

PARATRANSIT POST

Utah Transit Authority Riverside Division January 2007

DATABASE TO AID DISABLED IN DISASTERS

An article by Jeremiah Stettler, Salt Lake Tribune, Dec. 9, 2006

Teams would use the info to help the state's most-at-risk people during an emergency.

Should natural disaster strike, Julie Beckstead knows Big Brother will be calling.

The mother of four doesn't mind the state's watchful eye, not when her confinement to a wheelchair could make her vulnerable during a snowstorm, flood or earthquake.

The Utah Division of Homeland Security announced Friday the creation of an online database that will supply disaster management teams with information about people with disabilities. The database will contain information on people's mobility, medications and other impairments that might endanger them during an emergency. It will provide contact information and perhaps a family physician in case of medical troubles.

Disaster teams would use the information to more effectively help the state's most at-risk population during an emergency.

The registry is voluntary, compiled by people who submit their information online or over the phone. Homeland Security officials called it a potential lifesaver during a natural disaster.



“This will give us a jump-start,” said Michael Kuehn, the state’s Homeland Security director. “It will pinpoint folks who are in genuine need of help that they can’t get any other way.”

The registry is available online at www.specialneedsutah.org or by calling 211.

Beckstead, a program coordinator at the Utah Independent Living Center in Salt Lake City, registered Friday. She admitted some concerns about privacy, but said the added security outweighs any worries.

“Sometimes you need to take risks to protect yourself,” she said.

Homeland Security officials downplayed the privacy issue Friday, stating that the information will be stored on a protected server and distributed only to emergency personnel.

Gov. Jon M. Huntsman, Jr., drumming up support for the initiative, said the registry will fill a gap in the state’s emergency preparedness efforts.

“Snowstorms and floods like those that we saw not long ago in St. George helped us understand the importance of emergency preparedness and looking after all of our citizens,” he said.

The registry will cost about \$30,000 annually, paid out of grant money through the Division of Homeland Security and Utah Department of Health. The state not only will maintain the database, but call registrants once a year to make sure the information is current.

Homeland Security officials had no estimate on how many people might participate, but said they would beef up 211 personnel to meet demand, if necessary.

“It makes me feel good that if something were to happen like a snowstorm, flood or earthquake, that someone would check on me to make sure I’m OK,” Beckstead said. “It’s a peace of mind.”

jstettler@sltrib.com

CAT ~ UTA Wants Your Advice

Since long before the passage of the ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act), UTA has met with and listened to comments made by representatives of the disabled community. An official opportunity to provide this important assistance to UTA is through the CAT. The Committee on Accessible Transportation or CAT has been created by the UTA Board of Trustees and the ADA Compliance Officer is staff to this advisory group.

The purpose of the CAT is to provide on-going review and feedback to UTA, to make sure all public transportation services and programs are accessible and inclusive to people with all types of disabilities. The CAT is called upon to review plans for new fixed route programs and services as well as to review on-going policies and practices to assure consistent, fair and equal treatment for Paratransit eligible riders.

Voting membership on the CAT is open to individuals who have a disability or to those who represent people with disabilities. A CAT membership application must be completed and returned to UTA. Before someone is recommended to fill a position on the Committee, members of the CAT review the applications and conduct interviews to select and recommend the best candidates.

If you are interested in serving on the CAT or need more information, go to the UTA web site at www.rideuta.com or contact Sherry Repscher at (801) 287-3536 to request an application. Applications are accepted at any time.

A Note About The Phones

The paratransit schedulers' phone line are open Monday through Friday from 7am to 5pm, except during our lunch hour, 11am to 12pm. During lunch you may leave a message on the voicemail for next day scheduling only. You can also reach the cancellation line, transfer to Customer Support or check on your current trips.

Saturdays, our phone lines are open for scheduling from 7am to 3pm with no down-time for lunch. From 3pm to 5pm, next day trips can be left on the voicemail.

Sundays and Holidays, the phones are unavailable. If you need to make a next day schedule, you can do so on the voicemail between the hours of 7am and 5pm.

Pay close attention to the options when you get the voicemail:

If you press:

#1 - You will get a dispatcher (if you need to check on your bus.) They are available from 530am to 1130pm, and during lunch and meetings.

#2 - You will get the cancellation line. Please leave first and last name, the trip you need cancelled, including dates and times.

#3 - Will transfer you to the customer support department. Please leave them a message should you get the voicemail.

#4 - You will get the scheduling line. Please leave all your information. Name (or client's name if you are calling on behalf of someone.) Spelling of name, home address and the EXACT address of where you would like to go. Also include what time you need to arrive, what time you would like a return and a number where you can be reached.

****There may be other times (such as office meetings) that our phones need to be unavailable. You can always leave next day scheduling on the voicemail at this time as well.****

If you have any other questions regarding this issue, please call Customer Support at 287-5359.

Trip Scheduling	801-287-7433
Trip Scheduling Toll Free	877-882-7272
After Hours Cancellations	801-287-4651
After Hours Cancellations Toll Free	877-882-7272
Customer Concerns	801-287-5359

Who Are the UTA Paratransit Dispatchers?

UTA's Paratransit Division (Riverside) in Salt Lake County utilizes a team of five full time radio dispatchers. All of the dispatchers have experience driving for UTA Paratransit. The experience they bring from driving assists them in identifying and understanding operator and passenger concerns.

Our team consists of the following Radio Control Coordinators:

Andres Colman - Andres is the newest member of our group. Andres joined the team just this past October, after being a Paratransit Operator for five years.

Dave Holt - Dave is working on his ninth year in the radio room, after eight years of service as a Paratransit Operator.

Roger McIff - Roger drove for five and a half years and has been a radio dispatcher for one and a half years.

Kelly Molyneux - Kelly was a paratransit Operator for five years and has been in the radio room for six years.

Ramee Rogers - Ramee became a dispatcher in 2000, after eight years of service as a Paratransit Operator.

Our dispatchers are all very dedicated to providing the most efficient and safe transportation to our passengers.

OUR MISSION IS TO PROVIDE HELPFUL AND COURTEOUS SERVICE WHILE MAINTAINING UNCOMPROMISED LEVELS OF QUALITY, SAFETY AND SENSITIVITY IN OUR ENVIRONMENT; THIS IS ACCOMPLISHED BY HAVING POSITIVE ATTITUDES TOWARDS OURSELVES AND THE PEOPLE WE SERVE. BY SETTING THESE HIGH STANDARDS WE ARE ABLE TO OFFER ASSISTANCE TO OUR DISABLED COMMUNITY IN THEIR QUEST FOR INDEPENDENCE.

Who's Who in Paratransit Scheduling?



Kristina, Toni, Trent, Rachelle, Laura, Robin, Luwanna, Alex, Sue

There have been big changes in the Paratransit Scheduling Department this past year. We have lost a few and gained a few! Hans, Sabrina, Corrie, and Frances have all left us, but are not forgotten. In return, we have gained Robin, Toni, Laura, Alex, Luwanna, and Kristina. Many of you probably already know these voices, but now you can put a face to the name!

PCA's and Companions

As a rider of Paratransit, you have the right to schedule your trips with a PCA (Personal Care Attendant) and/or companion, according to your conditions. You must be registered with us as needing a PCA.

Make sure that, when you are requesting your trips, you let the scheduling specialist know if there will be anyone traveling with you. If you forget, a PCA or a companion will not be allowed to ride with you the day of service. This is considered a same day change and we do not allow same day changes. Remember, it is your responsibility to make sure to schedule the trip correctly.

If you request to have a PCA or companion travel with you and you find out

that they will not be going, you need to call that in to the scheduling department (when possible) by 5pm the day before and cancel their space so it can be used for other riders. If you have any questions regarding this issue, please refer to pages 38-39 of the Rider's Guide or call customer support at (801)287-5359.

Effective January 1, 2007, you may only schedule one companion to travel with you when you book your trip. If you want more companions to ride with you, you will need to check the day before service no later than 5pm to see if there is space available for additional companions.

CUSTOMER SUPPORT PROCESS

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN I CALL IN A CONCERN?

We are hearing customers' frustrations due to: 1) The length of time on hold and then being transferred to the Customer Concern line. 2) No live person available to take your call; uncertain if your concern was received, causing you to make multiple calls. 3) Getting a response back to you.

- 1) Two things could happen when you call. Your call comes directly into the Customer Support line (287-5359). Or you call from outside the area using the toll free number (1-877-882-7272) and your call goes into a call box and is answered in the order it is received. During business hours all calls on the toll free line go through the scheduling department. This is an advantage to you because you have one number to call. This also avoids confusion about what number you need to call for scheduling, "where is my ride?", and customer concerns.
- 2) Your calls are important to us, but someone may not be available all the time to talk directly with you. In those cases, a recording system is available for you to leave your information rather than require you to call back and talk with someone. We feel the process better serves

you, the customer. Be assured, by leaving a message, your information is being handled as it would be if you spoke with a live person. There is no need to leave multiple messages unless you have additional information. It is important when leaving the message that you leave as much information as possible so an additional call won't be necessary. Leave your name (if you are not the client, please spell the client's last name), date of the incident, and the reason for your concern, along with a phone number where you can be reached during business hours. Every call left is entered into our tracker system prior to researching for response, so if you are leaving two or three messages, you are delaying the response and bogging down the system.

- 3) Because we have limited resources, it is our preference to research your concern prior to getting back to you. Depending on the circumstances, the research could involve pulling of a manifest, requesting a manifest be sent from the outlying counties, listening to a call, checking with the scheduling department, checking the points records, talking directly to the operator (who may or may not be available due to sick or vacation time), having a supervisor talk with the operator, or sending a supervisor out to the location. All of this research takes time. It is our goal to make contact with you within 72 hours, however that is not always possible, particularly if we are waiting a response from our contractors to send us information. If you have not heard back from us in five working days, by all means call us back to check on the status of the concern. (Please state the date you originally called.)

We want to take this opportunity to say that we appreciate hearing the good things about our service as well. We believe we have the best team available, offering you the best service possible. Your feedback allows us to develop our team when opportunities arise, and also allows us to give individuals your personal thanks.

Public Participation and UTA

Recently, The Utah Transit Authority (UTA) Board of Trustees authored a new vision for the Authority, saying that the

“Utah Transit Authority strengthens and connects communities, enabling individuals to pursue a fuller life with greater ease and convenience by leading through partnering, planning and wise investment of physical, economic and human resources.”

Fulfilling the board’s vision includes asking the public how they see UTA can best strengthen and connect their community. From time to time, UTA requests the public’s involvement regarding changes in service levels and significant capital projects. UTA is committed to creating an open public forum for the public regarding changes that impact you, our riders and potential riders.

As 2007 progresses, UTA plans significant changes in the way communities connect using transit. Passage of referendums in Salt Lake and Utah Counties will bring increased rail transit, bus service changes and improved mobility for the entire state. During the upcoming months it will be essential that you provide UTA with the needed feedback to improve the quality of transit service and build a first-class transit system that will carry us into the 21st century.

More information regarding the public involvement opportunities on UTA’s service are available at www.rideuta.com, with additional information that will be forthcoming.

Thank you for riding.

MEDICAID STICKERS - It has been brought to our attention that for those of you using Medicaid stickers, Medicaid will only reimburse us for 3 trips per day. If you are going to the doctor's office and then later going to pick up your prescription, you will need to pay for one leg of the trip. If you are going from the doctor's office to pick up your prescription all trips will be reimbursed. Remember, Medicaid stickers are to be used for medical trips only.

WHEELCHAIR CERTIFICATION - Remember, if you want to ride in a wheelchair other than the one you were certified to use, you must make an appointment to go to the mobility center and have the wheelchair weighed and measured. If you do not do this prior to your scheduled pick up you will receive a no-show and will not be able to ride with us until the wheelchair is certified.

Another Year Has Come and Gone!

A message from Cheryl Beveridge

Another year has come and gone; it seems like time passes so quickly. Before we know it, the Utah Transit Authority FrontRunner commuter rail project will be finished, followed by the construction of the light rail extensions to West Jordan and West Valley and other designated lines. All of these services will expand your transportation options.

UTA's Paratransit service continues to receive national recognition for the quality of our eligibility process and our service delivery model. Because UTA is a more progressive transit agency, we are always looking for ways to make our service to you better.

We expect to have a "passenger assistance" video developed for operator training this year to better enhance our assistance to you. We will also see replacement Paratransit vehicles with a new paint scheme to allow better recognition of our buses. We expect to have the Paratransit Rider's Guide and Eligibility Brochure available in Spanish this year. We wish we could translate these into all languages necessary for our riders but do not currently

have the resources to do that.

We saw some service changes for fixed route last year in the Salt Lake County area, and saw service changes for Paratransit riders. Public hearings and town meetings were held to discuss these changes and how the changes affect you. Unfortunately not many of you attended.

Any changes to the fixed route (big bus) service will affect Paratransit riders. It is very important that you voice your opinion of service changes during the public hearing process. If you do not take the time to attend a public hearing about fixed route changes, you will lose your opportunity to be heard on those changes, including the impact of those changes to your Paratransit ride.

Our year-end service information shows that for the second year in a row, no-shows, late cancellations and same-day cancellations are on the rise. When UTA chose to change the No Show policy allowing riders to call by 10pm the day before service to cancel rides without any point assessment, we expected to see a decline in late cancellations. That has not been the case. We understand some of you have illnesses that are beyond your control, which is why you are allowed so many points on your record before a potential service suspension occurs.

UTA gets NO MONEY from the state or federal government to pay for the daily operation of our transportation, including Paratransit. Each Paratransit ride costs UTA and taxpayers \$25, of which the rider pays \$2.05 (the current fare) of that cost. The only money UTA receives to pay for this service is money from fares, sales tax and advertisement.

Please help us to manage the cost of Paratransit by giving us as much advance notice as possible that you do not need your scheduled ride. Also let us know if your scheduled companion or personal care attendant is not riding with you, so the space can be freed up for another rider. UTA schedules your driver by 5pm the day before your ride to make sure we have the right amount of drivers to transport all our passengers, so any rides that you cancel after that time costs UTA money. Thanks for making every effort to notify us as early as possible to eliminate unnecessary cost.

You can see there are a lot of things happening at UTA as we meet our transportation commitment, our community voting to support an increase in taxes to move these projects forward more quickly. The staff of UTA's Paratransit service thanks you for allowing us to serve you, our customer. We wish you and your loved ones a happy New Year, and hopes of a peaceful and healthy 2007.

FYI: UTA Holiday Service in 2007

New Years Day, Mon., January 1

Ski Service only, no TRAX

Martin Luther King Day,

Monday, January 15

Weekday Bus and TRAX
service

PRESIDENT'S DAY (*this is an
addition from previous years*)

Sunday Service with
extended Sunday TRAX
service (early and late)

Memorial Day, Monday, May 28

Sunday Service for Bus and
TRAX

Independence Day, Wed., July 4

Sunday Service with
Extended Sunday TRAX
service (early and late)

Pioneer Day, Tuesday, July 24

Sunday Service with

Extended Sunday TRAX
service (early and late)

Labor Day, Monday, September 3

Sunday Service with Sunday
TRAX service.

Columbus Day, Mon., October 8

Weekday Service, Bus and
TRAX

Veterans Day, Sun., November 11

Sun. Service bus and TRAX

Monday, November 12

Weekday Service bus and
TRAX

Thanksgiving Day, Thursday,
November 22

Ski Service only, no TRAX

Christmas Day, Tuesday,
December 25

Ski Service only, no TRAX

