



Escambia County ADA Transportation Rider's Handbook

A service provided by

Escambia County Area Transit

&

Escambia County

Community Transportation

Effective July 2016

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The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal law that guarantees people with disabilities full and equal access to the same services and accommodations available to people without disabilities. Under the ADA, public buses that run on regular schedules along specific routes (called fixed-route service) must be accessible to people with disabilities. When fixed route service is not accessible or when a passenger with a disability is not able to use the fixed route system, ADA mandates that transit systems operate ADA Transportation. ADA Transportation prohibits priorities by trip purpose (i.e., medical, employment, recreation, etc.).

Escambia County Area Transit ADA Transportation

This is an Escambia County Area Transit (ECAT) service specifically for individuals with disabilities, who because of their disability are unable to use the ECAT fixed route service. For ADA eligible riders traveling within the ECAT service area, ADA Transportation will provide service using an ADA accessible vehicle. All ECAT buses are equipped with wheelchair lifts or ramps. ECAT buses also lower to curb height (kneel) and have voice-announced stops. ADA Transportation is provided curb-to-curb or upon request, door-to-door. ECAT is responsible for the administration of this service; however Escambia County Community Transportation (CCT) provides the service in contract accordance with Escambia County.

ADA Eligibility Certification

ADA Eligibility Categories

Persons with Disabilities may be eligible for ADA complementary paratransit service on the basis of a permanent or temporary disability. According to federal regulations, paratransit services must be offered to persons whose disability:

- 1) Prevents them from getting on and off the bus or riding the bus, or
- 2) Prevents them from travelling to or from a bus stop on ECAT's fixed route bus system. This could be due to distance, weather, ground conditions, or architectural barriers.

ADA complementary paratransit service must be provided to all passengers described as being ADA eligible under ADA Regulation (49 CFR §37.123). ADA eligibility includes the following categories:

- Category 1. Any individual with a disability who is unable, as a result of a physical or mental impairment (including a visual impairment), and without the assistance of another individual (not including driver assistance and the use of a lift or ramp to board the vehicle) to board, ride or disembark from an accessible vehicle in the system. Included in this category are individuals with psychiatric, cognitive, physical or vision impairments who cannot navigate the system.
- Category 2. Persons who need accessible vehicles are eligible for ADA complementary paratransit if accessible fixed route vehicles are not available on the bus routes on which they need to travel, when they need to travel during operational hours of Escambia County Area Transit.
- Category 3. Persons with specific impairment related conditions that cannot travel to a boarding location or from a disembarking location to their final destination. Conditions that make getting to the fixed route bus stop “more difficult” do not grant eligibility. Second, the existence of architectural barriers (such as no curb cuts) not under the control of Escambia County Area Transit, and environmental barriers (such as distance, ground conditions, and weather) do not, by themselves, confer eligibility.

Eligibility Certification Application Process

If you feel that you meet the above criteria, please contact ECAT or Escambia CCT to receive an ADA Transportation Eligibility Certification packet. The ADA Transportation Eligibility Certification packet contains a certification application that you must fill out, and a Medical Verification form that must be completed by your licensed physician.

All applicants, whether new or re-certifying, must complete an entire ADA Eligibility Certification Packet.

ADA Eligibility Interview Process

This application package should include a copy of the ADA Transportation Eligibility Certification Application, and ADA Transportation Medical Verification Form.

All questions of this application must be answered in full or the application will be considered incomplete and it will be returned and will delay processing. Please keep in mind, the more detailed information you can provide, the better you will enable ECAT to make the most appropriate determination regarding your transportation needs. All information will remain confidential. A licensed physician must complete and return the *Medical Verification Form* to Escambia CCT.

Once Escambia CCT receives the completed *ADA Transportation Certification Application* and *Medical Verification Form*, they will contact you to schedule a face-to-face interview. Transportation to and from the interview will be provided at no charge to the applicant.

Determination of ADA Eligibility

A determination letter certifying your ADA eligibility will be sent to you in writing within 21 days of your interview. Your identification card will also be included with your notification letter. **This identification card must be presented on all trips with Escambia County Community Transportation (CCT) and ECAT.** After notification, and if eligible, trips cannot be scheduled for the first 48 hours. ECAT, not Escambia County Community Transportation (CCT), makes the final determination of eligibility certification in all cases.

When processing your ADA certification application, there are three (3) different types of eligibility determinations that are considered for each applicant. These eligibility determination types are:

- **Unconditional Eligibility** – An individual eligible for all trips with ADA Transportation.
- **Conditional or trip-by-trip eligibility** – An individual may be eligible for certain trips or trip-by-trip basis with ADA Transportation.
- **Temporary Eligibility** – An individual is eligible for ADA Transportation on a temporary basis. The length of time varies on the customer's needs.

Note: Temporary eligibility will be granted if the eligibility determination process takes longer than 21 days.

“Conditional or Trip-by-Trip Eligibility” Determination

Eligibility for ADA Transportation will be provided only for those trips in which ADA paratransit eligibility standards have been met. For trips that are not deemed ADA paratransit eligible, riders may use Escambia County Area Transit fixed route service, or find alternative transportation.

Your trip origin and destination must be within $\frac{3}{4}$ miles of ECAT's fixed route service area and the time of your trip must fall within the hours of the closest bus route. If you do not reside within the $\frac{3}{4}$ mile radius, then you must have the means of getting within our service area before transportation is provided to you.

Appealing Your ADA Eligibility Determination

You have the right to appeal any decision that declares you ineligible for ADA Transportation. You may submit your appeal, in writing, to the main Escambia County Area Transit office at:

Escambia County Area Transit
Attn: ECAT ADA Transportation
1515 West Fairfield Drive
Pensacola, FL 32501

Specific information regarding the ADA Transportation Eligibility Appeals Process will be included in your ADA eligibility determination letter. Your original ADA eligibility determination will remain in effect until a decision can be made on your appeal.

To see if you qualify for other available transportation programs, you may call Escambia CCT at (850) 595-0501.

Scheduling an ADA Paratransit Trip

To schedule a trip, call the reservationist at Escambia County Community Transportation (CCT) at (850) 595-0501 between the hours of 8:00 AM – 5:00 PM Monday through Friday. Let the Reservation Center know that you are ADA certified to receive the \$3.50 ADA fare.

You can schedule a trip at least one day in advance (by 5:00 pm), and up to two weeks in advance.

When you call to reserve your trip, be prepared to provide the following information:

- First and last name
- Date you are traveling
- Pick-up address (including building/business name, nearby landmark, specific pick-up information like entrance, entry code for any security entrance)
- Time you need to be at your destination
- Destination address (including specific drop-off information like entrances)
- Whether a personal care attendant (PCA/escort) will be traveling with you
- Whether guests other than PCA will be traveling with you (including children)
- If the rider, PCA/escort, guest(s), will be using a mobility device

When scheduling return trips, customers should allow plenty of time to complete their business so they are ready when the vehicle arrives. Be aware of opening and closing times at the destination location to avoid waiting outside the building before or after business hours. When scheduling trips, please follow these suggestions:

- Allow adequate time to reach the destination
- Allow extra time for the pick-up and drop-off of other passengers
- Allow for traffic conditions and weather delays

Personal Care Attendants, Companions, and Guests

Personal Care Attendants (PCA's)

If you are certified to have a Personal Care Attendant (PCA) that travels with you to assist with daily living activities, the reservationist at Escambia CCT will need to know in advance. Your Personal Care Attendant is authorized to ride for free with you on a trip-by-trip basis. PCA's are not authorized to schedule a free trip to meet you somewhere.

Companions and Guests

The reservationist at Escambia CCT needs to know in advance if any companions or guests will be joining you on your trip. Companions and guests will be subject to pay the same **\$3.50 ADA fare** as the certified rider.

Service Animals

In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), all paratransit passengers will be permitted to travel with a service animal trained to assist them.

ADA regulations define a service animal as any guide dog, signal dog, or other animal that is individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability, including a physical, sensory, psychiatric, intellectual, or other mental disability.*

*- FTA Circulator 4710.1 Chapter 2.6 Service Animals

Please notify Escambia CCT in advance if you intend to bring a service animal with you.

Animals that are not trained to do work or perform tasks are **not** considered to be service animals. For example, emotional support animals, which provide emotional support, well-being, comfort, or companionship to an individual with disabilities but are not trained to do work or perform tasks, are not considered to be service animals.

If you are planning on riding on Escambia CCT with a service animal, please follow these guidelines:

- Service animals are to be properly leashed and/or harnessed and under the control of their handlers at all times.
- The service animal must remain at your feet or on your lap. The service animal may not sit on a vehicle seat.
- The service animal must not be aggressive toward people or other animals.
- You are responsible for any damages or soiling caused by the service animal.
- The service animal must be clean and well groomed.

- The rider may be asked to remove his/her service animal from the vehicle if:
 - (1) the animal is out of control and the rider does not take effective action to control it
 - or (2) the animal poses a direct threat to the health or safety of others.
- You are responsible for the care and supervision of your service animal while on board the vehicle.

Pick-Up Window updated July 2016

Once you have given the Escambia CCT reservationist your pick-up and drop off locations and requested scheduled time, the reservationist will provide you with a time to be ready for your pick-up.

Once your trip is scheduled, the Escambia CCT or designated vehicle will arrive to pick you up within a 30 minute window of your scheduled pick-up time. The vehicle is considered “on-time” within the 30 minute pick-up window and is between the 15 minutes before your scheduled pick-up time and the 15 minutes after your scheduled pick-up time.* You should be ready to board the vehicle at the beginning of your pick-up window.

YOU MUST BE READY TO GO DURING YOUR 30 MINUTE PICK-UP WINDOW

Example: Your pick-up time is 8:00 AM. All reservations have a 30 minute pick-up window. Therefore, the vehicle may arrive anytime between 7:45 AM and 8:15 AM.

Pick-Up Window Starts (15 minutes before)	Scheduled Pick-Up Time	Pick-Up Window Ends (15 minutes after)
7:45 AM	8:00 AM	8:15 AM

*- FTA Circulator 4710.1 Chapter 8.4.5 Pickup Windows

Please go to the vehicle as soon as it arrives, as the driver may only wait for five (5) minutes before departing. If the vehicle arrives within your pick-up window, and you are not ready, the driver must wait no longer than five (5) minutes before leaving and before leaving and recording your trip as a “No-show”. Please remember to call and cancel the late ride and/or any return rides you may have scheduled. Drivers are not able to cancel your additional rides.

If your disability makes it impossible for you to board the vehicle in five minutes, then please notify ADA Transportation so the five minutes boarding requirement can be modified and noted in your file.

Changing a Scheduled ADA Trip

If your plans change and you need to adjust your scheduled trip times, call Escambia CCT at (850) 595-0501 at least by 4:00 pm, the day before your trip. Reservations are open until 4:00 pm daily. Escambia CCT will always try to accommodate your needs, but changes to your original ride request may result in adjustment to your pick-up times.

On the day of your trip, Escambia CCT cannot change pick-up times or pick-up/drop-off locations. This is considered same day service. These changes create an inconvenience to other riders. Escambia CCT can schedule you a “will call” trip for the next available vehicle in an attempt to accommodate your request.

If Your Appointment is Running Late

Everyone has occasional circumstances outside of their control that can cause delays at a scheduled appointment. If your appointment is running later than you expected and there is a chance you will not be ready for your scheduled return trip (or if you have missed the vehicle), call Escambia CCT as soon as possible. Every effort will be made to adjust your return pick-up time and assign another vehicle to pick you up at a later time. Because schedules are set the day before, there may be a delay of an hour or more before another vehicle is available to accommodate your trip.

If a vehicle is sent and you are not ready, you will be considered a “will call”. If you call to change your appointment because you are running late, you will be considered a “will call” and Escambia CCT has up to two hours to provide another pick-up.

REMEMBER: Allow extra time for medical appointments or other appointments that may take longer than expected. This will reduce the unnecessary cost of sending an additional vehicle.

No-Show Policy updated July 2016

Escambia County Area Transit (ECAT) understands that because ADA Transportation/ Complementary Paratransit Service requires trips to be scheduled in advance, riders may sometimes miss scheduled rides or forget to cancel rides they no longer need. ECAT also understands that riders may sometimes miss scheduled trips or be unable to cancel trips in a timely way for reasons that are beyond their control. However, repeatedly missing scheduled trips or failing to cancel trips in a timely way can lead to suspension of service. The following information explains ECAT’s No-Show Policy for ADA Transportation/ Complementary Paratransit Service.

Definitions:**No-show****A No-show is when all of the following criteria are met:**

1. There has been no call by the customer (or the customer's representative) to cancel the scheduled trip 2 hours or more before the pick-up window.
AND
2. The vehicle arrives at the scheduled pick-up location within the 20-minute pick-up window.
AND
3. The driver cannot reasonably see the customer approaching the vehicle within 5 minutes.
AND
4. The dispatch office is notified. At this time, dispatch will verify that the operator is at the correct location.

Late cancellations and cancellations at the door, as defined below, will also be treated as No-shows.

Pickup Window

The pickup window is defined as from 15 minutes before the scheduled pickup time to 15 minutes after the scheduled pickup time. Riders must be ready to board a vehicle that arrives within the pickup window. The driver will wait for a maximum of 5 minutes within the pickup window for the rider to appear.

Late Cancellation

A late cancellation is defined as either: the customer (or the customer's representative) does not call to cancel a specific scheduled trip at least 2 hours prior to the pick-up window (other than early morning trips as identified above) or a refusal to board a vehicle that has arrived within the pickup window. Late cancellations will be treated as No-shows.

Advance Cancellation

An Advance Cancellation is when the customer (or the customer's representative) calls and cancels a specific scheduled trip at least 2 hours prior to the pick-up window. Early morning trips scheduled for pick-up before 8:00 AM are to leave a cancellation message with the answering service or use the automated system to cancel the trip before 6:00 AM.

Cancellation at Door

Cancellation at Door is when the vehicle arrives at the location designated for a specific scheduled trip within the 30-minute pick-up window and the customer (or the customer's representative) notifies the driver at that time that they no longer need the scheduled trip. These cancellations are considered No-shows.

Important Notes on Cancellations:

- The driver is not responsible for cancelling any other trips booked for that day.
- The customer (or the customer's representative) must call Escambia County Community Transportation (Escambia CCT) to cancel other trips.
- Escambia CCT schedules pick-up and return trips separately, and assumes that all scheduled return trips are needed unless notice is given by the customer or their representative. If a pick-up trip is a No-show, Escambia CCT will not automatically cancel the return trip. A No-show on the return trip will count as a second No-show for the day.

No-Shows beyond Passenger's Control

Escambia CCT does not count as no-shows [or late cancellations] any missed trips due to Escambia CCT error, such as:

- Trips placed on the schedule in error
- Pickups scheduled at the wrong pickup location
- Drivers arriving and departing before the pickup window begins
- Drivers arriving late (after the end of the pickup window)
- Drivers arriving within the pickup window, but departing without waiting the required five [5] minutes

Escambia CCT does not count as no-shows [or late cancellations] situations beyond a rider's control that prevent the rider from notifying us that the trip cannot be taken, such as:

- Medical emergency
- Family emergency
- Sudden illness or change in condition
- Appointment that runs unexpectedly late without sufficient notice

Riders should contact the Escambia CCT when experiencing no-shows [or late cancellations] due to circumstances beyond their control.

Policy for Handling Subsequent Trips Following No-shows

When a rider is a no-show for one trip, all subsequent trips on that day remain on the schedule unless the rider specifically cancels the trips. To avoid multiple no-shows on the same day, riders are strongly encouraged to cancel any subsequent trips they no longer need that day.

No-show Notifications

Customers will be notified of No-shows in writing, and will receive a warning after five No-shows. Customers will receive a No-show notice postcard in the mail. Customers may also

be contacted by email or phone. Communications will list the total number of No-shows and the percent of No-shows in reference to the total number of trips booked in the period. Specific dates, times and locations of each No-show in the period will be provided in writing upon customer request.

Suspension Policies for a Pattern or Practice of Excessive No-shows and Late Cancellations

ECAT reviews all recorded no-shows and late cancellations to ensure accuracy before recording them in a rider's account. Customers may be suspended from paratransit service when they show a "pattern and practice" of No-shows, which occurs when:

- a. A customer has five or more No-shows in a rolling 30-day period; **AND**
- b. The number of No-shows represents more than 15% of the trips booked by the customer in a rolling 30-day period.

The following are examples of what would and would not constitute a pattern and practice of No-shows:

Example 1: A customer books 20 trips in a 30-day period and misses five trips. This customer has a pattern and practice of No-shows because (a) the customer had five No-shows, and (b) those No-shows represent 25% of the total trips booked;

Example 2: A customer books 10 trips in a 30-day period and misses four trips. This customer will not have a pattern and practice of No-shows because the customer did not have five or more No-shows in the 30-day period. (Note that because there were not at least five No-shows, the fact that the customer missed 40% is irrelevant for purposes of determining whether there has been a pattern and practice of No-shows.)

A customer who shows a pattern and practice of No-shows may be subject to a suspension of service, as shown in the table below.

Consequences for Pattern and Practice of No-shows	
1 st Violation	Letter of warning and/or phone contact
2 nd Violation	2 Day Suspension
3 rd Violation	5 Day Suspension
4 th Violation	10 Day Suspension and Loss of ADA Service
5 th Violation	30 Day Suspension and Loss of ADA Service
	Violation history covers a 12-month floating period.

If a customer has a pattern and practice of No-shows as provided above, they will receive a suspension letter or email, proposing to suspend service within two weeks and outlining the appeals process. Suspension of service privileges will be postponed pending completion of the appeals process.

Loss of ADA subscription service takes effect with four violations in a floating 12-month period, and will not be removed until the customer has three consecutive months without any No-shows or late cancellations.

No-show Appeals Process

A customer (or a customer's representative) may file a verbal or written appeal for an individual No-show issued by contacting the following:

Escambia County Area Transit
Attn: ECAT ADA Transportation
1515 West Fairfield Drive
Pensacola, FL 32501

The customer should provide ECAT with any information on which the customer wishes to rely to support his/her appeal.

ECAT ADA Transportation Coordinator will review the information provided by the customer (or the customer's representative) and make a decision to either uphold the individual no-show or to excuse it. This decision will be made within ten (10) business days.

If No-shows have accumulated to a point where a suspension will be imposed, the customer (or the customer's representative) may file a verbal or written appeal for a review of all No-shows by contacting ECAT. Service will continue while the outcome of the appeal is decided.

If in any case, the customer is not satisfied with the review, they may request a formal review by ECAT's General Manager. A hearing will be scheduled on the matter during which the customer will be permitted to present any materials or testimony relevant to the appeal. A decision on the appeal will be made within ten (10) business days.

Tips for Riding ADA Paratransit

Drivers will assist riders, upon request, in getting to, on, off and from the vehicle. This assistance may include:

- Meeting you at the front door of any private residence or at the ground floor door of a public building. Drivers are prohibited from entering any private residence so please be ready and waiting to board the vehicle at the start of your scheduled “pick-up window”. Drivers may go into the first floor lobby door of a public building, but are not required to search for riders or go to the second floor of a building.
- Lending a supporting arm, guide, and / or assist up or down steps.
- Operate the wheelchair lift and will assist riders with the securing of wheelchairs or mobility aids and with seat belts.
- May not assist riders in wheelchairs up or down steps.
- May carry packages as determined by Escambia CCT. Riders are allowed to bring small shopping carts with them on the van to handle groceries.
- Prohibited from lifting or carrying passengers and/or their children.
- Required to escort riders from the door of their pick-up location to the door of the drop off location. Riders should wait by the outermost door for pick-up; drivers are not required to search for riders.

The **correct ADA fare of \$3.50** is required at the time of your trip. Drivers are prohibited from making change. Drivers are also prohibited from accepting gifts or gratuities of any kind.

Personal property that can be carried by the passenger and/or PCA in one trip and can be safely stored on the vehicle will be at no additional charge to the passenger. Personal property **does not** include wheelchairs, child seats, stretchers, secured oxygen, personal assistive devices, or intravenous devices. These items are considered necessary equipment and will be transported without question.

Once you have arrived at your destination and the driver has taken you to the door, if you need further assistance, please arrange to have someone other than the driver to assist you. Doctors’ offices and other places of business should be able to assist clients coming to their establishments.

Calling in advance to let the office or business know you need assistance will ensure your safe and timely arrival at your ultimate destination. The driver needs to depart after delivering you to your destination in order to pick-up other passengers and will not go through doors to take you to appointments.

Wheelchair Security and Seat Belt Policy

It is the driver's responsibility to ensure that mobility devices are properly secured. Wheelchairs/ scooters are required to be secured into the four-point anchor system at all times during the ride. ECAT and Escambia CCT request that riders allow operators to secure the lap belts to ensure the customer's safety.

Respirators and Portable Oxygen Equipment

Portable oxygen equipment and portable respirators are permitted on Escambia CCT vehicles. The driver will assist you in securing this equipment on the vehicle. Drivers are not permitted to assist you when using this equipment. If you need assistance with portable life support equipment, please arrange to bring a qualified attendant along with you.

Rider Courtesy and Conduct

Riders are asked to follow these rules of conduct to ensure the safety and comfort of all riders and the driver:

- No eating or drinking in the vehicle, unless medically necessary
- No smoking on vehicles
- Riders shall maintain appropriate, reasonable personal hygiene.
- Alcoholic beverages and illegal substances are not permitted on board the vehicle
- No flammable, explosive, or hazardous materials of any kind
- Shirt and shoes must be worn at all times
- No playing of radios, MP3 players, or compact disc players (without headphones), or other noisy equipment.
- For safety reasons, please limit unnecessary conversation with drivers while the vehicle is in motion
- Children age 12 years and under must be accompanied by an adult or older passenger
- No abusive, threatening, or obscene language or actions, which includes fighting, throwing objects, pushing, or rough behavior
- Infants and toddlers must be transported in car seats in accordance with state law

- For the health and safety of our passengers and drivers, Escambia CCT can refuse service to riders who have open or seeping sores and / or leaking bodily fluids. Permission to board the vehicle will be granted when and if the situation has been contained or corrected.

Riders who violate the rules of conduct are subject to penalties, up to and including suspension of service. Note: Passengers who engage in physical abuse or cause physical injury to another rider or the driver may be subject to immediate and permanent suspension, and possible criminal prosecution.

Travel Training

ECAT provides mobility and travel training for interested individuals and groups. This training includes a bus feature demonstration and the opportunity for new riders to have firsthand experience with riding. Training will also include personal instruction on:

- Safety - both on and off the bus
- How to board and disembark from the bus
- Tips on how to recognize your stop
- Detailed route information
- An introduction on understanding route maps,
- Accessible features such as wheelchair lifts, the kneeling feature, ramps, and bicycle racks.

Training can be held at ECAT's main office or an appointment can be scheduled at your home location. If you would like more information, or wish to schedule mobility and travel training, call the ECAT office.

Visitor Policy

If you are a visitor to the Escambia County area and have been determined ADA eligible by another public transportation agency, your ADA eligibility determination would be honored while you are visiting the Escambia County/Pensacola area. You will need to provide proof of ADA eligibility before you arrive, or when you arrive, prior to using the ADA Paratransit service. Contact ECAT or Escambia CCT and they can aid you in verifying your ADA eligibility. Visitors to Escambia County who have verified their local eligibility will be able to use the Paratransit service for a total of 21 days during the calendar year.

If you are in need of service beyond the 21 days, you will need to apply for local eligibility certification through ECAT and Escambia CCT. Visitors who cannot provide verification of ADA certification and require ADA Transportation service must provide ECAT or Escambia CCT verification documentation of their place of residence and disability. They will be provided service for no more than 21 days from their first trip until such time that they can become certified eligible for the ECAT Service area.

For Escambia County residents wishing to visit other locations, contact ECAT or Escambia CCT for assistance with notifying your destination's transit system of your ADA certification. This will allow you to use public transportation (if available) in the area you are visiting. The length of time that you are able to use the visiting area's ADA transportation will depend on local transit system's policy.

Important Numbers to Know



ESCAMBIA COUNTY AREA TRANSIT

Escambia County Area Transit

1515 West Fairfield Drive

Pensacola, FL 32501

Phone: (850) 595-3228

Fax: (850) 595-3222

www.goecat.com

ecat@myescambia.com



Escambia County

Community Transportation (CCT)

3346 McLemore Drive

Pensacola, FL 32514

Phone: (850) 595-0501

Toll Free: 844-595-0501

Fax: (850) 595-0502

TTY Relay: 7-1-1 or 800-955-8771

Kimberly Roberts

ADA Coordinator

850-595-0501 x1065

kimberly.roberts@firstgroup.com