



Valley Metro

Service Animals on Valley Metro Buses, Light Rail Trains and at Valley Metro Bus Stops, Light Rail Stations and Other Facilities

1. Policy Statement

- 1.1 Valley Metro is committed to taking reasonable measures to ensure that all passengers and the public are able to utilize Valley Metro's public transportation services and facilities with ease and comfort. Valley Metro has developed this policy to assist those qualified individuals with disabilities who use service animals on the fixed-route bus services, light rail vehicles, Dial-a-Ride services and Valley Metro facilities. In addition, this policy will enable Valley Metro employees and contractors to facilitate utilization by such individuals of Valley Metro's services and facilities.
- 1.2 Service animals play an important role in ensuring the independence of individuals with disabilities, and it is Valley Metro's policy to welcome any service animal that is trained to assist an individual with a disability on our buses, light rail vehicles, Dial-a-Ride vehicles and at all Valley Metro facilities. This policy is designed to assist Valley Metro employees and qualified individuals with disabilities in complying with all State and Federal laws, including the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 ("ADA") and its amendments.

2. APPLICABILITY

- 2.1 This policy is applicable to Valley Metro employees, contractors, and all qualified individuals with disabilities who travel on Valley Metro buses, light rail vehicles and Dial-a-Ride vehicles or who visit Valley Metro bus stops, shelters, light rail stations and other facilities.

3. DEFINITIONS

- 3.1 "**Direct Threat**" means a significant risk of substantial harm to the health and safety of other individuals.
- 3.2 "**Person with a Disability**" means an individual who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities of the individual; an individual with a record of such impairment; or being regarded as having such an impairment.
- 3.3 "**User/Owner**" means an individual with a disability who requires assistance with one or more daily life activities from a service animal, or service animals.
- 3.4 "**Service Animal**" means any dog, or other animal, individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of a qualified individual with a disability, including psychiatric, cognitive or mental disabilities. Possible tasks that service animals may perform include but are not limited to, guiding individuals who are blind or have low vision, alerting individuals who are deaf or hearing impaired to



the presence of people or sounds, pulling a wheelchair, fetching dropped items, assisting an individual during a seizure, retrieving medicine or alerting the individual to a telephone call, providing physical support to assist with balance and stability to individuals with mobility disabilities and assisting individuals including those with cognitive disabilities with navigation. A service animal is **not** a pet or a comfort animal.

- 3.5 **“Companion Animal”** (also referred to as “comfort animal” or “therapy animal”): means an animal which may provide a sense of well-being, comfort or companionship to a person (including individuals with disabilities) but which is not individually trained to perform specific tasks of daily living to assist people with disabilities. Companion animals are subject to Valley Metro’s policies and procedures for transporting pets. Companion animals are not the same as service animals, and they do not have the same rights as service animals to board and ride Valley Metro buses, light rail vehicles and Dial-a-Ride vehicles.

4. **STANDARDS**

- 4.1 Owners/users of service animals are welcome in all Valley Metro facilities and on-board all Valley Metro buses, light rail vehicles and Dial-a-Ride vehicles, whether owned or operated by Valley Metro or any contractor or subcontractor thereto. Companion, comfort and therapy animals are not permitted in Valley Metro facilities or on Valley Metro buses and light rail vehicles unless they can be stowed within an enclosed pet carrier that fits on the customer’s lap or on the floor beneath the customer’s seat.
- 4.2 Employees of Valley Metro, its contractors and subcontractors may ask the following questions to verify that an animal traveling with a Valley Metro passenger is a service animal:
- 4.2.1 Is the animal a service animal?
 - 4.2.2 What specific tasks is the animal trained to perform?
- 4.3 The user/owner boarding a Valley Metro vehicle with a service animal may not be charged an extra fee for the service animal.
- 4.4 The user/owner is not limited in the number of service animals he/she may have as each may provide a different type of service.
- 4.5 The user/owner must be in control of the service animal(s) at all times.
- 4.6 The service animal(s) must be appropriately trained and be able to perform its tasks for the benefit of the user/owner.
- 4.7 There is no specific requirement about how to board a service animal onto the bus, light rail vehicle or Dial-a-Ride vehicle. The vehicle operator should ask the user/owner how he/she would like to board with his/her service animal(s), and follow the requested procedures, if appropriate. An operator may call Dispatch for assistance.
- 4.8 Users/owners with service animals may not be required to sit in a specified area.
- 4.9 Service animals must sit or lie at their owner’s feet or may be held in the owner’s lap.



- 4.10 Service animals may not occupy a seat or block any aisle, vehicle entrance or exit.
- 4.11 A person's right to travel with a service animal may not be denied even if there is another passenger who is afraid of animals or who has an allergy to the service animal. In such instances, the passenger with the service animal may board as normal, and the passenger who is allergic to, or afraid of, the service animal may board the bus at a different door and sit or stand in a location as far from the service animal and its owner/user as possible.
- 4.12 A service animal may be barred from Valley Metro facilities, buses and/or light rail vehicles when:
 - 4.12.1 The animal causes damage to Valley Metro buses, light rail vehicles or facilities.
 - 4.12.2 The animal poses a direct threat to the health or safety of other passengers or employees.
 - 4.12.3 The owner/user is unable to maintain verbal or physical control over the animal.
- 4.13 Valley Metro may not bar access to a service animal based on experience with other service animals of the same type or breed, or on an unreasonable fear that is not related to the service animal's actual behavior.
- 4.14 Other passengers are requested not to call, touch or interfere with a service animal without the consent of its owner/user.
- 4.15 Any individual who violates this policy may be required to exit Valley Metro facilities, buses and/or light rail vehicles.

5. OWNER/USER RESPONSIBILITIES

- 5.1 Read and become familiar with Valley Metro's service animal policies
- 5.2 Be prepared to explain whether or not your animal is a service animal and what task(s) of daily living your animal(s) is/are trained to perform
- 5.3 Know the best way to safely board and ride with your service animal(s)
- 5.4 Maintain continuous verbal and/or physical control over your service animal(s) at Valley Metro facilities or when riding Valley Metro buses, light rail vehicles and/or Dial-a-Ride vehicles
- 5.5 Immediately control any inappropriate or threatening behavior exhibited by your service animal while visiting Valley Metro facilities or when riding Valley Metro buses, light rail vehicles or Dial-a-Ride vehicles
- 5.6 Request drivers or other Valley Metro personnel to provide assistance when boarding, riding or disembarking the bus, light rail vehicle or Dial-a-Ride vehicle with your service animal(s)
- 5.7 Reimburse Valley Metro for any damage which your service animal causes when visiting Valley Metro facilities or riding Valley Metro buses, light rail vehicles and/or Dial-a-Ride vehicles

6. TRAINING FOR VALLEY METRO EMPLOYEES

- 6.1 All front-line employees of Valley Metro, its contractors and subcontractors,



including drivers, supervisors, dispatchers, Customer Service Representatives and key management personnel, will be provided with training regarding the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), ADA service animal requirements, applicable state or local service animal laws or regulations regarding this policy. Valley Metro will also provide refresher training as warranted.

7. COMPLAINTS

7.1 General Complaints

7.2 If an individual believes that Valley Metro has violated this policy, the individual may file a general complaint describing the alleged violation. A Manager at Valley Metro, its contractor or subcontractor will research the matter, take appropriate actions to address any areas of alleged poor performance, and advise the passenger (if requested) of any findings and/or actions taken. General complaints may be filed by:

7.2.1 Calling Valley Metro's Customer Service Department at (602) 253-5000

7.2.2 Sending an email to csr@valleymetro.org

7.2.3 Filing a complaint on-line at <http://www.valleymetro.org>

7.2.4 General complaints usually are answered within 10 business days

7.3 ADA-specific Complaints

7.4 If an individual believes that Valley Metro or any of its employees, contractors or subcontractors, is systematically violating the ADA requirements regarding passengers who use service animals, the individual can file an ADA complaint with Valley Metro. Valley Metro and its contractors and subcontractors will research ADA complaints, identify any legal violations which may have occurred, identify the actions to be taken to correct the performance and contact the complainant with findings and next steps. ADA complaints may be filed:

7.4.1 On-line at http://www.valleymetro.org/accessibility/ada_form.

7.4.2 In writing at Valley Metro, 4600 E. Washington St. Ste. 101, Phoenix, AZ 85034

7.4.3 Assistance with the on-line form can be provided at (602) 253-5000

7.4.4 In accordance with federal law, ADA complaints must be addressed within 45 calendar days.

7.5 Individuals may also file ADA complaints (including complaints alleging discrimination based on the presence of a service animal) with the Federal Transportation Administration (FTA), Office of Civil Rights.

7.5.1 By phone: Toll-free at 1 (888) 446-4511

7.5.2 By TTY/TDD – The Federal Relay Service toll-free at (800) 877-8339

7.5.3 On-line at

http://www.fta.dot.gov/civilrights/ada/civil_rights_3889.html.