

SERVICE ANIMALS AND PETS

Service animals are welcome aboard Transit vehicles. A service animal is any guide dog, or other animal trained to perform tasks for an individual with a disability. **Service animals are not pets.** They are working animals that are specially trained to provide assistance. To travel on a Transit vehicle, a service animal must:

- Be on a leash or in a container, be under its person's control and behave appropriately
- Remain at its person's feet or on their lap, but may not sit on a vehicle seat
- Birds, reptiles, amphibians and rodents must be kept within an enclosed carrier or container
- Not show aggressive tendencies towards people or other animals

Under control and well behaved are the defining characteristics. The care and supervision of a service animal is solely the responsibility of its owner. In addition, customers traveling with animals are subject to the same general rules that apply to all passengers; i.e., any damage or soiling caused by the animal is the responsibility of the customer. If an animal is not under control or if its behavior is disruptive or menacing, Woodlake Transit can refuse service or ask the person and animal to exit the vehicle. Service animals must be kept under physical restraint by the owner at all times. Service animals that are disruptive, threatening or intimidating will be handled in a case-by-case discipline process.

Pets are not allowed on Woodlaketransit unless they are small and can be transported in a suitable pet carrier that can be placed on your lap. Your pet plus the kennel may weigh no more than 25 pounds.

A wide variety of animals are now being trained to assist individuals with disabilities. In addition to guide dogs, which assist persons who have vision impairments, dogs and other animals are being trained to assist persons who have hearing impairments, mobility limitations, seizure disorders, mental impairments, and other disabilities.

Recognizing the important role that service animals play in helping persons with disabilities to be more independent, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) and its implementing regulations include provisions specific to their accommodation. Included in the ADA regulations is the right of a person traveling with a service animal to enjoy equal access to public and private transportation programs

As civil rights law, the ADA takes precedence over laws, regulations or ordinances. Public and private transportation agencies do not have to change their pet policies as a result of the ADA. Some systems prohibit pets on board transit vehicles. Others allow pets to be transported, and some systems even charge a fare to carry pets. These policies are unaffected by the ADA. Fixed route, over-the-road busses, and private sedan/van operators must now allow access for persons traveling with service animals trained to assist them with their disabilities and may not charge an additional fee for carrying a service animal. At the same time, a person who has a disability and wants to travel with his or her pet, which is not a service animal, is not covered by the ADA service animal provisions and is subject to the same pet policies as other riders.

What is a service animal?

Service animals are not pets. They are working animals that are specially trained to provide assistance for individuals who have disabilities.

According to the ADA regulations:

- ❖ Service animal means any guide dog, signal dog, or other animal individually trained to work or perform tasks for an individual with a disability, including, but not limited to
 - guiding individuals with impaired vision
 - alerting individuals with impaired hearing to intruders or sounds
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The term "service" (or "assistance") animal is somewhat generic and may be used to describe all types of animals individually trained to assist persons with disabilities. **Most-but not all-service animals are dogs:**

- **Guide dogs** (or dog guides) provide assistance for persons who have visual impairments. Do not use the term "Seeing Eye Dog." This term refers only to dogs trained at The Seeing Eye, Inc., in Morristown, New Jersey. There are many other guide dog schools.
- **Assistance or mobility dogs** assist persons using wheelchairs and others who have mobility limitations. They may pull a wheelchair, fetch dropped items, handle money, carry briefcases, open doors or perform other tasks.
- **Hearing or signal dogs** assist persons with hearing impairments by alerting them to sounds such as alarms, horns, crying babies, telephones, and doorbells.
- **Seizure-response/alert dogs** assist persons with epilepsy or other seizure disorders. They may alert the person to an oncoming seizure, provide assistance during and after the seizure, seek help or perform other tasks. Because a person may not have an obvious disability, it may be hard to recognize a seizure-response/alert dog team.
- There also are **specialty and combination dogs**, which are trained to perform tasks for a person with multiple disabilities. For

example, a dog may be trained both as a guide dog and a service dog for a person with a vision impairment who uses a wheelchair. Service animal puppies-in-training are not explicitly offered protection by the ADA;

***In contrast, emotional support animals, therapy animals, facility animals, and other social animals are not specifically trained to perform a function for a particular person with a disability and, therefore, are not considered to be service animals. These animals would not be afforded access rights under the ADA.**

Note: Access rights depend on whether the person has a disability and is protected by the Americans with Disabilities Act **AND** whether the animal meets the definition of a service animal.