

PALM BEACH COUNTY
BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

AGENDA ITEM SUMMARY

Meeting Date: April 8, 2025 [] Consent [] Regular
Department: Palm Tran [] Ordinance [x] Public Hearing

I. EXECUTIVE BRIEF

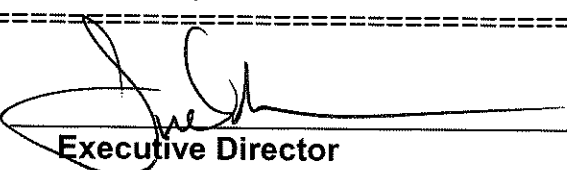
Motion and Title: Staff recommends motion to approve:


- A) PALM Tran Connection Program guidelines to differentiate Paratransit Complementary Palm Tran Connection transportation services provided per the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), versus Non-ADA transportation which may include Paratransit transportation, Mobility on Demand, or future alternative transportation options serving citizens beyond the Federal Transit Administration’s ADA complementary paratransit requirements;
- B) Palm Tran Connection Plus Program guidelines for eligible riders and trips outside of the ¾ mile ADA service area; and
- C) A fare increase of \$.50 for Palm Tran (Connection) and Palm Tran (Connection Plus), increasing the \$3.50 fare to \$4.00 for qualified users whose incomes are above 100% of the federal poverty guidelines.

Summary: Per ADA and the U.S. Department of Transportation’s implementing regulations at Title 49, Code of Federal Regulations, Section 37.131(a), transit systems must provide ADA complementary paratransit transportation to persons with a physical or cognitive disability who cannot navigate the fixed route system without assistance. ADA complementary transportation must be provided within ¾ mile on either side of each fixed route, a ¾-mile radius at the end of each fixed route, within the transit system’s core service area, and small areas surrounded by fixed route corridors. Currently, Connection provides ADA complementary transportation countywide exceeding the regulations. These proposed changes would enable Palm Tran to improve the efficiency of ADA and non-ADA transportation. For non-ADA paratransit transportation, Connection Plus would facilitate the implementation of cost-effective alternative transportation modalities such as Mobility on Demand, transfers into fixed transportation versus door-to-door for customers capable of using fixed route, and the utilization of best practices in scheduling such as the multi-loading of vehicles, the removal of trip negotiation and travel time limitation restrictions, and trip prioritization. A Title VI fare equity analysis was completed to prevent disparate impact on the basis of race, color, national origin, or low-income populations. Based on this analysis, to prevent a disproportionate burden, qualified riders whose income falls at or below 100% of federal poverty guidelines will be exempt from the fare increase and will continue to pay \$3.50 per one-way trip. If approved by the Board of County Commissioners (BCC), the implementation of the Connection Plus program and the fare increase would begin in January 2026. Countywide (MM)

Background and Policy Issues: On August 27, 2024, during a BCC Workshop, Palm Tran provided an overview of the Connection Program, proposed the implementation of Connection Plus to provide non-ADA transportation services to transportation disadvantaged citizens traveling from and to areas beyond the fixed route boundary required for ADA complementary paratransit transportation, and the issuance of a Request for Proposal for contracted paratransit services.

- Attachments:**
- 1. Palm Tran Connection ADA Program Guidelines
 - 2. Palm Tran Connection Plus Program Guidelines
 - 3. Public Hearing Notice

Recommended By:  Executive Director Date: 3/25/25

Approved By:  Assistant County Administrator Date: 4/3/25

II. FISCAL IMPACT ANALYSIS

A. Five Year Summary of Fiscal Impact:

Fiscal Years	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029
Capital Expenditures					
Operating Costs					
External Revenues		(69,430)	(23,144)		
Program Income(County)					
In-Kind Match(County)					
NET FISCAL IMPACT		(69,430)	(23,144)		
#ADDITIONAL FTE					
POSITIONS (CUMULATIVE)					

Is Item Included in the current Budget?

☐Yes☒No

Does this item include the use of federal funds?

☐Yes☒No

Does this item include the use of state funds?

☐Yes☒No

Budget Account No:

Fund	Department	Unit	Object	RSRC
1340	540	5003	---	4434

B. Recommended Sources of Funds/Summary of Fiscal Impact:

The fiscal impact only reflects the estimate for the first year after implementation of the fare increase in January 2026.

C. Departmental Fiscal Review:

Barbara Hiller

Barbara Hiller, Fiscal Manager II

III. REVIEW COMMENTS:

A. OFMB Fiscal and/or Contract Dev. and Control Comments:

ASD

3/26/25

OFMB MAR 3/26

Brande Gruchis

3/27/25

Contract Dev. & Control 3.27.25

B. Legal Sufficiency

Ru. Ben for Masim. K. Mutamba

4/3/25

Assistant County Attorney

C. Other Department Review

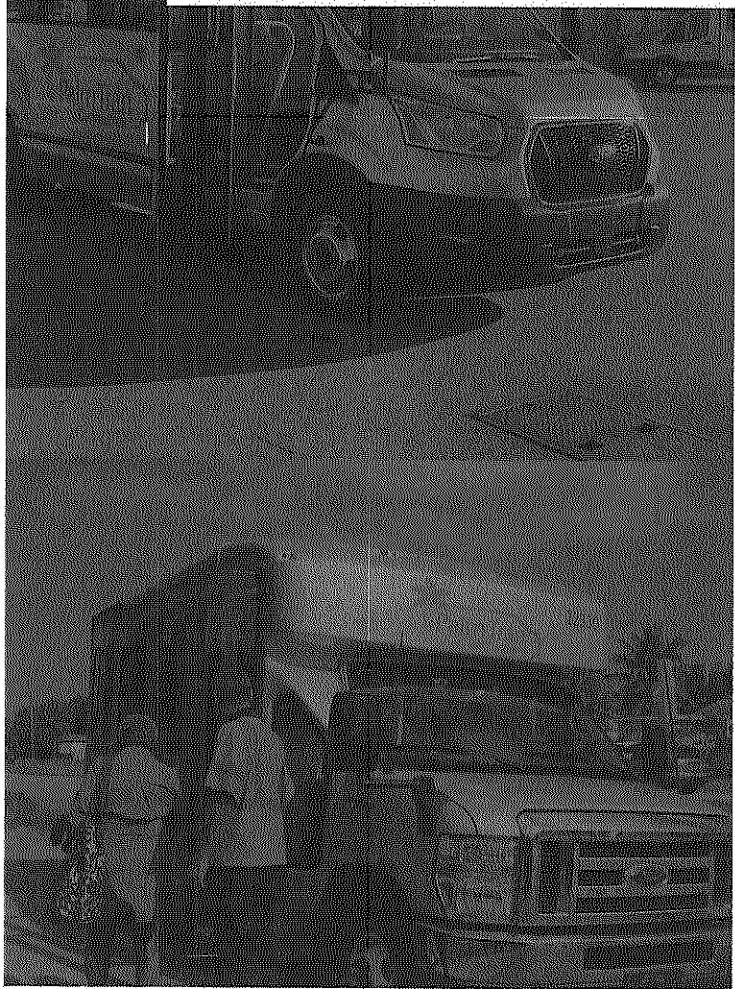
Department Director

(THIS SUMMARY IS NOT TO BE USED AS A BASIS FOR PAYMENT.)



Palm Tran Connection

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Paratransit Complementary Transportation General Guidelines



These general guidelines are not inclusive of all program-specific requirements, such as the application and eligibility process, customer rights and responsibilities, and other policies described in the Palm Tran Connection and Connection Plus Guide Books.

Introduction

Palm Tran Connection is a shared ride door-to-door, paratransit service that provides complementary transportation in accordance with the ADA to persons whose disabilities prevent them from using Palm Tran’s fixed route system.



As an ADA complementary Paratransit service, Connection transportation is provided within three-fourths (3/4) of a mile on both sides of Palm Tran’s fixed route transit network, and locations inside the fixed route network.

Connection service aligns with Palm Tran’s fixed route bus service on weekdays, evenings, and weekends, “during the same hours and days as Palm Tran fixed-route bus service.” This means that the start and end of Connection service may vary in certain areas in accordance with the end and start of fixed route service in those areas. Connection ADA service does not serve locations outside three-fourths (3/4) of a mile of Palm Tran’s fixed route transit network, and does not follow special service routes or express routes (commuter bus service).

Program Guidelines

As a shared ride and multi-load passenger service, several riders may share the Connection vehicle. The Connection vehicle may make multiple stops to pick up and drop off riders. Travel time may vary, depending on trip distance, traffic conditions, inclement weather, and stops made to accommodate other riders. The "ride time" shall be comparable in length to the ride time (including transfers and walking to stop) on the fixed route bus. The scheduling of Connection door-to-door pick-up or drop-off trips may be negotiated up to an hour before or after the requested reservation time in accordance with the availability of resources. The time of travel experienced may resemble the travel experienced by using the fixed route network. The trips will be scheduled in a manner that creates the least customer inconvenience.

Where there is no fixed route to compare, the trip shall be provided in a reasonable time, taking into account the need to multi-load trips to gain operational efficiencies.

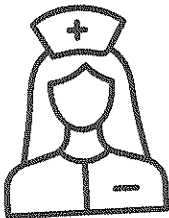


Eligibility

To become eligible for ADA service, an individual must have a disability and be unable to independently use the fixed-route service because of a physical or mental impairment. The paratransit service eligibility is not based on a diagnosis or type of disability or type of mobility aid(s) used. Individuals with the same diagnosis or disability may have very different functional abilities to use Palm Tran fixed-route bus service. Eligibility for service can be determined as unconditional (able to ride for all trips) or conditionally (e.g., able to use paratransit for some trips due to weather or variable health conditions). The eligibility process may include a phone or in-person interview and verification of submitted documentation.



With the exception of persons with severe-permanent disabilities, persons may be certified for Connection services up to three years. For those determined to be ineligible or conditionally eligible, the applicant has the right to appeal the decision. An appeal can be made in person or by submitting additional documentation. In both instances, the person must demonstrate their need to use Palm Tran Connection services and their ability to travel without an attendant, or a solution that will allow them to travel on their own.



Personal Care Attendants (PCA)

As part of the eligibility process, applicants must indicate if they will be traveling with a PCA who will assist the eligible individual in achieving independence due to a disability. Connection riders will only be required to travel with a PCA if a PCA is a necessary condition of service based on the rider’s engagement in violent, seriously disruptive, or illegal conduct, or if they pose a direct threat to the health or safety of themselves or others.

If a rider cannot be left alone at a destination, or if the rider must be under constant care or supervision, the rider should travel with a PCA as the driver cannot serve as a PCA. The driver will provide assistance to the first floor front door, to the ground floor entrance of the destination or origin and provide assistance up or down one flight of stairs, provided that the driver does not lose sight of the Connection vehicle.

Eligibility Categories

An individual’s certification eligibility period depends on the specific conditions influencing their eligibility determination (functional abilities of the individual, physical environment, and/or changes in the accessibility of the fixed route system).

Permanent (chronic condition)

The person has a permanent physical, mental, or psychological disability or incapacity.

Temporary (acute)

The person has a physical, mental, or psychological disability or incapacity of fewer than six months’ duration covered in the eligibility criteria. Their eligibility is limited to the duration of the person’s temporary disability.

ADA Complementary Paratransit Services for Visitors

Visitors to the Palm Beach County area who are unable to use Palm Tran’s fixed route bus system and wish to use Connection service are required to provide visitor documentation, such as a certification letter or an identification card, demonstrating ADA paratransit eligibility with their home transit agency.

Connection will provide service to eligible visitors for a period of 21 days during any 365-day period. The 21 days may be used as single days or consecutive days. If an individual needs access to Connection service for more than 21 days in a 365-day period, the individual must go through the standard Connection application process.



Connection Trip Reservation

The reservations department is open seven days a week from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

To allow for the efficient scheduling of trips, reservations are accepted up to three (3) days in advance, but no later than 5:00 pm the day before travel as all schedules are made the day before travel. No same-day trips are permitted.

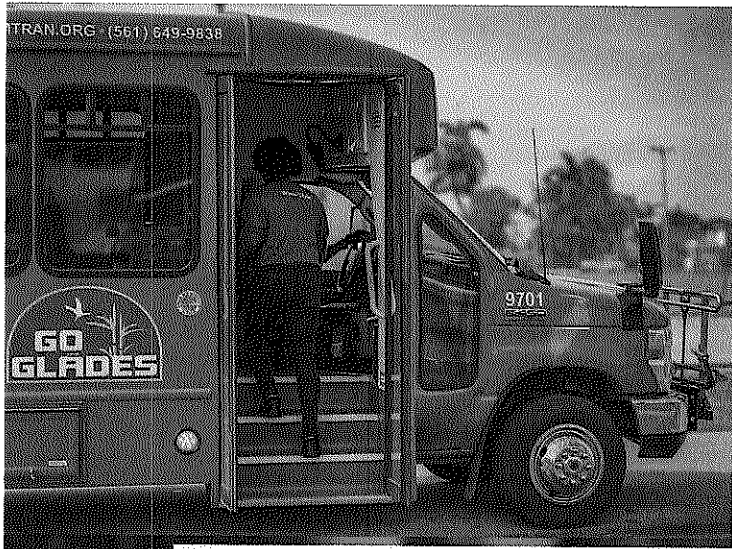
For the timely transportation of all riders, when dropping riders at their destinations, drivers are not permitted to wait for the home or establishment to open or for someone to arrive home to let the rider inside.

Due to unforeseeable issues that may affect travel, rider pick-ups are scheduled based on a half-hour "pick-up window." Riders must be ready and waiting at the first floor of their pickup location at the beginning of their "pick-up windows." From the time of arrival, the driver will wait five (5) minutes before leaving for the next pick-up. After waiting five (5) minutes, the driver will not return to pick up the rider to adhere to the schedule of other riders.

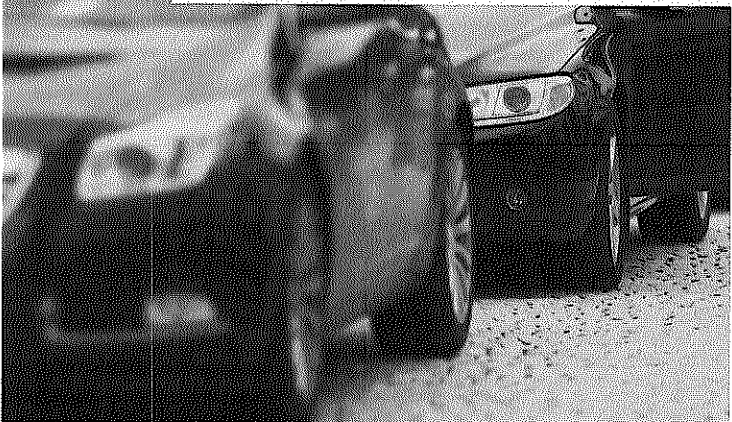
Fares:

<p>The one-way trip fare for eligible riders is \$4.00.</p> <p>Paratransit riders whose income is at or below 100 percent of the Federal Poverty Guidelines may qualify for a 50-cent fare reduction subsidy.</p>	<p>Personal Care Attendants (PCA) ride fare-free when accompanied by the eligible Connection fare-paying rider.</p>	<p>Children eight (8) and under ride fare-free when accompanied by a fare-paying passenger.</p>
<p>Children up to five-year-olds must ride in a federally approved child safety seat, provided by the customer.</p>	<p>Eligible Connection customers may travel with one companion who will be charged the same fare as the eligible customer. Additional companions are allowed on a space available basis.</p>	<p>Companions must be traveling with the eligible Connection customer and have the same origin and destination.</p>





Palm Tran Connection Plus General Guidelines



These general guidelines are not inclusive of all program-specific requirements, such as the application and eligibility process, customer rights and responsibilities, and other policies described in the Palm Tran Connection and Connection Plus Guide Books.

Introduction

The Palm Tran Connection Plus program is designed to provide transportation options to disabled or low-income citizens who reside outside the ADA service area of 3/4 of a mile from a Palm Tran fixed route. This service is for eligible riders who are unable to transport themselves or have no means of transportation. Trips outside the ADA service area are considered Transportation Disadvantaged (TD) Program trips and will fall under the guidelines of the Palm Tran Connection Plus program.

Connection Plus corresponds with Palm Tran’s fixed route bus service on weekdays, evenings, and weekends. This means that the Connection Plus service area may change based on time of day or day of week as does the fixed route schedule. For example if, a fixed route in a certain area ends services at 7 pm, services on Connection Plus will also end for that area at 7:00 pm.

Transportation Disadvantaged (TD) Program

The TD Program is sponsored by the State of Florida Transportation Disadvantaged Trust Fund, and overseen by the Commission of the Transportation Disadvantaged (CTD) per Rule 41-2 and mandated under Chapter 427. The Palm Beach County TD program is funded in part by the State of Florida Transportation Disadvantaged Trust Fund and matched by local Ad-Valorem funds.

“Transportation disadvantaged” means those persons who, because of physical or mental disability, income status, or age, are unable to transport themselves or to purchase transportation and are, therefore, dependent upon others to obtain access to health care, employment, education, shopping, social activities, or other life-sustaining activities, or children who are handicapped or high-risk or at-risk as defined in the Florida Statutes s. 411.202.



Program Guidelines

TD-eligible riders either have a disability (as defined by the ADA) or meet the economically disadvantaged requirements based on the Federal Poverty Guidelines, and are unable to transport themselves or to purchase transportation and are, therefore, dependent upon others for their transportation.



TD Trip Priorities

TD service may be provided anywhere in Palm Beach County in accordance with program guidelines. However, if trip demand exceeds available funds, then trip prioritization may occur as follows:



Priority One

Critical Care Trips (kidney dialysis, life-sustaining treatments)



Priority Two

Medical Trips (medical appointments, pharmacy trips, etc.)



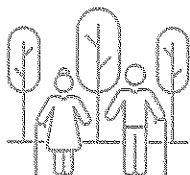
Priority Three

Nutrition Trips (including daily meals and grocery shopping)



Priority Four

Daycare and Employment Trips (including job interviews, volunteering, workshops for pay and education)



Priority Five

Other/Quality of Life Activities (including governmental, voting, recreational, religious and social support activities)



TD Transportation based on the Federal Poverty Guidelines

Low-income TD Riders who can access the fixed route bus network and whose origin and destination are within 3/4 of a mile from a fixed route bus must use the fixed route system. They will be eligible to participate in the TD Bus Pass Program and purchase a discounted 31-day bus pass for \$15.00 or \$20.00 based on their income status, instead of the \$70.00 regular price.

TD Riders whose origin is outside the ADA service area and their destination is within the ADA service area will be transported to the closest bus stop to their origin. They shall complete the trip to their destination by accessing the fixed route system.

TD Riders outside the ADA service area will pay the paratransit door-to-door fare. The rider will be able to transfer to the fixed route for free.

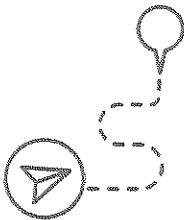
TD Door-to-Door Fare Breakdown for Low-Income Riders (Trips outside the ADA Service area):

- Door-to-door fares for a one way trip are \$4.00.
- Paratransit riders whose income is at or below 100 percent of the Federal Poverty Guidelines may qualify for a 50-cent fare reduction subsidy.



TD Transportation for Citizens who have a disability that prevents them from using the fixed route network:

TD shared Door-to-Door Paratransit Transportation will be provided from the point of origin to destination.



The scheduling of TD shared Door-to-Door trips will be negotiated as close as possible to the requested pick-up and delivery time, except when the demand for trips on a specific period of time exceeds the number of vehicles available for services. Subsequently, Palm Tran will negotiate the pick-up or drop-off time according to the availability of resources. The trips shall be scheduled in a manner that creates the least customer inconvenience. For trips outside the ADA service area, the time of travel experienced shall resemble the travel experienced by using the fixed route network. Where there is no fixed route to compare, the trip shall be provided in a reasonable time, taking into account the need to multi-load trips to gain operational efficiencies.

Door-to-door fares for the Transportation Disadvantaged program are as follows:

\$4.00 each way

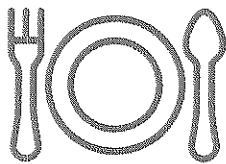
TD riders whose income is at or below 100 percent of the Federal Poverty Guidelines may qualify for a 50-cent fare reduction subsidy.

Personal Care Attendants (PCAs) are fare free when accompanied by the Door-to-Door fare-paying passenger. Children: Children eight (8) and under ride for free when accompanied by a fare-paying passenger. Eligible TD customers may travel with one companion who will be charged the same fare as the eligible customer. Additional companions are allowed on a space available basis. Companions must be traveling with the eligible Connection Plus customer and have the same origin and destination.



Division of Senior Services (DOSS) Transportation Services

DOSS congregate meals and transportation are sponsored by the Palm Beach Board of County Commissioners, the State of Florida, Department of Elder Affairs and Area Agency on Aging of Palm Beach/Treasure Coast, Inc. DOSS provides nutritional, well-balanced meals that foster social interaction, and provides access to nutrition education and counseling to older adults. Congregate meals are served Monday to Friday at designated County-sponsored Senior Meal Sites north of Hypoluxo Road. This program is partially funded through the Older Americans Act. Persons over 60 are eligible for this program.



To qualify for DOSS transportation, an individual must be registered with an approved County DOSS meal site. For more information, visit the DOSS website at: www.pbcgov.com/communityservices/programs/seniorservices/

DOSS Transportation Fares

Trips to County approved meal-sites with designated route times are fare-free.



Connection Plus
Mobility-On-Demand (MOD)

MOD is intended to improve transportation efficiency and effectiveness by ensuring that transit is fully integrated and a vital element of the Palm Beach County transportation network. The ultimate goal of MOD is to enhance the customer experience by providing alternative transportation options to traditional paratransit such as shared/unshared, curb-to-curb travel through providers like Uber, Lyft, Taxi, ADA-compliant UZURV and Wheelchair Transportation providers. One example of MOD in Palm Beach County is the Go Glades service.

Connection Plus MOD Fares

MOD fares will vary according to the specific program. MOD programs encompass first and last mile connections to help riders start or end their commute. MOD can also be offered in areas within the fixed route network to provide a more comprehensive transportation system.



NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

RE: PALM TRAN CONNECTION PROGRAM GUIDELINES

Notice is hereby given that the Palm Beach County Board of Commissioners (BCC) intends to approve a change in Palm Tran Connection Program guidelines as generally described below. A Public Hearing has been scheduled for the purpose of receiving comments regarding these changes. The Public Hearing will be held as follows:

DATE: Tuesday, April 8, 2025
TIME: 9:30 a.m.
LOCATION: Jane Thompson Memorial Chambers
6th Floor, Robert Weisman Governmental Center
301 North Olive Avenue
West Palm Beach, FL 33401

Palm Tran Connection Program Guidelines submitted for BCC Approval:

- A) PALM Tran Connection Program guidelines to differentiate Paratransit Complementary Palm Tran Connection transportation services provided per the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), versus Non-ADA transportation which may include Paratransit transportation, Mobility on Demand, or future alternative transportation options serving citizens beyond the Federal Transit Administration's ADA complementary paratransit requirements;
- B) Palm Tran Connection Plus Program guidelines for eligible riders and trips outside of the $\frac{3}{4}$ mile ADA service area; and
- C) A fare increase of \$.50 for Palm Tran (Connection) and Palm Tran (Connection Plus), increasing the \$3.50 fare to \$4.00 for qualified users whose incomes are above 100% of the federal poverty guidelines.

To request information in a language other than English, or to request assistance for individuals with disabilities please contact the comment line at: 561-841-4360.

Para solicitar información en idiomas distintos al inglés, si requiere un intérprete en la audiencia pública, o para solicitar asistencia para una persona con discapacidades, por favor déjenos un mensaje en el (561) 841-4360, o nos puede contactar en palm-comments@pbcgov.org

Pou mande enfòmasyon sa a nan yon lang ki pa angle, oswa si ou bezwen akomodasyon espesyal anba Lwa sou Ameriken ak Andikap tanpri kontakte liy kòmantè a nan: 561-841-4360 oswa palm-comments@pbcgov.org

(To be published on March 30 & April 6, 2025)