

Passenger Tips – The Rules of the Road

MOTA bus operators and staff want to be sure that you, our passengers, know how best to use our services to meet your needs, and to take you to and from where you want to go. We strive to provide public transportation services in a safe, effective and affordable manner. Being familiar with and remembering the following basic tools or tips for riding one of our vehicles will help us accomplish our goal of providing you with our best customer service; and it will help you to have a comfortable, pleasant and trouble free trip. Thank you for traveling with us.

- Please be prepared to board the bus at the designated pickup time and location. Our bus operators are allowed to wait for three minutes. Waiting time will be extended for customers with disabilities.
- Prior to getting on the bus, wait for the bus to come to a complete stop, for the door to open fully, and for exiting passengers to leave the bus before entering the bus.
- Have the exact fare, tickets, or tokens ready when getting on the bus. Bus operators cannot make change. Tokens are available for purchase from the bus operator, the dispatch office, and online at www.motaonline.net.
- You may bring up to four (4) packages, not more than forty (40) pounds each, on the bus. For safety reasons, additional packages will not be allowed.
- Certified service animals are permitted to accompany you on the bus. Pets are permitted on the bus in approved enclosed containers.
- Take a seat as soon as possible, and do not change seats once seated. Allow people using mobility devices to board first. Seating is provided on a first come, first served basis. Seating is neither assigned nor reserved. When available, Priority Seating will be offered to customers who are senior citizens, disabled, or expectant mothers.
- If traveling with an infant, we recommend that you hold your baby on your lap for safety purposes. If traveling with a stroller, please fold it up and do your best to keep it out of the way of other passengers.
- If you must stand, hold on to the railings or seat backs. Always stand behind the yellow standee line located at the front of the aisle behind the bus operator.
- Plan for a longer trip than you would in an automobile, as the bus may need to make several stops.
- Shoes and shirts must be worn at all times.
- Radios or other electronic devices may be used only with headphones and at a low volume so as not to disturb other passengers.
- Vandalism or graffiti to seats and other portions of the bus is prohibited, and could be subject to a fine and/or prosecution.
- Stay clear of the doorways and stairwell and never put arms, hands, or head outside windows. Please keep your feet off the seats and out of the aisle. Do not take more than one seat.
- If you have questions while you are on the bus, the bus operator will gladly help, but try not to distract the bus operator while the bus is in motion.
- Please dispose of garbage before exiting the bus. We appreciate your help in keeping our vehicles clean.
- Please remain seated until the bus comes to a complete stop. For your own safety and the safety of those behind you, hold on to the hand rails until you clear the door and then move away from the bus as soon as possible.
- If you need any medical or other assistance while riding the bus, the bus operator can use the two-way radio to get help immediately (police, ambulance, etc.).
- If you would like assistance in learning how to ride the bus, call us and we will be happy to assist or accompany you.
- To avoid being charged for a no-show, please notify the dispatch office as soon as possible if you need to cancel your ride. Please refer to the MOTA No-Show Policy below for details.
- We will make every effort to provide service in adverse weather conditions. Delays and cancellations are possible.

- Eating, drinking, smoking, objectionable odors, vulgar language, threatening or intimidating behavior, destruction of property, illegal substances, lewd or indecent behavior, and potentially dangerous items are prohibited on all MOTA vehicles. Causing a disturbance or harassing other passengers or the bus operator is strictly prohibited. Fighting, throwing things, pushing, shouting, rough behavior, and vulgar language are all prohibited.
- MOTA reserves the right to refuse service when necessary.

Passengers and Bus Safety

Protecting the safety and security of our passengers is and always will be a top priority for MOTA. The need to be safe as we travel is a daily concern for all of us, and it is one that should be approached in a responsible and measured way. To help us at MOTA ensure that our passengers are secure and can respond prudently to emergencies or possible threats which may arise while traveling with us, we ask that passengers pay attention to their surroundings, and take the following steps if necessary.

Be aware of:

- Suspicious people, or unusual activity; unattended bags, packages, boxes, backpacks, etc.
- Smoke or odd smells.
- Suspicious behavior or disorderly conduct.

What should you do if you notice something different than usual?

- If you see someone leave a package, politely bring it to their attention.
- If you see a bag or package left unattended, stay away from it, and tell the bus operator immediately.
- Listen to the instructions of the bus operator.
- Familiarize yourself with emergency exits on the bus.
- Stay calm and orderly.

If you witness an emergency while riding the bus and have a cell phone, call 911. If you notice an unusual package on the bus, do not use your cell phone on the bus or in the immediate area of a bus, as this could be dangerous.

How to Be a Safe Pedestrian Around the Bus

Most drivers know to allow extra space between themselves and buses and trucks. These large vehicles need room to move in traffic, and it is wise to give them a wide berth. But all too often when we are not in a car this good sense does not carry over to when we are walking close to large vehicles. The result of this inattention can be serious. As pedestrians, we put ourselves at risk when we do not pay attention while crossing in front of transit or school buses. Sadly, a high percentage of single-vehicle fatal bus accidents involve pedestrians. The need to rethink our walking habits should be very clear.

We can help avoid trouble when walking near buses by keeping in mind that the bus operator has several blind spots, or certain areas around the vehicle that the bus operator simply cannot see, even with specialized side view mirrors that buses are equipped with for safety. As pedestrians, we need to do our part by paying attention in those situations when we find ourselves walking near buses and other large vehicles.

Don't have a blind spot when it comes to walking safely near buses. Always keep in mind the following important points.

- When you leave the bus, move away from the bus as soon as possible. If you can touch the bus, you are too close.
- Remember to wait until the bus leaves the bus stop before trying to cross the street or roadway.
- Do not cross in front of, or behind, a bus stopped at a bus stop or any stop where passengers may enter or exit the bus.

- Do not walk or cross streets or roadways between stopped buses because approaching drivers may not see you in time to stop.
- Do not allow children to play near buses, or to ever retrieve anything that falls underneath a bus.
- If you drop something near a bus, never try to pick it up because it is quite likely the bus operator cannot see you. Retrieve it after the bus leaves the stop.
- As the bus moves away from the curb, the bus operator's attention will be directed at merging with vehicle traffic, so stay off the roadway and away from the bus until the bus leaves the stop.

No-Show Policy

This policy establishes the administrative process that will be followed by MOTA for customers who establish a pattern or practice of missing scheduled trips. This behavior is called a "No-Show;" and the following definitions of, and internal procedures for, this activity apply to all specialized service and demand-response trips, including subscription trips, and grouped trips arranged by the passenger or someone on the passenger's behalf.

The No-Show policy and procedures will be applied when the following occurs:

- MOTA does not receive a one-hour cancellation notice of a trip prior to the arrival of a bus.
- The passenger is not at the requested pick-up address.
- The passenger is at the pick-up address, but decides not to go once the bus arrives.
- The passenger is at the pick-up address within the pickup window, but is unavailable to board within five (5) minutes of the time the bus arrives. Waiting time will be extended for passengers with disabilities.
- No one is at home or at the drop-off point to receive returning passengers who cannot be left alone.

The No-Show policy and procedures will not be applied to any trip missed by a passenger due to MOTA error or circumstances which are not under the control of the passenger.

MOTA error, which may not be counted as a no-show, includes but is not limited to:

- The bus arriving late, after the pickup window.
- The bus arriving early, before the pickup window, and the passenger was not ready to go.
- The bus never arriving.
- The bus going to the wrong location.
- A bus operator not following correct procedures to locate a passenger.
- A passenger cancelling in a timely way but the cancellation was not recorded correctly or was not transmitted to the bus operator in time.

Circumstances that may be beyond the passenger's control include but are not limited to:

- Family emergency
- Illness that precluded the passenger from calling to cancel.
- Personal attendant or another party who did not arrive on time to assist the passenger.
- The passenger was inside calling to check the ride status and was on hold for extended time.
- The passenger's appointment ran long and did not provide opportunity for the passenger to cancel in a timely way.
- Another party cancelled the passenger's appointment.
- The passenger's mobility aid failed.
- A sudden turn for the worse in a passenger with a variable condition.

- Adverse weather impacting the passenger's travel plans, precluding the passenger from cancelling in a timely way.

A no-show beyond the control of the passenger will not be counted as a no-show. Passengers are encouraged to contact MOTA if a no-show was beyond the passenger's control.

If a passenger incurring a no-show is scheduled for subsequent trips the same day, those trips will not be automatically cancelled unless the passenger contacts MOTA and confirms that the scheduled trips are to be cancelled. If a passenger is taken to a destination, the passenger will not be left stranded, even if the passenger incurs a no-show for the scheduled return trip. Return service will be provided as soon as possible, but without a guaranteed on-time window.

Bus operators should call the dispatch office after waiting two (2) minutes. The dispatcher will attempt to telephone the passenger. Bus operators are not permitted to leave a scheduled stop before being authorized to do so by the dispatcher. Bus operators are not to return for passengers who miss the bus, unless instructed to do so by the dispatcher. Another ride may be scheduled when another bus is available, and a no-show fare will apply. All no-shows will be documented by dispatch. In the case of a no-show, the passenger must pay a no-show fare before riding again.

If a pattern or practice of missing scheduled trips is identified, the passenger will be suspended from service. A letter will be mailed to the passenger by certified, return receipt mail, notifying the passenger of the proposed service suspension. The letter will contain the nature and basis of the proposed suspension; the length of the proposed suspension; when the proposed suspension will begin, and when service will resume. Passengers involved will always be notified in writing of any decisions affecting their service. A fine or financial penalty may be offered as an option instead of a suspension. Passengers are encouraged to contact MOTA if a listed no-show was beyond the passenger's control. The passenger has the right to appeal a suspension.

Young Children Policy

MOTA provides open door transportation throughout Mecosta and Osceola counties, and is committed to providing public transportation services in a safe, effective, and affordable manner to every passenger. To that end, there is no upper age limitation for MOTA passengers. Since young children have special needs, the policy for young children is as follows:

- Children four (4) years of age and under may ride only when accompanied by a parent or a designated responsible adult and must be secured in a child safety seat as required by Michigan law. Providing the seat and securement of the seat and the child is the responsibility of the parent or the designated responsible adult.
- Children ages four (4) to sixteen (16) must be properly protected by a safety belt as required by Michigan law.
- When scheduling unaccompanied transportation for children of elementary school age or younger, the parent or the responsible adult must provide more than one adult name and telephone number at which the parent or the responsible adult can be contacted in the event that there is no responsible adult available to receive the child from the MOTA bus at the child's destination. If, in the judgment of MOTA, a child of elementary school age or younger cannot be safely left at the child's destination, the telephone numbers will be called in order to get alternate destination instructions. If no one can be reached at those telephone numbers, the child will be transported to the nearest police station.

Passenger Misconduct Policy

It is MOTA's policy to provide safe and efficient service, and to be reasonable in responding to the behavior and needs of our passengers. But when passengers abuse the service, and create hazards that can adversely affect operations, boundaries on allowable conduct become necessary and prudent. For the safety and comfort of all passengers and employees on MOTA vehicles guidelines have been established that will

be applied when a passenger's misconduct jeopardizes MOTA's bus operations. As a recipient of federal funding, MOTA is required to provide the public with its ridership policies. This policy defines the general categories of passenger misconduct, its consequences for the customer, and the process to appeal a service suspension.

Passenger Misconduct Behavior

Hazardous Conduct is defined as any act that creates the potential for injury or death to any passenger, bus operator or members of the public, including passengers under the influence of a controlled substance.

Abusive Conduct is defined as any offensive, threatening act or behavior which infringes upon the comfort or safety of other passengers, impairs the ability of the bus operator to transport passengers safely, or invades the privacy rights of others such as touching another person in a rude, insolent, angry or inappropriate manner. Harassment of any kind, verbal or physical, will not be tolerated. Examples also include profanity, screaming, hitting, and the use of electronic devices without headphones.

Unintentional Misconduct

Any act that would qualify as misconduct, but is the direct and immediate consequence of a passenger's disability, such as abusive language that is a result of Tourette's Syndrome or socially unacceptable behavior brought on by a mental illness, shall be considered unintentional misconduct. Unintentional misconduct shall be addressed in the following manner.

A passenger may be subject to any reasonable accommodation requirement that will ensure the safety of all passengers and operators including being required to ride with a personal care attendant, and/or being required to attend training or receive additional counseling in proper transit conduct. The accommodation requirement may last for a time period sufficient to allow the passenger to learn appropriate behavior. The accommodation requirement may be permanent if the conduct is beyond the passenger's control. If a passenger commits an act of misconduct that the passenger has learned to be inappropriate, that act is considered intentional.

Consequences of Misconduct

A first offense will result in a warning or a suspension of service up to five (5) days. A second offense within a one-year period will result in suspension of service for up to thirty (30) days. A third offense within a one-year period will result in suspension of service for up to one year.

In cases of suspension of service, a certified letter will be mailed, notifying the passenger of the proposed service suspension. The letter will contain the nature and basis of the proposed suspension; the length of the proposed suspension; when the proposed suspension will begin, and when service will resume. Passengers involved will always be notified in writing of any decisions affecting their service. The passenger has the right to appeal a suspension through an appeal procedure explained below.

Appeal Procedure for Service Suspension

A passenger who receives a letter that suspension of service will be imposed may request an appeal hearing by sending a formal written request to the Executive Director of MOTA within ten (10) working days following the date of the suspension notice. The passenger who requests an appeal hearing will continue to receive service during the appeal process. In the event the passenger fails to request an appeal within the ten (10) day period, the suspension will become effective.

The appeal hearing will be scheduled within ten (10) working days of a formal request, and will be limited to reviewing the facts and application of the policy. The passenger or the passenger's representative may present arguments and information defending his/her position in person, in writing, or by telephone. If the passenger needs transportation to attend the appeal hearing, MOTA will provide this transportation at no charge to the passenger.

The passenger will be notified of the appeal hearing decision, in writing, within ten (10) working days of the decision date.



Mecosta Osceola Transit Authority

Passenger Handbook

Mecosta Osceola Transit Authority

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