

City of Visalia

Memo



To: David Thorndike, MV General Manager
From: Christine Chavez
Transit Management Analyst
Date: Wednesday, March 22, 2017
Re: Service Animals on City of Visalia Buses

The purpose of this memo is to clarify the type of animals that are allowed on City of Visalia Buses and provide guidance on how drivers should handle service animals. Federal regulations prohibit Visalia Transit from requiring riders to provide documentation for their service animal as a condition of boarding a bus with that animal. As an operator, drivers are **only** allowed to ask two questions*:

1. Is the animal a Service Animal that is required because of a disability?
2. What work or task has the animal been trained to perform?

*These questions should not be asked, however, if the animal's service tasks are obvious. For example, the questions shall not be asked if the dog is observed guiding an individual who is blind or has low vision, pulling a person's wheelchair, or aiding with stability or balance to an individual with an observable mobility disability.

Visalia Transit is prohibited from requiring special ID cards for the animal, asking about the person's disability, requesting medical documentation, or asking that the animal demonstrate its ability to perform the work or task it is trained for.

If the animal has not been trained to perform a specific task, then it does not qualify as a "Service Animal" under the applicable regulations. See 49 CFR Part 37, 37.3:

"Service animal means any guide dog, signal dog, or other animal individually trained to work or perform tasks for an individual with a disability, including, but not limited to, guiding individuals with impaired vision, alerting individuals with impaired hearing to intruders or sounds, providing minimal protection or rescue work, pulling a wheelchair, or fetching dropped items." Additionally if an animal's only function is to provide emotional support or comfort for the rider, that animal would not fall under regulatory training-based definition of a service animal."

Under the ADA, service animals must be harnessed, leashed, or tethered, unless those devices interfere with the service animal's work or the individual's disability prevents using these devices. In that case, the individual must maintain control of the animal through voice, signal, or other effective controls. If the animal is not restrained, or where appropriate, otherwise under the owner's control, then service may be denied. A service animal may not be excluded from boarding a bus unless the animal is out of control and the animal's owner does not take effective action to control it or the animal poses a direct threat to the health or safety of others.

Non-service animals may board all vehicles if they are small enough to fit in a secure animal carrier that will fit on the passenger's lap, or securely under the passenger's seat. The animal carrier may not be placed on the seat beside them, as it poses a hazard to other passengers.