



Rider's Guide



**Paratransit Division
Department of Transportation
Broward County Board of County Commissioners**



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TOPS! Paratransit Rider's Guide

TOPS! Service

The TOPS! (**T**ransportation **OP**tion**S**) Paratransit *Rider's Guide* is designed to assist riders to become acquainted with Broward County Transit's award-winning paratransit program. The *Rider's Guide* also provides necessary guidelines to use the service effectively and safely.

This Rider's Guide is not intended to create a contract and, violation or deviation of any of the goals, objectives and practices contained in this guide will not give rise to a cause of action nor create any presumption a legal duty has been breached. In addition, TOPS! may change the goals, objectives and policies set forth in the Rider's Guide at any time without liability to anyone.

For the most current version of the "Riders Guide" and TOPS! paratransit program information please visit the paratransit website at [http:// broward.org/BCT](http://broward.org/BCT).

Contact Information

Phone Numbers

TOPS! Call Center: 1-866-682-2258

(Trip reservations, general questions, update rider information, eligibility, compliments, complaints, "Where's My Ride" and technical assistance for My TOPS! Trips website)

- Monday through Saturday: 4:40 a.m. to 12:40 a.m. Sunday: 6:45 a.m. to 10:15 p.m.

TOPS! Trip Reservations: 1-866-682-2258

- Sunday through Saturday: 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

BCT Customer Service: 954-357-8400

TOPS! SERVICE ESCALATION HOTLINE:.....1-844-TOPS-911• 1-844-867-7911

IMPORTANT: This number is for escalation service issues only. **It does not replace 911 for emergencies** or the standard TOPS Customer Service line for general inquiries. Situations requiring immediate attention while using TOPS, missed returns, location issues, late vehicles.

TD Helpline: 1-800-983-2435

TD Helpline TTY: 1-800-648-6084

- Monday through Friday: 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Florida Relay Service... Dial 711 or 1-800-955-8771

Hearing Impaired may utilize the Florida Relay Service to contact any of the above telephone numbers during the indicated times. For more information regarding the Florida Relay Service, visit their website at <http://ftri.org/relay>

Paratransit Mailing Address

Paratransit Division
1 N. University Dr., Suite 2400-B
Plantation, FL 33324
Email: Paratransit@broward.org

Paratransit Website: <http://broward.org/BCT/Pages/Paratransit.aspx>

Service Information

One of the services provided through Broward County Paratransit TOPS! is door-to-door paratransit service. TOPS! is a shared ride service and operates in comparison to a fixed bus route system (excluding express bus service and commuter rail service).

Broward County TOPS! provides transportation to individuals in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) and the Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged (TD) guidelines. Paratransit service provides transportation to individuals who have a functional disability or are financially disadvantaged and cannot travel fixed-route bus service.

- TOPS! is a shared ride service
- TOPS! requires a fare
- TOPS! does not provide emergency or stretcher transportation
- TOPS! does not provide Personal Care Attendants (PCA)
- TOPS! does not provide wheelchairs or other mobility aids

Service Hours

TOPS! operates during the same days and hours as the BCT fixed route bus service, early morning until late at night. Please contact Customer Service at 954-357-8400 for specific hours and holiday schedules.

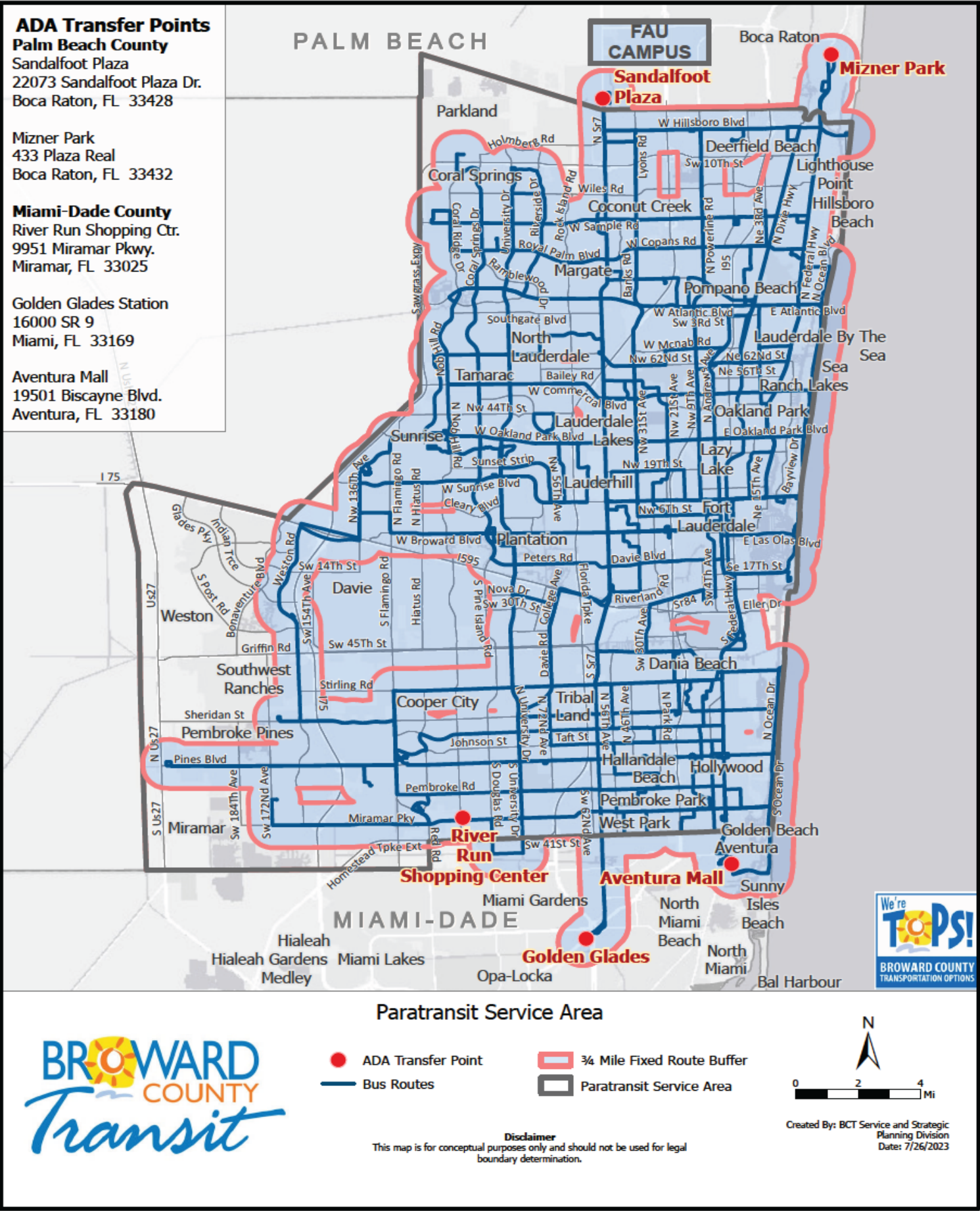
Origin to Destination Service

TOPS! is an origin-to-destination service and drivers must follow pick up and drop off locations as stated on their manifest. For the safety of riders of all abilities, BCT policy does not allow schedule or location changes while being transported.

Door-to-Door Service

Door-to-Door service is the standard transportation for all riders. Door-to-Door refers to main entrance locations only. Riders requiring assistance are escorted into the ground floor lobby of any public building or first threshold of a residence. Riders are not escorted beyond the ground floor lobby of any public building or first threshold of a residence. Drivers **do not** go upstairs, into houses, nursing homes or doctor's offices, etc. to locate riders. If the pickup address is located inside a gated community or requires special access, it is the rider's responsibility to arrange entry for the vehicle. If a vehicle is unable to enter the pick-up area and the rider fails to meet the vehicle, the trip is considered a "No-Show" trip.

Service Area Map



Reservations and Scheduling

Reservations by Telephone

To make a telephone reservation, contact the Call Center by calling 866-682-2258. Reservations are accepted at a maximum of three (3) days prior to travel date. Reservations **must be placed before 5 p.m. daily**.

Same day service is not guaranteed or generally available. Contact the Call Center and inquire if they can accommodate your request on a "space-available" basis.

A minimum sixty (60) minute wait is required between your appointment time and your next pickup time.

When reserving a ride, please provide the following information:

- Client ID Number
- First and Last Name
- Telephone Number
- Requested appointment or pickup time
- Complete pickup address (apartment/suite number, gate/security code, building identification and zip code)
- Complete destination address (apartment/suite number, gate/security code, building identification, zip code and telephone number)
- Indicate if rider will be accompanied by a PCA or Companion (refer to Personal Care Attendant/Companion sections)
- Indicate what service equipment you will use if applicable.

After you provide the reservation information, the reservationist will enter your trip request into the scheduling system. You will be informed your reservation has been accepted. A service window is **not** assigned at this point (refer to "Service Window" section).

Reservation by the Automated Telephone System

Call the Call Center and select the automated system. You will be prompted to enter your customer ID number and password. Your password is your 2-digit birth month, 2-digit birth date, and 4-digit birth year. Once you've entered the information you can schedule a trip to an address in your trip history, check trip window time, and/or cancel a trip.

Reservations Online

You must set up an account prior to making a reservation. **Next day reservations must be completed before 5 p.m.**

To create an online account:

1. Go to <http://mytopstrips.org>.
2. Click "Create an account" located under "Sign In."
3. Enter your TOPS Client ID number on the first line.
4. Enter your Last Name and First Name.
5. Use the calendar icon to select your DOB.

6. Click "Proceed."
7. Create and confirm a password (must be alphanumeric and more than 6 characters).
8. Click on "Proceed."

If you already have an online account:

1. Login to your My Tops Trips account at <http://mytopstrips.org>.
2. Select "Schedule a New Trip" and prompts will guide you through the reservation process. If the location is not in your trip history, please contact the Call Center.
3. You are not given a service window at this point (refer to "Service Window" section).
If you need ANY additional assistance with making an online reservation, contact the Call Center.

**When making reservations online, the term "Arrive" is the same as "Appointment" and the term "Depart" is the same as "Pick up". For example, if the reservation is being made for an Arrive/Appointment time of 9 a.m., it means the vehicle could arrive to your destination between 8:30 a.m. and 9 a.m. If making a reservation for vehicle to "Depart" at 9 a.m., it means you are scheduling the vehicle to "Pick Up" by 9 a.m. from your location. A service window will be provided for both "Arrive/Appointment" and "Depart/Pick Up" times.*

Subscriptions

Subscriptions (also known as "standing orders") are trips provided **at least two (2) times a week**, to and from the same locations, at the same time, and on the same days of the week. Subscription trips are scheduled for a **minimum of four (4) consecutive weeks**. Examples of subscription trips: work, school, dialysis, therapy, etc. Once arranged, subscription trips are automatic and additional telephone calls are not necessary. To place a subscription order, you may contact the Call Center.

It is the rider's responsibility to cancel specific subscription trips not needed.

Subscription trips are canceled on federal holidays. If you need service on a federal holiday, you must make a reservation with the Call Center. Contact the Call Center for a list of observed holidays.

Subscription service is a privilege and may be discontinued for due cause.

Travel Time

TOPS! travel time is comparable to fixed route travel times, including the time necessary to travel to the bus stop, wait for the bus, ride time, transfers, and travel from the final stop to the destination. Travel times may increase due to inclement weather or traffic condition.

Service Window

The Service Window is the thirty (30) minute period when your ride will arrive. For example, if your service window is 9 a.m. to 9:30 a.m., your ride is expected to arrive at the earliest by 9 a.m. and 9:30 a.m. at the latest. The vehicle may arrive at any time within the service window. Please be prepared so you are ready and waiting for the vehicle's arrival.

You will receive your service window phone call for each trip the night before travel, between 6 p.m. and 9 p.m. through the automated system. If the service window provided is inconvenient and you would like to negotiate a different time or wish to cancel the trip, you must contact the Call Center. The automated system will call you at the most current phone number(s) on file. It is important to contact the Call Center and update any change to your phone number. If you have a voice mail, the automated phone system will leave a message.

On the day of travel, your ride will arrive within the service window. When the vehicle is approximately ten (10) minutes away from your location, you will receive an automated reminder. However, it's still your responsibility to be ready at the start of the service window.

Drivers operate on a schedule allowing a maximum five (5) minute wait time after arriving at the pick-up location in the service window. Upon arrival, the driver **will wait a maximum of five (5) minutes** for you to board the vehicle after arriving at the pick-up location in the service window. **Riders are not required to board a vehicle prior to the start of the service window.**

If the vehicle did not arrive during the scheduled service window, contact the Call Center for assistance.

If the vehicle arrives late for your first trip, it may impact your return trip. If necessary, please contact the Call Center to update your return reservation.

Using TOPS! Service

Paratransit Fares

Fare is required **UPON** entering vehicle. Currently, all fares are payable by **cash only**. Please have **exact fare**. Drivers do not make change.

- ADA Paratransit trips shall not exceed twice the fare that would be charged to an individual paying full fare on fixed route up to a maximum of \$3.50 (A Paratransit fare is not charged within free fixed route zones).
- One-way fare per trip for honorably discharged veterans to VA clinics is \$1.75 (subject to change).
- Riders going to/from designated nutrition sites for **nutritional purposes only** do not pay a fare.

NOTE: Patterns of failure to pay your fare may result in loss of transportation privileges.

Mobility Devices

It is recommended that all wheelchair and scooter devices are WC-19 compliant to ensure proper securement in the vehicle. TOPS! vehicles are equipped with lifts accommodating wheelchairs or scooters less than 52 inches long and 33 inches wide. The combined weight of the rider and mobility aid **cannot** exceed 1,000 lbs.

Mobility devices exceeding these standards may not be transported.

Drivers will assist individuals in manual wheelchairs over one (1) curb and/or step. Drivers are not required to carry any Mobility Aids such as, but not limited to, walkers, canes, etc. All drivers are trained to operate vehicle lifts. All wheelchairs and scooters are secured with four (4) point tie-downs.

Riders without mobility devices may board the vehicle using the lift, upon request. **Only drivers may operate the lift.**

Companions and Personal Care Attendants

Companions

One (1) companion may accompany an ADA paratransit rider. Both rider and companion must be picked up and dropped off at the same address, at the same time. TOPS! must know in advance that a companion is traveling with you. When making your reservation, indicate a companion will accompany you. **Companions pay full fare.**

Personal Care Attendants (PCA)

A PCA is a person designated or employed specifically by the rider as an aide to assist with daily life activities such as providing personal care, performing manual tasks, or providing assistance with mobility and communication. PCA must be approved by TOPS! to be eligible to travel with a rider. If your PCA has not been approved, he/she may travel as a companion (refer to “Companions” section). Both rider and PCA must be picked up and dropped off at the same address, at the same time.

TOPS! must know in advance that a PCA is traveling with you to plan for seating. When making your reservation, indicate a PCA will accompany you. An **approved PCA does not pay a fare.**

Transporting Children

Children younger than four (4) years of age must be transported in an appropriate child safety seat. All clients and companions, including children, must pay the one-way fare. **TOPS! does not provide child safety seats.**

Transporting Packages

Drivers are not required to assist with rider’s packages or personal belongings. Due to space limitations, customers are only permitted to carry small packages that must fit within a certain space either on your lap or in front of your area. Riders are allowed to bring only parcels they and/or their PCA/Companion (if any) can personally manage and, if multiple parcels, they must be able to carry them all at the same time without assistance from the driver and without making multiple trips to/from the vehicle. If a customer attempts to bring more than the allowable packages, it will be the customer’s choice on whether to board with only the allowable bags and find alternative transportation to carry the remaining packages or decline the trip. Riders may not transport explosives, illegal substances, flammable liquids, or materials hazardous to themselves, driver, or other riders. Riders may transport self-carrying portable oxygen containers. Riders possessing or using illegal drugs will be denied paratransit transportation.

Transporting Service Animals

All service animals must be properly controlled. Service animals must ride on the floor or, if appropriate, in the lap of the rider and may not use vehicle seats. Riders are responsible for service animals' behavior and hygiene. Service may be refused or discontinued if a service animal is disruptive. All other animals may travel only in a properly secured cage or travel container that can be accommodated on the rider's lap. There is no additional charge for animals.

Other Considerations

For comfort and safety, the following policies apply:

- Seat belts **must** be worn at all times.
- No eating or drinking unless required for dietary/medical purposes and documentation is on file with TOPS!.
- No smoking (including electronic smoking devices).
- No riding under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs.
- No littering.
- No physical and/or verbal abuse of others.
- Specific providers and drivers cannot be requested.
- **Requests for specific vehicle type cannot be accommodated.**
- No sound-generating equipment is to be played aloud. Riders must use earphones or headphones.
- **Disruptive, physically, or verbally abusive riders will not be tolerated.**
- Riders may not allow their paratransit privileges to be utilized by others.
- Riders cannot change schedules or locations while being transported.
- Drivers are limited and/or restricted in parking, waiting and levels of assistance, while loading and unloading at the airport/seaport. We suggest you consider alternative arrangements for airport/seaport locations.

Drivers Requirements

- Drivers will offer assistance to all riders and assist riders when entering and debarking the vehicle. This includes offering aid when walking, assistance in bringing rider's wheelchair or other mobility device to/from the main door and, if requested, assisting with unlocking, or opening a main entrance door of a building or residence.
- Drivers shall exit the vehicle to assist in boarding or debarking at each pick-up and drop-off location over a maximum of one (1) curb and/or one (1) step if the rider is in a wheelchair (several steps if passenger is ambulatory).
- Drivers must follow assigned service schedule.

Drivers are NOT allowed to:

- "Honk the horn" to notify riders of their arrival.
- Lift or carry riders, except in emergency evacuations.
- Enter residence.
- Accept tips or gratuities.
- Play loud music.

- Maneuver wheelchairs up/down the stairs consisting of two (2) or more steps.
- Perform any personal care assistance for riders, including assistance to dress, give medications, operate medical equipment, etc.
- Smoke (this includes electronic smoking devices) in vehicles.
- Chew tobacco.
- Use the telephone while driving.
- Text while driving.
- Eat while driving.

Cancellations by Telephone, Online

Telephone Cancellations

To cancel a reservation, contact the Call Center. Indicate if one-way or round-trip service is to be cancelled. Reservations cancelled less than two (2) hours before the start of the service window are considered “Late Cancels.”

Online Cancellations

From <http://mytopstrips.org> sign into your account. Once logged into your account, you are presented with your account dashboard and your current trips are listed. Go to the “Details” section for the trip date and time you wish to cancel. Select and click on “Cancel Trip” and trip status will change to “Canceled.”

You can cancel online any scheduled trip that is a minimum of two (2) hours before the start of the service window. If you need to cancel a reservation less than two (2) hours before the start of the service window, you must contact the Call Center.

Visitors

Eligible riders who want to access Paratransit service outside of Broward County should call BCT Customer Service. The ADA allows travel as a visitor for twenty-one (21) days in a twelve (12) month period.

Compliment or Complaint

Compliments, complaints, and suggestions are welcomed. A Complaint or Service Complaint means a service-related incident as reported to County, the Call Center, or Paratransit service provider. Examples of complaints include, but are not limited to, denial of service, late pick-ups, client behavior issues, and driver behavior issues. Contact the Call Center or Customer Service to file a compliment or complaint. When submitting a compliment or complaint, provide specific, relevant details regarding the event. Share concerns about specific rides or incidents as soon as possible after the occurrence.

TOPS! investigates all complaints and will:

- Record the description of the problem.
- Research the complaint.
- Resolve all complaints within a reasonable time frame.

- Resolution of safety sensitive incidents will occur within twenty-four (24) hours (when possible).
- Complainant will be notified of the resolution by letter.

Fixed Route Service

Fixed route transit buses provide access for individuals with disabilities on buses operating throughout Broward County, with connections to Miami-Dade and Palm Beach counties transit systems and Tri-Rail.

Fixed route transit operates on timetables and does not require advanced reservations. Riders may travel individually and/or in groups spontaneously without concern regarding available space or advanced notice. All routes are wheelchair accessible.

Seniors, youth, students, and riders with disabilities may qualify for reduced fare. For information on reduced fares or bus pass programs, you may contact Customer Service.