists on holding a service animal on their lap, and it is safe, let them do so.
- Service animals should not block the passenger aisle.
- The best advice is common sense and courtesy. Avoid confrontations and call dispatch if there is a problem or question.

**Ben Franklin Transit (Paratransit)** says... Any animal that a customer indicates is a service animal is welcome onboard paratransit vehicles. If we receive a request to transport an animal with a customer, we advise that it must be a small animal in a carrying case that a customer can board with minimal driver assistance.

**Clallam Transit** says... When transported on any CTS vehicles, all animals must be caged, except guide dogs for the blind, exceptions only with dispatch approval.

**Columbia County Public Transportation** says... We require animals to be in pet carriers when they are pets and being transported to the vet or for grooming and such.

**CUBS** says... We require the pet to be in a pet carrier when transported on the bus.

**Intercity Transit** says... In our operator's manual, we require that the operators see that all pets be in carriers that prevent that will both contain and restrain the animal. The container need not be an airline-approved kennel, but must be sturdy enough to prevent the animal from escaping and/or harming other passengers.

From the Dial-a-Lift Handbook: **“Traveling with Pets** - Pets are not the same as service animals. Pets must be transported in an approved animal carrier. Your pet plus the carrier cannot weigh more than 30 pounds.”

**Island Transit** says... We have it posted in our schedules: SMALL PETS ARE PERMITTED ON THE BUSES IF THEY ARE IN APPROVED CARRIERS. If they are service animals this does not apply. We do not approve cardboard boxes or paper bags etc.

**Jefferson Transit** says... Only pets in appropriate containers may board the vehicle along with their owners. Appropriate, in this context, may be considered anything that sufficiently contains the animal. This would include, for example, pet carriers, cages, or boxes of a sufficient size in which the animal can comfortably sit or lie down. (Open containers are OK if the animal is contained below the top of the container).

Service animals trained to be in contact with the general public (such as seeing-eye dogs) are always exempt from this policy. Any service animal that is not trained to be in contact with the general public (such as a “comfort” animal) must adhere to the policy.

All animals may ride free of charge on a space available basis. That is to say that if a vehicle is at capacity and there is no room to accommodate an animal, even one complying with the policy, they must wait for the next vehicle.

**Kitsap Transit** says... Animals, other than those assisting the disabled are required to be in an approved container before they are allowed on a bus. Approved containers include any type of enclosure from which the animal may not escape. A paper or plastic bag does not qualify, a secured cardboard box does. Additional fare is not charged for animals

Operators may choose to carry a collapsible cardboard pet carrier with them on their routes. Carriers are available at the Main base. Operators may also refer passengers to CSO for a cardboard pet carrier.

Service animals are allowed in any public or privately owned business – including Kitsap Transit coaches. Not all service animals wear special collars or harnesses and not all are “licensed” or “certified”. As an Operator, if a passenger with an animal approaches you, you may ask the person if it is a service animal required because of a disability or if it is a pet. However, individuals may not be carrying documentation – nor are they required to.

Operators **will not** ask for proof of certification or proof of disability before permitting the service animal to accompany a passenger. Any conduct by a service animal that causes an unreasonable disturbance on the vehicle, or interferes with transit-related activities will be handled by following the steps in the Rules of Conduct.

**Skagit Transit** says... All pets must be in an approved animal container and able to be handled by the owner. We also do not allow very large containers, as all containers must be able to be carried by the owner or fit under the seats safely. In conjunction with this we allow all types of service animals until they prove to be a "Serious disruption to our service" as outlined under the ADA.

**Spokane Transit** says... We allow small pets on coaches if they are in a travel container similar to the type airlines use. The restriction is that the container cannot block the aisle. We have this documented in our Operator Handbook.

**Valley Transit** says... Our policy which is printed in our Route Guide reads: Pets, other than service animals used to assist the visually or hearing impaired, must be contained in an approved pet carrier and held on your lap.