TOWN OF COBOURG

POLICIES & PROCEDURES

'WHEELS'

SPECIALIZED TRANSPORTATION SERVICE

2021

WHEELS Service – Policies & Procedures

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WHEELS Service – Policies & Procedures

Introduction

The Town of Cobourg operates conventional as well as specialized transit service called WHEELS. WHEELS is an origin-to-destination service for those who, due to a functional limitation are unable to travel to/from a conventional Transit stop.

The WHEELS Service is:

- A scheduled pre-booked bus, shared ride, origin-to-destination service
- A service intended for people who, because of their disability, cannot ride the regular conventional service
- Only for those riders who are travelling within the town limits of Cobourg
- Suitable for customers using a wheelchair, scooter, cane, walker and most types of mobility aids.
- This service is intended for all persons with a disability, including but not limited to physical impairment, sensory impairment, cognitive impairment, mental illness, and various types of chronic disease.

The WHEELS Service is NOT:

- A taxi service
- A medical carrier
- Meant to replace Cobourg Transit's regular conventional service when it is not operating or not convenient
- A service for seniors without a disability

A Shared Ride is defined as:

- Other riders may be on board during the trip to your destination;
- The route of travel may be altered so another rider(s) can be accommodated;
- The vehicle may stop and pick up other riders as it travels to your destination in order to maximize the transportation needs of all WHEELS members. For this reason, travel times may be similar to conventional transit.

Eligibility / Application Process

WHEELS Specialized Transit is intended for persons who, due to a functional limitation, would be physically unable to utilize an accessible conventional public transit service or travel a distance of 175 meters (approximately 575 feet or a city block).

Eligibility is not based on a particular disability, age, income or lack of available public transit in an applicant's area. Eligibility is not for those who find it more difficult or are unwilling to use the conventional public transit system. Specialized Transit is not an

attendant care service. Passengers whose medical conditions require specific transportation (i.e. extreme fragility requiring transportation below regular speeds or inability to remain on the vehicle for up to one hour or inability to maneuver their own mobility device) need to contact a non-emergency medical carrier for transportation.

If you are considering your eligibility for Specialized Transit, please note that the WHEELS service is limited in capacity and intended for those with the least amount of ability. Please consider that you may be able to use Cobourg's accessible conventional transit system which utilizes fully accessible buses.

In order to be eligible for WHEELS, all users must first submit an application form which will be reviewed by the Public Transit Administrator, in compliance with the approved Categories of Eligibility, which are as follows:

There are three (3) categories of eligibility for which the Applicant can apply for which include:

1. **Unconditional**: A Person with a Disability that prevents them from using the accessible conventional transportation services,
2. **Temporary**: A Person with a Disability that prevents them from using the accessible conventional transportation services on a temporary basis (ex. a person having knee replacement surgery),
3. **Conditional**: A Person with a Disability where environmental or physical barriers limit their abilities to consistently use conventional transportation services, such as persons with a visual disability, persons who use assistive devices for mobility, especially during the winter conditions, and/or Persons with Disabilities that may have periods when their condition worsens.

If your application has been approved, you will be eligible to book trips on WHEELS. People who are permanently disabled and are eligible for WHEELS receive a permanent registration, with renewal required every 3 years. Exceptions to the renewal process will be made on a case-by-case basis in consultation with the WHEELS rider and their physician.

However, others who may only need WHEELS during a period of rehabilitation may submit an application. If approved, they would be registered on a temporary basis for a specific period of time at the end of which their registration and eligibility will also end. An extension will be granted pending a re-application.

Persons wishing to use WHEELS service must submit a WHEELS Application (Appendix A) which is available at Victoria Hall or the Public Works Joint Operations Facility or online at www.cobourg.ca

Once completed, the application can be submitted to the following locations:

Town of Cobourg
Victoria Hall
55 King Street West
Cobourg, ON
K9A 2M2

Public Works Joint Operations Facility
740 Division Street
Building #7 Northam Industrial Park
Cobourg, ON
K9A 0H6
Fax: 905 372 0009
Email: transit@cobourg.ca

Once the Application is reviewed by staff, you will be contacted by letter of your approval/denial for using the service.

Appeals Process

An appeal process is available to any person who is denied eligibility for WHEELS services, or who disagrees with an eligibility decision. All appeals must be filed in writing to the Town of Cobourg municipal office.

Appeals must be made within sixty (60) days of the receipt of Cobourg WHEELS letter advising of eligibility for WHEELS service.

Appellants are encouraged to note in their appeal letter, reasons why they believe that the decision does not accurately reflect their ability to use conventional transit services (Cobourg Transit).

Visitors

Cobourg WHEELS will provide service to any person visiting Cobourg who meets the eligibility requirements and is an active registrant of another accessible system. Verification of eligibility and registration with another accessible system is required.

Emergency Use

For emergency rides required before a WHEELS Application is able to be processed, please contact the Transportation Supervisor at 905-372-4555.

Hours of Operations

To book a ride, please call the Cobourg Transit dispatch centre at 905-373-0582. Hours of operations have been included in Appendix B.

Reservations / Bookings

The Town of Cobourg will make every effort to accommodate your trip request. WHEELS riders can book their trips ten (10) days in advance of their scheduled trip. We recommend that trips are to be booked at least 24 hours in advance, where possible. There is a ten (10) minute pick up window for rides, if your scheduled trip is between 12:00pm -12:10pm, be sure to be ready at the start of the window. Upon a driver's arrival, the driver will wait five (5) minutes for the WHEELS rider.

*Bookings are available for WHEELS members only and membership is not interchangeable with family members or friends.

There are three (3) kinds of trip bookings that can be made:

1. Subscription/Pre-Booked: These are regular trips that occur at the same time of day, on the same day, for a minimum of at least 4 weeks. Examples of this type of trip are dialysis, therapy appointments, or any appointment that repeats each week on the same day at the same time.

2. Reservation: These are trips not taken regularly and recommend an advance booking of 24 hours up to ten (10) days in advance. Examples are weekly shopping, etc. Exceptions will be made for medical appointments.

3. Same Day Trips: WHEELS riders can book Same Day Trips for unplanned outings. Wheels does not guarantee rides on short notice but endeavors to provide accommodation should vehicle capacity or scheduling allow or when cancellations occur. To book a Same Day Trip request, passengers may call WHEELS during regular dispatch service operational hours as noted in Appendix B.

When booking a ride on WHEELS, please have the following information ready:

- Your Name (first/last)
- Date you need transportation
- Requested arrival time at destination (i.e.. Appointment time)
- Address of pickup and accessible entrance (specific location required)
- Address of destination and accessible entrance (specific location required)
- Will you be bringing a companion?
- If your application indicates that an attendant or hand to hand attendant is required, will the attendant be available at the time of your booking?
- Whether you will be using a wheelchair or other mobility device
- Pickup time for your return trip

Notifications

When applying for WHEELS you will be asked to provide a primary phone number and email (if available) to receive notifications regarding your trip. You will be contacted with an estimated time of arrival when the bus is on route to your pick up location.

Late Cancellations / No Shows

Given the high demand for specialized transit services, it is crucial that customers call and cancel their trip as soon as they no longer require it. Your consideration to cancel well in advance will allow us to accommodate other passengers in need. Persons who do not respond within five (5) minutes of the WHEELS driver arriving at the door shall be deemed a “no show”.

Excessive cancellations with less than 24 hours’ notice and/or failing to show for a scheduled bus may result in progressive actions up to and including limitations on booking privileges.

** Note: When a passenger is a “No Show” for a scheduled bus, their remaining trips for the day are automatically cancelled.

Passengers are to be ready at the start of their booking window. Drivers can arrive within that booking “window”. To ensure other passengers are not inconvenienced, drivers are not required to wait more than 5 minutes at pick up locations provided the bus arrives within the allowable “window” time.

Drivers do not accompany passengers inside the building entrance, nor are they required to ring a buzzer or doorbell to inform riders of their arrival, nor search when the passenger is not at the exterior entrance. The passenger is to be ready at the exterior door or curbside including having any coats, boots etc. already on.

Rider Attendants / Companions

A Personal Attendant ("PA") is a mandatory support person who is capable of providing the rider with care and assistance beyond what the driver is required to provide.

A rider will require a PA to accompany them on the bus under these conditions:

- If the passenger is unable to travel independently beyond the door of the pick-up or drop-off location
- If the passenger is unable to be left alone
- If the passenger requires supervision on board the vehicle during transport
- If there is a risk of the passenger leaving the vehicle while the driver is escorting other passengers to and from the vehicle
- If the medical professional has deemed on the application that the client requires an attendant

All PA’s travel at no charge, but must board and disembark at the same location as the passenger, and travel with the passenger at all times. WHEELS drivers are not Personal

Attendants. WHEELS passengers cannot be Personal Attendants for another WHEELS passenger.

A Hand-to-Hand Attendant is required for riders who need supervision at the point of departure and arrival but are able to travel safely on the bus alone. The Hand-to-Hand Attendant must be present to assist riders with all boarding and disembarking at the point of departure and arrival, they are not required to ride the bus.

A Hand-to-Hand Attendant is required under these conditions:

- If the passenger cannot maneuver his or her wheelchair on his or her own
- If the medical professional has deemed on the application that the client requires a Hand-to-Hand Attendant

The need for a PA or Hand-to-Hand Attendant must be identified on the application form. In the event that the WHEELS Driver is not able to provide the required assistance to the rider or the rider's function changes enough to require an attendant, the Town reserves the right to request the rider to resubmit a new application with updated information. If a rider is identified as needing a PA to ride the vehicle and he/she is not accompanied by a PA upon arrival of the WHEELS vehicle, or the PA is not qualified, then the driver will not be permitted to allow the rider to board the vehicle. The driver will immediately notify dispatch for instructions.

Specialized Transit Drivers are not Personal Attendants – if an applicant requires extra support getting on/off of other than the driver loading and unloading or if the rider requires support beyond the accessible entrance at their destination, they must provide their own Personal Attendant.

Companions

In addition to an attendant, you may also travel with a companion (voluntary spouse, partner, friend or family). If a companion will be accompanying you, please notify the dispatcher when you make your trip reservation as they must reserve a seat for the companion as well. A companion is required to pay their own fare when traveling with you. Companions can be WHEELS members as well and may travel when permitted space is available and when it does not result in other WHEELS members being denied service.

Fares

WHEELS and conventional accessible transit fares are attached in Appendix C.

Shared Rides

The Town of Cobourg through its paratransit demand software optimizes trips based on appointment times and locations in order to accommodate more riders per trip. An estimate of your trip duration will be provided to you upon booking your trip.

Driver / Passenger Responsibilities

Drivers Will:

- Be responsible for the safe and efficient operation of specialized transit vehicles.
- Make their presence known at the pick-up locations.
- Provide light assistance such as walking with you to and from the bus and to the closest accessible exterior door, opening doors.
- Verbally guide you with the positioning of your mobility aid on the vehicle lift/ramp and operate the lift/ramp.
- Deploy the ramp when requested or required.
- Assist with boarding and disembarking off the bus, as needed and within reason.
- Safely secure your mobility aids and all belts and/or seatbelts.
- Ensure they arrive at the proper accessible entrance/transit stop during your pick-up and drop-off locations.
- Maintain their schedule as best possible.

Drivers Do Not:

- Do not park on private driveways.
- Make repairs or adjustments to mobility aids.
- Help you up or down stairs or lift wheelchairs/scooters up or down stairs.
- Carry parcels, groceries, baggage, or personal effects.
- Report to reception, specific stations or other medical locations to find you.
- Unlock doors, enter private homes or wait for someone to arrive to open the door.
- Wait more than 5 minutes past your scheduled pick up time.
- Assist you with fare payment by looking into bags, backpacks, coats or other.

Passenger Responsibilities:

- Must be ready at the nearest accessible door at the start of your booking window. You are expected to board the vehicle once it has arrived. Remain seated while the vehicle is in motion.
- Must have your pass displayed or exact fare ready for the Driver when boarding.
- Must cancel rides well in advance. If you are not able to make your trip time or you must cancel, please do so as soon as possible. This will avoid Late Cancellations / No Shows service suspensions and allow others to use the time.

- If you are feeling sick or unwell, please cancel to avoid spreading illness.
- Be on time. If you are more than 5 minutes late, the bus will have to proceed to the next scheduled ride and a Late Cancellations / No Shows service suspension may be implemented.
- Expect to share your ride with other passengers and expect a longer ride than if travelling by taxi or car.
- If attending an appointment, inform medical professionals that you are using the service, so that they may assist by keeping you on time.
- Be considerate and courteous of the Driver and other passengers at all times.
- For the health and comfort of Drivers and riders, kindly avoid excessive odors or scents.
- Have a clear accessible path to your door before pick-up and drop-off times, even in the winter months. Safe access to your property is your responsibility. Inaccessible paths may result in refusal of service.
- Keep all personal and health information up to date, including your phone number and address.
- Keep groceries/parcels and personal belongings to a safe and manageable amount (recommend a maximum equivalent of two (2) large bags). Riders must plan to have a companion or Personal Attendant accompany them if the trip is intended to transport many parcels/groceries. Failure to comply may result in a suspension of service.
- Abusive language/conduct will not be tolerated on WHEELS vehicles. Failure to comply may result in a suspension of service.
- If you must travel with a Personal Attendant, you must provide your own Personal Attendant for all trips. One Personal Attendant is permitted to travel at no cost.

WHEELS Service – Policies & Procedures

APPENDIX A – WHEELS APPLICATION

WHEELS Service – Policies & Procedures

APPENDIX B – WHEELS SERVICE OPERATING HOURS

WHEELS dispatch service operating hours:

8:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. Monday to Friday
8:15 a.m. to 6:45 p.m. Saturday
8:45 a.m. to 3:45 p.m. Sunday

WHEELS bus service operating hours:

6:15 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. Monday to Friday
8:15 a.m. to 6:45 p.m. Saturday
8:45 a.m. to 3:45 p.m. Sunday

Bookings: 905-373-0582

*Statutory holiday operating hours are subject to change and advance notification will be provided.

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APPENDIX C – RIDERSHIP FARES

WHEELS cash fares are $2.50 per trip.

The following are the prices for monthly passes:

Passes	Pricing
Adult	$65.00
Student	$48.75
Senior	$48.75
10 Ride Pass	$25.00
20 Ride Pass	$50.00
Attendants	FREE

As of January 1, 2024