



Subject: COVID-19 Operational Policy

Policy Number: N/A

Board Approval: June 5, 2020 by COVID-19 Ad-Hoc Committee

Notice: This policy is subject to change/revision as updated guidance is published by health and governmental authorities. Please be certain that you are reviewing the most current version of the policy.

Purpose: The purpose of this policy is to address how to operate The COMET's transit services during the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

Background: On March 13, 2020, the Governor of South Carolina issued a state of emergency resulting in operational changes to The COMET transit system. Executive Orders issued by the Governor and recommendations by a task force (Accelerate SC) developed best practices for reopening the State.

Policy: This policy applies to all The COMET fixed routes, flex routes and demand response services, including vehicles and facilities (COMET Central and Lowell C. Spires Regional Transit Facility). Face masks worn correctly by covering the nose and mouth are required when riding The COMET's vehicles and accessing The COMET's facilities. Signs will be placed on all vehicles and facility entry points.

- a. This policy applies to all passengers and employees of The COMET and its subcontractors unless a reasonable modification request has been filed and approved by the Director of Regulatory Compliance/Civil Rights Officer or designee (passengers) or a reasonable accommodation request has been filed by the employee with The COMET or contractor and approved by the Director of Administration & Operations/COO or designee of The COMET.
 - i. Face masks are not required in individual environments, such as an office, a relief, support or administrative vehicle or when deadheading a bus when there is no second or more persons in that environment.
 - ii. Children under 39 inches, as identified by the red tape on the bus door or pole do not require face masks as they are not recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

- b. The COMET will provide face masks for an initial 45-day period starting from June 15, 2020 to July 31, 2020. Face masks will be available on the buses next to the rear door on transit and trolley buses and the front door on cutaway buses and vans.
 - c. Starting on August 1, 2020, passengers would need to provide their own masks or ask for one at COMET Central or Lowell C. Spires Regional Transit Facility during customer service hours.
2. No vehicle will move until all passengers are correctly wearing a face mask covering the nose and mouth. The exception would be for those individuals approved to not wear a face mask or face covering.
3. Phase 2 approach will be determined at a later date established by The COMET's Executive Director/CEO. Phase 2 approach will be determined at a later date by The COMET's Executive Director/CEO or designee.

Vehicle Type	Maximum Seating	Maximum Standees (Phase II)
Starcraft Allstar (DART/ReFlex)	14	0
Starcraft Allstar (The COMET)	18	10
New Flyer D35LF	29	30
New Flyer Xcelesor 35 foot	32	30
New Flyer Xcelesor 40 foot	39	45
Optima American Heritage Streetcar	22	22
Vanhool AD 330	24	No Altoona Report
El Dorado National Axxess	33	33
Dodge Caravan	5	0
Champion LF270 (ReFlex)	18	0
NABI 40LFW	36	27

4. Until bus operator barriers are installed to protect the bus operator from interaction with boarding and exiting passengers, front door boarding will be reserved for seniors and persons with disabilities on the larger transit buses that have double doors.
5. To reduce the potential for overcrowding, one-way travel is required and passengers will be asked to de-board at the end of the line and re-board again to ensure capacity is not exceeded. Exclusion is allowed when a passenger boards on a one-way route segment or at the turn-around loop.
6. The COMET will provide hand sanitizing wipes or spray bottle of disinfectant and dry paper towels as well as a hand sanitizer dispenser inside all buses and facilities and the Contractor will be responsible for its refill.
 - a. Hand sanitizer dispensers shall be placed in an area accessible by all passengers;
7. A trash can will be placed by the Contractor near rear door of buses or front door of cutaways and minivans.

8. **No tolerance for violence!** If a dispute occurs between a passenger and an employee of The COMET or its contractors in regard to a passenger not wanting to wear a face mask on the bus or in a facility owned or controlled by The COMET, the following actions will take place:
 - a. In the case of a bus, the bus will not move and the bus operator will contact dispatch to request for supervisor or police assistance if a passenger does not comply with this policy. Those with reasonable modification requests or under 39 inches are exempt from this requirement.
 - b. In the case of the facilities, police or security will be called if a visitor does not comply with this policy. Those with reasonable accommodation requests are exempt from this requirement.
 - c. Signs are to be installed in all buses and facilities to state “No Trespassing” to ensure that persons not following this policy could be subject to Trespassing as defined in the City of Columbia Municipal Code Section 14.97, Trespassing or Section 14.91 Disorderly Conduct at <https://columbiapd.net/trespassing/>
 - d. The On Time Performance (OTP) requirement of the contractor is waived when situations occur that resulted in a delay in service due to a passenger’s non-compliance of this policy.
9. COMET Central will be available to the general public with no more than 17 customers allowed inside the building at any one given time with all to practice social distancing based on the Governor of South Carolina’s Executive Order 2020-28 limiting the number of customers inside a business not to exceed five (5) customers per 1,000 square feet or 20% of the occupancy limit as determined by the fire marshal whichever is less. COMET Central is 3,460 square feet and the occupancy of COMET Central is 159. Employees interacting with customers will be required to wear face masks. Customers entering COMET Central will be required to wear face masks. Private security will monitor the ingress and egress of customers at COMET Central.
10. An enhanced Saturday service level would operate Monday-Friday until the State of Emergency has been lifted by the Governor of South Carolina. At that point, the Board of Directors would review the environment to determine if and when to add the remaining suspended routes back into service and to transition to a normal weekday schedule based on information presented by the Executive Director/CEO.
11. A suspension of fare collection would continue to be provided until the State of Emergency has been lifted by the Governor of South Carolina. At that point, the Board of Directors would review the environment to determine if and when to resume charging fares based on the completion of the installation of a barrier to separate the bus operator from the customers that does not obstruct the bus operator’s vision in the operation of the bus based on information presented by the Executive Director/CEO.
12. The COMET will continue to do enhanced detailing on its vehicles four times a month, which will include fogging and steam cleaning as long as this policy is in effect and pay any necessary extra costs required to its contractor to ensure this responsibility is implemented.
13. The COMET will continue to do enhanced cleaning of its facilities, including bus shelters and bus benches daily as long as this policy is in effect and pay any necessary extra costs required to its contractor to ensure this responsibility is implemented.

14. This policy will be reviewed by the Board of Directors every three months starting September 30, 2020, or more frequently if warranted, for continued applicability until CDC and/or South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC) has determined that the Novel Coronavirus pandemic is over with relaxed restrictions regarding the interaction of people.
15. The COMET will provide food delivery in partnership with non-profits organizations and area grocery stores through August 20, 2020 as allowable by the Federal Transit Administration and as long as food delivery services do not conflict with The COMET's overall mission in transportation customers.