“Rides to Wellness” is a collaborative Community project with Northeast Oregon Public Transit, ODOT Public Transit, and ODVA. It is further supported by Grande Ronde Hospital and the Union County Local Community Advisory Council. The program is delivered by Union County Public Transit.
Union County Public Transit (UCPT) has made an effort to keep the guide as jargon free as possible, but there are still a few terms that are necessary to use to fully describe the services provided. The following list is provided for ease of reference where the use of such terminology is required.

- **ADA** - Americans with Disabilities Act. The ADA framework provides the basis, and in some cases, responsibility to provide Ride to Wellness Services.
- **Add-On** - An add-on is a classification of trip that we provide from time to time on a space available basis. While it is provided in the Rides to Wellness program, it is not subject to the ADA guarantee.
- **Paratransit** - Sometimes called Complementary Paratransit, the term refers to our obligation under the ADA to provide a transportation alternative for people who are prevented from using Fixed Route due to a disability.
- **Area of Service** - The area of service for Rides to Wellness is primarily Union County. However, our services extend outside of county as needed, when they will not infringe on the services provided by other areas. Currently our service area will extend 275 miles from our Public Transit Hub.
- **Same Day Accommodation** - Unlike typical Paratransit services, Rides to Wellness clients may call the same day to schedule transportation. It is the goal of UCPT to respond to ride request in La Grande/ Island City in 60 minutes or less and in bedroom communities (such as Union, Elgin, Cove, or North Powder) in 90 minutes or less.
- **Eligibility** - Eligibility is when a client meets the criteria to participate in the program.
- **Origin to Destination** - Origin to Destination is the ADA standard for how we deliver Rides to Wellness services. A full discussion of Origin to Destination is included on page 7.
- **Promise Window** - The Promise Window is our estimation of when a vehicle will arrive to perform a pickup within a 20 minute zone of certainty. For example a ride request of 10:30 may result in a Promise Window between 10:30 and
10:50. While we rarely arrive more than five minutes from the opening of the Promise Window it is best to schedule trips and watch for the bus accordingly.

- **Trip Denial** - We actively seek to avoid trip denials. A trip denial occurs when two circumstances are met:
  - All the trip slots up to an hour before and up to an hour after the requested time are full, AND
  - We are unable to bring in an extra driver and vehicle to accommodate the trip within one hour on either side of the original request time.

- **Will-Call** - Will-Calls are a special classification of trip where the pickup time is unknown at the time an appointment is made. All medical trips in La Grande/Island City are scheduled in this way. While a will-call is the best approach for a medical appointment, where the end time is often unknown, we work with medical providers to get an estimated end time for any Rides to Wellness trips that will travel outside of La Grande/Island City to best utilize our driver’s time.

- **Demand Response** - Rides that occur outside of our Fixed Route service area, or outside of our regular Paratransit scheduling hours, such as same day accommodations are classified as demand response rides.

For alternative formats of this document please request via 541-963-2877, or call TTY at 711 or 1-800-735-2900.
Rides to Wellness provides demand response access to medical care. Program goals include improved access to primary and urgent care facilities; fewer missed appointments, fewer trips to the Emergency Room, and reduced hospitalization (and re-hospitalization).

Public Transit offers the backbone of the system but private taxis and couriers have been invited to assist. The method of delivery is based on provider availability, medical appropriateness and cost effectiveness.

Following the ADA obligations we meet for Paratransit services, Rides to Wellness is provided for those who are PREVENTED from getting to their medical appointments via Fixed Route or other services (i.e. a taxi, using their own car, being driven by a family member). Rides to Wellness is not for those who are inconvenienced by using Fixed Route or the above mentioned options, or for those who simply prefer origin to destination service.

Rides to Wellness is open to eligible passengers with origin to destination trips within our service area (defined primarily as Union County, but extending beyond as needed). 90% of our fleet is accessible to wheelchairs and other mobility devices. All of our drivers have been trained to proficiency with our accessibility equipment.

Rides to Wellness eligibility is based on a rider’s ability to get to their doctor’s appointment via Fixed Route, taxi, personal, and/or family car. It is not based on any specific diagnosis. Application for the Rides to Wellness program is handled verbally during the first call to schedule a ride either from the passenger or the medical staff calling in their place. Each first ride is typically handled with temporary/presumptive eligibility until it is determined that the services are no longer needed or the passenger is no longer eligible.

**Hours of Service**

Rides to Wellness operates primarily Monday through Friday from 7:30 am to 5:30 pm. Due to the demand response nature of the program the full hours of service will extend beyond that and operate any day including holidays if a medical
appointment has been scheduled. You will only be able to reach a ride scheduler during the primary hours of operation.

**Eligibility**

Unlike the Paratransit program, a lengthy written application is not required for eligibility to use the Rides to Wellness program. Eligibility is handled almost exclusively as Temporary (sometimes called Presumptive) Eligibility. This happens because a large number of clients will only need the Rides to Wellness program once, or on a loosely intermittent basis. The small group of clients who need the services on a regular basis are still handled in the same way, and are not required to carry an eligibility card to receive services.

Essentially anyone that has a mobility condition, or a transportation obstacle that prevents them from getting to their medical appointment is eligible for Rides to Wellness, but the service is meant to fill the gap in between those who have the means to get themselves to their medical appointments and those who’s transportation is provided for them via Medicaid or Oregon Health Plan. A rider could need Rides to Wellness due to a broad range of conditions including, physical, cognitive, sensorial, and psychological and others.

**Ineligibility**

Due to the temporary/presumptive eligibility approach to Rides to Wellness an ineligibility determination would be extremely rare, but would occur if it became apparent that the rider was NOT PREVENTED from using Fixed Route, taxi, personal car, etc. Applicants who have been found ineligible and disagree with the finding have 60 days to file an appeal. An appeal does not guarantee approval after review. Appeals should be directed to the Union County Public Transit Manager. They will gather all pertinent facts to reach a finding. The conclusions of the Transit Manager will be provided to you in writing (or an accessible format upon request) within 30 days. The decision of the Transit Manager is final.
Scheduling a Ride

Trip planners are available Mon-Friday 7:30 to 5:30 p.m. Call as soon as you know of your need for an appointment. We are able to take ride requests up to 14 days in advance of your appointment, but we do make same day accommodation medical trips as well. Please remember that while we strive for quick response to same day accommodations, it is much simpler to fit your medical trip into the existing Public Transit schedule when we have advance notice. For recurrent trips, such as dialysis appointments, we are able to schedule a subscription service (defined further below).

Our trips are dispatched via Mobile Data Computers (a one way medium). Drivers cannot change any particular aspect of a trip. Trip changes can only be arranged through the call center at 541-963-2877. We request that for out of county rides the scheduler attempt to schedule at least 48 hours in advance.

Types of Trips

We offer three types of trips: simple, compound, and subscription.

Simple Trips

Simple trips are from one point to another and/or then back to the point of origin. A trip to your doctor’s office and then back home is a simple trip. A simple trip can be either one way, or a round trip. In the case of a round trip simple trip fare is charged on both legs of the trip.

Compound Trips

A compound trip requires more stops. So if you were to go from the doctor’s office to the pharmacy, and then return to your home (or go to any other destinations beyond that before returning home) you would be on a compound trip. Compound trips are not eligible for subscription service.
Each leg of your trip must be scheduled at the time you call for an appointment (only your return to home ride remains open in “will-call” status). When scheduling a compound trip it is important to allow yourself enough time to finish your business at each destination to prevent receiving a no-show.

Occasionally you may find that you need an additional trip when you would normally be calling in your will-call to return home. For example you may not know until you are attending your doctor’s appointment that you need to go to the pharmacy. This extra trip is considered a same day add-on that (for understandable reasons) could not be scheduled in advance. For best results, schedule the add-on through the call center as soon as possible; we will accommodate as soon as the space is available.

Alternatively, you may change your will-call destination. The unique properties of a will-call trip system allow for flexibility, but you need to be aware of the potential hazards:

Irrespective of where the driver delivers you from the will-call, our obligations under the ADA are satisfied. That means your trip home from the pharmacy becomes the add-on trip – Which is not subject to the ADA guarantee of ride fulfilment.

**Subscription Trips**

Recurring rides can be scheduled on an on-going (or subscription) basis provided they meet two conditions:

- It must be a simple trip occurring at predictable intervals (day, week, etc.)
- It must occur weekly (or more frequently)

The advantage to subscription service is that you will not need to call in advance to reserve it. However with this method it is important that you keep track of when your appointment is, and notify the call center if it has changed to avoid a no-show.

**A Word About Trip Denials**

UCPT adheres to the Americans with Disabilities Act to accommodate every paratransit ride request, made by an eligible passenger, within our schedule and area of service, when it is made a day in advance. While Rides to Wellness trips are not held to this standard we strive to reach this level of commitment to the program. Because of the frequency of same day accommodations with Rides to
Wellness the potential for a trip denial is higher, but we strive with the same level of diligence to prevent them.

In an effort to meet the ADA Paratransit requirements we first try to provide a ride at the specifically requested time if it is available. If it is not, we will attempt to fill the ride in a surrounding open time spot. If an adjacent time is not open within one hour on either side of a requested reservation, we will attempt to add capacity (driver and vehicle) to accommodate it. Failure to do so is considered a trip denial.

Please note, if a surrounding time is available but doesn’t work for the rider (that is, he or she declines) it is not considered a trip denial. However, if the first leg of the trip is denied resulting in the loss of the trip, all subsequent legs are also recorded as denials.

A pattern of ADA trip denials (same rider, gender, area of town, time of appointment, delivery destination, etc.) would be considered a violation of the Americans with Disabilities Act. UCPT will take every possible step to avoid an ADA trip denial, and applies this same approach to the Rides to Wellness program.

**More on Origin to Destination**

The American’s with Disabilities Act was drafted with the ambiguous term “Origin to Destination” to describe a passenger trip to avoid limiting terms used by providers (such as curb-to-curb). This ensures that passengers can use the services that are provided by allowing the level of service to be tailored to their needs with some exceptions.

It is reasonable to expect that origin to destination will mean door-to-door for some riders or locations and curb-to-curb may work better for others. The ADA recognizes that arranging for assistance beyond the curb takes additional time and that is reasonable for us to ask for advance notice from passengers who need it.

The ADA does NOT require transit providers to fundamentally alter the nature of their service to make an accommodation. Examples of assistance that would NOT be required include:

- Assistance through a door and into or out of a building
- Leaving a vehicle unattended for a lengthy period of time
- Losing line of sight view of the unattended vehicle
Actions that are unsafe (backing down a narrow alley, carrying a wheelchair downstairs, etc.)

Other operational examples are evaluated on a case-by-case basis. The bottom line however is that UCPT will make its best effort to fulfill a door-to-door request that does not constitute a fundamental alteration of our basic service. All that we ask in return is that you observe our strong preference for such requests to be made at least a day in advance (preferably at the time of the original ride reservation).

Ready to Roll

A Ride to Wellness appointment is our estimate arrival with a 20 minute margin of error called a promise window. If you accept a ride reservation for 2:15 your driver has a window between 2:15 and 2:35 to arrive for pickup. It is very rare for us to arrive more than five minutes beyond the opening of the promise window. Since our driver has limited dwell time (see below) you should be ready to ride by the 2:15 time your originally accepted for your appointment.

Courtesy Window (Dwell Time)

Our courtesy window, sometimes called dwell time is two minutes. This means we will wait two minutes after arrival for you to appear before proceeding to our next scheduled passenger.

This does NOT mean that you must load within two minutes. Simply appear to indicate to the driver that you intend to keep your appointment. It is important to keep an eye open for the driver because, unless you specifically request door-to-door service at the time you make your reservation, the driver will not knock on your door to announce arrival.

If the courtesy window closes before you appear, your trip will be booked as a no-show and you will need to schedule another appointment. Additionally if you appear at the door and tell the driver that you will not be going it is booked as a no-show.

Fare

Rides to Wellness cost $3.00 per direction ($6 round trip) when you are traveling within Union County, and $2.00 per direction ($4 round trip) when traveling within La Grande/ Island City. A 20 punch pass is $36 (unless you routinely travel around the
county, at which point it is $54) and an unlimited monthly pass for $55 are available for purchase if you do not want to deal with cash each time you reserve a ride.

Eligible out of county rides are charged a fare that works on a sliding scale based off of the mileage range your trip falls in to. Tier one is for trips between 0 and 74 miles (but outside of Union County) and the cost is $25 per direction ($50 round trip). Tier two is for trips between 75 and 140 miles and the cost is $30 per direction ($60 round trip). Tier three is for trips between 141 and 199 miles and the cost is $45 per direction ($90 round trip). Tier four is for all trips over 200 miles and the cost is $50 per direction ($100 round trip).

UCPT also does stretcher transports, but they have a different fare structure. In Union County it is $10 per trip, unless it is a last trip for a hospice patient. Last trips are done for free as a courtesy. When traveling out of county, stretcher trips work on the same tier system, but tier one is $35 per trip ($70 round trip), tier two is $50 per trip ($100 round trip), tier three is $65 per trip ($130 round trip), and tier four is $75 ($150 round trip).

We will transport a personal care attendant free of charge with your paid fare. UCPT will NOT provide a personal care attendant our driver is NOT qualified to fill this role. We are not an appropriate option for medical emergencies that require care in route.

**Carry On Items**

Our drivers will happily assist you with your carry-on items within a few limitations:

- Carry-on assistance is limited to getting your items on and off the vehicle. We cannot help you take things inside your home.
- We will NOT transport any carry-on items that cannot be safely stowed for travel (in the driver’s estimation).
- Our drivers will NOT assist with any item that in his or her estimation exceeds 25 pounds in weight.

If you will be returning with more items than you can carry we encourage you to arrange a person care attendant to ride with you.
**Guest Riders**

We will transport a traveling companion who is not a care provider with you on a fare for service basis. More than one companion may be transported on a space available and fare for service basis. The space needed for this person must be disclosed at the time of the original ride reservation as we may have two clients scheduled to share a vehicle which would limit the available space.

The only exception for guest companions to ride without a fare is in the case of children riding with parents to medical appoints for a sibling, themselves, or the parent. In this case the child(ren) ride for free, but they must be accounted for at the time of the original ride scheduling to ensure a vehicle with enough capacity to carry the children is sent. It is the responsibility of the parent to provide the necessary child and/or infant car seats.

**Cancellation and No-Shows**

It is expected that you will cancel your scheduled ride with us no later than an hour before your scheduled ride to have a no fault cancelation. When you cancel within an hour of your scheduled ride it is booked as a late cancel and stays at such through the window leading up to your scheduled ride until the driver has been dispatched to your address. At this point any form of cancellation is a no-show. Our drivers are not available to return and you will need to call the call center to make new arrangements.

You must call the call center to cancel your appointment. Our drivers can NOT make scheduling changes. If you need to cancel a ride outside of office hours, please dial 541-963-2877 to leave a voicemail with your cancellation.

A no-show or pattern of late cancels on a subscribed trip may result in automatic cancellation of pending and future subscriptions. A passenger who has a future subscription canceled is subject to the same rights of appeal as a rider who is suspended or found ineligible for service – see page 4.

A passenger accruing three no-shows, or a pattern of late cancels in excess of system norms or both during a given month may receive a suspension warning. UCPT approaches suspensions VERY reluctantly, and then only in a context sensitive manner. Three no-shows in a month would be out of system norms for someone who rides 20 times a month. However, they may be inconsequential for someone who
rides 200 times a month. Our trip reservation software catalogs the history of every rider in our system and all rider in aggregate. While each case for suspension is considered on its own merit, the agency will not suspend passengers who are within system norms for the queried period of time. A passenger who is suspended for no-show and/or late cancel activity has the same right of appeal as a passenger who is found ineligible – see page 5.
While funding is available, Union County Public Transit (UCPT), has the privilege of providing rides to medical appointments for veterans at no cost. Veteran spouses and family will not be eligible for this particular leg of the program, but they are still eligible to use other UCPT services. A spouse or family member may still ride as a personal care attendant (PCA) with the veteran at no cost. During the eligibility process the veteran will need to present a military ID or their DD214 form.

If a veteran is eligible for the Veteran Administration’s (VA) mileage reimbursement program, and they own a vehicle, they are not eligible to use the Veteran Rides to Wellness program. The two exceptions to this rule would be an appointment where their physician provides a letter to UCPT confirming that the treatment taking place would create a safety hazard if the veteran were to drive before or after the appointment or you require the use of a mobility device and the vehicle you own cannot accommodate the device.

Eligible criteria for VA reimbursement include:

- A veteran with a service connected (SC) injury rating of 30% or more
- Those traveling out of the area for a SC condition rated 10% or higher
- Those receiving a VA pension rate
- Those classified as being in Category 5 poverty (Set Federally and subject to change, but currently making less than $1436 a month).
- Those traveling for a schedule compensation or pension

Veteran Rides to Wellness will work on a Demand Response model as needed, like the base Rides to Wellness program. However, on Mondays the program will not go to the VA clinic in Walla Walla, Washington as there is a VA bus going by appointment. UCPT will help to schedule rides on this bus as needed if a veteran calls for a ride to that clinic for a Monday appointment. Any veteran with VA health benefits is eligible to use that service.

Calling to schedule a ride with Veteran Rides to Wellness will work as the base program does, with a phone call to 541-963-2877 any time Monday through Friday between 7:30 am and 5:30 pm. For out of county rides we request the scheduler try to call at least 48 hours in advance. UCPT may need to confirm appointment information with the VA clinic, and will ask the scheduler about this during their initial phone call.
LIMITATIONS

**Animals**

We welcome your service animals but cannot accommodate pets. A service animal is an animal trained to perform a task which accommodates conditions associated with a passenger’s disability. Comfort or companion animals are NOT considered service animals by the ADA.

**Refusal of Service**

UCPT shall not discriminate based on any protected status. However, refusal of service may result from illegal conduct or actions that pose a threat to the safety of the driver or other riders. Additionally, abusive language toward the driver, the personal care attendant, and/or companion on the ride with the passenger who reserved the trip will lead to refusal of service. A passenger may also be refused service for discharge of bodily fluids that are not (or cannot) be contained in an appropriate manner. A passenger denied service has the same right of appeal as a passenger found ineligible for service – see page 5.

**Mobility Devices**

We will not transport any mobility device that exceeds the capacity of our equipment. Wheelchairs must fit within the width of our ramps/lifts (including helper ringer on wheels). We will likewise not attempt boarding where the combined weight of a rider and the mobility device exceeds equipment specifications. If you have a large mobility device please call for an evaluation before making a ride request. Failure to do this could lead to refusal of service on-site if the driver cannot safely load the passenger and mobility device into the vehicle.

**Securing Mobility Devices**

Our driver (and only our driver) is responsible for securing your mobility device into our vehicle. It is our policy to secure all devices for transport. It is legally required that all devices be secured facing forward if the passenger remains seated in the device. If the device cannot be secured facing forward due to size the passenger
must transfer out to sit in the vehicle seat. If the passenger is unable to transfer UCPT will be forced to refuse service due to safety.

**Passenger Restraints**

UCPT encourages all passengers to use shoulder restraints and lap belts. A passenger is required to present a seat belt waiver card if they choose not to wear shoulder restraints and lap belts. Additionally these restraints need to be used in the fashion they were designed (i.e. sitting upright in the seat, not laying down across the seat with the lap belt fastened over you).

**Other Prohibited Conduct**

In addition to the items listed above, a passenger may not:

- Eat, drink, smoke, or spit in the vehicle
- Fight, push, shout, or act violently
- Use vulgar, hostile, or offensive language
- Throw objects
- Engage in illegal activity
- Carry hazardous objects
- Carry flammable or poisonous items
- Transport material that may harm other, could spill, or have an offensive odor
APPENDIX

Route Questions and Deviation Requests:
(541)963-BUSS Ext. 2

Hours of Service:
Monday through Friday 7:30 am to 5:30 pm

Other Agency Services:
Paratransit: Monday through Friday 7:30 am to 5:30 pm

Incidental Medicaid Rides:
Medical Transit Program 877-875-4657

Event Management:
Kate Sprauer (Assistant Manager) (541) 963-2877 Ext. 108

Contact Information:
Union County Public Transit
2204 East Penn Avenue
La Grande, Oregon 97850
(541) 963-2877
www.neotransit.org

Angie Peters, Transit Manager, (541) 963-2877 Ext. 158

Se habla Español:
Eddie or Lucy, (541) 963-2877 Ext. 105