

DAWSON COUNTY GOVERNMENT



Transit Operating Policy

Prepared by: Dawson County Transit
201 Recreation Rd
Dawsonville, GA 30534

Revised: January 27, 2020

This Handbook supersedes any and all prior policies, procedures, and Handbooks of the County

1. INTRODUCTION

This document outlines specific service standards for the operation and management of the County of Dawson Public Transit service. These standards have been developed through the review of previous service guidelines, present service capacities, previous experience with the provision of transportation services for persons with a disability, and the Americans With Disabilities Act of 1990 transportation final rule. The following are only basic service standards. More detailed operating procedures may exist with regard to specific protocol for employee management issues, accident/emergency management, fiscal accountability and other operational matters within Dawson County Employee Policy, GDOT Policy, and FTA Policy.

2. GENERAL INFORMATION

2.1. Service Availability – Dawson Transit operating hours are between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. Passenger pick ups will occur between the hours of 8:15 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. There shall be no service on holidays observed by Dawson County Board of Commissioners. These holidays are listed each year on the Dawson County website at www.dawsoncounty.org.

2.2. Service Area – Dawson Transit shall provide service within Dawson County Monday- Friday and to a limited area consisting of Gainesville and Cumming two days a week (Tuesdays & Thursdays) and Dahlonega five days a week as permitting per work load.

2.3. Service vehicles – Services within Dawson County area as identified in Section 2.1.2 shall be provided by buses paid for with the Dawson County tax levy and Dawson County share of the capital fund from the state grant. For system accountability, there shall be a unique identification of county buses. Use of county buses outside of the Dawson service area are allowable for special trips and emergency use.

2.4. Fare – Each fare is applicable to one complete trip. Once the passenger disembarks from the vehicle, or arrives at a destination one trip is completed. Upon entering the same vehicle again, a new trip commences and the passenger will be required to pay a new fare. The fare for each one-way trip scheduled within the county limits is \$2.00 per trip. Trips to Cumming and Dahlonega will be \$4.00 each way, and Gainesville will be \$6.00 each way. It shall be the responsibility of the driver to make certain that passengers pay all fares. Passengers are responsible for having exact change, drivers are not to extend credit or allow free rides.

Children age six and under may ride free of charge when accompanied by a paying parent, and/or Guardian. A parent and/or Guardian is responsible for providing the seat and to install the seat. No car seat will be allowed to stay on the bus, in between trips.

2.5. There shall be no advance payment of fares without a special contract arrangement, except for the return portion of a roundtrip approved and scheduled by the dispatcher. No refund of fares shall be provided to passengers who pay in advance for the return portion of a round trip and fail to use the round trip as scheduled.

2.6. It is the responsibility of the passenger or passenger's companion to properly pay each one-way trip fare by means of cash or check. Failure to properly adhere to the fare requirements may result in denial of a ride.

2.7. It is the responsibility of each rider to manage his/her ride money. The public transit drivers and support staff shall not be responsible for managing passenger money.

2.8. School Transportation - Transportation to or from school (grades K-12) and/or school related activities are the responsibility of the school district.

2.9. Pets - No pets are allowed on the bus. Certified assistance animals are exempt from this provision.

3. TRIP RESERVATION PROCEDURES

3.1 Dawson Transit Telephone Number – 706-344-3603

When requesting service, give the dispatcher your name, origin address, destination address, desired pick-up times and any other details related to the ride. The return trip should be scheduled in advance at this time. Only as a last resort should the passenger ask the bus driver to relay a message about a ride request.

3.2 Multiple Passengers- If more than one passenger is going from the same address, it is the responsibility of the passenger making the reservation to give all information concerning other passengers to the dispatcher at the time service is requested. The driver has the right to refuse passengers that have not been scheduled due to space availability. It is the responsibility of the driver to contact the dispatcher immediately if more than the scheduled passengers are riding.

3.3. Advance Notice – Dawson Transit trips can be scheduled up to 30 days in advance.

3.4 All trip reservations must be placed with the Dawson Transit dispatcher who will take reservation calls between the hours of 7:00 a.m. and 3:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. In the event of the dispatcher being out driving during the day, a message may be left on the voicemail. No appointments will be taken on Saturdays, Sundays or Holidays.

3.5 Requests for service must be placed with the Dawson Transit dispatcher by 3:00 p.m. 2 days prior to the desired trip. Service requests received after 3:00 p.m. or requests for same day service will be accommodated based on the availability of buses within the system.

3.6 Subscription Trips - Same time, same origin/destination trips are eligible for subscription status. Subscription service is limited due to capacity constraints. Those passengers who register for subscription service may receive scheduling priority.

3.7 Subscription service will be issued to passengers on a "first come, first served" basis. A waiting list will be established on a seniority basis for individuals who are not able to schedule subscription trips due to scheduling constraints.

3.8 Shared-Ride system – Dawson Transit operates on a "shared ride" basis. Shared-Ride means that all trips will be coordinated to carry as many passengers as possible as inexpensively as possible, e.g.: As many as ten people could be included in one tour, depending on the pick-up and drop-off points.

3.9 When the reservation call is made, the dispatcher will attempt to fit the desired pick-up time into an existing trip. If there is a similar trip origin/destination at an earlier or later time, the dispatcher will offer an alternate pick up time to the person, at a maximum of 60 minutes earlier or later than the pick-up time requested. All attempts shall be made to provide service within a period of 45 minutes of the time requested.

3.10 The caller will be provided with a scheduled pick-up time. All passengers should be ready at least 30 minutes prior to their scheduled pick-up time and allow 30 minutes to pass beyond their pick-up time before calling the dispatcher to inquire about their ride.

3.11 Scheduling Limitations - A reasonable effort will be made to schedule trip requests at the specific time desired. However, due to system capacity and limitations, or for other reasons, it may not always be possible to meet all trip requests. In such cases, an effort will be made to arrange an alternative travel time which is acceptable to the passenger. Only in the event that a suitable travel time cannot be arranged will a trip request be denied.

4. PICK-UP AND TRAVEL PROCEDURE

4.1 Passenger Preparedness - Passengers must be readily prepared to leave at least 30 minutes prior to the scheduled pick-up time.

4.2 Dawson Transit reserves the right to deny entrance into a vehicle if the passenger appears disorderly or leads the driver to conclude that the passenger will exhibit disruptive behavior that would pose a safety threat, not only to the driver but also the passengers. All denials will be immediately reported to the dispatcher.

4.3 Intoxicated Passengers - No person, who is noticeably intoxicated shall be permitted to board a vehicle, nor shall any person be allowed to drink intoxicating liquor while on a Dawson Transit bus. If an intoxicated person succeeds in boarding a vehicle without having been noticed and is able to take care of themselves and at no time annoys passengers, he/she shall be permitted to ride, but if he/she becomes incapacitated, displays inappropriate or unsafe behavior toward other passengers or the driver, law enforcement will be notified and the individual may be removed from the bus. The dispatcher shall be responsible for notifying law enforcement. A passenger shall not be removed during a trip, unless he/she is endangering other passengers. The dispatcher and law enforcement shall be notified of any passengers who are removed from the vehicle.

4.4 Passenger Personal Hygiene – Dawson Transit may deny rides to passengers who emit foul odors which reasonably annoy other passengers and the drivers. Odors may include but are not limited to scents related to unlaundered clothing, lack of bathing, animal related odors, and excessive perfumes.

4.5 Passengers Personal Health- Dawson Transit will not transport passengers with communicable diseases or persons with open wounds, we will advise the client of using medical transportation if available in our area.

4.6 Criminal Activity/Disruptive Passengers

Illegal activity and disruptive behavior shall be prosecuted in accordance with applicable laws. Some prohibited activities include;

(1) operates a radio, television, tape player, electronic musical instrument, or other electronic devices, other than a watch, which amplifies music, unless the sound emanates only from earphones or headphones, except vehicle operators may operate electronic equipment for official business;

(2) Abusive, offensive, or fowl language will not be tolerated on the bus

(3) Consistent with the public health concerns addressed by the adoption of the Georgia Smoke Free Air Act of 2005, Dawson Transit policy is to provide a tobacco-free environment. Tobacco use of any kind is prohibited inside our offices and county vehicles including Transit vehicles. In addition, smokeless tobacco, vaping, e-cigs, or other aerosolized devices are prohibited.

(4) consumes food or beverages, except when authorized by the operator or other official of the transit system;

(5) throws or deposits litter; or

(6) carries or is in control of an animal without the operator's consent.

(7) carries or is in control of a firearm, weapon or dangerous object. **The discharge of a firearm at or in any portion of a public transit vehicle or facility is a felony offense.

4.7. Passengers that necessitate law enforcement involvement, or who are otherwise removed from the bus because of their behavior or activities; may be permanently banned from use of the bus service.

4.8. Driver Assistance –Dawson Transit operates on a “curb to curb” basis. Passengers are expected to be ready for the bus and to board and de-board the vehicle from the curb, end of driveway or other area that is reasonably accessible. Drivers are not allowed to enter a personal residence. However, drivers will assist passengers with boarding and de-boarding of the vehicle. Also, drivers may be able to assist a passenger to the door or help with carrying a package. Drivers are not to lose sight of his/her vehicle during this process. When assistance is required beyond the point a driver can see the vehicle, an aid or attendant shall be required to assist with passenger needs. The aid or attendant will be responsible for his/her fare.

4.9 Passengers who are unable to independently conduct themselves inside a destination building/lobby must have a personal care attendant/companion present to assist the passenger. The driver, after first receiving approval from the dispatcher, shall have authority to deny the passenger the scheduled trip if a personal care attendant is not present and is required.

4.10. No more than 5 bags/packages will be allowed per passenger. Drivers are only allowed to carry two packages or 25 pounds, as can reasonably be handled in one trip, per passenger.

Passengers/Companions are expected to assist the driver with their packages.

4.11. Accepting tips, gifts or gratuities and solicitation of any kind while on duty is not permitted. Passengers wanting to reward an employee with a gift or tip will be told that it is against Dawson Transit policy. If a tip is insisted upon it will be documented and used for the Dawson Transit program. Small unsolicited gifts such as baked goods or candy that would typically be given during a holiday season are acceptable.

4.12. Dawson Transit reserves the right to require a personal care attendant or assistant when transporting a passenger that has a documented medical or documented behavioral condition that could pose an unsafe situation for either the driver or any of the other passengers.

4.13. Use of Wheelchair Lift and Securement Inside Bus -The driver will always operate the wheelchair lift and will keep the passenger under surveillance at all times. Passengers who use a lift will be assisted onto and off the lift by the driver. Passengers will be secured with the wheelchair tie downs in accordance with manufacturer's requirements and State & Federal requirements.

4.14. Seat Belts – State law requires that bus drivers wear seat belts at all times while operating the bus. Passenger safety belts are provided in all vehicles. Drivers will assist passengers who request assistance with buckling their seat belt. It shall be the passenger's responsibility to use the seat belt and request any assistance.

4.15. Car seats – Car seats or boosters are required by Georgia Law. All passengers must follow all state and federal laws concerning car and booster seats. It is the responsibility of the parent to secure the above mention seats. Current requirements for car seats in Georgia can be found by going to <http://www.gahighwaysafety.org>.

4.16. Route Changes - Drivers shall take the most time efficient route to the destination. The driver cannot change a route or make detours upon passenger request without first informing the dispatcher and receiving authorization.

4.17. Canceled Trip Notification Requirement - A scheduled trip will be considered canceled if notice is given prior to the trip being dispatched to allow the vehicle to be rerouted for another rider without negatively affecting the route schedule or without system resources or expenses being required. A cancellation made after the ride has been dispatched will be considered a no-show as described below.

4.18. No-Show Policy - A no-show occurs when an individual, misses his or her scheduled pick up time or does not give sufficient cancellation notice (see Section above) such as it does not allow the vehicle to be rerouted efficiently. If a passenger is not ready to board bus, the driver will notify the dispatcher and wait five minutes. Events beyond the individual's control (i.e. vehicle being more than 45 minutes late, the vehicle being early, or other event which makes it impossible for the individual to be ready for their pick-up at their scheduled time) will not be considered a no-show. After 3 no-shows in a Period of one month, from the date of the first no-show, the individual will be suspended from the service for 60 days.

5.0 COMMENTS/COMPLAINTS

Dawson Transit is committed to providing exceptional service and maintaining high standards within the transit system. All comments and complaints will be handled in a professional manner. Complaints will be documented in the transit office and will be followed up in a timely manner. Complaint forms are available in the Transit Office.

6.0 INTERAGENCY AGREEMENT

Dawson Transit is committed to providing and maintaining the current level of transit services to the citizens of Dawson County. The county reserves the right to terminate any and all cooperative agreements for services that are determined to adversely affect service to the citizens of Dawson County.

7.0 EMERGENCY/INCLEMENT WEATHER SERVICE INTERRUPTIONS

From time to time it may be necessary to cancel or suspend service due to unforeseen circumstances. These decisions will be made by the Transit Coordinator, Director of Senior Services, and County Manager. If the Dawson County school system closes due to inclement weather, Dawson County Transit will also be closed. Transit clients are encouraged to watch and listen to the local weather and news referencing county/school closings.