

# EL LIFT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES (Riders Guide)

Revised 2018



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## (Riders Guide)

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## WELCOME TO EL LIFT PARATRANSIT SERVICE

EL LIFT Paratransit Services provides shared, curb-to-curb with assistance to the door (as per request) public transportation to people with disabilities who are unable to use EL METRO's fixed route buses. "Curb- to-curb" means the vehicle will pick-up customers at the curb of the pick- up address and drop- off customers at the curb of the drop off address. Customers needing assistance beyond the curb can let an El Lift agent know so additional assistance can be provided. El Lift provides "Assist-to-Door" service for customers who cannot independently walk or roll from the front door of their home to a El Lift van parked at curbside. We also offer free travel training to eligible persons with disabilities who are capable of riding an accessible bus. Paratransit Services is a shared-ride service operated with modern, accessible vehicles. Riders who are unable to access vans by using steps may use wheelchair lifts. We hope this guide answers all of your questions. If you need further information, please don't hesitate to contact us. We are here to provide safe, reliable, dependable, and efficient public transportation for persons with disabilities. Again, welcome to EL LIFT Paratransit Services!

### OVERVIEW

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 requires that each public agency, which operates a fixed route public transit service, provide paratransit service for persons with disabilities who cannot utilize fixed route service, due to their disability.

Three categories of persons with rights to paratransit services established by the ADA are:

- Category 1) Individuals, who because of their disability cannot independently board, ride and/or disembark from an accessible vehicle.
- Category 2) Any person with a disability who can use an accessible fixed route vehicle, but for whom any desired trip cannot be made because the service they need is not yet accessible, is eligible.
- Category 3) Those who have impairment-related conditions that prevent them from getting to or from a boarding or disembarking location.

Paratransit must provide a level of service that is comparable to that provided on the fixed route system. ADA defines comparable paratransit service with six criteria:

1. It must operate in the same service area as the fixed route system.
2. It must have a comparable response time.
3. It must have fares no more than twice that of fixed route service for the same trip.
4. It must have comparable days and hours of service when compared with fixed route service for the same trip.
5. It must meet requests for any trip purpose.
6. It must not limit service availability because of capacity constraints.

## **ADMINISTRATOR**

The Laredo Transit Management Inc., dba EL METRO located at 401 Scott Street in Laredo, Texas is responsible for ensuring overall ADA compliance. Office hours are from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. The EI Lift Mobility Manager is responsible for directing the day-to-day activities of EI Metro's demand response Program. The Operations Manager is responsible for the overall daily bus operations.

## **PURPOSE**

The Laredo Transit Management, Inc. offers demand response transportation service for persons with disabilities. This program continues to meet the ever growing and changing transportation demands of a significant number of transit passengers. The goal of the EI Lift is to provide excellent public transit services for citizens in the safest, most cost efficient, effective and friendly manner possible.

## **ELIGIBILITY FOR SERVICE**

Per ADA guidelines, paratransit service may be provided to persons with a physical, mental, or visual impairment of such severity as to prevent independent city bus travel, without consideration that it may be difficult, challenging, uncomfortable, or inconvenient to do so. The presence of a disability, diagnosis, or condition alone does not determine automatic paratransit eligibility. Rather, paratransit eligibility is determined by whether the applicant's functional mobility is so severely restricted that the applicant is prevented from performing the mobility skills necessary for independent city bus travel, even though it may be difficult, inconvenient, or challenging to do so.

As part of the EI Lift eligibility and recertification process, customers may be asked to participate in Functional Assessment of Independent Travel Skills to assess their functional level and their ability to perform those mobility skills and tasks necessary for independent city bus travel. The Functional Assessment performance report along with the application information and any supplemental documentation are reviewed by an EI Lift Eligibility Specialist who will make a determination regarding the applicant's eligibility for paratransit service. The customer is notified by mail of their eligibility status within twenty-one days of the completed record.

EI Lift applications may be obtained from the EI Lift Paratransit Office at 401 Scott St. (956-795-2290) or at the Laredo Transit Center, Lobby 1301 Farragut St. Main Floor between the hours of 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday, or visit [www.elmetrotransit.com](http://www.elmetrotransit.com).

## **RECERTIFICATION**

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, all paratransit customers are required to recertify their paratransit eligibility at regular intervals. Laredo Transit Management Inc. resolved that the recertification period for EI Lift customers occur at least once every 3 years. Recertification attempts to insure that EI Lift has the most current information regarding the customers contact information and

any significant changes in health status and personal travel needs. Customers will receive written notification of recertification approximately sixty (60) days prior to the date their EI Lift service is due to expire.

EI Lift has the right to review any customer's eligibility status at any time there is indication of or reason to expect a change in the customers' medical condition, functional level, or mobility status. In such cases, EI Lift may require that additional or corroborating information be submitted by or on behalf of the customer and/or may request that the customer participate in a Functional Assessment to identify special travel needs current mobility status.

Each customer is responsible for informing EI Lift of any change that may affect his/her eligibility status, to include: significant improvement or deterioration of mobility skills; the presence of a communicable or contagious disease; and the use of assistive devices or mobility aids. Customers must also promptly inform EI Lift of any changes to their residential address; contact telephone numbers; the name, address or phone number of their designated emergency contact person(s) and, if applicable, of persons designated to act on a customer's behalf.

Recertification applications must be received at least thirty one (30) days prior to the customer's service expiration date which appears on the EI Lift photo identification card. Customers, whose applications are not received at least thirty (30) days prior to the expiration date, may risk service interruption. Recertification applications may be obtained at the EI Lift Paratransit Office at 401 Scott St. (956-795-2290) or at the Laredo Transit Center, Lobby 1301 Farragut St. Main Floor Monday-Friday from 7:45 a.m. - 5:15 p.m. and Saturday from 7:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m., or visit [www.elmetrotransit.com](http://www.elmetrotransit.com).

## **EL LIFT PHOTO IDENTIFICATION CARD**

Customers certified to use EI Lift must have another form of identification card. New customers must obtain a Photo ID card before trip reservations can be made. Instructions to obtain a photo ID card are provided in the initial eligibility notice. EI Lift photo ID cards can only be made at the Laredo Transit Center, 1301 Farragut St Main Floor. The initial photo identification card is free. Replacement or recertification cards are \$2.00.

## **APPLICATION FOR SERVICES**

An application for service must be completed and approved by Laredo Transit Management, Inc. prior to delivery of EI Lift Paratransit Services. An application for service may be requested by calling the EI Lift Office between 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday or by coming to our offices at:

EI Metro Operations Facility  
401 Scott  
Laredo, Texas 78040

Upon receipt of a request for an application, one will be mailed to the requestor within 7 working days. The applicant and physician must complete the application form and return it to the EL METRO office in person.

An application cannot be approved until the Verification of Disability is completed by a physician or other professional and returned to EL METRO.

Once, application is complete a determination of eligibility will be made within 21 calendar days. Also, note that an applicant will be allowed to use service until a decision is made if the application process exceeds 21 calendar days.

Within 21 days, the following information will be mailed to the applicant:

1. Approval or rejection of application (and reason, if rejected).
  - a) Non-eligibility as defined by ADA eligibility categories.
  - b) Effective dates of eligibility.
  - c) Explanation of restrictions, if any, such as temporary certification or trip-by-trip eligibility determination.

### **Appeals Process**

*If denied eligibility for service, you may appeal the denial. You must request an appeal by completing and submitting the appeal request form within twenty days of receipt of the letter from El Lift stating your ineligibility for service. A copy of the appeals process may be obtained by calling (956) 795-2280. You may request a hearing at which you may present additional information supporting your appeal request. El Lift will notify you in writing of the outcome of your appeal within 60 days of the appeal hearing. If a decision is not made within 60 days, you will be provided with El Lift service until you are notified of the outcome of the appeal.*

### **HOURS/ADDRESSES**

El Lift Paratransit Services - Operation Hours 401 Scott St. Laredo, Texas 78040	Monday, Wednesday, Friday: 4:30 a.m. - 10:30 p.m. Tuesday, Thursday– 5:30 a.m. - 10:30 p.m. Saturday 6:00 a.m. - 10:30 p.m. Sunday: 8:00 a.m. – 8:30 p.m.
El Lift Paratransit Scheduling hours	Monday - Sunday: 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.
El Lift Paratransit Administration office hours	Monday-Friday: 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.

### **SERVICE AREA**

Paratransit service will be provided only within the service area. The extent of this service area is a width of ¾ of a mile on either side of any El Metro fixed route.

The service area may be adjusted from time to time and reviewed at a public meeting.

## **SCHEDULING PARATRANSIT SERVICES**

To schedule a trip, please call (956) 795-2290 between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m., Monday thru Sunday. Reservations may be made from one day before or up to seven (7) days in advance. When scheduling a trip, please be ready to provide the following info:

- Your name.
- Your pick-up address (including building/business names, specific pick-up information, landmarks).
- The date you are traveling.
- The time you would like to be picked up. (Note: schedule appointments with ample time to reach your destination)
- Requested drop-off time and alternate drop-off times
- The street address of your destination (including specific drop-off information).
- If a Personal Care Attendant (PCA) will travel with you.
- If a guest other than your PCA will travel with you (including children).
- Schedule a return trip
- need for a will-call (for a medical appointment)

**REMEMBER:** The EL LIFT is a ride-share paratransit service for use by all those who are participating. Mutual consideration and respect for your fellow riders will avoid unnecessary delays and assure greater efficiency. El Lift does not provide emergency service nor is an ambulance service.

**To ensure your trip is scheduled in a manner that best suits the most agreeable time, please let us know if any of the following applies:**

- **If you cannot arrive at your destination before a specific time (i.e. your PCA is not at home until a specific time to receive you). If so, you will receive a pick-up window that will get you at your destination no-earlier-than your requested time. Please allow flexibility on your pick-up time.**
- **If you need to arrive at your destination no later than a certain time (i.e. a doctor's appointment, dialysis or work). If so, you will be given a pick-up window that will allow you to get there in time. Please allow flexibility on your pick-up time.**
- **If you cannot be picked up before a specific time (i.e. you don't get off work until a particular time). You will receive a pickup window that starts after your requested time.**
- **If you would like to be picked up at a specific time regardless as to what time you arrive at your destination (i.e. going shopping, to the gym, etc.). We will accommodate a time as close to your requested time as possible. Your arrival time may vary depending on length of trip and other passengers onboard.**

## PROVIDE FOR ALTERNATIVE TRAVEL TIMES

Paratransit Services may offer travel times (1) one hour before or (1) one hour after the requested travel time as established under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 service criteria. Pick-up times in excess of one hour however, must be agreed to by the rider i.e. the rider has the right to require a pick-up time within an hour before or after his/her requested time.

## TIPS FOR SCHEDULING SERVICE

When scheduling rides for specific times, be sure to allow plenty of time to finish your appointment in order to meet the vehicle at your scheduled pick-up time. Be aware of opening and closing times at your destination to avoid waiting outside the building before or after business hours. When scheduling your trips, please follow these suggestions:

- Allow adequate time to reach your destination.
- Allow extra time for the pick-up and drop-off of other passengers before reaching your destination. (Keep in mind; this is a ride-share service)
- Allow for traffic conditions and weather delays.

## CONFIRMING YOUR TRIPS

Trips will be confirmed at the time a trip reservation is scheduled. The **reservation agent will repeat the date, time, addresses, and any other details of the trip.** The evening before travel, the EI Lift telephone system will call customers reminding them of their trips for the next day and giving them the option to cancel the trip, if needed.

## CANCELING TRIPS

Trips must be canceled at least two (2) hours before the start of your ready-time window. Please see page 13 for a definition of the ready-time window.

## CHANGING OR CANCELING A RESERVATION

If you want to change a reservation, please call between 8:00 AM and 5:00 PM. Changes must be requested at least a day in advance. Call EI Lift at 956-795-2290 to revise or cancel a trip.

## “WILL CALL” TRIPS

Occasionally, customers need open-ended return times because they do not know when they will be ready to be picked up. Customers may request open-ended pick up times for medical appointments or jury duty only. Customers must let reservation



agents know at the time reservations are made that they want a “will-call”. Will-call pick-ups are activated when customer notifies the El Lift reservation agent that they are ready to be picked up. El Lift will dispatch a vehicle as soon as possible; however, under certain peak times and high use circumstances it can take up to two hours before the vehicle arrives to the pick-up location. Will-call pick-ups are not recommended unless all other options have been eliminated.

### On-time Performance

1. *There will be no restrictions or priorities based on trip purpose.* [49 CFR 37.13(d)]
2. *There will be no limitations on service based on capacity constraints.* [49 CFR 37.131(f)] *Capacity constraints include:*
  - a. *There will be no restrictions on the number of trips an individual can take.* [49 CFR 37.131(£)(1)]
  - b. *There will be no waiting lists for access to service.* [49 CFR 37.131(£)(2)]
  - c. *El Metro will avoid any operational pattern or practice that significantly limits service availability, such as substantial number of significantly untimely pickups for initial or return trips, substantial number of trip denials or missed trips, or substantial numbers of trips with excessive trip lengths.* [49 CFR 37.13(f)(i)(A)-(C)]
    - I. Number of trip denials. *A trip denial (or denial of service) occurs whenever a patron attempts to schedule a trip according to the procedures outlined in this policy manual, but El Lift is unable to schedule that trip within one hour before or one hour after the desired time, even if the patron agrees to schedule some other trip time beyond that two-hour window. A trip that is turned down by the patron because El Lift is able to offer only the initial or return trip counts as two trip denials.*
    - II. Number of trips with excessive trip length. *An excessive trip length is any travel time on paratransit that is not comparable to the amount of time it would take to make the same trip using fixed route bus service including connections and travel time to and from bus stops.*
    - III. Number of missed trip. *A missed trip occurs when El Lift fails to pick up a passenger for a scheduled trip. A missed trip is defined as a trip the provider schedules for which the vehicle never arrives, arrives within the pick-up window but does not wait the required five minutes for the passenger to board or arrives outside of the pick-up window and the passenger does not take the trip.*

*IV. Number of untimely pick-ups for initial or return trips. An untimely pick-up is considered late when it is more than 30 minutes late past the scheduled pick-up time. For example: If El Lift picks up a passenger earlier than fifteen (15) minutes before the scheduled pick-up time window or later than fifteen (15) minutes after the scheduled pick-up time window, it will log the trip as an untimely (early or late) pick-up.*

Quarterly reports will be reviewed by El Metro General Manager, AGM of Operations/Administration Manager and AGM of Maintenance. El Metro Management will determine the areas of improvement based on the performance data when administering its ADA paratransit service. El Metro will increase the capacity to respond to the demand of paratransit services.

*d. Operational problems attributable to causes beyond El Metro's control (such as bad weather or unsafe traffic conditions) shall not be a basis for determining that the kind of pattern or practice mentioned in c. immediately above exists. [49 CFR 37.131 (f) (ii)]*

## **HOLIDAY SCHEDULE**

El Metro does not operate fixed route bus service and El Lift Paratransit service on the following holidays: Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Eve, and New Year's Day. On several holidays, El Metro bus service will operate on a Sunday service schedule. Please make your appointments on regular hours as stated.

## **OPERATOR TRAINING**

All El Lift vehicles operators will be trained in at least the following:

- All operators will be complete the Transit and Paratransit Company (TAPCO) training.
- Loading and unloading of passengers using mobility assistance devices
- Passenger assistance training, including passenger courtesy and sensitivity Training.

Operators will be required to perform the following functions:

- Driving to the curb of the pick-up location
- Activating the vehicle horn if requested
- Providing assistance in boarding and exiting
- Driving to the curb of the destination point

Operators will be prohibited from:

- Giving medication
- Using oxygen or other life-assistance machines
- Moving wheelchairs to and from the vehicle, or helping passengers to the

vehicle beyond 10 ft. from the vehicle.

- Feeding or dressing passengers
- Handling complaints
- Making reservations
- Carrying or handling packages

## RIDING PARATRANSIT SERVICES

### PICK-UP/DROP OFF LOCATIONS

To ensure that a rider's trip goes smoothly, Paratransit Services has established the following pick-up and drop-off locations for the rider's convenience.

### WHERE TO WAIT

Paratransit Services is origin to destination, ride-share program that complements El Metro's fixed route bus services. Riders must be waiting at the sidewalk, or at another safe waiting area in front of, or as close as possible to, the entrance of the pick-up location. Operators will wait for a rider at the curb of a public street, in front of, or as close as possible to, the rider's house, building, or other designated pick-up location. **The operator cannot enter the building or go beyond 10 ft. from the vehicle.** If a rider will need assistance exiting the pick-up location a companion or personal care attendant must be available to assist. For drop-offs, the operator will drop the rider off at the sidewalk, or another safe waiting area next to the curb or a public street in front of, or as close as possible to, the designated drop-off location.

### APARTMENT/OFFICE COMPLEXES

When scheduling your trip, please provide Paratransit schedulers with specific building name and number within the complex. Operators will pick up the rider at that specific building. If a rider's building is located within a gated community and requires special entry, notify the security office to arrange entry for the Paratransit vehicle before pick-up time. If the rider does not arrange entry, and the vehicle is unable to enter the pick-up area, the rider will be considered a No-Show.

### NURSING HOMES

Riders with pick-ups at nursing homes should meet the operator in front of the curb or at another safe waiting area in front of, or as close as possible to entrance or loading area. **Operators cannot assist riders in and out of a nursing home; staff should be ready to assist the individual out of the nursing home, if necessary.** Riders will unload at the curb/sidewalk in front of any major and or the safest possible entrance or loading area of the nursing home.

## ADULT PROGRAM/ DAY CARE CENTERS

Riders attending adult programs or day care centers should be present when paratransit services vehicles arrive. **Operators cannot assist riders in or out of adult program/day care centers. Center's staff must be ready to assist the individual in or out of the center, if necessary.** If the Adult/Day Care Center requires special entry, the rider or center staff should arrange entry for the paratransit vehicle before pick-up time. If the rider or center staff does not arrange entry, and the vehicle is unable to enter the pick-up area, the rider will be considered a No-Show, and therefore the Adult Program/Day Care will resume responsibility for returning the rider to their home. Paratransit Services has designated standard pick-up and drop-off sites at major centers and destinations such as large medical centers and malls. If a rider schedules a trip to one of these destinations, the scheduler will inform the rider of the specific pick-up and drop-off location.

## BOARDING MOBILITY DEVICES

*Paratransit Services will make every attempt to accommodate standard mobility devices.*

***For our riders' safety, it is preferred that mobility devices are clean, safe and in good working condition when traveling.***

### ***Use of Wheelchair Lifts, Ramps, and Securement Devices***

- a. *El Metro will transport any wheelchair on its vehicles so long as:
  - 1) *The dimensional requirements do not create or pose a safety concern to the vehicle or its passengers, and*
  - 2) *The weight capacity does not exceed the manufacturer's recommended vehicle or lift design load specifications when occupied.**[49 CFR 37 & 38]**
  
- b. *Wheelchairs must be placed in the designated area on the vehicle where it can be secured. Wheelchairs will not be permitted to ride in any other location. [49 CFR 37.165 (b) & (c) (3)]*
  
- c. *If a wheelchair cannot be secured or restrained, the patron may still ride on the vehicle but he/she must remain in the designated area. [49 CFR 37.165(d)]*
  
- d. *In some circumstances, El Metro will ask a passenger using a wheelchair to transfer to a vehicle seat, although the passenger will not be required to move. [49 CFR 37.165 (e)]*
  
- e. *El Metro will allow any patron who requests to board using a wheelchair lift or ramp to do so even if he/she does not use a wheelchair. [49 CFR 37.165(g)] However, lifts and ramps will not be deployed at stops where they will be damaged if deployed or there is some temporary danger that prevents safe use of that stop. [49 CFR 37.167(g)]*

f. Where necessary or upon request, El Metro personnel will assist individuals with disabilities with the use of securement devices, ramps, and lifts. [49 CFR 37.165(f)]

### **Maintenance of Wheelchair Lifts, Ramps, and Securement Devices**

1. El Metro has in place a system of regular and frequent maintenance checks of its wheelchair lifts and ramps to ensure operability. [49 CFR 37.163(b)]

2. Operators are required to notify supervisors immediately if a lift is inoperable for any reason so that maintenance can be applied. [49 CFR 37.163(c)]

3. If a lift or ramp becomes inoperable during service, the vehicle in which the lift or ramp is located will be removed from service, repaired, and placed in service no earlier than the beginning of the next service day unless doing so would reduce the transportation service that El Metro provides and there is no spare vehicle available to take the place of the one with the inoperable lift or ramp. In that case, the vehicle with the inoperable lift or ramp may stay in service for no more than three (3) days from the day on which the inoperability was discovered. [49 CFR 37.163d &(e)]

4. If a vehicle with an inoperable lift or ramp is operating on a route and the headway to the next accessible vehicle on the route is more than thirty (30) minutes, El Metro will provide alternative transportation to individuals with disabilities who are unable to use the vehicle because the lift or ramp is inoperable. [49 CFR 37.163(f)]

### **OTHER MOBILITY AIDS & EQUIPMENT**

1. El Metro will allow service animals on its vehicles and in its facilities. [49 CFR 37.167(d)] A service animal is any guide dog, signal dog, or other animal trained to work for an individual with a disability. No other animals will be permitted.
2. El Metro will allow any reasonable breathing aid, including portable oxygen tanks and respirators, on its vehicles. [49 CFR 37.167(h)]

Operators on paratransit services will make all attempts to secure standard mobility devices. If a mobility device exceeds the normal size, the operator may ask the rider to transfer to a seat, as it may be difficult to safely secure the passenger within the mobility device. It is the rider's choice to transfer or remain in their mobility device. **If a rider is traveling with a child who is 4 years of age or younger, or weighs 40 pounds or less, Paratransit Services strongly recommends that the child be secured in a child safety seat.** Paratransit Services does not provide child safety seats for children.

## WHEN TO BE READY (ARRIVALS AND DEPARTURES)

All passengers are reminded that El LIFT is a public transportation service. This means you will be sharing rides with other customers. This also means trip lengths can be comparable to a fixed-route trip, which includes the time it takes a passenger to travel to a bus stop and wait for a fixed-route bus. You also may have to arrive earlier than desired.

You may request consideration for a no-earlier-than arrival time, or a no-later-than pick-up time when scheduling your trip. We will try to accommodate your trips as best we can; however, schedules will be based on the total number of passengers traveling that day while following ADA regulations.

A few items to keep in mind:

- El Lift has a 30-minute, pick-up window. *For example, the customer has the appointment pick-up time at 10:00 a.m.* The scheduler may state that you will be picked up between 9:45 a.m. and 10:15 a.m.
- Once the driver arrives at the pick-up site, the driver can only wait 5 minutes. Because of new technology now in place, drivers receive a schedule in order to stay on time and pick up other passengers accordingly.
- Be sure to be prepared for the El Lift vehicle at the beginning of your 30-minute window. Please keep in mind the 30-minute window does not mean the LIFT vehicle can wait until the end of the 30 minutes.

Sometimes your appointments do not finish on time. If this happens and the bus has arrived, the driver will notify LIFT dispatchers to let them know they are cancelling your trip on their bus. Dispatch will then wait for you to call when you are ready and they will reschedule a pick-up as quickly as possible. This will not count as a No-Show against you.

### EXAMPLES: PICK-UPS

Paratransit vehicles will arrive any time within a 15 minute ready-time window. For example, if you are scheduled for a pick-up at 9 a.m., then your ready-time window is between 8:45 a.m. and 9:15 a.m. The vehicle will arrive any time between 8:45 a.m. and 9:15 a.m. Please be ready to board the vehicle immediately upon arrival, or your vehicle will leave after 5 minutes, and you will receive a No-Show

When your vehicle arrives, you are required to present your Paratransit Identification Card and the exact fare or a valid coupon. Please note: The operator cannot take you to your requested destination without the required fare.

**Eating and drinking are prohibited on Paratransit vehicles unless necessary for dietary and/or medical purposes.**

### CAN EL LIFT OPERATOR ASSIST ME?

El Lift provides “Assist-to-Door” service for customers who cannot independently walk or



roll from the front door of their home to an EI Lift van parked at curbside (but not to the inside of the building). Examples of a person with a disability needing

“Assist-to-Door” services include:

- Someone who is unable to self-propel a manual mobility device
- Someone who cannot follow the path to or from a van without guidance; or
- Someone who needs help to maintain his/her balance.

Assist-to-Door service can also be provided at a customer’s destination (bank, shopping center, church, medical office, etc.) and for the return trip back home. Customers who are approved for Assist-to-Door service can expect their EI Lift van operator (driver) to:

- Physically push the customer’s manual mobility device;
- Offer directions, verbally or by light touch, to keep the customer on the right path; or
- Allow the customer to hold the van operator’s hand or forearm for balance.

Van operators will not, however, operate the controls of an electric mobility device and will not carry a customer or bear the customer’s weight.

This service will not be provided at workshops, dialysis clinics or adult day activity centers when staff are available to help, and is not offered to customers with “Do Not Leave Alone” status. Customers must also promptly appear when the van arrives. EI Lift sends phone calls when a van is on the way, and Assist-to-Door is not a van arrival notification service.

Customers who require Van Operator assistance at the origin and/or destination stage of all EI Lift trips must complete a brief application prior to taking a trip in order to establish the need for full-time (i. e., at all origins and destinations) assistance. Approval is contingent upon a safety inspection at a customer's residence to establish the presence of a suitable ramp, steps and/or pathway and a reasonable distance between the customer's doors and van. If a customer requires Assist-to-Door service for all EI Lift trips, please contact EI Lift Mobility Manager by phone at (956) 795-2290.

Van Operators can also assist customers upon request to or from the van at an unfamiliar location or down steps. Customers who need occasional assistance at their home should inform the Reservation Agent when making a reservation.

**Assist-to-door service DOES NOT include any of the following:**

- Assisting passengers on unsafe or steeply inclined mobility ramps or stairs
- Walking through the door of a house, apartment, or building
- Locking/unlocking doors or activating/deactivating house alarms
- Loading/unloading personal items
- Lifting or carrying a customer
- Pushing a mobility device over steps

If you have any questions, please call EI Lift Reservations at (956) 795-2290.

## RIDER ACCOMODATIONS

### PERSONAL CARE ATTENDANT

A Personal Care Attendant (PCA) may accompany a registered Paratransit rider at no additional charge. Your file must indicate that you are eligible to have a PCA travel with you. You must reserve space for your PCA when scheduling your trip. If a vehicle is dispatched for a passenger who utilizes a PCA and the PCA is not available, and it is determined that a PCA is no longer required, documentation to this effect may be required by EL METRO. Guests are welcome to ride with you but will pay same fare as customer per trip. Due to limited space, each rider is allowed one guest per trip. You must reserve space for your guest (including children) when scheduling your trip. Seating for more than one guest is on a "space available" basis when scheduling your trips. Children accompanying you are considered traveling guests. Children under the age of 5 must be accompanied by an adult. **If a rider is traveling with a child who is 4 years of age or younger, or weighs 40 pounds or less, Paratransit Services strongly recommends that the child be secured in a child safety seat.** Paratransit Services does not provide child safety seats for children.

Special Note: PCA's and guest must have the same origin and destination points as the eligible demand response passenger. Trips with the purpose of accommodating any guest, and or PCA (pick-ups and drop offs) are not allowed.

### PACKAGES

Carry-on packages are limited to two (2) grocery bags or similar-sized packages on board the Paratransit vehicles. Operators are not allowed to assist the rider carrying the packages to and from the same sidewalk or waiting area where the rider boards.

### VISITORS

Out-of-town visitors who are ADA certified in other cities or who have obvious mobility limitations can use El Lift services on a temporary basis. Visitors must contact El Lift Office Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., at 956-795-2290. It is recommended to apply two (2) weeks before service is required.

Once this is done, advance reservations can be made up to seven (7) days in advance. The policies and procedures in this guide apply to visitors.

Visitors can use El Lift Service for 21 days out of any 365-day period. Receiving service beyond 21 days will require the person to apply for El Lift service and an eligibility determination by El Metro Lift Services.

### SERVICE ANIMALS

Guide dogs and other service animals are allowed to accompany you if this need is indicated in your file. Please inform Scheduling if a service animal will be accompanying you when scheduling your trips.



## **SUBSCRIPTION SERVICE**

Subscription Service is limited to riders traveling to the same place at the same time at least three (3) times a week for a minimum period of 120 days. EL LIFT reserves the right to restrict and/or prioritize Subscription Service to maintain a maximum level of fifty percent (50%) as required by the ADA, when there is no excess demand capacity available. El Lift will terminate any Subscription Service that is canceled 50% or more of the time during any 30-day period, or if there is a consistent pattern of cancellations of any part of a subscription.

Before the 120 days minimum expires, the passenger will be required to re-apply for subscription services.

Eligible passengers can schedule subscriptions for repetitive trips for employment, school, and acute medical treatment (i.e., kidney dialysis, chemotherapy and physical therapy.) To maximize multi-loading, pick-up times will be negotiated up to one hour before or after the pick-up time requested by the passenger.

## **REASONABLE MODIFICATION POLICY**

*El Lift is committed to providing safe, reliable, courteous, accessible and user-friendly services to its customers. To ensure equality and fairness, El Lift is committed to making reasonable modifications to its policies, practices and procedures to avoid discrimination and ensure programs and services are accessible to individuals with disabilities. Requests for modifications can be made by calling 956-795-2280.*

## **NO-SHOW, LATE CANCELLATIONS AND CANCEL AT DOOR POLICY**

An individual's EL LIFT service may be suspended if they frequently fail to appear for a scheduled trip, i.e. No-Show, or frequently cancel late.

### **ABOUT NO-SHOWS**

If the vehicle arrives within the 30-minute window, waits five minutes, and the passenger does not appear, it will be considered a No-Show. Before a No-Show is determined, El Lift will make every effort to contact the passenger. This may include:

- Lightly honking the horn during reasonable hours (8 a.m. – 10 p.m.)
- The driver knocking on the door
- Dispatch calling the passenger using the telephone numbers on file

***Note: A No-Show will not be authorized by Dispatch until all attempts have been made to contact the passenger. If the vehicle arrives prior to the 30-minute window, you are not obligated to board until your scheduled time starts.***

### **ABOUT LATE CANCELLATIONS**

A trip cancelled by the passenger within at least 2 hours of the scheduled 30-minute window is a late cancellation. Late cancellations will be considered the same as a No-Show. This includes cancellations at the door.

- We encourage passengers to call in a cancellation as soon as they know they will not require our transportation services.

El Metro understands that passengers will experience unplanned events that prevent them from taking a scheduled trip. However, to prevent abuse El Metro has a strict No-Show/Late Cancellations Policy. The reason for such a strict policy is because No-Show trips mean a ride may have been denied to another person.

To avoid No-Shows, passengers are reminded to be ready at the beginning of your 30-minute window provided at the time the trip was scheduled; drivers should wait no more than five minutes after arriving for passengers to board the bus.

### ***Description:***

#### **NO SHOW**

A No-Show occurs when you fail to board the paratransit vehicle within five (5) minutes after it arrives within the ready-time window.

#### **LATE CANCELLATION**

A Late Cancellation occurs when you fail to cancel your scheduled trip at least two (2) hours before the start of the ready-time window.

#### **CANCEL AT THE DOOR**

Canceling your trip when the operator arrives is considered a Cancel at the Door.

#### **THE PENALTIES**

*When you accumulate any combination of three or more No-Shows, Late Cancellations, or Cancels at Door within a 30-day period, and those incidents represent more than 10% of the trips you have scheduled during that period, the penalties will occur.*

- *The first violation you will receive a warning letter and follow up phone call (first violation).*
- *The second violation, you No-Show, Late Cancel, or Cancel at Door three or more times within a 30-day period, accounting for 10% of your schedule trips for that period, you will receive a written Notice of Service Suspension and services will be suspended for three days (second violation).*
- *A third violation will result in a suspension of service for seven days.*
- *A fourth violation will result in a suspension of service for fourteen days.*
- *A fifth violation will result in a suspension for 21 days as stated on the El Lift Paratransit Service Rider's Guide-Policies and Procedures.*

*Every attempt will be made to resolve disagreements concerning specific No-Shows, late cancellations and cancel at door. Any suspension of service will include the opportunity for the passenger to submit a written appeal, which must be described as No-Show occurrences.*

**Note: Trips missed for reasons outside of the passenger's control or those missed by El Metro will NOT count as a No-Show. You have the right to appeal any of the violations or proposed suspension of services following the same appeal process as mentioned under Application for services.**

## **RESOLVING DISPUTES**

Every attempt will be made to resolve disagreements concerning specific No-Shows, late cancellations and cancel at door. Any suspension of service will include the opportunity for the passenger to submit a written appeal, which must be described as No-Show occurrences.

## **RULES OF CONDUCT**

Riders are asked to follow these rules of conduct to ensure the safety and comfort of all riders and the operator.

- No physical abuse of another rider, or the operator.
- No abusive, threatening or obscene language or actions.
- Food and or/beverages are prohibited, unless necessary for dietary and/or medical purposes.
- Smoking is not allowed on board the vehicles.
- No riding under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs.
- No deliberate fare evasion.
- No operating or tampering with any equipment while on board a Paratransit vehicle.
- No radios, cassette tape players, compact disc players or other sound generating equipment are to be played aboard the vehicles.
- No tipping or other gratuities are allowed.

Riders who violate rules of conduct are subject to penalties, up to and including suspension of service and would be cited for disruption of transportation.

## **DIRECT THREAT**

The ADA specifically advises that paratransit service may be refused to persons with a documented history of uncontrolled, unpredictably disruptive, aggressive, or threatening behaviors which may pose a direct threat to the safe operation of the vehicle and/or transport of all passengers. EL Lift reserves the right to refuse, modify, suspend, or terminate service to customers who may pose such a threat. EL Lift may also require such a customer to travel in the company of a responsible travel attendant for all EL Lift trips.

## **SERVICE SUSPENSION/TERMINATION APPEAL PROCESS**

Note: Riders who engage in physical abuse or cause physical injury to another rider or operator may be subject to immediate and permanent suspension, and possible criminal prosecution.

A rider who disputes the basis for a suspension or termination of service may request an appeal hearing by writing:

Laredo Transit Center  
El Lift  
1301 Farragut 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor West  
Laredo, Texas 78040

### **TRAVEL TRAINING PROGRAM**

EL LIFT's Travel Training Program is available free to persons with disabilities who are able to use accessible bus transportation.

A reduced fare is available for eligible paratransit riders who access fixed route bus service. Travel Training is offered to familiarize customers with general public transit or specific routes, stops and stations. Training for bus services does not make you ineligible for Paratransit Services. If you are interested in more information regarding the Travel Training Program, please call our El Lift office at (956) 795-2290.

### **PARATRANSIT FARE STRUCTURE LEVELS**

El Lift Regular (Orange Ticket)	\$1.75 for rides up to 7 miles
El Lift Plus (Yellow Ticket)	\$2.50 for rides from 7.1 up to 14 miles
El Lift Premium (Red Ticket)	\$3.50 for rides 14.1 miles and over
Guest-	will pay same fare as El Lift customer
Personal Care Attendant (PCA's)	No Charge – must travel with eligible passenger

### **Paratransit Fare Tickets**

El Lift Regular Booklet (10 tickets)	\$17.50
El Lift Plus Booklet (10 tickets)	\$25.00
El Lift Premium Booklet (10 tickets)	\$35.00

All eligible riders, regardless of age, must pay exact fare when boarding. Operators cannot give change. El Lift - Regular, Plus and Premium tickets may be purchased at the following location:

Laredo Transit Center  
1301 Farragut St (Main Lobby)  
Laredo, Texas 78040

**Please note: Operators are not allowed to accept tips or gratuities.**

## HELPFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

<p>Please call <b>(956) 795-2290</b> to contact the following for:</p> <p>Paratransit Services Scheduling Cancellations/Confirmation Certification Subscription Services Complaints/Commendations</p>	<p>Please call <b>(956) 795-2280</b> to contact the following for:</p> <p>El Metro Customer Service Bus Route Information EL Metro Lost and Found</p>
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## HELPFUL ADDRESSES

<p>EL Lift Paratransit Services Operations Department 401 Scott Laredo, Texas 78040</p>	<p>El Metro Transit Center Customer Service, 1<sup>st</sup> floor Lobby 1301 Farragut Laredo, Texas 78040</p>
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### **QUESTIONS & COMMENTS**

*We want to hear from you. Please contact El Metro Customer Service at 956-795-2280 to leave your comments, complaints, commendations, suggestions or recommendations.*

#### **Customer Comment/Complaint Procedure**

*The El Metro customer comment/complaint procedure has been established to ensure that riders of the system have an easy and accessible way to provide feedback to the agency. When making a complaint, please try to provide as much detail as possible so we can properly address your concern. All customer comment/complaints should be accompanied with the following information:*

- *Type of comment/complaint: Fixed Route Service, El Lift Paratransit Service, ADA Fixed Route Service, ADA El Lift Paratransit Service, Title IV.*
- *Name, address and phone number (or person may remain anonymous).*
- *The date and time of the incident.*
- *Vehicle number (if applicable) and the dispatcher or driver name.*
- *Description of the complaint, commendation, or suggestion; and please, provide us with much information as possible.*
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#### **Filing a Complaint**

*For non-urgent items (a complaint regarding past service, suggestion, idea, etc.), please contact El Lift via one of the following methods:*

- *By Calling (956)795-2280 or 311*
- *Website: [www.elmetrotransit.com](http://www.elmetrotransit.com)*
- *Email: [transitfeedback@ci.laredo.tx.us](mailto:transitfeedback@ci.laredo.tx.us)*

- By letter to: El Metro/El Lift Paratransit service  
1301 Farragut St.  
Laredo, Texas 78040

- Fax: 956-795-2258

**Feedback Review Process:** El Metro’s Transit Coordinator will be responsible for dealing with complaints, comments, and suggestions. El Metro will ensure that appropriate actions are taken to resolve the cause of the complaint so that service is improved going forward. All feedback will be reviewed and distributed to the appropriate department(s) with follow up to the customer by El Metro staff within 72 hours.

### **PARATRANSIT ADVISORY COMMITTEE (PAC)**

PAC is an acronym for the Paratransit Advisory Committee to El Metro, a consumer body composed of individuals with experience and or knowledge in dealing with people with disabilities who advise and make recommendations to EL METRO regarding accessible transportation.

The committee meets with EL METRO staff every month to discuss the following issues:

- Service levels
- Scheduling issues
- Eligibility issues
- Training issues
- ADA Complaint resolution
- Appeal Board Panel
- Operational issues
- Planning issues

## **NOTES:**

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