

CAPITAL AREA TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY

Spec-Tran Customer Guide

Updated Jan. 2026



What is Spec-Tran?

Spec-Tran is CATA's Americans with Disabilities Act or ADA-complementary paratransit service for people who are unable to use CATA's fixed-route system. It is an advance-reservation, origin-to-destination service that uses small lift-equipped buses and vans to transport customers.

Who can use Spec-Tran?

Customers certified in accordance with ADA are eligible to use Spec-Tran.

Certification is obtained by completing an application, indicating the reason the applicant cannot use CATA's fixed-route service. The application is submitted to an independent party for review. Currently, the Disability Network Capital Area reviews applications and determines eligibility. The application may be obtained by calling the Disability Network at 517-999-2760 or going online to cata.org/SpecTran (click on the **ADA pre-certification application** link for a downloadable PDF).

Visitors to the Greater Lansing area who were certified elsewhere for ADA complementary paratransit service may use CATA's Spec-Tran for 21 days. Call 517-394-CATA (2282) for additional information. Approvals/denials will be made within one business day. CATA will provide service based on apparent disability with proof of residence.

Where does Spec-Tran go?

Spec-Tran service is available throughout Lansing and East Lansing and in Delhi, Delta, Lansing and Meridian townships.

The service-area boundaries are outlined below. Ride reservations will be limited to the service area. No exceptions will be allowed. Customers outside the service area may transfer from other services (such as those identified below) to Spec-Tran at one of the connection points indicated on the map. An enlarged version of the map is available online at

cata.org/SpecTran.

When does Spec-Tran operate?

Spec-Tran operates seven days a week during the same hours as CATA's fixed-route service. For specific hours, please call 517-394-CATA (2282).

CATA services, including Spec-Tran, are typically closed on the following holidays, unless noted as limited service:

- New Year's Day
- Easter Sunday (Limited Service)
- Memorial Day
- Independence Day (Limited Service)
- Labor Day
- Thanksgiving Day (Limited Service)
- Christmas Day (Limited Service)

What does it cost to ride Spec-Tran?

The Spec-Tran fare is \$2.50 for each one-way ride.

How can Spec-Tran fares be paid?

CATA accepts cash, mobile pay, debit and credit cards, prepaid fare cards, Spec-Tran punch passes, and blue Spec-Tran tokens.

Punch passes and tokens are available for purchase at CATA offices and various locations throughout the community. The list of locations is available at cata.org/Fares. Passes may also be purchased online. To order by phone, please call CATA at 517-394-1000 between 7 a.m. and 7 p.m. Monday through Friday, or between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. on weekends.

Spec-Tran drivers are unable to accept fixed-route passes or personal checks to satisfy fare payment.

The exact fare must be paid upon boarding a Spec-Tran vehicle. Delayed fare payment will not be permitted. Drivers will not be permitted to stop along the way to allow customers to acquire the appropriate fare.

Drivers are unable to make change for customers whose fare payment exceeds the required fare.

How do you reserve a ride?

CATA offers three options for reserving a Spec-Tran ride:

MyRideCATA app – Download the free app to arrange trips from your mobile device. Available on both iPhone and Android devices. A client ID and password is required.

Myspectran.cata.org – Access the website from any device. A client ID and password is required.

CATA's reservation line – Call 517-394-CATA (2282) from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., seven days a week, year-round, including holidays.

Ride reservations can only be made between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. online, via the app or over the phone. Rides scheduled electronically outside of the accepted reservation times will be canceled.

You may schedule a ride up to 14 days in advance of the trip.

Customers are discouraged from scheduling trips they are not sure will be needed. Ride cancellations cause Spec-Tran service to be less efficient and can inconvenience other customers.

Can customers book same-day trips?

Spec-Tran service is not available on a same-day basis. Next-day ride requests must be received by 5 p.m. regardless of how the trip is reserved.

What information do customers need to provide?

The Spec-Tran office receives hundreds of calls each day. Before calling, customers are urged to have the following information ready:

- Customer name
- Proposed ride dates and times
- Names and addresses of locations where customer will be picked up and dropped off
- Telephone numbers of both the pickup and drop-off locations
- Whether the customer will be traveling with a personal care assistant, guest or service animal
- Whether the customer, personal care assistant or guest will bring aboard a mobility device such as a wheelchair, cane or walker

Callers should be ready to jot down details about the scheduled ride, including the dates and times they called, who they spoke with and information about their pickup times.

Are ride times confirmed?

Spec-Tran must accommodate eligible customers who request a ride one day prior to the scheduled trip. To meet demand, CATA may need to negotiate pickup times. ADA regulations state that ride-pickup times can be negotiated up to one hour before or after the requested time.

Customers are not asked to depart early from work or medical appointments, but could arrive at their destination earlier than the appointment time and may be picked up from work or appointments later than the requested time.

The Spec-Tran scheduler gives customers a tentative “be-ready” window. The “be-ready” window means the driver may arrive up to five minutes before or ten minutes after the customer’s scheduled time.

Drivers will not wait more than five minutes for customers to board the vehicle. Customers must be ready to depart any time during the 15-minute “be-ready” window. If a customer has not boarded within five minutes following the driver’s arrival within the “be-ready” window, the driver will be instructed to leave.

Can customers choose the type of vehicle they ride in?

Spec-Tran uses small lift-equipped buses and low-floor vans. Rides for customers who need a lift are scheduled on buses. Other rides are scheduled on buses or vans that will be in the customer’s area at the time of the ride.

Are there restrictions on mobility device types and sizes?

Customers may bring aboard mobility devices such as canes, walkers, wheelchairs, etc. CATA will transport any mobility device whose combined total weight and size are within the actual design load and dimensions of the vehicle.

For the safety of all passengers, mobility devices must be securely stowed in both low-floor vans and small buses. The driver will determine where devices are secured and will be responsible for stowing them.

How are rides canceled?

CATA offers three options for canceling a Spec-Tran ride:

MyRideCATA app – Download the free app to cancel trips from your mobile device. Available on both iPhone and Android devices. A client ID and password is required.

Myspectran.cata.org – Access the website from any device. A client ID and password is required.

CATA’s cancellation line – Call 517-394-CATA (2282) 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. A client ID and password is required.

Cancellations must be made at least 90 minutes before the scheduled pickup time to allow for a schedule adjustment. Rides that are canceled less than 90 minutes before a scheduled pickup time are considered no-shows.

How much assistance does the driver provide?

Spec-Tran picks customers up and drops them off at the curb anywhere in CATA's service area. Drivers will assist customers in and around the vehicle.

- Drivers are not required to load or unload shopping bags and other personal items.
- Drivers are not permitted to enter private residences.
- Vehicles must remain within the driver's view.

What items may customers bring on the vehicle?

Customers may bring aboard mobility devices such as canes, walkers, wheelchairs, etc. Collapsible shopping carts are allowed. Commercial shopping carts (e.g., grocery store carts) are not permitted on any vehicle. Walkers, wheelchairs and collapsible shopping carts will be secured by the driver at their discretion. When scheduling a ride, please let the CATA representative know if the customer will be bringing a personal shopping cart.

As a courtesy to others in the vehicle, customers are asked to limit packages to only those that they and/or their personal care assistant or companion can carry aboard in one trip.

Are customers permitted to bring someone to assist them?

Customers who qualify may bring a personal care assistant on all CATA services at no additional charge. Customers may be asked to show their ADA card with the "PCA" box checked.

Can customers bring others aboard who are not personal assistants?

Spec-Tran customers may bring one guest. The guest must pay the same fare as the customer.

Personal care assistants and guests must ride from the beginning of the trip to the end of the trip. They cannot be picked up or dropped off along the way.

It is important to let the CATA Spec-Tran office know if personal care assistants, guests or children will be accompanying the customer to ensure seating availability.

Are children allowed on board?

Children under 42 inches tall may accompany their parents as guests at no charge. All other children would be required to pay the same fare as the customer.

When riding a small bus, safety restraints are not required. However, children riding in a CATA Spec-Tran van must adhere to Michigan law concerning safety restraints.

Children under the age of eight must be properly restrained in a child safety or booster seat that meets federal motor vehicle safety standards appropriate for the child's weight and height. For children or infants weighing less than 20 pounds, the safety seat must face the rear of the vehicle, in accordance with the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard. Children eight years or younger and shorter than 4 feet 9 inches must ride in a booster seat. Customers must provide appropriate safety restraints. Failure to provide proper safety equipment at the time of the trip will result in the ride being canceled.

Are service animals allowed?

ADA regulations define a service animal as any animal individually trained to provide assistance to an individual with a disability. Service animals are welcome on all CATA vehicles.

- Service animals must be clean and well-groomed.
- Service animals must be leashed and under the owner's control. Customers should not ask the driver to take the animal's leash or harness, or assist in the care of the animal.
- Customers are responsible for knowing the best way for the animal to board the vehicle.
- Service animals are expected to sit on the floor of the vehicle.
- Animals that display disruptive or threatening behavior will not be permitted on any CATA service or property.

What should customers do if the driver is late?

Drivers are faced with numerous unpredictable conditions that cause delays. A driver is not considered late until 10 minutes beyond the scheduled pickup time. If the ride is more than 10 minutes late, please call the CATA Spec-Tran office at 517-394-CATA (2282). Riders are not obligated to accept the ride if the vehicle arrives beyond the pickup window.

What should customers do if they are not finished with their appointment when the driver arrives?

CATA understands that customers are sometimes delayed for reasons they can't control. Customers are encouraged to:

- Allow for extra time at appointments.
- Let the receptionist or nurse know the time of their pickup.
- Ask someone to call the CATA Spec-Tran office as soon as the customer knows that they will not be ready at the scheduled time.

The Spec-Tran staff will do its best to schedule a later pickup. In some cases, there may be a long delay.

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What if a customer's appointment ends early?

Customers who are finished with an appointment more than 30 minutes early should call the CATA Spec-Tran office. If possible, an earlier pickup will be arranged.

Can customers change a ride the same day?

Customers may call the CATA Spec-Tran office up to 30 minutes before the scheduled trip to ask for a destination change if the new location is a shorter distance and along the planned route of the original trip. If a destination is changed, customers are responsible for canceling the trip and making other arrangements. Drivers are not responsible for canceling or changing a customer's ride.

Is a customer allowed to make stops along a trip?

Spec-Tran riders may schedule a wait stop trip, defined as one brief stop between pickup and final destination. For example, these stops may include picking up a grocery order, dropping off or picking up a child from daycare or a service animal from a veterinary appointment, or grabbing a carryout order. Riders stay on the same vehicle.

Passengers are allowed one wait stop per trip and up to two wait stop trips per day. The maximum time allowed for a wait stop trip is 15 minutes.

How do customers express concerns or complaints?

Customers are encouraged to contact a Customer Experience Representative at 517-394-1000 or visit cata.org/LAC to express concerns or file a complaint.

CATA is advised on issues of importance to people with disabilities by a Local Advisory Council (LAC). Meetings are held bi-monthly. The public is welcome to attend. Meeting dates and times are posted at cata.org/LAC, or you may call CATA at 517-394-1100.

Spec-Tran customers have a right to:

- Rides that are on time.
- Drivers who are trained to meet passenger needs.
- Safe and properly-maintained vehicles.
- Properly fastened seat belts and wheelchair securements.
- Vehicles that match the needs of the customer.
- Efficiently-routed trips.
- Professional, courteous and respectful treatment.

Spec-Tran customers are responsible for:

- Calling no later than 5 p.m. the day before a trip is needed to schedule a ride.
- Having all pertinent ride information ready at the time of the call.
- Canceling rides as soon as possible.
- Being ready at least 10 minutes before a scheduled pickup time.
- Having the correct fare for each ride.
- Using wheelchair securements and seat belts that are provided in the vehicle.
- Refraining from eating, drinking and smoking in CATA vehicles.
- Keeping mobility devices in clean and good condition.
- Following guidelines regarding service animals.
- Keeping driveways, sidewalks and steps clear of snow and ice.
- Providing a personal care assistant, if needed.
- Limiting packages to only as many as those that can be carried in a single trip by the customer and/or his/her personal care assistant.

This guide is also available in these formats:

- Downloadable audio file at cata.org
- Large print
- Braille
- Other formats may be available upon request by calling 517-394-1000 or dial 711 for Michigan Relay Service: For hearing, Deaf, hard-of-hearing or speech-impaired persons.

CATA services are provided in accordance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, without discrimination on the basis of race, color or national origin.