

**Southwest Express**  
Public Transportation

# Consumer Handbook

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## PASSENGER RULES

1. All Passengers must wear seat belts while in transit aboard the vehicle until arrival at his/her destination. There is no exception to this rule.
2. Weapons (guns, explosives, brass knuckles, knives etc.) are prohibited on all government property including the Southwest Human Resource Agency vehicles. T.C.A. Title 39, Chapter 17, Part 13.
3. All passengers will comply with a **NO SMOKING, EATING, or DRINKING** policy while anytime inside the vehicle. Exceptions will be made for those who have medical conditions the require food and/or drink (documentation of the condition may be required).
4. All passengers shall maintain orderly conduct while aboard the vehicle. The driver should not have to discipline the passenger and tend to driving responsibilities at the same time.
5. Passenger requested “extra stop” trips will not be acknowledged. The driver has a specific route to follow and no changes will be permitted. The responsibility of the passenger is to request all stops at the time of reserving the trip.
6. Passengers are responsible for the condition of their belongings and cleanliness of their person. Others, including the driver, are entitled to a safe and clean environment while aboard the vehicle. There will be NO exceptions to this rule.
7. Passengers shall have the ability to manage themselves before, during and after their trip. The driver is **NOT** responsible for assisting the passenger in areas other than boarding and unloading the vehicle. The driver is **NOT** to assist in carrying groceries, administering medicines, assisting with restroom duties, or helping one to get inside or outside of their home or appointment location.
8. Passengers will be allowed two (2) grocery bags per trip.
9. Passengers are allowed to have a companion if they are under the age of 18 or if they are in need of physical assistance that the driver cannot provide (documentation may be required).
10. The drivers are **NOT** allowed to accept gifts. They are not to be tipped or given any gift for simply doing their job.
11. Passengers are responsible for payment of all fares to the Driver for the Agency upon boarding the van, before the trip begins. If another agency is paying for the trip (for example, TennCare, Vocational Rehabilitation, Veteran’s Services etc.), the passenger should confirm this status with the Dispatcher at the time the trip reservation is made.
12. Passengers may request a “Trip Evaluation Form” at the end of a trip. This form will be sent to the Transportation Director for review. There is a form located at the end of this handbook.
13. Seating positions at the front of the passenger seating area are for the physically challenged. All other passengers will make sure that these seats are made available to those who are in need of them. The front seat located beside the Driver will not be used by any passenger unless the vehicle has reached the seating capacity of the passenger seating area.
14. To assure the safety of both the Driver and a Wheelchair bound passenger, the Drivers’ help is limited to a “one step” entrance and exit of a facility.

15. In order for the Drivers to better serve the needs of the passengers, it is the responsibility of the passenger to make known to the Driver any medical condition that may require special attention during the trip. The passenger will make their condition known to the driver **BEFORE** boarding the vehicle.
16. For trips that are provided under contract with another Agency (i.e., TennCare, Vocational Rehabilitation, TN Dept of Corrections, ModivCare, Foster Grandparent Program, and the Area Agency for Aging and Disabled), a passenger is allowed three (3) unexcused “no-shows”. After the third “no-show”, the Agency reserves the right to temporarily suspend future transportation services for up to 30 days.
17. Animals (or pets) may be transported with a passenger under the following conditions:
  - The animal is a service animal. A passenger is allowed only one (1) service animal per trip. The definition of a service animal is “a dog that has been individually trained to do work or perform tasks for an individual with a disability. The task(s) performed by the dog must be directly related to the person’s disability.”
  - Animals that are not service animals (as defined above) must be constrained in a kennel during the entire trip.
  - A service animal must be harnessed, leashed, or tethered while in the vehicle unless these devices interfere with the service animal’s work or the person’s disability prevents use of these devices. In that case, the person must use voice, signal, or other effective means to maintain control of the animal.
  - Both the ADA and SWHRA require that service animals be under the control of the handler at all times. If the animal becomes disruptive or threatening to the driver or other passengers, SWHRA reserves the right to discontinue transportation services for the animal.

By boarding this vehicle, you (the passenger) are accepting these “Passenger Rules”. You (the passenger) agree that you have received, read, and understand the rules for passengers as set forth above.

## **Policy on Personal Hygiene for Customers**

SWHRA strives to make the transport of clients a pleasant experience. Any person(s) that are transported should be mindful of other customers and their right to a clean environment. Good personal hygiene is necessary to ensure that everyone on board the vehicle is comfortable while being confined with others in a closed area. Therefore, all passengers will be required to adhere to the guidelines set forth by the transportation program regarding this policy. Any passenger that refuses to follow the good personal hygiene policy, which includes proper bathing and wearing clean clothing, may be refused transportation services in accordance with the policy stated below:

## **Policy for Refusing Transportation**

SWHRA may refuse transportation service in situations where a rider engages in violent, seriously disruptive, or illegal conduct; or represents a direct threat to the health or safety of others.

Refusal of service to an individual with disabilities shall not occur solely because the individual's disability results in involuntary behavior that may offend, annoy, or inconvenience others.

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) officials have advised that transit systems should provide "due process" before suspending a rider for disruptive behavior. The concept of due process is implicit in the protection of any civil right for a transportation customer.

1. First incident — The customer will be provided an explanation of the prohibited activity committed by the Transportation Director, or her/his designee and will be given the opportunity to correct their action. If they correct their action, then they should be transported. The SWHRA employee must inform their supervisor of the incident as soon as possible. The supervisor should give the customer a verbal warning and document the incident.
2. Second incident — If the passenger continues his/her disruptive behavior, Transportation Director, or his/her designee will speak with the passenger and the passenger's sponsoring agency representative (if the passenger is a human service agency client) a second time. During this conversation, the passenger will be presented with a written warning or in another format of their choice (I.E. e-mail, phone calls, etc.) stating the reasons his/her behavior is objectionable and the steps he/she must take to correct the behavior. This warning will include notification to the passenger that his/her transportation privileges are suspended for a period of seven (7) days. The warning will also state that another incident will result in a suspension of privileges to ride the transportation system for up to fifteen (15) days.
3. Third incident — If the problem continues to exist and suspension of service is warranted, the supervisor must afford the customer adequate due process rights prior to any suspension or termination of service. This process includes mailing a certified letter to the customer stating the prohibited activity committed, the pending adverse action, and given the opportunity to meet with the appropriate staff and transportation committee to present their own information and arguments prior to the action. The warning will notify the passenger that his/her transportation privileges are suspended for a period of fifteen (15) days. The warning will also state that another incident will result in a suspension of privileges to ride the transportation system for up to thirty (30) days.

4. Fourth incident — If fourth misconduct incident occurs and all of the above steps have taken place, a third written notification of the passenger's suspension from SWHRA's transit service will be sent to the passenger via certified mail or in another format of their choice (I.E. e-mail, phone call, etc.). The notification will include a statement giving the customer an opportunity to appeal any adverse action. A copy of this notification will be sent to the appropriate agency if it is a contract trip.

According to the Americans with Disabilities Act:

- It is not discrimination for an entity to refuse to provide service to an individual with disabilities because that individual engages in violent, seriously disruptive, or illegal conduct, or represents a direct threat to the health or safety of others. However, an entity shall not refuse to provide service to an individual with disabilities solely because the individual's disability results in appearance or involuntary behavior that may offend, annoy, or inconvenience employees of the entity or other persons.
- Access to public transit is a civil right and inherent in any civil right is the opportunity for due process. This means providing an individual who is denied service the opportunity to contest that decision, correct the situation, and resume service. Service refusals cannot be permanent unless an individual continues to pose a direct threat to the health or safety of others. Riders must have the opportunity to subsequently present information to the transit agency, demonstrating that issues have been resolved or presenting options to mitigate any problems, to have service reinstated. This also means providing a rider required to travel with an attendant the opportunity to appeal such a requirement. As with service refusals, riders have the right to subsequently provide information demonstrating they have addressed the agency's concerns and can now travel without an attendant or propose other solutions that permit them to travel on their own.

**Remember, if you as the driver or passenger fail to document incidents, the incident never happened. Document, document, document!**

## Customer & Employee Complaints/Comments

Customers will be given the opportunity to file a complaint with the Agency if they feel treatment has been unfair. The agency will follow the following procedure. The procedure should be posted at the Agency and the Level 1-4 information filled out accordingly.

### SWHRA TRANSPORTATION PROCEDURE FOR ALL COMPLAINTS

- Level 1: Dispatcher ([731 989-5111](tel:7319895111) or [dispatch@swhra.org](mailto:dispatch@swhra.org))  
Complainant name and contact information:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- If not resolved, go to Level 2.
- Level 2: Dispatch Center Supervisor - [Tilda Pearson \(tpearson@swhra.org\)](mailto:tpearson@swhra.org)  
[731-989-5111, ext. 1171](tel:7319895111)  
OR Operations Supervisor - [Kevin Lipford \(klipford@swhra.org\)](mailto:klipford@swhra.org)  
[731-989-5111, ext. 1176](tel:7319895111)  
If not resolved, go to Level 3.
- Level 3: Transportation Director – [Diana Turner \(dturner@swhra.org\)](mailto:dturner@swhra.org)  
[731-989-5111, ext 1130](tel:7319895111)  
If not resolved, go to Level 4.
- Level 4: SWHRA Executive Director - [Mike Smith \(msmith@swhra.org\)](mailto:msmith@swhra.org)

- All levels will be handled the same.
- The complaint should include your name, address, telephone number and description of the complaint.
- The complainant will be contacted by phone within 3 days of the complaint.
- The complainant should be informed that they have the right to have a witness or representative present during the interview.
- The person presiding over the Level at which the complaint was received will review and submit the final report to the Level above them.
- The complainant has the right to appeal all written reports to SWHRA and TDOT.
- The appeal must be made in writing within (14) days of the receipt of the final report.
- Anyone suspecting the existence of discriminatory practices by this Agency should take the following steps in the order listed. Contact should be made in writing, by telephone or in person. The complaint should be made within 180 days from the date of the suspected discriminatory practice. All complaints/grievances will be acknowledged and investigated with results reported to the complainant. A log of all complaints should be copied and faxed to SWHRA and The Department of Transportation.

**Transportation employees and passengers should be aware that all complaints and/or comments are thoroughly researched. This procedure does not necessarily mean that an employee or a passenger has been deemed at fault. Management will look for patterns of events and take action as necessary.**

**Southwest Human Resource Agency Rural Public Transit Service  
Trip Evaluation Form**

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_ COUNTY: \_\_\_\_\_

DRIVER NAME (if known): \_\_\_\_\_ VAN #: \_\_\_\_\_

**A. About the Vehicle:**

1. Was the vehicle clean inside? \_\_\_\_\_ YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO
2. Was the vehicle clean outside? \_\_\_\_\_ YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO
3. Did the vehicle have the proper equipment for your needs (for example, wheelchair securements, seatbelt extension, etc.)?  
\_\_\_\_\_ YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO

If no, did you tell the dispatcher that you had special equipment needs when you requested transit service?

\_\_\_\_\_ YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO

**B. About the Driver:**

1. Was the driver dressed neatly and in uniform with his or her Agency identification badge properly displayed?  
\_\_\_\_\_ YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO
2. Did the driver have good hygiene? \_\_\_\_\_ YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO
3. Did the driver have a pleasant personality and good manners?  
\_\_\_\_\_ YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO
4. Did the driver provide needed assistance? \_\_\_\_\_ YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO
5. If not, did you ask for help? \_\_\_\_\_ YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO
6. Did your driver arrive at the time you were informed you would be picked up by a dispatcher or your driver?  
\_\_\_\_\_ YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO
7. Was the temperature inside the vehicle comfortable? \_\_\_\_\_ YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO
8. Was the radio playing too loudly? \_\_\_\_\_ YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO
9. Do you feel that all passengers were treated in the same way?  
\_\_\_\_\_ YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO

10. Did the dispatcher or driver explain the trip schedule? \_\_\_\_\_ YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO

11. Did the driver explain about the trip length? \_\_\_\_\_ YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO

12. Do you feel that the driver drove safely? \_\_\_\_\_ YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO

13. If no, did you feel unsafe because the driver was

\_\_\_\_\_ SPEEDING

\_\_\_\_\_ RAN A STOP LIGHT OR STOP SIGN

\_\_\_\_\_ ACCELERATED TO BEAT A TRAFFIC LIGHT

\_\_\_\_\_ WEAVED INTO AND OUT OF TRAFFIC

\_\_\_\_\_ OTHER, please explain \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

C. Overall Experience:

1. Would you use this rural public transit service again?

\_\_\_\_\_ YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO

a. If no, why not? \_\_\_\_\_

2. Would you recommend this transportation service to someone else?

\_\_\_\_\_ YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO

a. If no, why not? \_\_\_\_\_

3. Please rate your overall experience with Southwest Human Resource Agency:

\_\_\_\_\_ EXCELLANT \_\_\_\_\_ GOOD \_\_\_\_\_ FAIR \_\_\_\_\_ POOR

Comments and/or suggestions for improvements:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for riding with Southwest Human Resource Agency's Rural Public Transit service. We look forward to your next trip. Please fee free to contact the Transportation Director at 1-800-372-6013, Monday-Friday 8:00AM-4:30PM if you have other concerns or comments.