



Do I need a General Authorization or a Special Authorization Licence?

Commercial Passenger Vehicles

Commercial passenger vehicles move people. Operators receive compensation for transporting passengers.

In British Columbia, commercial passenger vehicle operators must have a passenger transportation licence. A licence tells you what service you can provide with your vehicles.

Section 5 of the [Passenger Transportation Regulation](#) lists those cases where a passenger transportation licence is not required. These include:

- Vehicles operated by the federal or provincial government
- Vehicles operated by a regional district or municipal government within their respective boundaries
- Public transit vehicles
- Ambulances and hearses
- Car and van pool vehicles
- Vehicles operated by a society or charity where the primary purpose of the organization is not transportation
- Vehicles operated by volunteer drivers, taking people to or from health care treatments
- School buses
- Vehicles operated by or on behalf of community care or assisted living facilities
- Vehicles operated by motor dealers and realtors
- Vehicles operated in the course of providing personal care or assistance where transportation is not the primary business of the operator and no money is charged directly for the transportation service

- “Auxiliary passenger vehicles” where
 - ✓ the operator is a business enterprise,
 - ✓ transportation is not the primary business of the enterprise, and
 - ✓ there is no money or other compensation charged directly for the transportation

! *The exact wording and requirements of these exemptions are in the [Passenger Transportation Regulation](#) and should be referred to. These are posted on the Board’s website: www.ptboard.bc.ca*

If you are not sure if your service qualifies as an “exemption”, contact the [Passenger Transportation Branch](#) and ask to speak with a Duty Inspector. This will help you avoid future compliance or enforcement action.

If you are not exempt, the type of passenger transportation licence you need will depend on:

- the *vehicle(s)* you use
- the *service* you provide

The *Passenger Transportation Act* sets out three types of commercial passenger vehicles:

1. passenger directed vehicles
2. inter-city buses
3. general passenger vehicles

The *Passenger Transportation Act* sets out two types of authorization:

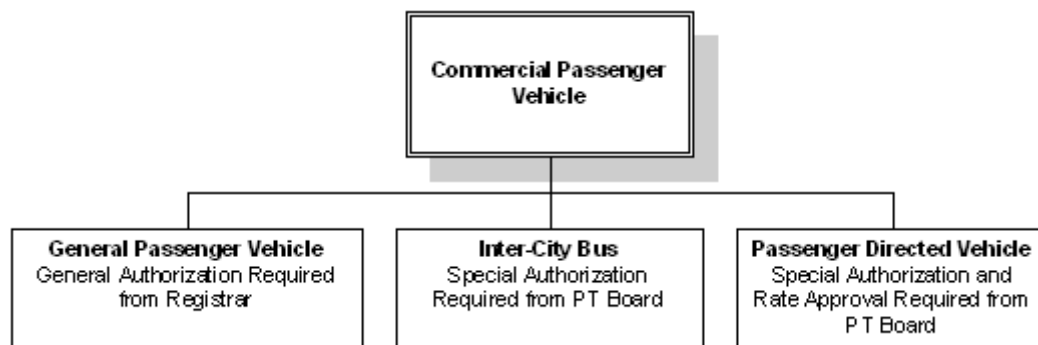
1. special authorization
2. general authorization

The [Passenger Transportation Board](#) makes decisions on Special Authorization applications. The Board reviews applications and considers three questions:

1. Is there a public need for an applicant’s proposed service?
2. Is the applicant a fit and proper person and capable of providing the service?
3. Would approving the application promote sound economic conditions in the transportation industry?

If the Board approves an application, the Registrar will issue a licence when certain safety requirements are met.

The [Registrar of Passenger Transportation](#) makes decisions on General Authorization applications. These applications do not come to the Board. The Registrar issues licences when certain safety requirements are met. There is no public need or other economic regulation test. The Registrar may refuse to issue a licence if he or she finds that the applicant is not a fit and proper person to provide the service.



Passenger Directed Vehicles

A *passenger directed vehicle* (PDV) is a vehicle that:

- (a) can seat a driver and 11 passengers or less or has primarily perimeter seating and can seat a driver and 12 or more passengers, and
- (b) is operated to and from locations determined by passengers or on behalf of passengers

Examples of PDVs are:

- taxis, limousines, perimeter seating buses and small shuttle buses.
- vehicles used for crew transportation or “customized” tours
- vehicles used for sightseeing trips if the vehicles have a carrying capacity of a driver and 11 passengers or less.

A *perimeter seating bus* (PSB) is a vehicle that:

- can seat a driver and 12 or more passengers
- has primarily perimeter seats (e.g. stretch SUV, limo bus), and
- provides a passenger directed service

Passenger Directed Vehicle Exclusions

The *Passenger Transportation Act* says that some vehicles may be **excluded** from the definition of a PDV. This means that even though the vehicles meet the definition of a PDV, operators do not need a Special Authorization licence. They need a General Authorization licence.

Exclusions are set out in the Regulation. These include:

- Vehicles used to transport persons with a disability and their companions. That is, the person is not able to use conventional transit services. An example of this exclusion is *patient transfer services* that take people to and from hospitals.
- Overnight tour packages. Transportation for all passengers is arranged or brokered by a travel agent or broker licensed under the *Business Practices and Consumer Protection Act*. Tours catering to foreign tourists are an example of this type of exclusion.
- Vehicles used to transport people from outside British Columbia in or through British Columbia and then out of the Province. No new passengers may be picked up in British Columbia. For example, a Washington state tour company may bring people into BC, tour the province and then return with or without their passengers to Washington.

! *The exact wording of these exclusions is in the [Passenger Transportation Regulation](#). If you think your service falls under one of these exclusions, refer to the Regulation.*

Inter-City Buses

An *inter-city bus* (ICB) is a vehicle that operates:

- (a) on a set time schedule
 - (i) between a prescribed municipality and another location outside the municipality, whether in British Columbia or not, or
 - (ii) between a location in a prescribed regional district and another location inside or outside the prescribed regional district, whether in British Columbia or not,
- (b) for individual fares,
- (c) over a regular route, and
- (d) between fixed terminating points, picking up or dropping off passengers at intermediate points as necessary,

Public transit buses are not inter-city buses.

Inter-City Bus Exclusions

The *Passenger Transportation Act* says that some vehicles may be **excluded** from the definition of an ICB. This means that even though the vehicles used meet the definition of an ICB, operators do not need a Special Authorization licence. They need a General Authorization licence.

Exclusions are set out in the Regulation. They are listed below.

A commercial passenger vehicle is excluded from the definition of “inter-city bus” when it is operated on a set time schedule

- (i) between a location in the Capital Regional District (Greater Victoria) and another location inside the Capital Regional District, or
- (ii) between a location in the Greater Vancouver Regional District and another location inside the Greater Vancouver Regional District

A commercial passenger vehicle that operates as a “Connector Bus” is excluded from the definition of an “inter-city bus”. Connector buses operate to and from port, ferry and airport terminals.

The following three conditions must be met for a vehicle to operate as a connector bus:

- 1) The bus only picks up passengers on the way to the port, ferry or airport terminal. The bus does not stop to drop off passengers before it arrives at the terminal.
- 2) The bus only drops off passengers on the way from the port, ferry or airport terminal to the end of the route. The bus does not stop to pick up any passengers along the route.
- 3) The port, ferry or airport authority gives the connector bus operator written permission to provide service at the terminal.

The connector bus exclusion only applies to ports that are defined in the *Canada Marine Act*. The exclusion only applies to ferries operated under the *Coastal Ferry Act*.

A commercial passenger vehicle is excluded from the definition of an “inter-city bus”:

- (a) if the vehicle
 - (i) picks up passengers in a single municipality,
 - (ii) takes those passengers to a location outside of the municipality, and
 - (iii) returns those passengers to the municipality;
- (b) if no other passengers are picked up along the route; and
- (c) if passengers are not dropped off in the starting municipality before they have gone to the destination location.

! *The exact wording of these exclusions is in the [Passenger Transportation Regulation](#). If you think your service falls under one of these exclusions, you should refer to the Regulation.*

General Passenger Vehicles

General Passenger Vehicles (GPVs) are all commercial passenger vehicles that are not passenger directed vehicles or inter-city buses.

Examples of GPVs include:

- Tour or charter or sightseeing buses with a carrying capacity of a driver and 12 or more passengers. These may be “carrier directed” or “passenger directed” services. Perimeter Seating Buses (PSBs) are not GPVs if they meet the PSB definition on page 3.
- Tour or sightseeing buses if all itineraries are set by the operator. These are “carrier-directed” tours services. Trips are not “customized” for passengers. Operators may use vehicles with any carrying capacity.

Who decides if General Authorization or a Special Authorization licence is required?

Applicants can learn more about what type of passenger transportation licence they may need by reviewing the websites of the [Passenger Transportation Branch](#) and the [Passenger Transportation Board](#).

Applicants can contact the Branch if they have questions about what type of licence they need for their proposed service.

The Branch asks people applying for a General Authorization licence to submit a passenger service proposal. This proposal describes the proposed service. It answers the following questions:

- What is the nature of the business? (e.g. type of business and target market)
- How will the vehicles be used? (e.g. sightseeing, tour, charter bus)
- What size of vehicles will be used? (e.g. year, make, model and passenger carrying capacity, excluding the driver)
- What is the service area for the proposed transportation service?
- What type of compensation will be received? (e.g. charter, individual fares, flat rates, point to point)
- How will the compensation be collected?

The Branch reviews applications to see if people have submitted the right form. The Branch may decide that both a General Authorization and a Special Authorization application are required. This will depend on the vehicles that will be used and the services that will be provided. For example, someone may apply to operate custom tours. Some vehicles (non PSBs) will have the capacity to carry a driver and 14 passengers. Other vehicles will have a carrying capacity of a driver and 6 passengers. In this example, both a general and special authorization is required. Two applications must be submitted.

Are there special cases?

Sometimes these occur when the Registrar believes the service proposed by the general authorization applicant would use PDV or ICB vehicles. The Registrar may then ask the Passenger Transportation Board to decide what type of licence is required.

The Board looks at the applicant's proposal. The Board may ask the applicant to clarify some aspects of the proposal. If the Board decides that the proposed service is not using PDV or ICB vehicles, then the application can proceed as a general authorization application.

If the Board decides that the proposed service is using PDV or ICB vehicles, then the Board reviews relevant exclusions. If an exclusion applies, then the application can proceed as a general authorization application.

If an exclusion does not apply, the Board will tell the applicant and the Registrar that a Special Authorization licence is required. If the applicant wants to continue with the application, it must amend its application and meet the requirements for a special authorization application.

Submitting an Application

Information, application forms and reference materials for new **general authorization applicants** are posted on the Registrar, Passenger Transportation Branch website:

http://www.th.gov.bc.ca/rpt/licence_new.htm

Application materials for taxis, limousines and inter-city buses (which require **special authorization**) are posted on the Board website at:

<http://www.th.gov.bc.ca/ptb/applications.htm>

The “Rides Home” webpage of the Passenger Transportation Branch outlines transportation options available to restaurants, bars and other establishments. It also sets out whether licensing is required and if so, what are the licensing options.

<http://www.th.gov.bc.ca/rpt/rides.htm>

Applications must be submitted to the Registrar/Passenger Transportation Branch of the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure. Application forms are available from the Branch at <http://www.th.gov.bc.ca/forms/results.aspx?group=21>

The Branch can be contacted at:

Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure

Passenger Transportation Branch

Suite 313, 1500 Woolridge Street

Coquitlam, BC V3K 0B8

Phone: 604-527-2198

Fax: 604-527-2205

Email: passengertransportationbr@gov.bc.ca

The Board can be contacted at:

Passenger Transportation Board

PO Box 9850 STN PROV GOVT

Victoria, BC V8W 9T5

Phone: 250-953-3777

Fax: 250-953-3788

Email: ptboard@gov.bc.ca

BC residents can call toll free through Enquiry BC:

Victoria: 250-387-6121 Elsewhere in BC: 1-800-663-7867