SUBJECT: Safety/Seat Belt Policy

AGENCY: Perry County Transit

EFFECTIVE DATE: 01/01/2026

APPROVED BY: Cheryl Boley, CEO

APPROVAL DATE: 12/31/2025

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Policy

The purpose of this policy is to reduce injuries and fatalities by ensuring seatbelts and other occupant restraints are used consistently on all Perry County Transit (PCT) vehicles and in compliance with Ohio law and applicable federal rules.

Policy Statements (Requirements)

- **Seatbelt Use Where Provided**. All Drivers and Passengers are required to wear safety/seatbelts while operating or riding as a passenger in any PCT vehicle. Per Ohio law, any passenger occupying a seating position for which an occupant restraining device is provided must wear the available seatbelt properly while the vehicle is in motion. Drivers must remind passengers to fasten belts when boarding and periodically during service.
- **Children**. In addition to seatbelt rules, child passenger restraints and booster seat laws in Ohio apply—children under applicable ages/heights must be in appropriate child seats or boosters unless meeting statutory exceptions. Drivers will advise caregivers of legal requirements but will not install child seats (unless trained and equipment provided). *(Refer to PCT's Child Passenger Safety Policy)*
- **Wheelchairs & Mobility Devices**. Wheelchair users are secured with appropriate tie-downs and may be required to use available occupant restraints consistent with federal guidance; however, restraint requirements for wheelchair users depend on whether all other passengers are required to belt and on ADA/FTA guidance. Do not force a transfer from wheelchair to seat.
- **New Vehicles & Procurement**. All new vehicles procured that are subject to National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) requirements will be specified with safety belts at each forward-facing position. Retrofit analyses should be conducted before retrofitting older vehicles.

Authority and Legal Basis

- Ohio law requires drivers and passengers to wear occupant restraining devices (seat belts, shoulder belts, harnesses) where provided for a seating position. See Ohio Rev. Code §4513.263.
- Ohio guidance clarifies front-seat occupants and children have specific requirements and exemptions (e.g., physician affidavit for medical exemption; booster/child-seat rules).
- Federal transit guidance permits transit agencies to require seatbelt use on vehicles where belts are provided (particularly paratransit/demand-response). Agencies must treat passengers with disabilities consistent with ADA guidance.

PERRY COUNTY TRANSIT

Driver and Staff Responsibilities

- Pre-trip checks: Ensure all provided seatbelts are functional and accessible. Report faulty restraints immediately and take vehicle out of service if critical safety equipment is inoperable.
- Passenger communication: Announce seatbelt requirement upon boarding ("For your safety, please fasten your seatbelt — a reminder: seatbelts are required where provided.").
- Refusals: If a passenger refuses, attempt a calm de-escalation (see refusal procedures below). Refusal creates an immediate safety risk; the driver should refuse transport or stop service safely per agency de-escalation & ADA rules.
- Documentation: Log seatbelt malfunctions, repeated refusals, and any incidents in the vehicle incident report system.

Passenger Education and Signage

- Clear, readable signage are posted in all vehicles requiring seatbelts to be worn.
- Provide a brochure summarizing the requirement, child seat rules, wheelchair policies, and how to report concerns.
- Driver will announce passengers shall fasten their seatbelts during boarding.

Refusal and Exception Procedure

- **Medical/Physical Exemption**
  - Drivers stating they have a medical/physical exemption will be required to provide PCT with the applicable affidavit in alignment with Ohio laws, ODOT and FTA regulations.
  - Passengers stating, they have a medical/physical condition that prohibits the use of a seatbelt will not be required to wear the seatbelt while onboard a PCT vehicle.
    - The driver is required to document this information on the driver's manifest and the office associate will enter this information into the passenger's profile under special needs for future trips
    - DO NOT ask the passenger the disability or medical condition that prevents the use of a seatbelt.
    - All attempts should be made to seat these passengers where State law does not require the use of seatbelts.
- **Refusal steps**
  - Remind the passenger calmly about the requirement and explain safety rationale.
  - Offer assistance fastening the belt.
  - If refusal continues, explain possible outcomes (e.g., inability to travel if unsafe) and offer alternative assistance (reschedule, caregiver assistance).
  - Follow incident reporting procedures. Escalate to dispatch/supervisor.
- **Passengers with disabilities**
  - Do not deny transport solely because a passenger refuses a belt if doing so would violate ADA obligations. Consult supervisor/dispatch for reasonable modification options.