RCTS Passenger Policy

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I. Introduction

Welcome to Richland County Transportation (RCTS)! We are happy to be your choice for transit services within Richland County. RCTS is open to all ages for transportation anywhere within our regular service area. Please take a minute to look over this helpful guide; it will tell you what to expect when making reservations and taking your ride.

RCTS is a cooperative effort between four area agencies that have recognized the area's need for a public transportation system. The four agencies (Richland County Commission on Aging, The Lodge at Lone Tree Creek, Richland Opportunities, Inc. and Sidney Health Center) are dedicated to providing this resource to Richland County.

RCTS operates on a demand/response basis rather than a regular bus route. For important information about making reservations please see "Reservation Process" on page 5.

RCTS strives to provide area residents and guests with the best possible service. We will make every reasonable effort to accommodate our riders while following RCTS reservation and service policies.

II. Schedule & Reservations

Service Area

RCTS operates within a 5 mile radius of the Sidney city limits (weather permitting) during all hours of service. Transportation to, from and within other County communities are as follows:

- Savage: Tuesdays
- Fairview: Thursdays
- Lambert: Fridays

***Note: Several special trips out of our regular service area are planned each year; for more information see "Daytrips & Charters" on page 10.*

Hours of Service

Office Hours

The RCTS business office is open Monday through Friday from 8am to 5pm. ***Passengers must call during this time to make reservations.***

Bus Service

RCTS buses run from 7am to 6pm Monday through Friday and from 8am to 1pm on Sunday.

RCTS will be closed on all Federal holidays. For a complete list of scheduled closures, please see page 9.

Fares

In an effort to keep our costs low, RCTS promotes ride sharing which allows us to pass the savings on to you. Reservations made by the business day prior to your ride allow us to route our vehicles in the most efficient manner possible resulting in a lower fare for you. Reservations made the day of your ride require an additional vehicle that has not been routed for efficiency thus requiring us to charge a higher rate.

RCTS fares are as follows:

<u>Within the Sidney Service Area</u>
Advance reservations: $1.00 per stop
Same day reservations: $5.00 per stop (subject to availability)
Students (Preschool—Grade 12): $1.00 per stop

<u>Service from/to Savage, Fairview, Lambert</u>
$5.00 per trip: Reservations MUST be made at least 24 hours in advance. Pickup time is 10:30am with a return trip of 2:00pm

RCTS fares are payable upon entry at *each* stop. RCTS has a number of vehicles and a passenger will frequently ride on two or more during a scheduled trip. Since the fareboxes are reconciled with their vehicle it is important that the fare be paid to each vehicle they enter.

Credit Accounts

If you do not wish to pay a fare each time you board the vehicle, you may set up a credit account. To set up an account, simply visit our business office and put money in a ride account. You will be notified when your account is close to running out of money. If your credit account drops below a $0 credit rides will still be permitted as long as payment is received by the 10th of the month. **Any credit accounts reaching a payable balance of $75 will be suspended until such time that payment is made**. To resume using your account, a minimum credit of $20 must be reinstated. For safety reasons, drivers do not leave children at a destination even if they do not have their fare available; for this reason, passengers under 10 years old who will ride more than two times per month are *required* to have a credit account.

Reservation Process

When making reservations please keep in mind that although we strive to make your trip as convenient as possible, we are a public bus system and therefore cannot act as a taxi. While riding RCTS, you may be on the bus for up to a half hour while we pick up and drop off other passengers in the most efficient manner possible. When making reservations, you may dictate *either* what time you would like to be picked up OR what time you must be dropped off at a certain location.

For instance, if you have a doctor's appointment at 1:30pm, you would say you want to be dropped off by that time. We will adjust your pickup time to fit into our route for that day in order to ensure you reach your destination by 1:30pm. If you are going grocery shopping and want to be picked up at 1:30pm, we will schedule you a pickup at that time and the time you get to the store will depend on our schedule for that day. When making reservations, you MUST choose one or the other. Also keep in mind that due to traffic, passenger delays and other unforeseeable events, our drivers have a 15 minute pickup window meaning if your pickup is at 1:30pm, we may arrive as early as 1:15pm or as late as 1:45pm. If you schedule your ride for a dropoff at a certain time, you may be dropped off up to 15 minutes early but RCTS will do its best to make sure you are never late.

To make a reservation, simply call 406 433-RIDE (7433) during our regular office hours. The RCTS dispatcher will schedule your ride either by dropoff time or pickup time. You will get a call the night before your ride telling you what time to expect your bus and another call the day of the ride when the bus departs for your location. To avoid missing your ride, begin watching for the bus as soon as you get your same day call; see "Driver Wait Time" on page 6 for more information.

When scheduling your trip, inform dispatch of each stop you want to make. Only stops that have been scheduled by dispatch are able to be performed by the driver. If it is the day of your trip and you require

an additional stop, *you* must call dispatch and see if it can be added. If time permits, we will gladly add your stop however the additions will be subject to the same day fare of $5/stop regardless of when the original reservation was made.

Remember that only advance reservations are guaranteed; same-day service is subject to availability.

Standing Reservations

A number of our passengers take the same trip on an on-going basis. Whether it's a trip to work or school each day or a trip to the hairdresser on the same day each week, we can create a "standing reservation" for you. With a standing reservation you will not have to call for each trip, the bus will automatically show up for you and you will always pay the advance fare of $1.00/stop for that trip. If you have a standing reservation you will only need to call if you are cancelling for a certain day.

Driver Wait Time

Passengers must be ready for their ride as soon as the bus arrives. When a bus arrives for your pickup, the bus will sound its horn and will wait for *three minutes* if they are within the 15 minute pickup window. If the driver does not see a passenger within that time they will leave to go on to their next pickup and the passenger will be marked as a "no-show".

If a driver marks you as a no-show and you call to have the bus come back for you, it will be considered a new ride which is subject to availability and same day service pricing. Many times, our schedule does not allow time for a driver to turn around and go back to your location.

Cancellations & "No-Shows"

In the event that you need to cancel a previously scheduled ride, you must call our business office as soon as possible so they may let the bus driver know you will not be riding. If you do not call by the time the bus departs for your pick-up location you will be charged the round-trip fare which will be payable before you are allowed to ride again. If the first trip is logged as a no-show, your return trip will be automatically cancelled. Repeated no-shows are considered an abuse of the system; 3 or more no shows during a two month period will result in all standing reservations being cancelled to free those slots up for other customers. In addition, customers with repeated no-shows are subject to a 30 day suspension.

III. Passenger Guidelines

General Rules

Below are some general rules that help keep our passengers safe and comfortable. Please familiarize yourself with these rules before riding an RCTS vehicle. All rules will be strictly enforced.

- Seatbelts are required at ALL TIMES; the driver will not move the bus until everyone is buckled up
- Remain seated at all times
- Small packages such as groceries, beach bags, etc. are permitted on all vehicles however if you have a large item (bicycle, etc.) you should let the dispatcher know so an appropriate vehicle can be dispatched for you
- Rollerblades, roller skates, skateboards and the like must not be worn or used on the bus. These items may be carried on
- Smoking is **NOT** permitted on any RCTS vehicles
- Open alcohol containers and the consumption of alcohol is not permitted on RCTS vehicles
- Passengers are responsible for any mess that may occur from food or drinks brought on the bus. Drivers have the authority to ban food/drinks on a case-by-case basis due to prior experiences with particular passengers
- Service animals are always welcome aboard any RCTS vehicle. Pets may be transported if they remain in a carrier or under *direct* control of its owner. No animals are allowed on the seats
- Drivers will help you to and from the door of your home and drop-off location. If you require assistance beyond our door-to-door service you must find someone to supply it. If you have an attendant, they will ride free of charge provided they accompany you the entire trip from pick-up to drop-off. Under no circumstances are drivers allowed to assist you beyond your door
- Offensive language or behavior that is disruptive or unsafe for the other riders and/or driver is not allowed
- Radios, audio devices and other such equipment may not be used on RCTS vehicles without earphones. The volume of such equipment must be low enough that it cannot be heard by other passengers
- Firearms and other hazardous items such as uncovered glass, gasoline and flammable and explosive items are **NOT** permitted on RCTS vehicles
- Driveways and walkways must be cleared if you want the RCTS vehicle to pick you up at your door. If acceptable clearance is not maintained, you will be asked to meet the bus at the road
- In emergency situations all passengers **MUST** follow the driver's instructions. RCTS has policies in place to protect your safety and the driver is well-versed in these
- Drivers are generally not allowed to wait at a destination no matter how short the stop. Always remember there are other passengers waiting for their ride; your consideration is greatly appreciated!!

Refusal of Service

RCTS and its drivers will make every reasonable effort to accommodate riders however there are times when passengers abuse the system. If this happens, RCTS has the right to deny service to those riders. Some instances that may call for the suspension of transit services include:

- Verbal or physical abuse toward an RCTS driver, staff, or another passenger
- Behavior which represents a clear and present danger to an individuals or another passengers health or safety
- Violent , disruptive or illegal behavior
- Passengers who are routinely late for pickups whether it be at their original pickup point or for their return trip
- Excessive no-shows

Lost & Found Items

RCTS is not responsible for lost, damaged, or stolen items. All items brought on an RCTS vehicle are the sole responsibility of the passenger. If an item is left on an RCTS bus and found by the driver or turned in by another passenger, RCTS will keep the item in the business office for 30 days. After 30 days, the item will be thrown, given away, or donated. If you suspect you left an item on the bus, call the RCTS office at 433-7433.

Child Safety Seats

Children who are required by law to be in a safety seat must be appropriately restrained. **Passengers are responsible for providing child safety seats that meet applicable federal motor vehicle safety standards.** If a passenger is unwilling to comply they will be refused service. RCTS assumes no liability for damage sustained to a child safety seat if it is left on an RCTS vehicle.

ADA Vehicles & Accessibility

All RCTS vehicles are equipped with handicap entrances in the form of either a lift or a ramp. Drivers will happily deploy these features whenever requested by a passenger and all types of mobility devices are welcome aboard RCTS. Mobility devices will be properly secured to the vehicle using the installed securement systems; all passengers are required to use seatbelts whether they are sitting in a seat or using a wheelchair. When securing wheelchairs, drivers will take care (to the best of their ability) to not scratch or damage the chair however RCTS assumes no liability for preexisting damage or for wear and tear resulting from ordinary procedures used in securing a mobility device. Passengers **may not** refuse securement of their mobility device.

IV. Additional Information

Complaints and/or Grievances

RCTS strives to provide superior service to its passengers. If an instance occurs where you feel you did not receive this service or are unsatisfied in some way, you may contact the RCTS Coordinator to file a complaint. Your complaint will be logged, investigated and we will work with you to find a suitable resolution. When filing a complaint, please be prepared to provide the following information:

- Your name, address, and contact information
- The date and time the incident occurred
- The name of your driver (if known)
- A description of the events leading to the complaint (you may be asked to provide this in writing)

Complaints may be filed by contacting:

Jodi Berry-RCTS Coordinator
1201 W Holly, Suite 1
Sidney, MT 59270
Phone: 406-433-7433
Fax: 406-433-5800
E-mail: jberry@richland.org

Scheduled & Unscheduled Closures

In the event of inclimate weather or other circumstances beyond the control of RCTS bus service may be suspended, cancelled or altered for the safety of our drivers, passengers and other motorists. If RCTS closes or alters its service area, all customers (who have a valid phone number on file) will receive an automated message informing them of the change. Updates will also be posted to our Facebook page and added to our website at www.myrcts.com.

Holidays

In order to spend time with our families and to recognize the holidays, RCTS will be closed on the following days:

- New Year's Day—January 1st
- Martin Luther King Jr. Day—3rd Monday in January
- President's Day—3rd Monday in February
- Memorial Day—Last Monday in May
- Independence Day—July 4
- Labor Day—1st Monday in September
- Columbus Day—2nd Monday in October

- Veteran's Day—November 11
- Thanksgiving—4th Thursday in November
- Thanksgiving Break—4th Friday in November
- Christmas Day—December 25th

In addition to the above referenced holidays, RCTS will close at noon on the following:

- Good Friday
- Christmas Eve

***Note: If any holiday falls on a Sunday, it will be recognized on Monday. If it falls on a Saturday, it will be recognized on the preceding Friday.*

Daytrips & Charters

Because RCTS is partially funded by federal funds, all rides occurring on RCTS must be open to the public. Because of this, individuals and groups may not charter RCTS vehicles for exclusive use or events outside our regular service area or service hours. If an RCTS vehicle leaves its service area or deviates from its regular hours, advance notice of the trip will be published on our website, Facebook page, and in the Sidney Herald; these trips are always open to the public.

RCTS does plan several special daytrips per year so passengers can experience area highlights such as the Medora Musical and the Fort Peck Theater performances. These trips are charged a rate consistent with expenses relating to the trip and are advertised in accordance with the above paragraph. RCTS provides transportation *only*; passengers are responsible for purchasing their own tickets to any events.

RCTS also plans a number of trips that are within the service area but outside our regular service hours in response to community activities. Examples of this include holiday light tours, Halloween trick-or-treating, rides to and from the Richland County Fair, etc.; when there is a service hour extension for events such as these RCTS will advise the public as described above.

Stay Informed

RCTS strives to keep customers informed about upcoming changes and important news that affects the service we are able to provide to our passengers. To stay up-to-date with all changes and to find out about closures, cancellations, and service alterations we encourage you to "like" Richland County Transportation Service on Facebook. We will also post important news and documents to our website at www.myrcts.com.

RCTS also has Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) meetings on the third Tuesday of every other month. These meetings are held at 9am at the Community Services Building (1201 W Holly, Sidney). All TAC meetings are open to the public and time is reserved for passengers to share their ideas and concerns. If you are interested in serving on the TAC, please contact the RCTS Coordinator at 433-7433.