



AdVANtage Rider Guide

**OHIO VALLEY REGIONAL
TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY
and
EASTERN OHIO REGIONAL TRANSIT
AUTHORITY**

**21 South Huron Street
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**EFFECTIVE DATE
March 10, 2021**

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INTRODUCTION

The Ohio Valley Regional Transportation Authority and the Eastern Ohio Regional Transit Authority (OVRTA/EORTA) are the public transportation providers for the following communities:

Bellaire	McMechen
Benwood	Rayland
Bethlehem	Shadyside
Blaine	Tiltonsville
Bridgeport	Wheeling
Brookside	Wolfhurst
Lansing	Yorkville
Martins Ferry	

Our goal is to provide the best possible transportation service. Our vehicles are clean, safe, comfortable and well-maintained, and our drivers are trained to serve you.

OVRTA/EORTA are pleased to provide for the public transportation needs of all the area's residents and visitors, including those with disabilities. To accomplish this goal, OVRTA/EORTA operate 2 services:

- Accessible bus routes
- AdVANtage service

Buses on routes are lift- or ramp-equipped so they are accessible for individuals who use a wheelchair or cannot climb stairs. Our drivers receive special training in assisting people with disabilities. Drivers announce stops at key destinations and upon request to help passengers find their stops. You may travel with your respirator, concentrator, and portable oxygen. Service animals are welcome on-board buses. Our goal is to make our bus routes accessible to and convenient for everyone.

AdVANtage provides comparable service to our route service for individuals whose disabling conditions prevent them from riding routes. Service is provided according to the guidelines set forth by the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) and as outlined in this guide. Persons who use this service must be certified as ADA paratransit eligible for all or some of their trip needs. The certification is valid for 5 years at which time we will ask you to reapply.

If you have any questions regarding this guide or our services, please call us at **(304) 232-1744**.

APPLICATION PROCESS

Any individual wishing to apply for AdvANTage eligibility may:

- Download the application from our website, www.ovrta.org
- Pick up an application at our office at 21 South Huron Street, Wheeling
- Call **(304) 232-1744** from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, to obtain an application by mail

Each applicant must provide the name and address of a treating professional who is familiar with the applicant's disabling condition, and how that condition prevents the applicant from riding routes. A treating professional includes a physician, physician's assistant, nurse practitioner, chiropractor, psychiatrist or psychologist, social worker, naturopathic physician, licensed clinical behavioral health practitioner, or physical or occupational therapist. OVRTA/EORTA may mail a Professional Verification Form to the treating professional for additional information regarding the functional limitations due to the applicant's disability.

Under the ADA, the standard for determining eligibility is not whether a disabling condition exists, but whether (or under what circumstances) the applicant's disabling condition prevents him or her from riding routes. In some cases, eligibility is established for certain circumstances only.

After both the properly completed application form AND the Professional Verification Form have been received, a decision will be made within 21 days. If you are granted less than unconditional eligibility, the letter will state the reason for the determination.

If you are dissatisfied with your eligibility determination, you may appeal within 60 days of the date of the letter notifying you of your eligibility status. Please review the section on how to file an appeal later in this document.

VISITORS

Visitors can ride AdvANTage. To ride either fax, email, or mail:

1. Documentation that you are already eligible for ADA paratransit (a copy of your eligibility letter or your photo ID), or
2. Documentation that you have a disability, such as a note from a treating professional, and documentation of residence, such as a utility bill.

Our contact information is:

Mobility Manager
OVRTA
21 South Huron Street
Wheeling, WV 26003
Telephone: (304) 232-1744
Fax: (304) 232-0811
Email: AdVANtage@ovrta.org

Visitors may also apply in person at our office. When applying in person, no documentation of disability is required if the disability is apparent.

A visitor may ride the service for up to 21 days over a year, starting with the first day of travel. To continue to ride after 21 days of service are provided, you must apply for eligibility.

SERVICE AREA

AdVANtage operates within 1 and 1/2-mile off an OVRTA/EORTA route. All pickups and drop-offs must take place within the defined service area. We will determine whether your trip is in the AdVANtage service area when you call to schedule a ride.

SERVICE HOURS

AdVANtage operates the same days and hours of service as our routes.

Monday through Saturday, depending on your location pickups start at 6:00 a.m. Trips must be completed by 6:00 p.m.

No service is provided on Sunday and the following holidays:

New Year's Day	Labor Day
Martin Luther King Jr. Day	Veterans Day
Memorial Day	Thanksgiving Day
4 th of July	Christmas Day

TRIP RESTRICTIONS

AdVANtage is designed to be comparable to route service. Just as with our route service, there are no trip restrictions or ranking of trips by trip purpose.

FARES

As allowed by ADA regulations, the AdVANtage fare is twice the route fare. A fare is charged for each leg of a trip. Payment is required at the time of boarding.

Fares may be paid with cash, check or token. Tokens may be purchased on board the van or at our office at 21 South Huron Street, Wheeling. When paying cash, please have the exact fare. OVRTA/EORTA do not give refunds and our drivers do not make change. If a passenger does not have the proper fare, service will NOT be provided.

CURB-TO-CURB SERVICE

AdVANtage is curb-to-curb service. OVRTA/EORTA ask that passengers be ready for pickup **at the curb**. However, if you require assistance to and from the van to the door, please let us know and the driver will assist you if the path is accessible. Drivers will NOT assist passengers up or down steps or steep ramps. Please arrange with someone else to assist you.

PERSONAL CARE ATTENDANTS and COMPANIONS

If you require the assistance of a personal care attendant, the attendant travels with you for free. At the time of scheduling a ride, please indicate if you will have a personal care attendant with you. Of course, the attendant must get on and get off at the same locations as you do.

At least 1 companion, more if space is available, may accompany you. Each companion will pay a fare. At the time of scheduling a ride, please indicate the number of companions who will accompany you. Of course, companions must get on and get off at the same location as you do.

A person requiring the services of a personal care attendant may also be accompanied by 1 or more companions.

SERVICE ANIMALS

Service animals are always welcome. The passenger must have the service animal fully under control at all times so as not to disrupt other passengers or the schedule. Drivers cannot and will not assume any responsibility for service animals. At the time of scheduling a ride, please indicate if a service animal will accompany you.

SCHEDULING RIDES

Rides on AdVANtage can be scheduled the day before the trip or up to 14 days in advance. To schedule a ride, please call **(304) 232-1744**. To speak to a dispatcher, call Monday through Friday between 8:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. or Saturdays between 8:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. A telephone answering service is available on Sundays and holidays between 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m.

To help serve you better, we ask that you observe the following 4 tips:

1. Prepare for your call
2. Note your trip information
3. Schedule the return trip up front
4. Be ready to go at the scheduled time

Prepare for Your Call

Please have the following information ready when you call:

- Name
- Date of travel
- Origin address
- Destination address
- Desired pick-up or arrival time
- Whether you use a wheelchair or walker
- Whether a personal care attendant, one or more companions, or a service animal will accompany you

The dispatcher will let you know your pickup and return times. OVRTA/EORTA make every effort to schedule your trip at the desired times.

Note Your Trip Information

Have a pencil and paper ready to write your pickup and return times down. This will help you remember them. If you have a calendar, write the times on it.

Schedule Your Return Trip

OVRTA/EORTA require return trips to be scheduled. Passengers should anticipate the latest possible time needed for their return and schedule a return trip for that time. If you are ready to return before your scheduled time, or if you will be later than your scheduled time, please call us immediately at **(304) 232-1744** and we will do all we can to accommodate your request.

Be Ready to Go at the Scheduled Time

Please be ready to go 5 minutes before the scheduled pickup time. We make every effort to arrive as close to the scheduled pickup time as possible.

However, we may arrive up to 5 minutes before or 5 minutes after the scheduled pickup time.

Example: If you schedule a 9:30 a.m. pickup, the vehicle may arrive between 9:25 a.m. and 9:35 a.m.

This 10-minute time period (of 5 minutes before to 5 minutes after the scheduled time) is called the pickup window.

Drivers, after arriving within the pickup window, will wait up to 5 minutes. Any passenger, who is not at the scheduled pickup point and ready to go by that time, will be considered a no-show, and the driver will leave to pick up other riders. The driver will NOT return for a second attempt. The only exception will be passengers who have been detained during a medical appointment. If you know that you will be detained during a medical appointment, please call OVRTA/EORTA at **(304) 232-1744** as soon as soon as possible. When you are ready, call us and we will dispatch the next available van to pick you up.

CANCELLATIONS

If you are unable to make your scheduled ride for any reason, please call the office at **(304) 232-1744** no later than 4:30 p.m. the day before to cancel your ride. Drivers cannot make schedule changes for you. Cancellations made after 2 hours before the scheduled trip will be considered a no-show.

NO-SHOW POLICY

A no-show occurs when:

- You fail to show up for your scheduled trip
- You fail to cancel 2 hours before your scheduled trip
- You are not ready within 5 minutes of the driver's arrival during the pickup window

Riders will be suspended for no-shows if the following criteria are met during a 3-month period:

1. No-shows represent 10 percent or more of their scheduled trips, AND
2. The rider has 3 or more no-shows.

Only no-shows under the passenger's control will be counted against the rider. The passenger will be given an opportunity to appeal the suspension before the suspension takes effect. Suspensions will be stayed during appeal.

After a second no-show, OVRTA/EORTA will send you a warning letter. If you are suspended, we will notify you by registered mail of the date on which the suspension will begin. The date for the beginning of the suspension of service will be no less than 10 days from the date the letter is sent. The letter will indicate the times and dates of the no-shows that have occurred and your rights of appeal.

The length of the suspension depends on the number of offenses:

- First offense: 5 days
- Second offense: 10 days
- Third offense: 15 days
- Fourth or higher offense: 30 days

WHEELCHAIRS

The ADA defines a wheelchair as a mobility aid belonging to any class of 3- or more-wheeled devices, usable indoors, designed or modified for and used by individuals with mobility impairments, whether operated manually or powered. We will make every effort to transport you and your wheelchair. However, if you and your wheelchair weigh more than what our wheelchair lifts are rated to carry or the wheelchair is too big for the lift platform, we will be unable to transport you. OVRTA/EORTA will not be able to provide service until we have determined whether we can accommodate your mobility device.

All wheelchairs and other mobility devices must be secured to the floor of the vehicle using the securement equipment. Drivers will make every effort not to damage wheelchairs with the securement straps and hooks. Service will be provided even when the wheelchair cannot be secured to the driver's satisfaction.

In the case where a mobility device is incapable of being properly secured by the securement devices, the driver will let you know and will recommend transferring to a seat. In those cases, it will be up to you to decide to continue with the ride.

DRIVER ASSISTANCE

Our drivers are specially trained to serve you. Drivers will:

- Deploy lifts and ramps for persons using mobility devices and those without mobility devices who cannot navigate the bus steps upon request
- Secure your wheelchair

- Fasten your seatbelt

To ensure your safety and the safety of our drivers, drivers will NOT:

- Assist passengers using wheelchairs up or down steps
- Carry packages
- Dress passengers
- Search a passenger's body for the appropriate fare or token
- Clear pathways of ice, snow or other barriers

Please arrange with someone else to assist you.

GENERAL RIDERSHIP POLICIES

OVRTA/EORTA have established the following general ridership policies for AdVANtage service. Many of the policies also apply to route service.

- If a passenger uses oxygen, the tank or device must be portable, i.e., the passenger must be able to carry the tank or device into the vehicle themselves, even if the passenger is in a wheelchair. Once on board, the portable oxygen tank or device must ride in a secure location, for example, in the passenger's lap, strapped to the wheelchair, in front of the passenger on the floor between seats, or on the floor behind the modesty panel. The passenger is responsible for the control of the oxygen tank or the device at all times.
- All passengers must wear seatbelts.
- All passengers using a wheelchair or scooter must use the restraint system that is used to secure the wheelchair or scooter to the floor of the vehicle.
- The number of packages a passenger can have along is limited to the number of packages that the passenger can carry. The passenger is responsible for transporting and controlling the packages.
- Drivers cannot accept tips.
- For safety reasons, OVRTA/EORTA may request that passengers be accompanied by a personal care attendant.
- OVRTA/EORTA may suspend or refuse service to any individual whose behavior and/or actions are violent, seriously disruptive, or illegal; cause a service interruption; or raise safety concerns.

Please visit our website www.ovrta.org for additional ridership policies.

APPEALS PROCESS

You may appeal your eligibility determination or suspension from the program for violating our no-show policy. An appeal of an eligibility determination must be submitted within 60 days of the date of the denial letter. A suspension for violating the no-show policy will be stayed during the appeal.

Your request for an appeal must be in writing. In the request either describe why you disagree with the determination or suspension, or ask to present your case in person. You or a representative of your choosing may present on your behalf. A written decision will be made within 30 days the information for the appeal was received or the hearing was held.

Send appeal requests to:

Executive Director
OVRTA/EORTA
21 South Huron Street
Wheeling, WV 26003

Thank you for riding AdVANtage.