

St. Lawrence County Public Transit Passenger Code of Conduct

Intent

St. Lawrence County Public Transit aims to provide safe, pleasant and efficient transit service. This code of conduct is for persons who use St. Lawrence County Public Transit's services, equipment, vehicles, facilities and property, and is intended to ensure the safety, health, and welfare of its passengers, transit staff, and the general public.

Persons who use public transit agree to the following code of conduct to ensure others enjoy a pleasant and safe experience. This code applies to all public transit's equipment, vehicles, facilities and property associated with its operations, including its administrative, maintenance, operational facilities (owned or leased); vehicles and equipment; bus stops; bus shelters and social media accounts.

Safety is everyone's responsibility. St. Lawrence County Public Transit asks anyone witnessing a violation to report it to a driver, transit employee or official immediately.

Code of Conduct

Riders are expected to arrive at least five minutes early to board the bus, and ensure that they are visible to the driver. It is a requirement that riders be fully clothed at all times.

No individual may engage in inappropriate conduct that involves the use of a public transit service, equipment, vehicle, facility or property. This includes persons who are not physically present, but engage verbally or online in a taunting, harassing or belligerent manner so as to interfere with transit operations. "Inappropriate conduct" includes, but is not limited to, any individual or group activity that:

- a. Constitutes a violation of any law or ordinance;
- b. Is deemed by a reasonable person to be an attempt to disturb the peace or quiet by engaging in tumultuous and/or offensive conduct, or by threatening, harassing, slandering, defaming or otherwise appearing to try to physically or mentally injure public transit passengers, staff or the general public;
- c. Damages any St. Lawrence County Public Transit equipment, vehicle, facility or property;
- d. Disrupts or interferes with normal public transit operations.

Whether or not an individual is charged or convicted of violating a law or ordinance does not preclude Public Transit from conducting an investigation and imposing sanctions under this code.

Any person who commits a violation may lose the privilege of boarding a bus; using its equipment; contacting its offices; entering a transit facility or property; or posting on transit's social media accounts. St. Lawrence County Public Transit reserves the right to suspend or revoke any and all of its services to anyone who violates this code. Any person who is found to have engaged in inappropriate

conduct may be denied the privilege of using public transit's services, its facilities or property. Prohibited conduct, and sanctions for committing violations are outlined below.

Categories of Prohibited Conduct and Sanctions

Category A: The following violations infringe on the delivery of safe transit operations, and infringe on the mental and physical comfort, and safety of persons using public transit:

1. Carrying or consuming food or beverages in an open container while on board a transit vehicle. This excludes transit drivers who have permission to do so when a vehicle is not in motion.
2. Smoking or vaping in a transit vehicle, or in non-designated areas of a transit facility or property.
3. Boarding a vehicle with any animal other than a professionally trained service animal that is not in an enclosed pet carrier that fits on a seat or on a passenger's lap.
4. Traveling with more than a single load of groceries, items, belongings, package, luggage, or baggage that require a passenger to board and exit a transit vehicle multiple times.
5. Boarding a vehicle with any container, package, luggage, groceries, baggage or article that cannot be safely placed in an overhead compartment or on a passenger's lap and blocks an aisle, wheelchair ramp or stairway.
6. Failing to exit a transit vehicle, facility or property when requested to do so by a driver, transit employee or official.
7. Boarding a transit vehicle without paying the established cash fare; or failing to show a valid bus pass, college student identification, voucher or transfer pass.
8. Failing to present a valid identification card when requested to do so by a driver, transit employee or official for verification of reduced fare rates.
9. Entering through the rear exit door of a transit vehicle unless instructed to do so by a driver, transit employee or official, emergency services or law enforcement.
10. Climbing through a window or extending an arm, leg, or head out of the window of a transit vehicle.
11. Obstructing the free movement of a person who is attempting to board or exit a transit vehicle, facility or property.

12. Standing or otherwise occupying any space in front of the "standee line" marked on the floor at a transit vehicle's front entrance, or otherwise obstructing the vision of the driver while a vehicle is in motion.
13. Playing a musical instrument or audio device (e.g. radio, CD, DVD, MP3, cell phone) inside a vehicle unless it is used with earphones so that the sound from device is primarily confined to the person who is using it.
14. Using loud, vulgar, or discriminating language that may cause other passengers, the driver or transit employees to become upset, offended or otherwise uneasy in regards to the content of a conversation.
15. Littering, discarding, or depositing rubbish, trash, debris, needles or offensive substances in a transit vehicle, facility or property except in an appropriate trash receptacle.
16. Distracting the driver, making excessive and unnecessary noise; or running, engaging in any horseplay in a transit vehicle, facility or property.
17. Canvassing, soliciting, or distributing pamphlets or other documents for any purpose. Public Transit reserves the right to distribute literature and solicit information from its patrons in the interest of improving service or transit experience.
18. Posting or removing any notice, sign or advertisement unless authorized by a transit official.
19. The boarding, operating, riding or other use of any wheeled device in a transit vehicle, facility or property, except for devices that help persons with mobility.
20. Loitering on a transit vehicle, or loitering at a facility or property beyond the reasonable time needed to utilize transit services and reach a final destination.

Sanctions for Category A violations include a verbal warning from a transit driver, employee or official. A verbal warning to discontinue the conduct will be issued before a sanction is imposed. Persons who fail to comply with a warning may be denied the opportunity to board a transit vehicle; will be directed to remove themselves from a transit vehicle; or will be directed to exit a transit facility or property.

Following removal, the violator will be verbally informed by a transit official they are not allowed to board, use or contact a transit service, vehicle, facility or property for a minimum of three days (72 hours), and up to 14 days (2 weeks) depending on the severity of the violation. Sanctions shall be imposed in consultation with the County Mobility Manager and the County Planning Office.

Category B: These violations are more severe than Category A as they threaten the health and safety of those present, or cause damage to transit equipment, vehicles, facilities, or property for an amount of less than \$250:

1. Boarding a transit vehicle or entering a transit facility or property with a weapon. This excludes security guards, peace officers, or other persons who are lawfully-permitted to carry weapons.
2. Boarding a transit vehicle or entering a transit facility or property with an inherently dangerous item such as explosives, caustic materials, and poisons. This excludes items regularly purchased at a grocery store and are recognized as customary household items.
3. Interfering with the operation or movement of transit equipment or vehicle.
4. Impeding the use of, tampering with, or otherwise obstructing the operation of any window, door, or other emergency exit.
5. Damaging, writing upon, or otherwise defacing or altering any transit equipment, vehicle, facility or property.
6. Throwing any object or substance at, into or from a transit vehicle, facility or property.
7. Threatening any violent, tumultuous, physical or verbal behavior, including the use of words or conduct that are generally known to be used as racial slurs; words that belittle; or words and actions that are understood to likely provoke a violent response. This includes face-to-face interactions, and incidents that occur by telephone, email, texting, social media posts and instant messaging.
8. Consuming alcoholic beverages or controlled substances in a transit vehicle, facility or property.
9. Using transit's wifi network to access or transmit pornographic, obscene, or sexually explicit material; or to transmit obscene, abusive, sexually explicit or threatening language, including without limitation racial slurs or epithets.
10. Any attempt to steal, damage or disable the property of another person or entity who is on board a transit vehicle, or who is using a transit facility or property.
11. Failing to comply with a 72-hour sanction for committing a Category A violation.
12. Committing multiple Category A offenses over a one-year period from the date of the initial violation. Public Transit shall maintain a written record of the date of the initial violation, and the issuance of verbal warnings.

Sanctions for Category B Violations include the immediate suspension of a person's use of public transit, or accessing a transit service, equipment, vehicle, facility or property for a minimum of 14 days (two weeks), and up to 90 days (three months), depending on the severity of the violation. No verbal warning from a driver, transit employee or official is required prior to issuing the sanction. Public Transit may also contact local law enforcement.

Category C: The most severe violations and include any assault or battery against any individual using public transit; breaking the law while using public transit equipment, services, facility or property; or damaging transit equipment, vehicles, facilities or property for an amount equal to or greater than \$250.

1. Engaging in a fight, assaulting a person, or committing an act that would warrant a charge of battery or assault under State or Federal law.
2. Conviction of battery or assault against a driver, transit staff, official, a transit passenger, or another person at a transit facility or property. A "no contest" plea to the charge or conviction on an alternative charge will not affect the sanction.
3. Engaging in any activity that is prohibited under federal, state, county, or municipal law.
4. Committing multiple Category B violations over a two-year period from the date of the initial violation. Public Transit shall maintain a written record of each violation and sanction.

Sanctions for Category C Violations include the immediate suspension from: Boarding a transit vehicle; entering a transit facility or property; or contacting public transit for a minimum of 90 days (three months), and up to 365 days (one year) depending on the severity of the violation. No verbal warning is required from a driver, transit employee or official prior to issuing a sanction. Public Transit will also contact local law enforcement.

Serving Notice

A transit official will make reasonable effort to verbally notify individuals who are sanctioned for a period of up to three days (72 hours), and will attempt to provide written notice for sanctions that are longer than three days.

Written notices will be sent to an individual's last known address and may be delivered by email, by hand, or postal service. The notice will include details of the violation including: Bus route, date, time and location; the role of persons who witnessed and reported the violation; and the length of a sanction. For sanctions greater than three days, the notice will include instructions on how sanctions can be appealed.

In instances where a person is associated with a university, or is associated with a service or program, a transit official may also notify a primary point of contact at the organization.

Appeal Process

A person sanctioned for more than 72 hours may appeal the duration of a sanction. Appeals shall be submitted in writing to: St. Lawrence County Public Transit, 6 Commerce Lane, Canton NY 13617. The sanctioned passenger shall include in the appeal a phone number, email address, and return address in order to be notified of a decision.

The duration of a sanction may be modified to accommodate a demonstrated need to: Maintain employment, attend education or training, or receive medical treatment. The appeal shall explain why the sanction should be reduced or rescinded based on this criteria.

Within seven days of receiving a written appeal, a transit official shall confer with the County Mobility Manager and County Planning Office and exercise good effort to decide whether a sanction should be reduced or rescinded. Public Transit will weigh the information in the appeal and take into account: Evidence from witnesses, employees, transit officials and local law enforcement; the nature and extent of damage or injury caused by the violation; and whether a history of prior violations exist.

A notice of decision on the appeal shall be provided in writing to the return address included in the appeal.

For anyone who commits two Category C offenses within a three-year period, the sanctioned person is required to submit a written request to reinstate access to public transit services, vehicles or equipment; entering transit facilities or property; or contacting Public Transit unless a sanction is rescinded through an appeals process. Said request shall not be considered until the initial suspension is concluded, and the individual has fully complied with all terms imposed as part of the suspension.