

VAN TRAN RIDER HANDBOOK



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Introduction

The Fairbanks North Star Borough has been operating the Metropolitan Area Commuter Service (MACS) since 1977. This is the Borough's fixed bus route system. In 1985 the Borough began Van Tran service for the elderly and disabled. When the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) was passed, it required all communities with a fixed bus route system to provide comparable paratransit service for those who cannot (because of their disabilities) use the fixed route service. Van Tran then became the Borough's paratransit service to meet the requirements of the ADA and provide door-to-door service for its patrons.

Both MACS and Van Tran vehicles are wheelchair accessible. The MACS buses have priority seating for senior and disabled citizens. We encourage patrons to use the regular MACS system whenever possible. The MACS Transit bus service should be the primary means of public transportation for everyone, including people with disabilities. Disability alone does not qualify a person to ride Van Tran under the ADA.

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) is a civil rights bill. It was designed to remove the physical and attitudinal barriers that have kept people with disabilities from fully participating in American society.

Under the ADA, Van Tran will provide service to the following three general groups of persons:

1. People, who are unable to board, ride or exit from MACS buses even if they are able to get to a bus stop and the bus is equipped with a wheelchair lift.

Example: A person who can't ride the bus independently, recognize bus stops, read a bus schedule, determine the fare, etc.

2. People who have a specific impairment-related condition that prevents them from getting to or from the bus stop.

Example: A person with special sensitivity to temperatures that may prohibit travel to or from a bus stop in certain weather conditions.

3. In addition, Van Tran will provide service to anyone who is at least 60 years of age.

Description of Service

Van Tran provides door-to-door service for all patrons. Drivers will accompany patrons to and from the first entryway door of the pick-up and drop-off location. If more assistance is needed, patrons must have a Personal Care Attendant (PCA) or caregiver.

How to Apply for Van Tran Service

The application process includes both the completion of an application, and an in-person interview.

Application Process

Obtain an application from Van Tran by:

1. Calling 459-1010 option 2 to have one mailed
2. Visit the Transit Center at 501 Cushman St and request one from a Customer Service Representative
3. Visit the Transit Maintenance Facility at 3175 Peger Rd and request one from the administrative staff
4. Download the application from the website at <http://co.fairbanks.ak.us/Transportation/>

Return the completed application form by mail or in person to:

Van Tran
FNSB Transportation Department
501 Cushman St
Fairbanks, AK 99701

Applications are processed in the order they are received. To avoid needless delays in processing please do the following:

Answer all questions completely.

1. Include an accurate mailing address and phone number so you can be contacted with further instructions.
2. Make sure to include your entire medical provider contact information and have them complete that portion of the application.
3. Be sure to sign the release form and the application.
4. Return the original application packet to us, not a copy. Scanned and faxed versions will also be accepted.

Please feel free to call and check on the status of eligibility with the Van Tran Customer Service Representatives at 459-1010 option 2.

After submission of a completed application to a Customer Service Representative, the applicant will be called to arrange an in-person interview. Once the application is processed and an eligibility determination is completed, the applicant will be eligible for rides on Van Tran. If an eligibility determination is not made in 21 days, the applicant becomes eligible for Van Tran rides until an eligibility determination is completed.

After the applicant is approved, they will be notified by mail on where and how to get an ADA identification card. If a ride is needed to pick up the card, it can be requested with Customer Service Representative. There is no charge for the card or the ride to/from the Borough Administration Center to get the card. The ADA card is not required to receive Van Tran service.

If the applicant is denied, they will receive a letter stating why the application was denied within 5 days of the decision. The applicant may appeal the denial in writing within sixty (60) days of the notification date. The appeals process is outlined on page 9.

Interview and Assessment Process

To comply with the ADA, Van Tran is required to determine which applicants require Van Tran service and which applicants can use MACS Transit buses. Applicants will be contacted by Van Tran staff to set up an interview appointment.

All Van Tran eligibility interviews will be scheduled Monday through Friday, and will take approximately 1 hour. Van Tran will provide transportation to and from the appointment for the applicant and a companion, if needed, at no charge. Transportation will only be provided in the A service area. Applicants residing in the B service area will need to arrange their own transportation to the Transit Center, or to a location inside the A service area. (See page 4 for an explanation of service areas.)

Every effort will be made to accommodate the requested day and time when scheduling the interview appointment. Van Tran reserves the right to schedule the interview at an alternative time, if necessary. The no show and late cancellation policy applies to trips scheduled for the interview. Patrons that accumulate no shows and late cancellations during the interview process will be subject to suspension. The no show and late cancellation policy can be found on page 8.

The interview consists of a series of questions to determine the applicant's functional capability to ride a MACS Transit bus. The interview does not involve a physical examination, provide a medical diagnosis, or include a physician's certification. There is no cost to the applicant for an ADA eligibility interview.

Eligibility Status

Van Tran will notify the applicant by mail of their eligibility status. The applicant's status will be one of the following:

1. Fully ADA eligible for Van Tran service
2. Temporarily ADA eligible for Van Tran service
 - a. People with temporary disabilities may become registered Van Tran riders for up to one year by going through the application and interview process.
 - b. People with disabilities that continue beyond one year must reapply and go through the interview process again.
3. Conditionally ADA eligible for Van Tran service
 - a. People are eligible for some trips but not for others.
4. Ineligible for Van Tran service
 - a. Applicants will receive information regarding MACS transit bus service and the eligibility appeal process. The appeals process is outlined on page 9.
 - b. Applicants must wait until there is a significant change in the applicant's conditions or functional abilities before re-applying.

Current Van Tran patrons are required to reapply to Van Tran when their eligibility expires. They will be evaluated based on the established application and interview process.

Visitors

Visitors to Fairbanks who have an ADA paratransit identification card from another city are eligible to use Van Tran services. However, a person who does not have an ADA paratransit

identification card may ride Van Tran for 21 days after completing and submitting a Van Tran application, while the application and interview process is pending.

Service Area and Priority Levels

Comparable paratransit service is prioritized according to the following eligibility categories:

Priority Category	Priority Level	Area served
A	1	People with qualifying disabilities wanting to travel (both origin and destination) within ¾ mile of a fixed route bus route
B	2	People with qualifying disabilities wanting to travel (either origin or destination) beyond ¾ mile of a fixed route bus route.
C	3	People over 60 years of age

Days and Hours of Operation

	Operating Hours	Customer Service Hours
MON-FRI	6:00 AM – 9:45 PM	6:00 AM – 6:00 PM
SAT	8:45 AM – 7:45 PM	CLOSED
SUN	CLOSED	CLOSED

Holidays

Van Tran and MACS Transit do not operate on the following holidays:

New Years Day	Memorial Day	Independence Day
Labor Day	Thanksgiving Day	Christmas Day

If the holiday falls on a Sunday, the Monday following the Sunday will be observed as the holiday and Van Tran and MACS Transit will not operate.

Fares

Per Ride (one way) – \$2

10 Ride Punch card – \$20

Personal Care Attendant or Caregiver when accompanied by eligible patron – Free

A patron’s eligibility can be suspended if a patron fails to pay for rides taken.

How to Request a Ride

To Request a ride, do one of the following:

1. Call 459-1010 and speak to a Customer Service Representative during the following hours:
 - a. Monday through Friday – 6:00 AM to 5:00 PM.
 - b. If you call outside of these times you are welcome to leave your request on the voicemail. We will process all voicemail requests on the following day of operation.
 - c. Ride requests for the next day, made after 5:00 PM will not be priority A rides, and will be scheduled on a space available basis.
2. Send an email to vantran@fnsb.us with the trip information.
3. Make a trip request online
 - a. Go to: www.fnsb.us/transportation/
 - b. Click on the link under Van Tran that says “Van Tran Ride Request Online”
 - c. Sign up for an account. Remember to complete the entire registration process.
 - d. Once logged in, patrons can:
 - i. Make trip requests
 - ii. Cancel trip requests
 - iii. Review upcoming trips
 - iv. Review past trips
 - e. Trip requests are still reviewed and authorized by a Customer Service Representative, so just because a trip is requested it does not mean it has been confirmed. You will still need to call the day before or wait for the automated call to receive that confirmation.
 - f. If you need assistance with the online ride request system you can call Customer Service Representatives at 459-1010.

When calling or sending an email to request a trip, please have the following information ready:

1. Patron name.
2. The date of the ride.
3. Pick up address and destination address (including street names, street numbers and building numbers).
4. The time of the appointment or the time the patron wishes to be there.
5. The return time, with address if different from the original pick up address.
6. The number of other patrons on the trip(i.e. Guests, PCA’s, caregivers)and Mobility Device assistance request (wheelchair, a walker, a cane)

When requesting a trip, if the desired time is not available, the Customer Service Representative may have to discuss other options to fit the trip in the schedule. Patrons may have to be scheduled up to one hour before or after the requested time. Patrons will have the option of accepting that time or changing the requested time. Some trips will take longer than a direct trip so that Van Tran may provide more rides to others sharing the vehicle. Pick up and drop off times may vary greatly depending on the demand of service for that time of day.

Automated Reminder Calls

The scheduling system will automatically make phone calls to patrons reminding them of confirmed trips.

1. Each evening around 6:00 P.M., the system will call to remind patrons of trips scheduled the next day. The recording will state the pick-up time, the pick-up location, and the drop-off location. At that point, the patron can confirm or cancel the trip. With this phone call, patrons do not need to call in to confirm trip information. After the system states trip information, it will prompt patrons to accept, cancel or get the detail of all rides.
2. The system will call patrons the day of the trip, 30 minutes before the trip is scheduled, to remind them of the van's arrival. Patrons must be ready to board the van 15 minutes prior to the scheduled pick-up time.
3. The system is also capable of flood messaging for those rare occurrences when the entire system needs to be shut down, or we need to get a message to everyone quickly.

Types of Trips

Van Tran offers two types of trips. They are demand trips and subscription service.

DEMAND TRIPS

A demand trip is a single trip, when patrons wish to go to any location within the service area. This could be to the store, doctor's office, the movies, post office or for any other purpose. No priority is given for trip purposes. Van Tran service can be used for any reason.

Trip requests may be made up to two (2) weeks in advance, with the last request accepted till 5:00 PM the day before.

Requested trips will be finalized for scheduling by 5:00 PM the business day before the day of the trip. Patrons may call a Customer Service Representative between 5:00 and 6:00 PM for the trip times for the next day.

SUBSCRIPTION SERVICE

Subscription service is when a patron travels to the same place at the same time one or more times a week. This service allows patrons to take regular trips without the need to call to schedule or confirm each trip. Requests for subscription service must be made in writing to the Customer Service Representative.

Subscription service is limited to specific trip purposes, which are medical appointments, education, training, and employment. Social and shopping trips are not eligible for subscription service. Pick-up and drop-off times may be negotiated, and may vary from day to day due to scheduling requirements.

Due to the demand for and the limited availability of subscription service, cancellations or no-shows can result in a suspension or complete cancellation of the subscription for that patron.

Requests that qualify for subscription service during times when it is not available are placed on a waiting list. Though, patrons may still request trips each day, though the time may be

negotiated. As soon as subscription space is available these requests are added to the subscription schedule and the patrons are notified.

Standby requests

When a trip cannot be fit into a regular schedule or when a request is made for same day travel, the trip is then placed on a stand-by list. The ride request will be monitored for availability in the schedule. If space becomes available, the Van Tran Customer Service Representative will call when the request can be scheduled. A Van Tran driver will be dispatched if the patron accepts the trip.

Arrivals and Departures

Van Tran may arrive 15 minutes before or after a scheduled pick up time. It is the patron's responsibility to keep track of the time for scheduled trips and to be ready to board the vehicle at any time within the 30-minute arrival window.

EXAMPLE: The scheduled pick up time is 3:00 p.m. The driver may arrive anytime between 2:45 PM and 3:15 PM.

Drivers are tightly scheduled to accommodate as many patrons as possible therefore patrons must be ready to board the van upon the driver's arrival.

Drivers may not be able to wait or come back if the patron is not ready.

If the vehicle is more than 15 minutes late, the Customer Service Representative will try to notify the patron. If patrons are not notified and the vehicle is late, they should call the Customer Service Representative to check on the van status. The Customer Service Representative should be able to give an approximate arrival time for the vehicle. Traffic, weather conditions and other trips may cause delays to schedules.

Patron Responsibilities

1. Write down every scheduled trip and check it daily.
2. Be ready to board the vehicle when it arrives.
3. Be visible to drivers. Drivers will not enter buildings or residences, or search for patrons.
4. Make sure your house/building number is plainly visible.
5. Cancel trips early, so others may use the service.
6. Keep Van Tran informed of any changes in your address, phone, or physical status.

Cancellations

A cancellation is when a patron cancels or changes a ride the same day as the ride. To avoid being penalized for too many cancellations patrons must make sure they write down all scheduled trips as a reminder.

It is very important to cancel unwanted rides to allow others to use this time and not waste a trip. Someone on standby can use this spot only if patrons call and give the Customer Service Representative enough time to schedule another patron.

No Shows

A No-Show is when patrons are not at the designated pick-up point, when a patron is not ready to board the van at the scheduled pick up time, or when patrons refuse a scheduled ride when the van arrives. Cancellations called in less than one hour before scheduled pick-up times are also considered to be No-Shows.

If a patron has a “No-Show”, all of your other trips for that day are automatically canceled unless you immediately notify the Customer Service Representative by calling 459-1010 option 2.

Suspension Policy

This suspension policy is designed to provide more opportunities for others to ride by imposing suspension of service to patrons who repeatedly accumulate too many cancellations or no-shows.

Patron eligibility will be suspended if one of the following is accumulated:

- 3 cancellations during a 3 month period
- 3 no shows during a 3 month period
- A combination of 3 cancellations and no shows during a 3 month period.

The suspension period will be according to the following table:

1 st Offense	3 days
2 nd Offense	1 week
3 rd Offense	1 month
4 th Offense	3 months
5 th Offense	6 months

If a patron is a subscription patron and receives a suspension, they will lose the subscription rides and will be placed on the bottom of the subscription waiting list. After the suspension period is up, patrons may request demand rides but the rides will no longer be automatically scheduled and dispatched. Subscription service will be reinstated only when that request reaches the top of the waiting list.

Trip Changes or Cancellations

Trips may be changed or cancelled before 5:00 PM the day before the scheduled trip without penalty. Minor origin or destination changes can be accommodated the same day, as long as the new origin or destination is within ¼ mile of the original origin or destination. These minor changes must be requested through the Customer Service Representative before the arrival window begins to pick up the patron.

All other changes or cancellations made the same day will be considered a cancellation or no-show (depending on the time of cancellation) and will be subject to the cancellation and

no-show suspension policy. Trip changes include change of time, pick-up location or drop-off location.

Denied Service Policy

Occasionally it may become necessary to deny someone Van Tran service. Such reasons could be (but are not limited to):

1. A person's disability does not meet eligibility criteria.
2. A person no longer resides in the service area.
3. Lack of road maintenance prevents van access to a location.
4. Physical barriers at an address prevent the driver from safely assisting patrons from the entry door to the van and into the van.
5. Conduct or behavior that is unacceptable while using Van Tran services.
6. Not using a PCA or caregiver when warranted or required for your safety and convenience.
7. Failure to follow Van Tran rules and policy.

Appeal Process

If the patron's rights to ride on Van Tran are suspended or if the patron believes that they have been improperly denied service, they have the right to appeal these decisions. Specifically, a patron may appeal suspension of service, determination that an individual is not eligible for service, or conditions placed on an individual's eligibility.

All appeals must be in writing and are made to the Fairbanks North Star Borough, Transportation Director. Appeals must be received within sixty (60) business days after the date of the notification or act being appealed.

Appeals may be:

1. Faxed to 907-459-1004
2. Mailed/hand delivered to:

Glenn Miller, Transportation Director
FNSB Transportation Department
3175 Peger Rd
Fairbanks, AK 99709-5499

Your appeal must contain:

1. Patron name, address, phone number.
2. The defense (or reasons) why the decision or act being appealed is incorrect.

If your appeal is regarding a suspension of service, or a determination that an individual is not eligible for service then the following is also required in the appeal:

1. Date of suspension or denied service.
2. Reason for suspension or denied service.

The appeal will first be informally reviewed by the Transportation Director within ten (10) business days after receipt of the appeal. After review the Transportation Director will either grant the request within the appeal or schedule an appeal with the appropriate body. The decision will be mailed or otherwise delivered at the address provided in the appeal.

If the appeal is regarding an initial or renewing eligibility assessment, including conditions placed on eligibility, the appeal will be scheduled with a qualified medical professional. The appeal will be performed through an independent evaluation with a qualified medical professional and the determination provided to both the FNSB and the individual filing the appeal. A written decision will be provided within 30 days.

All other appeals regarding possible denial or suspension of service will be heard by the Public Transportation Advisory Commission (PTAC). Appeals to the PTAC or a qualified medical professional will be scheduled within 30 days from receipt of the initial appeal request. Patrons may continue to use Van Tran service while the administrative appeal is pending.

The decision will become effective ten (10) days after the PTAC or medical professional's final decision, unless stayed by order of court or agreement of the parties. A patron may appeal the decision of the medical professional or the PTAC to the Alaska Superior Court within thirty (30) days of the date the PTAC or medical professional's decision is mailed or otherwise delivered to the patron.

Children

Children requesting Van Tran service undergo the same eligibility application process as adults. If a child obtains Van Tran eligibility, an adult may travel with the child as a guest or personal care attendant, whichever is appropriate for the child. Personal care attendants may ride with the eligible patron without charge, however guests pay the regular fare. The eligible child pays the same fare as any other eligible adult patron.

Van Tran eligible patrons may have children accompany them as guests. Patrons who have children as guests must notify the Customer Service Representative when requesting a ride. Children under 7 years of age must be accompanied by an adult. Young children riding Van Tran must follow the State of Alaska seat belt law, which requires an approved child safety device (car seat or toddler booster seat). Specifically,

1. A child less than one year of age or a child one year of age or older who weighs less than 20 pounds shall be properly secured in a rear-facing child safety seat.
2. A child one or more years of age but less than five years of age who weighs 20 pounds or more shall be properly secured in a child restraint device.
3. A child over four years of age but less than eight years of age who is less than 57 inches in height and weighs 20 or more pounds but less than 65 pounds shall be properly secured in a booster seat that is secured by a seat belt system or by another child passenger restraint system.

The child's accompanying adult must provide a child restraint device for the child. The adult must secure the restraint device to the seat and ensure the child is secured before the vehicle moves. The driver may deny rides to children without appropriate restraint devices.

Personal Care Attendants

A person who is physically able to assist when a Van Tran patron requires assistance beyond the first entry door or needs to travel with another person for safety or health reasons is a Personal

Care Attendant or Caregiver (PCA). Van Tran patrons must furnish their own PCA. The PCA may be any qualified person and does not necessarily have to be a certified Medical PCA.

The need for a PCA must be indicated on the Van Tran application. If a patron needs to add PCA authorization, contact a Van Tran Customer Service Representative at 459-1010 option 2. One (1) PCA may travel with the patron at no charge.

Guests

Patrons are entitled to have guests accompany them on Van Tran in addition to the PCA. Guests pay regular Van Tran fares. Guests must be picked up and dropped off at the same locations as the eligible patron.

When requesting a ride, let the Customer Service Representative know if a PCA and/or guests will be accompanying the patron so that the Customer Service Representative can reserve additional spaces on the vehicle for that trip.

Other Policies

Animals

All animals must be in a pet carrier, except for service animals. Control of the service animal is the responsibility of the animal's handler. Service animals must be on the floor and out of the aisle while the van is moving.

Compliments and Complaints

The Fairbanks North Star Borough Transportation Department is committed to provide quality customer service and satisfaction for Van Tran patrons. Pre-addressed comment cards may be found in the vehicles or from the driver. Your compliments, suggestions or complaints are important and welcomed. Return the comments cards to the driver or mail them directly to Van Tran. Patrons who have a complaint or concern that involves the service performed, a scheduled or requested trip, no-shows or a subscription cancellation may call a Van Tran Customer Service Representative at 459-1010 option 2 or email vantran@fnsb.us.

Dedicated Vehicles/Drivers

Van Tran does not allow patrons to request a dedicated vehicle or driver. Van Tran is part of the public transportation system in Fairbanks. The vehicle may include others that need Van Tran services. In addition, requests for specific drivers will not be granted.

Driveways

Van Tran vehicles will not go into any driveway that does not allow sufficient access for a safe entrance and exit. In the winter months walkways and driveways must be plowed or shoveled to allow for safe access and a reasonable turn around area.

Door to Door Service

Van Tran drivers will assist patrons from the vehicle to the first entrance of the destination, and from the first entrance of the origin to the vehicle. Reasonable accommodation can be made at

the request of the patron to assist them on an incline, through snowdrifts or uneven walking surfaces if doing so would not pose a direct threat to the driver.

Emergency Services

Request for emergency transportation to or from medical facilities should be referred to Emergency “911”.

Food and Beverages

Patrons may not eat or drink on Van Tran vehicles. Food and beverages will be allowed only in closed containers that remain unopened during the trip. Exceptions can be made for medical requirements.

Gratuities

Borough policy prohibits drivers from accepting tips, gratuities or donations of any kind. Please do not offer the drivers any tips or gratuities.

Intermediate Stops

Van Tran patrons request trips from one destination to another. Intermediate stops are not allowed. For example, you request a trip from your work to your home. An intermediate stop would be stopping at a grocery store enroute to your home. In this example, two trips would need to be requested. One from work to the store, and another from the store to home.

Offensive Language/Behavior

No offensive language or disruptive behavior is allowed.

Oxygen Tanks

Personal oxygen tanks may be transported. The oxygen tanks must be secured on the wheelchair. If carried onto the vehicle, the driver must secure the tanks during the trip.

Personal Items, Packages And Groceries

Drivers are required to make one trip to your door. The ONE trip to the door is to provide assistance to the patron. At no time is the driver obligated to carry a patron’s groceries or packages if the patron is unable or unwilling to do so. If a patron has several packages and/or groceries that require more than one trip, they must make arrangements with someone else to assist them. Packages, parcels and other personal items must be either secured or placed so that they will not move in case of a sudden stop.

Radios

Radios, audio devices or musical instruments may not be operated by patrons, PCA’s or guests on Van Tran, unless equipped with individual headsets.

Reasonable Accommodation

Van Tran will make reasonable accommodations at the patron’s request to ensure the program’s accessibility. Reasonable requests may be granted to allow exceptions to standard practice and policy to allow a patron access to the Van Tran service. Examples of reasonable accommodation include, assistance around obstacles, pick-up and drop-off locations, fare handling, eating and drinking, and opening building doors. Requests may be submitted to a Customer Service Representative.

Seat Belts

All patrons and drivers are required to wear seat belts. Drivers will not move the vehicle until everyone is safely secured.

Smoking

Smoking is not permitted on Van Tran vehicles.

Weather

Scheduled rides may be altered and/or canceled due to weather, temperatures, or hazardous road conditions. Van Tran may not operate vehicles in inclement weather. If service is canceled or delayed due to weather, all those with scheduled rides will be notified by phone as soon as possible.

Wheelchairs and Scooters

Van Tran vehicles are lift-equipped. All patrons who use the lift will sit in a boarding chair provided by Van Tran or sit in a mobility device of their own. When on the lift, patrons will sit facing outward from the van. Power wheelchairs must have the power turned off when the patron is on the lift. Wheelchair tie-down spaces are limited so patrons must be sure to tell the Customer Service Representative when they will be using a mobility device. Wheelchairs or scooters must fit on a 32" x 48" platform or Van Tran will not be able to transport them. Service may be refused if total weight of a wheelchair and patron exceeds 800 pounds. All wheelchairs and patrons must be secured with safety belts while riding in the vehicles.

Van Tran is not required to provide any patron with a wheelchair if the occupant's wheelchair exceeds the maximum dimensions and/or weight specifications. Van Tran drivers will not transfer any patron between wheelchairs in order to gain access to ride Van Tran.

Van Tran patrons who use scooters must make a seat transfer. Sitting on a scooter is not permitted while the van is in motion.

This handbook is not meant to be all-inclusive. If you have a question or a situation that is not specifically addressed please feel free to call or write to Van Tran.