

# **Blue Rivers Area Agency on Aging Passenger Handbook**

## **BLUE RIVERS AREA AGENCY ON AGING MISSION STATEMENT**

The mission of Blue Rivers Area Agency on Aging is to assist older adults to remain independent in their homes. The mission of Blue Rivers Area Agency on Aging Transportation is to provide safe, efficient, and affordable public transportation to area residents.

## **GOALS OF PASSENGER HANDBOOK**

Blue Rivers Area Agency on Aging is a transportation provider for Gage, Jefferson, Thayer, Nemaha, and Otoe Counties in Southeast Nebraska. This service has a set of rules that passengers are required to follow. It is to the benefit and safety of all passengers that all rules outlined in this handbook are followed. Refusal to follow these rules will result in disciplinary action described in the VIOLATION OF RULES on page eight (8).

All rules will be enforced in a consistent and fair manner. If passengers perceive they have been treated unfairly, they have the option of filing a complaint with Blue Rivers Area Agency on Aging as outlined in the COMPLAINT/GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES on page nine (9).

## **TITLE VI NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC**

Blue Rivers Area Agency on Aging operates its programs and services without regard to race, color, or national origin in accordance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act. Any person who believes they have been aggrieved by an unlawful discriminatory practice under Title VI may file a complaint of discrimination by completing and submitting the agency's Title VI Discrimination Complaint Form. This form can be downloaded on the agency website at [www.BlueRiversAAA.org](http://www.BlueRiversAAA.org). Additionally, the form can be requested by contacting the agency at the address provided below. A telephone interpreter can be provided to assist persons of limited English proficiency. To request more information on the agency's Title VI obligations, or to obtain a detailed description of the agency's Title VI discrimination complaint procedures, please visit the agency website or contact the agency using the information provided. Title VI Discrimination Complaint Forms and additional information can also be obtained through the Nebraska Department of Transportation (NDOT) website at <https://www.nebraskatransit.com>, or by contacting NDOT using the information provided below. A telephone interpreter can be provided to assist persons of limited English proficiency.

Blue Rivers Area Agency on Aging  
Attn: Transportation Manager  
103 Eastside Blvd  
Beatrice, NE 68310  
402-223-1376 [doug.neemann@blueriversaaa.org](mailto:doug.neemann@blueriversaaa.org)

Nebraska Department of Transportation  
Attn: Title VI Transit Manager  
1500 Hwy 2  
Lincoln, NE 68502  
402.479.4694 [Kari.Ruse@Nebraska.gov](mailto:Kari.Ruse@Nebraska.gov)

Federal Transit Administration  
Office of Civil Rights  
Attn: Title VI Program Coordinator  
East Building, 5th Floor-TCR  
1200 New Jersey Ave., SE  
Washington, D.C. 20590

#### **NOTICE OF NONDISCRIMINATION AND COMPLAINT PROCEDURE**

Blue Rivers Area Agency on Aging complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and other federal equal opportunity laws. Blue Rivers Area Agency on Aging serves a diverse population of individuals with varying ages, physical challenges, economic status, and ethnic backgrounds. Blue Rivers Area Agency on Aging shall ensure that no person shall be excluded from the participation in, be denied the benefits of, or otherwise be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity undertaken by Blue Rivers Area Agency on Aging based solely on his/her, religion, sex, age, disability, or any other characteristic protected by laws. Title VI complaints of alleged discrimination and inquiries regarding the nondiscrimination policies of Blue Rivers Area Agency on Aging may be directed to Blue Rivers Area Agency on Aging, Transportation Director. Complaint forms are available at the Blue Rivers Area Agency on Aging Offices, located at 103 Eastside Blvd, Beatrice, NE 68310, all local Transit Offices and on each bus operated by Blue Rivers Public Transit.

#### **DESCRIPTION OF SERVICE**

Blue Rivers Area Agency on Aging operates in five counties in Southeast Nebraska on a demand-response, 24-hour advance reservation basis. Vehicles are generally stationed in county seat communities and offer routed transportation services to communities within the county on an as needed, requested basis. The system contracts with a private cab company in Beatrice, for off hours, weekend, and peak-time transportation services. Two routes provide transportation to Lincoln and Omaha weekly.

#### **SERVICE AREA**

Blue Rivers Area Agency on Aging provides public transportation services to people of all ages and abilities in the following areas: Gage, Jefferson, Nemaha, Otoe, and Thayer Counties in Southeast Nebraska.

## **DAYS AND HOURS OF SERVICE**

Blue Rivers Area Agency on Aging provides transportation Monday-Friday, excluding holidays. Contact the transportation office nearest you for information regarding specific schedules.

### **Gage County**

Beatrice: 402-223-1357 8:00 am – 12:00 pm & 12:30 pm – 4:30 pm

Wymore: 402-645-3525 9:00 am – 12:00 pm & 1:00 pm – 4:00 pm

### **Jefferson County**

Fairbury: 402-729-6475 8:00 am – 12:00 pm & 1:00 pm – 5:00 pm

### **Nemaha County**

Auburn: 402-274-5365 8:00 am – 12:00 pm & 1:00 pm – 5:00 pm

### **Otoe County**

Nebraska City: 402-873-3005 8:00 am – 12:00 pm & 1:00 pm – 5:00 pm

Syracuse: 402-269-5129 8:00 am – 12:30 pm & 1:00 pm – 4:30 pm

### **Thayer County**

Hebron: 402-768-6052 8:45 am – 12:00 pm & 1:00 pm – 3:45 pm

Public transportation services are not provided in the evenings, on Saturday or Sunday, or the following holidays: New Year's Day, Martin Luther King Jr. Day, President's Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Columbus Day, Veterans' Day, Thanksgiving Day and the day after Thanksgiving, and Christmas Day, or any day declared a holiday by the Governor of the State of Nebraska or the President of the United States.

Occasionally, the Blue Rivers Area Agency on Aging Executive Director will temporarily halt service due to inclement weather or hold meetings which will close transportation services for one day.

## **FARES AND PAYMENTS**

Please check with the transportation office nearest to you for the latest information on fares.

**Cash Fares-** All rides must be paid for at the time of service. Use exact payment. Drivers do not carry money to make change.

**Punch Cards-** Punch cards are available for purchase for frequent passengers. Punch cards are available at the local transportation offices and can be purchased on request from drivers. Punch cards are not refundable and cannot be transferred to another person.

## **SERVICE TYPE**

Demand response, 24-hour advance reservations requested. Open to the general public. People of all ages and abilities are welcome to ride.

## **SCHEDULING RIDES**

Contact the Agency's transportation office nearest to your location during office hours to schedule your ride. Rides should be scheduled at least 24 hours prior to service. Schedulers will make every effort to schedule your ride. If there is a conflict, an alternate time will be offered for service.

Information necessary to schedule your service includes passenger name and phone number, the address for pick-up and address for drop-off and desired times for service.

### **PASSENGER READINESS**

Passengers should be prepared for transit vehicles to arrive 15 minutes before or 15 minutes after your scheduled pick-up time. Schedule rides accordingly to arrive at your destination for appointments.

### **CANCELLATION OF RIDES AND NO-SHOWS**

Passengers are encouraged to cancel scheduled pick-ups in a timely manner. Cancellations can be made by contacting the scheduler during office hours Monday through Friday. Cancellations should be made 24 hours in advance or as early as possible.

A “no-show” is defined as any instance in which a passenger does not keep his/her scheduled ride and fails to notify the scheduler at least 1 hour prior to scheduled pick-up time. Upon arrival at the scheduled pick-up point, the driver will wait for the passenger for five minutes. After five minutes, the driver will continue on his/her route and the ride will be marked as a no-show.

### **DOOR-TO-DOOR SERVICE**

Blue Rivers Area Agency on Aging provides “door-to-door” service. The following policies further define this service:

1. Private Homes:
  - Passengers must enter and depart the transit vehicle at the designated pick-up and drop-off times and scheduled locations.
  - Drivers will not enter private homes for any reason.
  - Drivers can assist passengers from the door of pick up location, to and from the bus, and to the door of the destination if requested.
  - Drivers are not permitted to lift passengers.
  - Drivers are not permitted to maneuver a mobility device up or down stairs.
2. Business/Medical Facilities/Public Buildings:
  - Drivers may assist passengers in to and from the inside door. Due to extreme temperatures in entryways, drivers may assist passengers through the second entry door when necessary. Drivers will not assist passengers further into the building.
  - When picking up passengers from a business or medical facility, drivers may go through the first door. Drivers may go through a second door, if necessary, but only as requested.
  - It is the individual’s personal care attendants’ responsibility to ensure that passengers are waiting inside the door for their ride.
  - Drivers will not enter nursing homes, medical facilities, shopping centers or businesses to locate passengers. Passengers must be waiting at the designated pickup

point at least 15 minutes before their scheduled pick-up time or the no-show policy will apply.

### **TRANSPORTING PASSENGERS WHO ARE NOT WELL**

Blue Rivers Area Agency on Aging is not an ambulance service. If a driver sees that a passenger is too ill to ride the bus safely, the driver will contact the scheduler and an ambulance will be called to transport the passenger.

### **PERSONAL CARE ATTENDANTS**

Special needs passengers boarding the bus may be required to be accompanied by a personal care attendant. Personal care attendants are persons who are directly involved in the mobility assistance of the passenger and will be allowed to ride free of charge while accompanying the passenger. Personal Care Attendants generally assist the passenger with mobility, disorientation, non-comprehension, and communication impairment. Personal care attendants are required to specifically assist the passenger.

This assistance includes, but is not limited to, the following duties:

Assisting the passenger from his/her door to the bus and back

- Opening doors
- Pushing wheelchairs to and from the vehicle
- Transfer assistance from a mobility device to a seat on the bus
- Carrying packages
- Communicating with the driver (if passenger is unable)

### **TRANSPORTING SERVICE ANIMALS & ACCOMODATION OF OTHER ANIMALS**

Blue Rivers Area Agency on Aging allows service animals to accompany owners as per the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990. Service animals are individually trained to perform tasks for people with disabilities. The transit driver may ask if an animal is a service animal and what task(s) the animal has been trained to perform. The driver cannot ask for a demonstration of the animal performing the task or ask about the person's disability.

Under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, "comfort," "therapy" or "emotional support animals" do not meet the definition of a service animal.

Animals other than service animals as described above may be allowed to ride the bus on a case by case basis under physical control which may include leash and collar or a carrying cage. Animals who are dangerous, noisy, dirty, or have odor issues will not be allowed on the bus. Contact the bus office nearest to your location with questions.

### **PASSENGER SAFETY AND SECURITY**

It is **STRONGLY RECOMMENDED** that all passengers wear an approved safety device and/or seatbelt while riding on the bus. Passengers utilizing mobility devices will be required to have their mobility device properly secured in the bus if at all possible.

A passenger who cannot enter the bus using the stairs, but who does not use a wheelchair, will enter the bus using the wheelchair lift.

Drivers have the discretion to assign seats and determine wheelchair placement when necessary for the efficiency and/or safety of the passengers.

The driver may recommend that a passenger transfer from his or her mobility device into a vehicle seat. In this instance, the passenger has the final decision as to whether a transfer is appropriate. State laws apply to child passengers. Blue Rivers Area Agency on Aging does NOT provide child car seats. Parents or guardians are responsible for providing the appropriate safety seat, based on the age and weight of the child.

### **GENERAL PASSENGER RULES**

The general rules listed below are not intended to be all-inclusive but are considered a guideline for proper passenger behavior.

1. To protect the safety of the driver, a passenger who cannot enter the bus using the stairs, but who does not use a wheelchair, will enter the bus using the wheelchair lift.
2. Passengers who are unable to be transported safely due to illness, physical or emotional reasons will not be transported. An ambulance will be called to transport the person.
3. Passengers shall be considerate of other passengers and the driver at all times. Verbal threats, use of foul language, teasing, touching, hitting, tripping, shoving, kicking, spitting, horseplay, or any other improper or disruptive behavior will not be tolerated.
4. Passengers are not allowed to demand additional stops that have not been previously scheduled. The driver and/or scheduler may accommodate extra stops if the transit schedule allows.
5. Any weapon or other items that the driver considers a safety risk to other passengers are not permitted on the bus.
6. To protect the safety of other passengers and the driver, passengers who have bowel or bladder incontinence issues that have resulted in soiled clothing will be allowed to ride the bus but use a seat protective item such as a Chux® brand disposable incontinence pad.
7. To protect the safety of other passengers and the driver, passengers who are under the influence of alcohol or drugs will not be allowed to ride the bus. Use of tobacco products is not allowed on the bus, including vaporizers and e-cigarettes.
8. Passengers may not possess open alcoholic beverage containers, drugs, or drug paraphernalia on the bus. Unopened alcoholic beverage containers are allowed if purchased by a legal aged adult for personal use. Beverages should be kept in a shopping bag and not be in plain view of other passengers.
9. While waiting for the bus at the designated pick-up point, passengers shall stay off the traveled roadway at all times. Passengers shall not walk along the side, directly in front of, or behind the bus for any reason. The bus must come to a complete stop before passengers' board.

10. Passengers shall wait until the bus has come to a complete stop before disembarking. All passengers will remain seated while the bus is in motion and for the duration of their ride.
11. Passengers shall obey the driver willingly and report any problems to the driver or scheduler promptly. If an emergency evacuation becomes necessary, follow the driver's instructions.
12. All passengers must wear a shirt, pants and some form of footwear. For the safety of the driver and other passengers, no roller skates, roller blades, ice skates, etc., are to be worn on the bus.
13. Eating or drinking beverages on the bus is not permitted. Passengers shall assist in keeping the bus clean by using sanitary practices and throwing away any trash. Any offensive odors to others or any type of unsanitary practices are prohibited.
14. Passengers will use headphones with radios, iPods, MP3 players or any other audio device to avoid distracting other passengers or the driver.

### **DANGEROUS WEAPONS**

Dangerous weapons - concealed or unconcealed – are not permitted on buses or in transportation offices. This includes weapons carried by people who possess a conceal/carry permit. A dangerous weapon includes guns, knives or swords with a blade 4 inches or longer, explosives, chemicals, or any other device capable of producing death, harm to person or property, or bodily injury. Violations will result in following the disciplinary steps outlined in VIOLATION OF RULES.

Depending on the situation, Blue Rivers Area Agency on Aging reserves the right to refuse rides to any passenger immediately. Any act or threat of violence will result in immediate termination of service, and may be reported to law enforcement.

### **CHILD RIDERS**

Blue Rivers Area Agency on Aging has established rules, roles, and responsibilities for the transportation of children:

1. All children must follow the transit rules, regulations, and policies. Violations of these rules by either the child or parent may lead to service suspension.
2. No child under the age of three (3) is permitted to ride alone. A fare will be collected starting at age three (3). A child under the age of three (3) can ride free of charge if accompanied by a parent or guardian. The parent or guardian is responsible for providing the appropriate safety seat, based on the age and weight of the child.
3. Children will be transported only to the destination scheduled by the parent or guardian.
4. Children are not allowed to change scheduled rides.
5. Parents or guardians must notify the scheduler of the child's age at the time of trip scheduling. If a parent or guardian makes multiple stops, the child will only be charged for one round trip (2 one-way trips). The parent or guardian will be charged for each stop.
6. If no adult is at the destination location to accept the child, the child will NOT be left at the drop off location. Drivers will be instructed to deliver the child to the transportation office, and the parents will be notified.

## **PACKAGES AND PERSONAL ITEMS**

Passengers should limit their carry-on packages to not more than the equivalent of five brown paper grocery sacks or ten plastic shopping bags per person. A personal care attendant may travel to assist with the loading/unloading of packages. Oversized packages will be refused for transport. No one package shall weigh more than 20 pounds.

An oxygen tank must be portable and secured in some fashion so it cannot fall or roll. The tank can be secured with a seat belt or tank holder.

Drivers are not responsible for lost, stolen or damaged items.

## **SEVERE WEATHER**

Passengers are responsible for snow removal so their driveways and sidewalks are accessible to buses and drivers. If a passenger schedules service knowing that snow has not been removed from the path between the door and pick-up location, the trip will be considered a no-show and the no-show policy will apply

If extreme weather conditions make travel unsafe, services will be discontinued until conditions are more favorable. Passengers with scheduled trips will be notified as soon as possible. Routine appointments (medical, hair, etc.) are not considered as necessary during severe weather.

Winter Riding Tips:

- Be aware of weather conditions that could affect transit services.
- Allow extra time for the bus to reach your location.
- Be prepared for sudden stops while riding the bus.
- At all times, watch your step, wear your seatbelt, and wear appropriate winter clothing.

## **VIOLATION OF RULES**

To protect the safety of other passengers and the driver, any violation of the General Passenger Rules or any other rules in this handbook, will follow the disciplinary steps below:

First Offense: A verbal warning will be issued by the driver and/or dispatcher.

Second Offense: A letter will be sent by the Transportation Manager or Agency Director which will result in rides being discontinued for one month.

Third Offense: A letter will be sent by the Transportation Manager or Agency Director which will result in rides being discontinued for 6 months.

Fourth Offense: A letter will be sent by the Transportation Manager or Agency Director which will result in rides being discontinued for 1 year.

Fifth Offense: A letter will be sent by the Transportation Manager or Agency Director which will result in rides being discontinued indefinitely.

Depending on the situation, Blue Rivers Area Agency on Aging reserves the right to refuse rides to any passenger immediately. Any act or threat of violence will result in immediate termination of service, and may be reported to law enforcement. A letter will be sent by the Transportation Manager or Agency Director describing the reasons for termination of service.



## **REASONABLE MODIFICATION/ACCOMODATION**

Department of Transportation (DOT) guidelines require Blue Rivers Area Agency on Aging will make reasonable modifications/accommodations to rules, policies, practices, and procedures to avoid discrimination and ensure that programs are accessible to individuals with disabilities. To request an accommodation, please contact Blue Rivers Area Agency on Aging, Transportation Manager listed below for more information or to request a complaint form.

Blue Rivers Area Agency on Aging  
Attn: Transportation Manager  
103 Eastside Blvd  
Beatrice, NE 68310  
402-223-1376 [doug.neemann@blueriversaaa.org](mailto:doug.neemann@blueriversaaa.org)

## **COMPLAINT/GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES**

As a recipient of State and Federal funds administered by the Nebraska Department of Roads, Blue Rivers Area Agency on Aging hereby attests that it will abide by the eligibility guidelines and service priorities as stipulated by all applicable laws, rules and regulations. The process for submitting a Title VI complaint is outlined in the Non-discrimination section of this handbook. For all other complaints, contact the following for additional information and a copy of the complaint form:

Blue Rivers Area Agency on Aging  
Attn: Transportation Manager  
103 Eastside Blvd  
Beatrice, NE 68310  
402-223-1376 [doug.neemann@blueriversaaa.org](mailto:doug.neemann@blueriversaaa.org)

Upon receipt of the complaint, the Blue Rivers Area Agency on Aging representative will request written detail of the complaint or take an oral statement from the complainant. The complaint should include all details regarding the situation including date, time, driver, problem, etc. All complaints or statements should be signed or, if by telephone, the actual complainant should be the individual calling. Complaints received by telephone will be investigated and resolved as soon as possible. A written response will not be required if complainant is satisfied with the resolution. Upon completion of the investigation of a written complaint, a decision regarding the complaint will be rendered and a written response issued to the complainant no later than 10 days after receipt of the complaint. A copy of the complaint and action taken will be forwarded to the Nebraska Department of Transportation, Transit Section, and a copy will be kept on file at 103 Eastside Blvd, Beatrice, Nebraska.