

Somerset County Transportation System Policy on Service Animals and Emotional Support Animals

12/23/24

Purpose

This policy outlines the guidelines for the transportation of animals aboard Somerset County Transportation System (SCTS) public transportation vans. The aim is to ensure compliance with applicable laws, including the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), while maintaining the safety and comfort of all passengers and staff.

Policy Statement

Somerset County Transportation System is committed to providing safe, equitable, and accessible transportation for all passengers, including those with disabilities. As part of this commitment, SCTS allows service animals onboard its vehicles but does not permit emotional support animals.

1. Service Animals

- **Definition:** A "service animal" is defined under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) as any animal that is individually trained to do work or perform tasks for an individual with a disability.
- **Permitted Use:** Service animals may accompany individuals with disabilities aboard SCTS vehicles when they are performing tasks directly related to the person's disability.
- **Responsibilities of Passenger:**
 - Passengers traveling with a service animal must maintain control of the animal at all times.
 - The service animal must be kept on a leash or harness, unless the passenger's disability prevents the use of such restraints.
 - Passengers are responsible for cleaning up after their service animal.

2. Emotional Support Animals

- **Definition:** An emotional support animal (ESA) is an animal that provides comfort or emotional support to an individual with a mental health condition, but is not trained to perform specific tasks related to the individual's disability.
- **Prohibited Use:** Emotional support animals are not permitted aboard Somerset County Transportation System vehicles. Unlike service animals, ESAs are not covered under the ADA and do not meet the necessary criteria to travel in public spaces designed for service animals.

3. Passenger Expectations

- **Behavior of Animals:** Service animals are expected to behave in a manner that does not disrupt the safety, comfort, or convenience of other passengers or staff.
 - Passengers are responsible for cleaning up after their service animal.

- - If an animal behaves aggressively, creates a nuisance, or otherwise disrupts the operation of the vehicle, the driver or other SCTS staff may request the animal to be removed from the vehicle.
- **Refusal of Service:** If a passenger insists on bringing an emotional support animal onto the vehicle, SCTS may refuse service to that passenger, consistent with this policy.

4. Staff Responsibilities

- **Training:** All SCTS staff will receive training on the proper handling of service animals and the legal distinction between service animals and emotional support animals.
- **Incident Reporting:** In the event of any incidents involving animals (e.g., aggressive behavior or damage to the vehicle), SCTS staff will complete an incident report for further investigation.

5. Policy Enforcement

- Passengers who violate this policy may be denied service and asked to leave the vehicle.
- This policy will be reviewed periodically to ensure compliance with applicable laws and regulations.

Effective Date: 12/23/2024

Contact Information:

For questions regarding this policy or to request additional accommodations, please contact SCTS 541 E Main st Somerset PA 15501 814-701-3691

Conclusion

SCTS is dedicated to serving all passengers in a fair and accessible manner. By allowing service animals and not emotional support animals, SCTS strives to uphold the rights of individuals with disabilities while ensuring the safety and comfort of all riders.