

2021 ADA Paratransit Implementation Plan

for the

Calhoun County Urban Area

Updated February/March 2021

**East Alabama Regional Planning &
Development Commission**

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2021 ADA Paratransit Implementation Plan Update

submitted to the

Alabama Department of Transportation

Prepared by:

East Alabama Regional Planning and Development Commission

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**Due to Covid-19, fares on both Fixed Route and Demand Response have been suspended until further notice. Also, the impact of Covid-19 has led to limiting the number of passengers on at one time. Fixed-Route allows five, and Demand Response allows two on at one time. ACTS makes every effort to limit the contact between drivers and passengers. Each bus and van in service are sanitized at the end of each day.

Section I **Introduction**

BACKGROUND

The East Alabama Regional Planning and Development Commission (EAC) Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Complementary Paratransit Service Plan Update represents an update to EAC's Plan.

The ADA of 1990 is sweeping legislation that makes it illegal to discriminate against persons with disabilities of all types whether permanent or temporary, physical or mental. The Act provides for equal access for disabled citizens in the areas of transportation, public services, public accommodations and facilities, employment and telecommunications. The U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) published ADA implementing regulations (49 CFR Part 37, "Transportation Services for Individuals with Disabilities (ADA)" and Part 38 "Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Accessibility Specifications for Transportation Vehicles") on September 6, 1991 delineating specific transportation provisions of the ADA. The FTA and ADA regulations and guidelines followed by EAC related to Paratransit Service can be found online at <http://www.fta.dot.gov/civilrights/12325.html>

These regulations require that entities operating fixed route transportation service for the general public also provide complementary paratransit transportation with a 3/4 mile radius of the fixed route service to persons unable to use the fixed route system. Paratransit service is specialized service typically designed for those who are unable to use the fixed route system due to a disability. The ADA Transportation Regulations specify three categories of ADA paratransit eligibility:

- (1) Individuals who are unable, due to a physical or mental impairment, to board, ride, or disembark independently from any readily accessible vehicle on the regular fixed-route system;
- (2) Individuals with a physical or mental impairment who could use accessible fixed-route transportation, but the accessible fixed route is not available at that time on that route (for example, the accessible vehicle is down for maintenance or the lift cannot be deployed); and
- (3) Individuals with a disability who have specific impairment-related conditions that prevent them from traveling to a boarding location or from a disembarking location on the system.

Fixed route and paratransit services must be similar in several ways. The ADA (49 CFR 37.123) specifies eligibility for these services, the level of service that must be provided and standards for certain aspects of operation.

Service Criteria

As developed in our ADA Paratransit Plan update submissions to the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), the Areawide Community Transportation System (ACTS) Fixed Route is currently in full compliance with all six ADA paratransit service requirements. The requirements are: operate in the same service area as the fixed route system, have a response time (defined as the elapsed time between a request for service and the provision of service) that is comparable, have comparable fares, have comparable days and hours of service, meet requests for any trip purpose, not limit service availability because of capacity restraints. The system continues to meet the on-going requirements for the public participation of persons with disabilities.

1. Service Area: ACTS Paratransit must be provided to all origins and destination within a corridor $\frac{3}{4}$ mile on each side of the fixed route. Service beyond this area may be provided at EARPDC's discretion. EARPDC must coordinate where service areas overlap or are contiguous.

ACTS Paratransit meets this requirement. Paratransit services extend to the municipal boundaries.

2. Response Time: Next-day service must be provided for requests made any time during the preceding day. Requests for service must be taken when administrative offices are open and must arrange to accept reservations on days or times when administrative offices are closed if service is provided the following day.

Next-day service by ACTS Paratransit for requests made during office hours the preceding day prior to close of business, Monday through Friday. Reservations will be taken by voice mail on days when the office is closed.

3. Fares: Fares can be no more than twice the fixed route adult fare.

The ADA Paratransit fare is \$1.00 as it is for the general public on the fixed route. Personal Care Attendants are not charged a fare.

4. Service Days and Hours: Days and hours of operations must be at least the same as the fixed route system.

ACTS Paratransit service operates the same hours as the fixed route.

5. Trip Purpose: Trips must be accepted and handled on an equal basis. There can be no restrictions on trip purposes or prioritizing by trip type.

ACTS Paratransit does not prioritize or restrict trips by purpose of trip.

6. Capacity Constraints: Service cannot be limited because of capacity constraints. No waiting lists can be maintained, and the number of trips provided to an individual cannot be restricted.

Service is not limited due to capacity constraints. ACTS Paratransit does not maintain waiting lists and trips are not restricted to individuals. Subscription trips are limited to no more than 50% of complementary paratransit service capacity. Because ACTS Paratransit is an above ADA service, if necessary, Paratransit passengers will have priority on an advance-reservation basis, over non-Paratransit, including subscription passengers. ACTS Paratransit does not allow same-day service.

Section II Description of Transit Services

OVERVIEW

East Alabama Regional Planning and Development Commission operates the Areawide Community Transportation System (ACTS), a fixed route service, the ADA Paratransit Services along with a rural transit program under Section 5311. The fixed route program began in 1988 as a continuous 2-loop program up and back on Noble Street in Anniston, AL. With increasing ridership and the introduction of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, the service grew to a 3-route system with a paratransit program. Since July 23, 2007, the system was reconfigured from the 3 existing routes to a 4-route program, still with a complementary paratransit program. On January 19, 2010, the routes were reconfigured to accommodate change in the population and to provide more accessibility to healthcare facilities, along with a move of the central transfer point to 4th Street at the Amtrak Train Station. For the urbanized, unincorporated and rural areas of Calhoun County, a demand response service began in 1996.

AREAWIDE COMMUNITY TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM/ACTS - FIXED ROUTE SERVICE

Service Area

All four bus routes combined cover approximately 53 miles. The service area encompasses the major municipalities in Calhoun County, Alabama. The City of Anniston is a north/south city, whereas the City of Oxford is orientated east/west. This orientation has pushed the evolution of the fixed-route. See *Attachment A*

Route Structure

ACTS is comprised of four fixed routes: North, South, East and West.

The North route serves the north side of the City of Anniston, which includes McClellan and into the south side of the City of Weaver. The South route serves the south side of the City of Anniston, Hobson City, and most of the City of Oxford. The East route serves the east and southeast sides of the City of Anniston. The West route serves the west side of the City of Anniston.

Service Days and Hours

Service is operated Monday through Friday from 6:00 am to 6:00 pm and on Saturdays from 10:00 am to 5:00 pm. ACTS does not operate on Sundays and the following holidays: New Year's Day, MLK Jr. Day, President's Day, Memorial Day, July 4th, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Eve, and Christmas Day. Columbus Day is set aside for mandatory training for the transit contractor.

Fare Structure

The base fare for ACTS is \$1.00 per one-way trip with one transfer upon request. Riders with a Military ID have a 75¢ fare. Riders that are disabled, students, elderly, children under the age of 12 or have Medicare or Medicaid with ID have a fare of 50¢.

Fleet

The ACTS fixed route fleet, as shown in Table 1, currently has 9 vehicles. All of which are wheelchair lift-equipped.

Table 1

Vehicle Description, Make Model	Model Year	Lift Equipped	Location/Condition/Use
Ford Starcraft Allstar	2015	Yes	Anniston/Fair/Fixed Route
Ford Starcraft Allstar	2015	Yes	Oxford/Fair/Fixed Route
Ford Starcraft Allstar	2016	Yes	Anniston/Good/Fixed Route
Ford Starcraft Allstar	2016	Yes	Oxford/Good/Fixed Route
Ford Starcraft Allstar	2017	Yes	Anniston/Good/Fixed Route
Ford Starcraft Allstar	2017	Yes	Oxford/Good/Fixed Route
Ford Starcraft Allstar	2019	Yes	Oxford/Excellent/Fixed Route
Ford Starcraft Allstar	2019	Yes	Anniston/Excellent/Fixed Route
Ford Starcraft Allstar	2019	Yes	Oxford/New/Fixed Route

Ridership

A total of 79,665 fixed route passenger trips were provided for by ACTS in Fiscal Year 2019-2020. An average of 6,639 trips were provided each month.

Route Accessibility

All fixed route and ADA paratransit vehicles are accessible. Disabled riders can access the fixed route at the destinations listed on the route maps. There have been no issues with boarding or disembarking.

AREAWIDE COMMUNITY TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM/ACTS - ADA PARATRANSIT SERVICES

Service Area

By definition, the service area of the Paratransit program must be provided to all origins and destinations within 3/4 mile on each side of the fixed route. EAC has expanded the service area to: Wellborn, Cobb Town, Vinnette, Eulaton, Alexandria, Plainview, Saks, Lenlock, the Peaceburg/ Warren Drive area, the Anniston Beach Road area, and the unincorporated areas of DeArmanville which are well beyond the 3/4 mile corridor required.

Service Days and Hours

Service is operated Monday through Friday 6:00 am to 6:00 pm and Saturday 10:00 am to 5:00 pm.

Fare

The fare for qualified persons is \$1.00 each way. Personal Care Attendants pay no fare.

Trip Request

Reservations are taken with a day's notice. Same day service is not provided by the ADA Paratransit system.

Fleet

The ADA Paratransit fleet, as shown in Table 2, is composed of 7 paratransit vehicles. All of which are wheelchair lift-equipped.

Table 2

Vehicle Description, Make Model	Model Year	Lift Equipped	Location/Condition/Use
Ford Starcraft Starlite	2016	Yes	Anniston/Poor/ADA
Ford Starcraft Starlite	2017	Yes	Anniston/Good/ADA
Ford Starcraft Starlite	2017	Yes	Oxford/Good/ADA
Ford Starcraft Starlite	2018	Yes	Anniston/Good/ADA
Ford Starcraft Starlite	2018	Yes	Oxford/Good/ADA
Ford Starcraft Starlite	2019	Yes	Anniston/Excellent/ADA
Ford Starcraft Starlite	2019	Yes	Oxford/New/ADA

Ridership

ADA Paratransit and other Calhoun County demand response services provided 17,275 passenger trips in Fiscal Year 2019-2020. The system provided approximately 1,440 trips each month.

Attendant Policy

Personal Care Attendants (PCA) will be permitted to accompany ADA eligible riders on ADA eligible trips at no charge. The ACTS will require that passengers state the need for a PCA when they request ADA eligibility certification. At the time each appointment is scheduled, the passenger will inform the ACTS that a PCA will be accompanying them. One guest will be allowed to accompany an ADA eligible complementary paratransit passenger on their ADA eligible paratransit trip. More than one guest will be allowed on a space available basis. The PCA is not considered to be a "guest". A guest is required to pay the applicable paratransit fare. A parent, guardian, or another responsible adult must accompany children under the age of 12.

The ACTS's Driver Origin to Destination Assistance Policy

It is the policy of the ACTS to provide origin to destination complementary paratransit services within the city limits of Anniston, Oxford, Weaver, Jacksonville, and Hobson City. A door to door option is available if needed by an individual rider. Drivers are trained to provide minimal assistance only. Drivers are not trained to provide medical assistance. Drivers:

- Shall assist passengers in a manual wheelchair up/down 1 step or curb
- Shall assist with packages that can be safety controlled on the vehicle and can be carried (drivers cannot pick up items that may cause injury)
- Shall open the door at the home and the destination for a passenger needing that assistance
- Shall assist pushing a manual wheelchair up or down a ramp unless exceedingly steep and would therefore cause direct threat to the driver's well being
- Shall keep the vehicle in sight to ensure the safety of any passengers on board as well as security of the vehicle itself
- Shall not enter homes or businesses to assist passengers
- Shall not retrieve items on a passenger's behalf such as going into a store to get their prescription medication from the pharmacy
- Shall ring exterior doorbells when necessary
- Shall clear a path of small items so that a wheelchair can pass but will not move heavy objects or shovel snow

The ACTS shall not take any actions that would fundamentally alter the nature of the service or create undue burdens. The ACTS shall not provide additional personnel in addition to the driver to assist passengers.

Pick up Window

The ACTS schedules pickups within a 30-minute pickup window to allow for traffic and other delays. That means, we give you a 30-minute period during which your driver should arrive. For example, if you ask to be picked up at 8:00 AM, your ride may arrive between 7:45 and 8:15 AM.

Be ready to leave as early as the start time of the pick-up window. For example, if your pick-up window is from 7:45 to 8:15 AM, you must be ready at 7:45 AM. If your driver arrives early, he or she is only required to wait 5 minutes into the pick-up window. For example, if your pick-up window is from 7:45 to 8:15 AM and the driver arrives at 7:45 or earlier, you must be in the vehicle by 7:50 AM.

You are not required to board the vehicle until the pick-up window begins, but you may board the vehicle early if you wish.

Missed Trip

A “trip denial” or pick-up outside of the 30 minutes pick up window shall be recorded as a missed trip.

Shopping Trips

To ensure timely service, passengers are encouraged only to bring what they can carry and control on their own or with assistance of a personal care attendant (PCA). Passengers are welcome to bring a collapsible shopping cart on board the vehicle to assist them with their purchases.

Parcels

Parcels are allowed if the passenger can reasonably carry and control the parcel. All passengers, including non-ambulatory and passengers with disabilities, should be able to get the parcel(s) on the vehicle in one trip, stabilize it, and with the assistance of a cardboard box or likeness, have the parcel(s) under control for the trip. The passenger will be allowed to use a collapsible cart that should be placed underneath the seat or in an area that does not obstruct directly or indirectly passenger movement within the bus. The parcel(s) should be placed underneath the seat, in the lap of the passenger or in the seat next to the passenger as long as the bus is not crowded. Any parcel that either directly or indirectly threatens the safe transportation of passengers will not be allowed. This includes not blocking the aisle, restricting passenger movement or impeding the evacuation of a bus in an emergency situation.

Visitors

Visitors to the ACTS Service area who are unable to use the local fixed service, because of their disabilities are eligible to use paratransit for up to 21 days in a 365 day period. Visitors must either present documentation that they are eligible for ADA paratransit service in their home area, or document their place of residence and their disabilities (if not apparent) to ACTS. To use paratransit beyond the 21 day period, you will be required to apply for or obtain paratransit eligibility. Please call 256-237-6741 to arrange visitor service.

Lift and Securement Use Policy

In accordance with the regulations, The ACTS will provide service to all mobility devices and their users. A wheelchair is broadly defined as a three or more wheeled device that can be used indoors and is designed for and used by persons with mobility disabilities.

The ACTS shall carry a wheelchair and occupant if the lift and vehicle can physically accommodate them, unless doing so is inconsistent with legitimate safety requirements.

Legitimate safety requirements include such circumstances as a wheelchair of such size that it would block an aisle or would be too large to fully enter a railcar, would block the vestibule, or would interfere with the safe evacuation of passengers in an emergency. Use of the Securement system on the ACTS's vehicles will be a required condition of service. Passengers must allow the driver to secure the chair per the wheelchair manufacturer's securement recommendation.

The ACTS may recommend that the passenger transfer from his or her mobility device into a bus seat. The passenger, in this case, has the final decision as to whether a transfer is appropriate given the passengers' particular disability.

As the regulations require, a passenger who cannot enter the vehicle using the stairs or ramp, but who does not use a wheelchair, will be allowed to enter the vehicle using the lift.

Accommodating Other Mobility Devices, Life Support Equipment or Service Animals

The ACTS will permit the use of a lift for other personal transportation devices when used as a mobility device by eligible customers as long as it does not exceed what the lift is designed to accommodate or would put the driver, passenger, other passengers, or vehicle in danger. Securement provisions do not apply.

In accordance with Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), all paratransit passengers will be permitted to travel with a service animal trained to assist them. The DOT ADA regulations defines a service animal as any guide dog, signal dog or other animal individually trained to work or perform tasks for an individual with a disability. Animals that meet this definition are considered service animals under the ADA, regardless of whether they have been licensed or certified by a state or local government.

People with disabilities who use service animals will not be charged extra fees, isolated from other patrons, or treated less favorably than other patrons. A person with a disability cannot be asked to remove his/her service animal from the premises unless: (1) the animal is out of control and the animal's owner does not take effective action to control it or (2) the animal poses a direct threat to the health or safety of others. The ACTS will not provide care or food for a service animal or provide a special location for it to relieve itself.

Allergies and fear of animals are generally not valid reasons for denying access or refusing service to people with service animals.

Passengers will also be permitted to travel with respirators, portable oxygen and other life support equipment. Travel with this equipment will only be denied if it violates rules concerning the transportation of hazardous materials.

Recurring Subscription Trips (Weekly Trips)

A Subscription service is provided for the convenience of riders desiring service on a regular basis for medical and similar recurring weekly trips. This service eliminates the need for you to call daily or weekly to schedule a trip. We can also schedule trips that occur periodically every month i.e., 2nd Tuesday of the month.

Subscription scheduling may be requested by calling the office at 256-231-0010 during business hours. These trip requests will be accepted on a continual basis. After requests are received, passengers will be contacted and a pick-up time confirmed. Passengers wishing to change a subscription must give two weeks' notice to the paratransit office. Any changes in a passengers' schedule, e.g. vacation or break, must be called into the paratransit office at least two weeks in advance. This will allow other passengers to schedule trips in those time slots. No trip(s) will be cancelled automatically due to weather or school closings, unless the ACTS fixed route is not running. Passengers are responsible for calling the office to ensure each cancellation.

Canceling Subscription Trips

Because we have such a high demand for subscription trips, passengers canceling one-third (33%) of their Subscription trips in one month may lose the time slot. Consideration will be given for vacations, illnesses, and work/school related meetings, unplanned and unusual circumstances. The ACTS will not *automatically cancel* any passenger trips, i.e. due to school closings, bad weather, etc., unless the ACTS fixed route is *not* running. Passengers must call in to report their individual cancellation(s).

Trip Cancellation Policy for a Scheduled Trip

Passengers may cancel up to 1 hour before scheduled pick-ups. The transit agency shall also cancel the trip 1 hour before scheduled pick-up. Any cancellation by the transit agency shall prompt the notification of affected passengers with explanation.

Realizing there may be natural disasters, unavoidable maintenance issues, accidents, civil disturbances, and/or unforeseen events beyond the control of this agency may be cause for trip cancellation or denial. All affected passengers shall be notified as soon as possible.

There is no penalty for a cancellation as long as notice is given at least 1 hour or more hours before the start of the pickup window. Passengers are encouraged to give as much notice as possible if unable to make the appointment. We ask that passengers be cooperative in reducing cancellations. Cancellations are disruptive to the overall operation and the time could have been scheduled by another passenger. If a passenger cancels a trip less than an hour before the scheduled pick up time, it will be treated the same as a No Show.

Passengers should call the ACTS at 256-231-0010 as soon as known to cancel any trips. Cancellations can be made by leaving a message on the answering system 24 hours a day 7 days a week, but every effort should be made to call during business hours that are between 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday.

Current ADA and Demand Response Services/ Application Process

At the present time, curb-to-curb demand response ADA Paratransit services with assistance from origin to destination as needed, are provided for approved disabled individuals residing within the municipalities of Hobson City, Anniston, Oxford, Weaver and Jacksonville. Clients within the municipal areas must be physically or mentally handicapped or otherwise disabled to be eligible for the service. In addition, clients within the municipal limits must complete and submit an application to be approved for ADA paratransit. Those wanting to use the ADA paratransit service contact EAC, generally by phone, to receive an application by mail, fax, or email. Once EAC receives the completed application, a temporary pass is issued within 21 days. The applicant completes Part I—general information and Part II asked for a certification from a healthcare professional that is familiar with their disability. The Paratransit Advisory Committee (PAC) meets once a month and reviews the applications. The PAC decides approval or denial of service eligibility. EAC follows an approved process for denial/appeal/and review of applications.

The paratransit service utilizes seven (7) wheelchair lift equipped 15 passenger vehicles. Service hours are the same as those of the ACTS Fixed Route fixed route system. The ADA paratransit system requires a day's notice in order to schedule transportation. In addition, the Calhoun County Commission sponsors curb-to-curb demand response transit service for all county residents both in the urbanized unincorporated areas and rural portions of the county. The urbanized unincorporated areas of Calhoun County are those areas within the urban boundary as defined by the US Census Bureau. Demand response services for residents within the urbanized unincorporated portions of Calhoun County are available to any citizen and no application is required.

Appeals Process for Denial of ADA Eligibility

The ACTS has established an administrative appeals process through which an individual who has been denied ADA complementary paratransit eligibility can obtain review of the denial.

1. Appeal of the decision of the denial of ADA paratransit eligibility must be filed within 60 days of written notification of the denial. Appeals are to be sent to the Project Administrator for the ACTS.
2. Upon receipt of the denial, the ACTS will provide the individual with the opportunity to be heard and to present information and arguments to an individual not involved with the initial decision to deny eligibility. The ACTS will again provide a written determination as to the decision made upon completion of the appeals process and the reasons for it.
3. The ACTS will provide complementary paratransit service to the applicant pending the final determination of the appeal.
4. If a customer appeal is denied and the applicant thinks the ADA paratransit eligibility process was unfair, the applicant can file a complaint with the Federal Transit Administration Office of Civil Rights, Attention: Title VI Program Coordinator, East Building 5th Floor – TCR, 1200 New Jersey Ave., SE, Washington, DC 20590

ADA Grievance Procedure

This grievance procedure is established to meet the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. It may be used by anyone who wishes to file a complaint alleging discrimination on the basis of disability in the provision of services, activities, programs, or benefits by the Areawide Community Transportation System (ACTS). Sound Transit's personnel policies govern employment-related complaints of disability discrimination.

The complaint should be in writing and contain information about the alleged discrimination such as name, address, phone number of complainant and location, date, and description of the problem. Alternative means of filing complaints, such as personal interviews or a tape recording of the complaint will be made available for persons with disabilities upon request.

The complaint should be submitted by the grievant and/or his/her designee as soon as possible but no later than 60 calendar days after the alleged violation to:

Shane Christian
Project Director
EARPDC
1130 Quintard Avenue Suite 300
Anniston, AL 36201
256-237-6741

TTY Relay: 711

Within 15 calendar days after receipt of the complaint, the Project Director or his/her designee will meet with the complainant to discuss the complaint and the possible resolutions. Within 15 calendar days of the meeting, the Project Director or his/her designee will respond in writing, and where appropriate, in format accessible to the complainant, such as large print or Braille. The response will explain the position of the Agency and offer options for substantive resolution of the complaint.

If the response by the Project Director or his/her designee does not satisfactorily resolve the issue, the complainant may appeal the decision within 15 calendar days after receipt of the response to the Project Director or his/her designee. Within 15 calendar days after receipt of the appeal, the Project Director or his/her designee will meet with the complainant to discuss the complaint and possible resolutions. Within 15 calendar days after the meeting, the Project Director or his/her designee will respond in writing, and, where appropriate, in a format accessible to the complainant, with a final resolution of the complaint.

All written complaints received by Project Director or his/her designee, appeals to the Project Director or his/her designee, and responses from these two offices will be retained by the Agency for at least three years.

Funding

Grant funds for Fiscal Year 2021 will be 100% Federally funded through the Coronavirus Aide, Relief and Economic Security Act of 2020.

Current Year Funding

The Fixed Route and Demand Response Services programs current year's funding, which includes the Federal appropriation as awarded by the Alabama Department of Transportation, will be funded entirely by the CARES Act. The amount appropriated will be 100% Federal. The current year's operations budget is \$1,436,914 dollars.

Budget

Budget increases are contingent on local match and available federal apportionment. In order to keep up with increasing cost and increased demand, it is projected that the budget should be increased 0.75% per year for the next 5 years.

Fiscal Year	Budget	Capital	Capital Budget
FY 2022	\$ 550,447.00	6 vehicles, replacing two	\$ 130,000
FY 2023	\$ 554,575.00	6 vehicles, replacing two	\$ 130,000
FY 2024	\$ 558,734.00	6 vehicles, replacing two	\$ 130,000
FY 2025	\$ 562,925.00	6 vehicles, replacing two	\$ 130,000
FY 2026	\$ 567,147.00	6 vehicles, replacing two	\$ 130,000

Approved Ridership

Currently, the Anniston program has 1,014 approved clients, the Jacksonville program has 348 approved clients, Hobson City has 13 approved clients, Oxford has approved 183 clients, and Weaver has 36 approved clients. ADA eligible residents of the urbanized unincorporated areas of Calhoun County are not required to complete an application, and their numbers are not collected. ADA Paratransit services are provided by Anniston Limousine, Inc. of Anniston, AL through a multi-year contract with the East Alabama Regional Planning and Development Commission.

Demand for Service

According to the 2019 American Community Survey 1-year estimates, 18,290 civilian noninstitutionalized individuals in Calhoun County live with disabilities. Not all will qualify for the paratransit service due to residence requirements (for ADA Paratransit) or nature of disability. From the number, however, demand for service is projected to only increase.

OTHER EXISTING ACTIVITIES

A survey of existing paratransit services in Calhoun County indicates a variety of agencies with the capability of providing limited transportation for handicapped and disabled citizens. Following is a list of agencies and a summary of the transportation they provide.

1. **Kid One Transport** (1-800-543-7143) - A non-profit organization providing transportation for children under the age of 19 to needed medical care, as well as expectant mothers to prenatal care. Providing services for over 40 counties including local and long-distance services for residents of Calhoun County.
2. **Opportunity Center-Easter Seal** (256-820-9960) - Transportation for disabled clients currently receiving services for Special Programs. Operates one (14) passenger van for client transportation.
3. **Anniston City Schools** (256-231-5000) - Operates four small 15 passenger buses, one diesel 18 passenger bus, and five 21 passenger buses. Two vehicles have wheelchair lifts. Transportation is provided for approximately 60 children/day.

4. **Highland Health Systems** (256-236-3403) - Operates several passenger vans each day to transport adults to various day treatment, partial hospital, extended care and children services programs. One of the vehicles is wheelchair lift equipped. The program transports approximately 200 clients/day for day treatment. Overall, the Center operates its vans throughout its various locations in both Calhoun and Cleburne Counties providing transit for ±400 clients each day to/from treatment and training centers in Jacksonville, Duke School, Anniston and Cleburne County.

5. **Anniston Parks and Recreation** (256-236-8221) – Provides transportation for mentally and physically challenged adults ≥ 18 years old for transportation to recreational programs. Transports approximately 80 clients/week. Also provides transportation to and from its senior center for participating citizens.

6. **City of Oxford/Oxford Senior Center** (256-831-5900) - Utilizes one wheelchair equipped van and one 14 passenger bus for participants of their Senior Citizens Center.

7. **NHC Place/Healthcare** (256-835-3959) - Utilizes one 16 passenger vehicle with wheelchair lift with the assisted living facility. Transports clients for recreation and medical appointments as needed, usually 8-10 patients each week.

8. **The ARC of Calhoun/Cleburne Counties** (256-236-2857) - Works in association with Anniston Parks and Recreation Program to provide transportation to/from recreational programs for about 25 developmentally disabled adults per week. Utilizes school buses for transportation during 4 weeks of summer activities for approximately 90 kids, ages 5 to 21 years. Coordinates with local school system and others for special events including: Special Olympics, summer day camps and other special events for disabled youth and adults. Transports clients to serve Meals on Wheels and Community Food Bank.

9. **Jacksonville Senior Center** (256-435-9199) - Operates one 12 passenger wheel chair lift equipped van to/from senior center for various senior oriented programs. Occasionally utilizes another vehicle when demand and personnel are available. Transit services provided 8 am-4 pm weekdays for ±15 citizens each day.

10. **Anniston EMS, Inc.** (256-237-8572) - Operates non-emergency services for non-ambulatory patients 24 hours a day, seven days a week for stretcher bound patients. This is a for-hire service available for patients located anywhere in Calhoun County with patients choice of destination. Also provides emergency transportation. They provide wheelchair transport for hire. They operate a

transport van for hire for ambulatory people who need a ride to the doctor's office for regular appointments.

11. **JSU Transit** (256-782-3600) - Gamecock Express' mission is to provide safe and reliable transit service to Jacksonville State University. The system, a fixed route service, operates Monday through Friday from 7:00 a.m. to 9:30 p.m. (with limited night and summer service) each semester, but is idle during university holidays, semester breaks and weekends. The system provides 166 trips per day with 5 different routes and operates 6 buses until peak time 8 buses on routes during peak time. There are 13 buses in the fleet. The system averages approximately 3,600 trips per month.

12. **Medical Transport of Alabama** (888-599-2050) - MTA is privately owned and operated emergency medical transportation company. MTA is a welcome alternative to traditional transportation. Employing more than 52 full-time drivers for its 52+ vehicle fleet, MTA is able to provide a wide variety of vehicle options including wheelchair and minivans to meet specific client needs. Drivers are trained to assist non-emergency patients, (who may or may not be confined to wheelchairs or other mobility aids), from door to door instead of just from curb to curb. The Drivers are certified and trained in both first aid and CPR should a client need arise for this type of action. In addition, each and every driver is subject to random drug testing and extensive background checks to insure the highest level of care for clientele.

SECTION III PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Transit Advisory Board

EAC has established a Transit Advisory Board (TAB) as its official body to provide public participation on transit issues, policies, programs and services impacting persons with disabilities. The TAB meets monthly on the second Tuesday of each month at 9:00 am at the offices of the East Alabama Regional Planning and Development Commission. TAB members are appointed by participating governments: The City of Anniston, City of Oxford, City of Weaver, Town of Hobson City, and the Calhoun County Commission. EAC and United Way of East Central Alabama also appoint representatives. A staff member from EAC serves as Secretary. Meetings are noticed to the public and provide a mechanism for participation by the public at large and individuals with disabilities in the continued development and assessment of services to the general public persons with disabilities. In a meeting immediately following the TAB, the Paratransit Advisory Board (PAB) meets to review applications for use of the ADA Paratransit program. Due to the reviewing of confidential information, the PAB is not opened to the public.

Outreach Activities

Anniston Limousine, Inc., 1130 Quintard Ave. Suite 403, Anniston, AL 36201, is the contractor for the provision of the Section 5307 ADA Paratransit Fixed Route and Demand Response services and the Section 5311 Rural Demand Response transit services. The contract was awarded through competitive bid in September of 2020. At the start of Fiscal Year 2020-2021, EAC staff met with representatives of Anniston Limousine to assure a smooth continuation of all programs in the new fiscal year. The contract is currently in the 1st of 3 years with an option to renew the Contract for two (2) additional twelve (12) month periods. The City of Jacksonville has appointed a Paratransit Advisory Board which continues to meet monthly to review program activities and evaluate applications. The Cities of Weaver, Oxford, and Hobson City along with the Calhoun County Commission and United Way of East Central Alabama have opportunities appointed representatives to the ACTS Fixed Route Transit Advisory Board and the ADA Paratransit Advisory Committee.

EAC staff visited local agencies and service providers to distribute maps and brochures, promoting the fixed route service and providing information regarding ADA Paratransit service. Contacts include the Department Of Human Resources, local Senior Centers, Calhoun County Health Department, YMCA, the offices of the Anniston Public Housing Authority, Hobson City Housing Authority, the Community Enabler and the city halls in Anniston, Oxford, and Hobson City.

Draft copies of the Fiscal Year 2021 ADA Paratransit Plan have been mailed to the local dialysis clinics, senior centers, the Calhoun County Health Department, Calhoun County Department of Human Resources. Calhoun/Cleburne Mental Health Center, the ACTS

Fixed Route Transit Advisory Board (TAB), the ADA Paratransit Advisory Board, Interfaith Ministries, the ARC of Calhoun County, the Opportunity Center, the Health Services Center, Jacksonville Paratransit Advisory Board, Bradford Health Services, the MPO Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC), Action Industries and the Community Services of Calhoun County. Also, 20 current ADA Paratransit riders were randomly chosen, contacted and sent a copy of the draft Plan. Their input was sought as end users of the service. In addition, an opportunity for public review and comment will be scheduled and advertised through an ad in the *Anniston Star* on February 3, 2021. The attached comment form is available at all locations and on www.earpdc.org.

Consultation Activities

The draft Fiscal Year 2021 ADA Paratransit plan will be mailed to 30 selected human service agencies in the Anniston and Jacksonville. Each of the agencies or groups will be solicited for their comments regarding the current level of ADA paratransit services. EAC staff continue to provide information regarding system performance and the regularly scheduled meetings of the ACTS Fixed Route Transit Advisory Board (TAB) and the Anniston Paratransit Advisory Board. In addition, EAC staff consults regularly with representatives of Anniston Limousine to address and monitor the ADA demand response paratransit system. EAC cartographers assisted transportation staff in the development, maintenance and up-dates of a map depicting the service areas and fare structure of the county transit services. This map was distributed to Anniston Limousine and the local Medicaid Agency representative.

Telephone consultation and referral services also take place on a continuing basis through the East Alabama Commission offices. Phone calls are received from individuals needing paratransit services and each is informed regarding the various types of service available. There average between fifty and sixty (50-60) calls received each month.

Ongoing Participation

In order to assure participation from disabled members of the community, the ACTS Fixed Route Transit Advisory Board formed the Paratransit Advisory Committee (PAC). The Anniston PAC meets the second Thursday every month after the regular meeting of the ACTS Fixed Route Advisory Board in the conference room of the offices of the East Alabama Regional Planning and Development Commission, 1130 Quintard Ave., in Anniston. The PAC is comprised of members of the Transit Advisory Board, citizens representing the participating municipalities (Anniston, Oxford, Hobson City and Weaver), a representative from the paratransit provider, a representative of local social/human service agencies, and two representatives from the East Alabama Regional Planning and Development Commission. These meetings are held monthly in a handicapped accessible building immediately after the ACTS Fixed Route Transit Advisory Board. Likewise, the City of Jacksonville has formed the Jacksonville Paratransit Advisory Board (PAB). The PAB meets monthly to evaluate service and to review ADA applications for service. The PAB is composed of a representative from the

Jacksonville Housing Authority and two Jacksonville City citizens. The Jacksonville PAB meets at 9:30 am the third Wednesday of each month in the offices of the Jacksonville Housing Authority.

Both PAC's provide application review and evaluation, and also function in an oversight capacity for the respective paratransit systems.

Update Plan Public Hearing

The Plan Update will be available for public review and comment from February 3, 2021 through March 9, 2021. The plan will be offered for adoption by the Calhoun Area MPO on March 18, 2021. Public comments will be accepted at any time during this period. A public hearing will be held at 9:00 am, March 9, 2021, in the 3rd floor conference room of the East Alabama Regional Planning and Development Commission. This is a handicapped accessible room. An ad for the public hearing was published in the *Anniston Star* on February 3, 2021. The ads also indicated that a draft plan will be available for public review and comment before the public hearing in the conference room of the East Alabama Regional Planning and Development Commission as well as public libraries in Anniston, Oxford, and Jacksonville. Copies of the plan update will be distributed to the ACTS Fixed Route TAB prior to its meeting. Notices of the comment period were put on fixed route and paratransit vehicles. Draft copies of the plan and display ad announcements of the public hearing were mailed to approximately 30 human service agencies and the members of the ACTS Fixed Route Transit Advisory Board.

UNRESOLVED ISSUES

There are no unresolved issues.

OTHER ISSUES

There are currently no identified issues with the ADA Paratransit service. Every effort is made to ensure an ongoing assessment of the program to make sure persons with disabilities are served to the fullest extent possible.

2021 ADA Paratransit Implementation Plan Update

Public Comment Form

February/March 2021

ADA Paratransit Service: _____

Public Participation:

Other Issues:

(Optional) Name: _____ City: _____

Please Return to: EARPDC
2021 Paratransit Plan
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Anniston, AL 36202

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