

Policy Statement 173 Fixed Route Transit Service Standards

Prepared by: Ray S. Boylston, Transit Services Administrator
Supersedes: May 22, 2014
Adopted by Council: September 20, 2016
Effective: October 1, 2016

PURPOSE:

The Town of Cary is a direct recipient of federal transit grants from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA); therefore, the Town is required to comply with various nondiscrimination laws and regulations, including Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. FTA requires that all fixed route providers of public transportation adopt the following system-wide service standards and policies to ensure service design and operations practices do not result in discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin. The adoption of this policy statement by Council ensures compliance with these requirements.

COVERAGE:

This policy shall be applicable to all activities, services, and operations of the Town's fixed route public transit system.

BACKGROUND:

Service Availability and Operating Environment

Routes are operated primarily along major arterials, but may run in other locations that are suitable for operation of buses if needed, particularly on end of the route areas to turn the vehicle around for inbound returns. Buses may have stops located within shopping centers for passenger convenience and utilize areas where shelters already exist, minimizing the number of freestanding bus shelters provided for passengers. For stops on private property, the Town will ensure that location has been approved by private property owners.

Service Area

Service coverage is defined as the area within ½ mile walking distance for the nearest bus route corridor. To the extent feasible, transit will serve as many major employers, medical offices, densely populated housing areas, and public housing as deemed feasible within the Town limits. Fixed routes may operate outside the Town limits with Council approval. Any contract services provided for the regional transit provider must ensure that all costs associated with such contract services (contract rate, fuel, administrative support time, etc.) are in the reimbursement rate charged by the Town to the regional provider.

Service Standards

Hours of Operation and Vehicle Headways

Current hours of operation and service levels can be found by referencing the Town's website. The hours of operation of paratransit (Door to Door) services will be the same days and hours as the fixed route service. The Town will strive to maintain 30 minute frequency, or "headway", on all linear fixed routes between 6 a.m. and 9 a.m. and 3 p.m. and 8 p.m. Monday through Saturday and 60 minute headways on all fixed loop routes. Any future service hours expansion later than 8 p.m. or on Sundays will operate on hourly headways.

Service Availability During Inclement Weather

In consultation with the Town's contractor for public transit services, transit staff will assess all instances of inclement weather and make adjustments to service hours and frequency as needed with priority placed on passenger and driver safety. All changes in service during these times will be communicated with the Public Information Office and included on all passenger alert technologies and web sites. Staff may determine that service needs to be delayed, suspended, or frequency of service adjusted during inclement weather. Every effort will be made by the Town to also provide FTA required paratransit service when determined safe to operate.

Passenger Amenities Criteria

Bus Stop Placement

In order to provide a safe environment for passenger boarding and alighting, bus stop locations will be formally designated. Bus stop signs, consistent with the regionally approved standard, will be used at these established locations. The spacing of the stops will vary by location, but as a general rule of thumb, will be spaced at least 800 feet apart. There may be some instances where additional stops are needed for transfer purposes. Prior to the placement of any bus stops, transit staff in consultation with the NCDOT, service contractor and other Town staff will assess and reach consensus the location to ensure the safety of drivers, passengers, and the general public. The Town will ensure that all new stops and passenger facilities meet Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements.

Shelter Placement

Town staff will utilize Automated Passenger Counter (APC) data to determine those bus stops that meet the minimum threshold of 20 passengers boarding a day for requiring a passenger shelter. Town staff will analyze this data on a quarterly basis and update our priority list. The Town will plan for the procurement and installation of passenger shelters and amenities (trash receptacles, solar lighting, and bike racks) for stops meeting this threshold. The Town will maximize the use of federal and state funding when possible to offset the cost to the Town.

Bench Placement

There may be some instances where bus stops do not require a passenger shelter, but necessitate the consideration of a bench-only. In these instances where bus stop usage is between 10-20 passenger boardings, but there is great potential for increased ridership, transit staff may opt to use a bench in lieu of a shelter for passenger comfort and to attract new riders. All bench sites will require trash receptacles and bike racks

Vehicle Loads and Assignment Standards

Vehicle Loads

Maximum loading standards will establish a goal that all passengers will have a seat for their trip. If routes where passengers exceed the number of seats available, then an additional transit vehicle, known as a "tripper", may be dispatched to meet their trip need. When staff determines that one or more routes are beginning to exceed the seating capacity on 30% or more of the trips provided on a given route or a load factor of 1.30, then staff will develop budget recommendations to the Town Manager for consideration of procurement of vehicles with additional seating capacity to meet this demand. Passengers, who are physically able, always have the option of using grab bars and standing when seats are not available.

Vehicle Assignments

The Town will assign vehicles to routes based on the ridership demands for each particular route. Larger vehicles will be assigned to those routes with the highest demand. The Town will be consistent in ensuring that all vehicles assigned will be in excellent working order and condition regardless of the route it serves.

Fixed Route On-Time Performance Standard

The Town's goal is to provide an average system-wide on-time performance of 90% for fixed route service. The Town defines on-time performance as arriving and departing stops within five minutes of the route timetables. If route(s) are not meeting the on-time performance goal, then staff will analyze the

route(s) to develop strategies to improve it. Staff will provide recommendations to Council for their approval as needed.