

# Model No-Show Policy for Community Transportation Systems

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## DEFINITIONS

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**Cancellation:** The termination of a trip request that occurs within the prescribed acceptable time period for such action. Typically, acceptable cancellation time frames vary from 5:00 PM one working day prior to the trip date to no later than one hour prior to passenger pickup time.

**Estimated Time Arrival (ETA):** The projected time that the vehicle shall pick up the passenger. Due to the nature of coordinating numerous trips on the same vehicle, an absolute pick-up and drop-off time is not always possible to strictly uphold.

**Wait Time:** The amount of time that is acceptable for a vehicle to dwell at the pick up site. The driver, in cooperation with the dispatcher, should provide adequate and reasonable wait time for the passenger. Reasonable accommodations such as additional wait time will be provided for individuals with special circumstances. The driver should be made aware of persons with disabilities that may need special notification and/or consideration. The transportation system should consult the sponsoring agencies that fund transportation services for individuals with excessive wait time needs.

**No-Show:** Client failure to show for a service (trip) provided in good faith. A “No-Show” has occurred when the vehicle has arrived within the ETA, a valid cancellation of a trip request has not been made and the rider has not boarded the vehicle within the specified wait time.

**Suspension:** A period of time during which a rider is not allowed to schedule service with the transportation system.

**Reinstatement:** Return of service privileges to the client.

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## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

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### **Cancellation:**

- In the event of a need to cancel a scheduled trip, it is the responsibility of the passenger and/or sponsoring agency to ensure the valid cancellation of the trip according to the local policy and procedures of the transportation system.

### **Estimated Time Arrival (ETA):**

- As a result of the need to maintain a reasonable schedule, riders should be prepared to board the vehicle at least fifteen (15) minutes prior to and fifteen (15) minutes following the ETA.
- If the route is running more than 15 minutes late, the dispatcher will notify the riders of the new ETA.

### **Wait Time:**

- The driver will blow the horn upon arrival at the pick up site providing notice of arrival, signaling the beginning of the wait time. Special consideration can be arranged in advance for passengers who are deaf and hard of hearing.
- If the vehicle arrives prior to the recommended pick-up window of fifteen (15) minutes, then the wait time would not be in effect until after the anticipated arrival time.
- Driver wait time should not exceed five (5) minutes, unless an individual with disabilities needs special accommodations.

### **Notification:**

- The transportation system dispatcher will notify the sponsoring agency of each client no-show within 48 hours of the missed appointment, so that the sponsoring agency can counsel the client regarding the importance of keeping transportation appointments.
- It is also important to determine a procedure for notifying riders of their no-show standing with the transportation system and the steps that should be taken by the rider.
- This may be done by use of door hanger forms, mailbox cards or other methods of communication appropriate to the rider's needs completed by the driver during the wait time. If this method is not possible, the rider will be informed by mail and/or by agency notification.
- The sponsoring agency should develop a compatible policy of notification taking into account any special circumstances/needs of the individuals they support.
- If the rider is an agency-sponsored client, the form should indicate information such as: "2<sup>nd</sup> no-show - please contact Ms. Jones of the *Department of Social Services* at 919-733-1234."

### **Suspension:**

- **Agencies contracting for services with a transportation system are encouraged to develop their own suspension guidelines in coordination with the transportation system.**
- The transportation system will notify the sponsoring agency if the client's transportation privileges have been suspended. The sponsoring agency should assist the coordinated system in enforcing suspensions as a result of excessive no-shows.
- After two no-shows within a 45-day period, the rider will be notified by the transportation system that he/she will lose riding privileges if an additional no-show occurs.
- The transportation system should enforce suspensions after three (3) initial no-shows within a forty-five (45) day period. Suspensions should be for a period of at least two (2) weeks.
- Once a rider has been suspended there should only be three (3) allowable no-shows within ninety (90) days following the initial suspension.
- Excessive no-shows resulting in repeated suspensions will result in longer periods of suspension up to and including final termination of all riding privileges.
- A local appeals process will be in place to review special situations.
- Agencies and/or riders demonstrating good cause reasons for failure to comply with the policy will be excused from the relevant no-show occurrence(s).

### **Reinstatement:**

- Upon receiving counseling by a sponsoring agency and/or completion of a suspension, riders should be allowed full privileges for scheduling and utilizing the transportation services available from the transportation system.
- It is recommended that the agencies and the transportation system work together to counsel the rider on the importance of notifying the transportation system of trips that must be cancelled.

### **Rider Education:**

- It will be very important for the riders of the transportation system to understand the no-show policy. Informed riders are more likely to comply with the policy than those who do not understand the importance of supplying a timely cancellation.
- A Transportation Information Form that all riders must read and sign may serve as an effective tool for educating riders.
- In the event that the rider cannot read, the information from the form will be read to them.

### **Contracting:**

- The transportation system and sponsoring agency will specify and agree to a No-Show policy as part of the written contract.
- The responsibilities of the transportation system and the human service (sponsoring) agency must be clearly defined within the contract.
- The transportation system will provide the services requested by the contracting agency and fulfill the requirements of the contract in good faith.
- Contracting agencies should uphold their responsibilities and reimburse the transportation system for services provided in good faith.

**Billing:**

- The transportation system will work with each contracting agency to develop one consistent and equitable method for the billing of no-show trips.
- The sponsoring agency will assume financial responsibility for the no-show trip.
- If the sponsoring agency’s policies or procedures prohibit the use of funds to support no-show trips, the transportation system may need to build the cost of no-shows into the system’s fully allocated cost model.
- If this method is utilized, the transportation system will also need to develop a method for monitoring agencies whose clients are more likely to be a no-show.
- ROAP Funds will be used to support the cost of no-show trips involving general public riders.

**Policy Adoption and Update:**

- The adoption of a No-Show Policy will follow a formal set of procedures that includes input from the Transportation Advisory Board and the boards of the sponsoring agencies.
- There will be an annual re-evaluation and possible update of this policy to insure its continued relevance to the changing operating environment.

**Communication:**

- *All* communication with the public and patrons of the transportation system must be made with reasonable accommodations for those in need of special assistance.
- Visually impaired or non-English speaking individuals may need a Braille or bilingual medium or a sign language interpreter for example.
- If the rider cannot read, the information from the forms must be verbally communicated.

**Agency Support:**

- In order for the policy to be successful, the agencies contracting for transportation services should develop a No-Show Policy in coordination with the local transportation system.

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**COMMENTS**

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The Public Transportation Division (PTD) provides the Model No-Show Policy as a recommended “Best Practice” for the Community Transportation Systems in the State of North Carolina. The PTD would like to thank the members of the Human Service Transportation Council (HSTC) who participated in the development of this “Best Practice” policy. In providing this recommended policy to the Community Transportation Systems of the State of North Carolina, the PTD recognizes that “one size does not fit all.” However, this “Best Practice” recommendation does touch on most of the important issues and should generate a discussion of the issues ultimately resulting in improvements to existing polices statewide.