# **What Rideshare Drivers Need to Know About Guide Dogs**

# **Supplemental Information**

This document provides rideshare influencers and others with supplemental information about each of the seven key points featured in the new rideshare poster available at www.PineTreeGuideDogUsers.org/rideshare-poster.

## ***I’m a guide dog, also known as a service animal.***

* Guide dogs have been leading people who cannot see for over 95 years.
* The most common breeds of guide dogs are Labrador Retrievers, Golden Lab Mixes, Golden Retrievers, and German shepherds.
* The majority of guide dogs are specially bred, raised and trained by guide dog schools accredited by the International Guide Dog Federation.
* Other terms that may be used to identify guide dogs are service animals, service dogs, assistance dogs, and sometimes by the name of the guide dog school such as Seeing Eye® dogs or Leader® dogs.

## ***My job is to guide a blind person.***

* Guide dogs are not pets. They are specially trained to help blind people go about their lives safely and independently.
* State and federal laws permit guide dogs to assist blind people in most all public places and modes of transportation, even when there is a “no pets” policy.
* It takes almost two years to raise and train a guide dog before it is ready to guide someone who is blind.
* Some of the specialized tasks that guide dogs are taught to perform include:
  + Navigating around stationary obstacles like telephone poles, parking meters, and trash cans.
  + Avoiding moving objects such as bicycles, people, strollers, and shopping carts.
  + Stopping at surface changes like curbs, broken sidewalks, and steps going up or down.
  + Refusing a command to go forward when faced with hazards like oncoming traffic or the end of a subway platform.

## ***See my special harness with a long handle.***

* Guide dogs can be easily recognized by the special harness they wear when out in public.
* This distinctive harness has a long rigid handle that attaches to the body of the harness near the dog’s shoulders, and extends about 18 inches or more down the dog’s back.
* While holding the harness handle, the person can easily detect the guide dog's movements and follow its guidance.

## ***I’m trained to be calm and ride on the floor.***

* From an early age, guide dog puppies go through a rigorous and thorough training program that prepares them for all aspects of their future work.
* As part of this training, guide dogs get used to riding on the floor when traveling in a personal vehicle and on other modes of public and private transportation.
* Proper public behavior is reinforced during the last part of training by professional Guide Dog Mobility Instructors and is maintained by the blind person throughout the dog’s working life.

## ***I’m kept clean and brushed.***

* People with guide dogs routinely groom their dogs to ensure acceptability in all public places and on all modes of transportation.
* Guide dog schools provide attendees with instruction on proper grooming techniques and give each person the necessary equipment to keep the new dog’s coat well-maintained.
* Drivers with concerns about dog hair may wish to use an inexpensive yoga mat cut to fit the floor space for dogs to ride on. After use, the mat can be shaken off, rolled up, and stored in the trunk.
* A few quick swipes with a ChomChom Pet Hair Remover can tidy up the floor area if needed. To use, roll back and forth along any surface to trap fur and lint into the built-in receptacle. When finished, press down on the release button to open the storage area and empty it.

## ***Just ask if you want my head kept away from you.***

* Drivers who have fears, religious objections, or other concerns about dogs in their vehicles may be more comfortable if they request that the dog’s head be kept away from the opening between the two front seats throughout the ride.

## ***Thanks for the ride!***

* Access to reliable and effective transportation is critical to the ability of blind people to live more independent lives.
* People with guide dogs greatly appreciate the many rideshare drivers who provide them with courteous and professional service.
* Drivers with concerns about having dogs in their vehicles often changed their perspective after transporting a guide dog for the first time. These drivers report being pleasantly surprised by the guide dog’s cleanliness and calm demeanor.

### **Note About the Legal obligations of Rideshare drivers**

State and federal laws require all drivers to accept service animals. Allergies, religious objections, and a generalized fear of animals are not valid reasons for denying transport. Failure to transport a person with a service animal may result in legal action, fines, criminal charges, and permanent deactivation from the rideshare platform. For more information about a driver’s legal obligation to accept riders with service animals, please visit ADA.gov or call the ADA Information Line at 800-514-0301.

Pine Tree Guide Dog Users offers helpful information & resources related to living and working with a guide dog. Please visit us at PineTreeGuideDogUsers.org or join us on Facebook.com/PTGDU.