



## *Spirit Unlimited Professional DJ Entertainment Wedding Planning Newsletter #19*

### **Transportation Timeline**

*Keeping track of time is important when planning a wedding...Use the following wedding transportation timeline to maximize your schedule...*

**6-12 months before:** Begin contacting wedding transportation companies and ask how much they charge per hour, their overtime rates, minimum package requisites, etc. Select wedding transportation company.

**4-6 months before:** Confirm wedding transportation package with company.

**1 week before:** Confirm wedding date, timeline, and pickup location with the wedding transportation company.

**Wedding Day:** Assign a family member or wedding party member to confirm pickup and drop-off information like time, address, directions, and emergency phone numbers.

### **Transportation Styles**

*Understanding and identifying the various styles associated with weddings is important...Here is a look at Wedding Transportation styles...*

There are many styles of wedding transportation: **Town Car, Regular Limousine, Stretch Limousine, Exotic Limousine, Limousine Bus, Horse-Drawn Carriage and Trolley.**

*Town Car:* A Lincoln Continental or Cadillac luxury car for two to four passengers without amenities like a bar or television.

*Regular Limousine:* A customized Lincoln Continental or Cadillac luxury car for two to six passengers. Amenities can include stereo, cassette player, CD player, sunroof, television, VCR, DVD player, bar with ice box, and light system.

*Stretch Limousine:* A longer customized Lincoln Continental or Cadillac luxury car for two to twelve passengers. Amenities can include stereo, cassette player, CD player, sunroof, television, VCR, DVD player, bar with icebox, and light system.

*Exotic Limousine:* A customized exotic luxury car like a Hummer, Ford Expedition, Mercedes, or classic car for two to twelve passengers. Amenities can include stereo, cassette player, CD player, sunroof, television, VCR, DVD player, bar with icebox, and light system.

*Limousine Bus:* A long customized luxury bus for two to 24 passengers. Amenities can include stereo, cassette player, CD player, sunroof, satellite television, VCR, DVD player, bar with ice box, light system, refrigerator, toilet, sink, and kitchenette.

*Horse-Drawn Carriage:* A vintage velvet or leather appointed carriage, usually drawn by one or two horses complete with a costumed driver. This is an excellent alternative to creating a romantic arrival and departure for the bride to a garden wedding. Verify with the venue, but many garden settings allow you to be brought up to the “aisle” in this fairytale way. Carriage companies are usually separate from limousine companies.

*Trolley:* These motorized replicas of San Francisco trolleys hold entire bridal parties as well as possibly immediate family members. They offer you a unique, charming arrival and departure. Trolley companies are usually separate from limousine companies. Typically they come specially decorated for the festive event.

## **What to Look For**

*It is sometimes difficult to know what makes a quality wedding vendor...we've provided a guide to help you identify the key things to look for...*

Inspecting the vehicles of a wedding transportation company is important. Here is some criterion to judge:

*Cleanliness:* Are the vehicles spotless and new or dirty and worn?

*Model:* The standard brands of limousines are Lincolns and Cadillac's.

*Year:* What are the years of the vehicles?

*Color:* Most limousines are either black or white. Black limousines are the most popular for wedding days.

*Amenities:* What types of “extras” do the vehicles come with? Do they come with stereos, TV's, bars, sunroofs, etc.?

## **New Trends**

*Wedding trends change and evolve with each New Year...we've provided a run-down of the newest, hottest trends in wedding transportation...*

Many wedding transportation companies now offer a special service where the bride and/or groom-to-be are driven around town to wedding preparations like hair and salon appointments a few days before the wedding.

Many companies also offer a similar service the day of the wedding. This is a relaxing option that can minimize some of the last minute stress associated with getting ready for the “big day”.

Limousines come in all shapes, makes, and models. Exotic vehicles like Hummers, Expeditions, and Mercedes are now offered in stretch limousine models.

Limousine “buses” are a new trend in transporting the wedding party from the ceremony to the reception. These are a popular option since most, if not all, of a wedding party can fit into a bus and still have all of the amenities of a limousine.

For themed-weddings, horse-drawn carriages or trolleys are an excellent option.

## **Package/Options**

*Understanding the typical wedding transportation packages and options is important...Here is a look at what is usually available for weddings...*

### **Package**

A standard wedding transportation booking is the rental of a limousine for four hours. A typical regular limousine will transport two to six passengers and have amenities like stereo, sunroof, television, and bar.

Larger packages can include stretch limousines, exotic limousines, limousine buses, pre-wedding day errands, entire wedding day transportation for bride and groom, bridal party transportation, and out-of-town guest pickups and drop-offs.

Special perks like wedding day decorations for the car, red carpet upon pickup and drop-off and complimentary beverages are often included in wedding packages.

Multiple car rentals are usually eligible for a group discount. Inquire with the wedding transportation company about negotiating an overall price that lowers the rental cost per car.

Depending on the company, some wedding transportation packages include a set amount of free miles and gas. Other companies will charge per-mile and/or gas charges. Make sure to find out which option the prospective wedding transportation company offers.

Overtime is billable. Before you sign any contracts find out what the hourly rate will be for overtime.

### **Options**

**Pre-wedding day errands:** A limousine or town car with a driver can take the bride-to-be and/or groom-to-be around town to do errands like appointments at hair salons and spas.

**Entire wedding day transportation:** A limousine or town car with a driver can pick up the bride-to-be and/or groom-to-be the morning of the wedding day and take them to do their last minute preparations and then take them to the ceremony and reception.

**Bridal party transportation:** Vehicles like town cars, limousines, limousine buses, and buses can be used to transport the Bridal party to the ceremony and reception locations.

**Guest's transportation:** Vehicles like town cars, limousines, limousine buses, and buses can be used to transport the wedding guests to the ceremony and especially reception locations.

## **Keys to Success**

*Here are some expert tips to make sure your wedding transportation experience is the best it possibly can be...*

Check to see if the company and drivers are National Limousine Association Certified.

The N.L.A. awards certifications based on testing which can assure a certain level of quality.

Ask the wedding transportation company what specific year and make of their vehicles are. Vehicles changed body style in 1998, and typically change every 4 years. Newer vehicles will likely be cleaner. Even if the company says they have “new” cars, ask what the actual years of the vehicles are. The cars may actually be “newer” and not necessarily current year.

Most wedding limousines are either black or white. Ask the limousine company what colors they have and can they guarantee a certain color for your wedding day.

Ask to look at the fleet in-person. If the company resists showing you their cars, it may be a red flag.

Make sure to book your wedding transportation as far in advance as possible, especially if you’re planning a wedding between April and June, the heart of high school prom season.

Sometimes, due to demand, transportation companies outsource bookings to another company. Ask if this “farm-out” is a common practice with the company you are considering. Make certain that the outsourced company has the specific year and type(s) of vehicles you reserved.

Address the attire of the limousine driver in advance of your wedding day. Most drivers will be dressed in a coat and tie but if your affair is even more formal than that, then the driver may need to wear a tuxedo.

Have your photographer ride along with you from the ceremony to the reception for “paparazzi-style” photographs.

Many wedding transportation companies have restrictions on decorating the bride and groom’s car. Be certain of what limitations they may have before you or your friends “get creative” and inflict damage to the vehicle. Unexpected repair bills are never fun.

If the wedding transportation company has not worked your ceremony and/or reception locations before, it is wise for them to check out the sites in advance of your wedding day to address any special access or parking considerations for the wedding party vehicles.

Have extra printed sheets with ceremony and reception site addresses, directions, and contact phone numbers for any wedding party or guest member who will be using wedding transportation. This will help alleviate any transportation problems in case the driver gets lost.

## **Wedding Valet Parking Keys to Success**

*And here are some expert tips to make sure your valet parking experience is the best it possibly can be...*

Most weddings need more valets when your guests arrive than when they leave. A qualified valet company will have contingency plans to address guests arriving simultaneously.

Finding a valet company with experience at your particular venue is very beneficial.

The company will already have an idea of on-site parking totals and places for limousines to park.

Most valet companies charge per hour per attendant with a predetermined minimum amount of hours. Extras like special uniforms, signage, shuttle vehicles, and parking lot rental fees usually are additional.

Make sure the person you're meeting with will be the one working your event. If they won't be, make certain to be introduced to the person that will be.

If adequate parking is available, you may not need to provide valet parking. Some alternatives to valet service include shuttle buses, traffic directors, and parking lot rental.

The bottom line is that you should feel comfortable with the person you're dealing with.

## **Wedding Transportation Questions**

*When you meet with your prospective wedding transportation company, you'll want to ask all the right questions...we've provided a list of what you should make sure to ask when you first speak with them about your wedding...Their responses, as well as attitude, will speak volumes about their service and whether or not you'll want to include them in your "Dream Team"...*

1. What types of cars, years, colors, and sizes do you offer? Movin' Tunes reminder, if the company says the vehicles are "new", ask them to be specific--what year?

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2. How many people do you recommend per car? We advise you to take into consideration the fact that your dress will probably take up the space of two passengers, so factor in extra space requirements for gowns.

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3. How many cars does your company have?

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4. Does your company do "farm-outs" in case of availability issues? With which company and can they guarantee a particular vehicle and year?

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5. Does the limousine or coach come with amenities like TV, sunroof, telephone and/or bar?

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6. Does your company offer special wedding packages? What is included?

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7. Does your company belong to the National Limousine Association?

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8. If we plan to rent more than one vehicle, do you have a group discount?

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9. Is gas or mileage included or separate?

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10. What is the standard attire for your drivers?

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11. How do you handle overtime?

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12. Do you have a copy of the insurance certificate and operating license?

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13. What is the minimum amount of hours you will book?

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14. Do you offer multiple pickup and drop-off services?

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### **Valet Parking Service Questions**

*If your wedding day venues lack adequate parking or you are planning a formal affair or you have security issues with your event, you may want to hire a valet parking service...Here's some questions to ask a potential valet company...*

#### **Questions You Should Ask:**

1. How many valets will I need and why?

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2. How much insurance do you have? We recommend they have a \$2,000,000 minimum policy.

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3. Should I charge per car or provide free valet?

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4. Will my guests be expected to tip?

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5. What will your valets be wearing the day of our event?

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6. What are your company's attire and grooming guidelines for the attendants?

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7. What system do you use to organize the cars and keys?

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8. Will the keys be in a locked box?

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9. Will you provide signs directing my guests?

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10. How much will this cost?

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### Questions The Company Should Ask You:

1. How many guests are you expecting?

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2. Where is the event being held?

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3. How much parking is available?

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4. Are we guaranteed it is available?

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5. Is it a ceremony and reception or will it just be the guests arriving at the reception?

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6. What time does the event start?

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7. What time does the event end?

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8. How does the event end? Will all the guests be leaving at once?

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9. What is the theme of the event?

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10. Who will be my contact the day of the event?

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### Things to Avoid

*Knowing the pitfalls and traps ahead of time can help save you money, time, and your sanity...Here's a list of things to avoid when planning your wedding transportation...*

The attire of the driver sometimes can be an issue. By communicating with your wedding transportation company before the ceremony, you can express your dress code expectations. It is a good idea to include this provision in the contract with your wedding transportation provider.

Vague and/or incorrect directions. It is imperative to have accurate, precise directions to every destination during your reserved time with the limousine. This includes places like salons, spas, churches, reception sites, hotels, and/or airports.

Be aware of venues with poor street access and street parking if you wish to arrive and depart by limousine. Because of their longer wheelbase and overall length, limousines need special places to turn around and park. Additional arrangements, such as golf carts, may have to be made to take you from the door of the limo to the door of your site. Address these details with your venue.

Try not to run behind your planned schedule. Stick to your timing for the day. If you've scheduled your first pickup to be at 8:00 am on your wedding morning, follow your timeline. This will minimize your stress and simplify your wedding transportation specialist's job of getting you where you need to go throughout the day on-time.

Avoid taking too long to shoot portrait pictures after the ceremony. This will not only make your guests wait for your arrival at the reception, it will eat into your time reserved for the limo. Make certain to find out if the company is renting out the car after your event or can it stay later if necessary. Be sure to address any overtime costs per hour before you reserve your wedding transportation.

Remember, weather is the greatest concern for outdoor weddings and receptions. It is vital to have a contingency plan in place that can serve as a backup for the wedding ceremony and reception. If the weather looks threatening, don't compromise great photos and the guests' comfort in order to stay with your original plan. Flexibility is key! Make certain the driver has accurate, precise directions to any alternative locations.

If you utilize the services of a Carriage company for your arrival and departure of a garden wedding, confirm with the venue that the carriage is allowed on the grass.

## **References**

*Checking the reputation, credentials, and service record of a prospective wedding transportation company is important before you hire them...*

There are several resources available to check the references of a particular wedding transportation specialist:

- Family and friends who have recently been married.
- The National Limousine Organization.
- Better Business Bureau (B.B.B.).
- Local Resorts/Country Clubs.
- Other local wedding vendors.

## **Contract/Payment**

*Knowing what to include in a contract with a wedding transportation company is critical...We've created a list of important points to consider...*

### **Contract**

- Name and contact information for you and the wedding transportation company.
- Date, exact times (number of hours), and exact locations (home, ceremony, reception) of pickup and drop-offs, including the exact addresses.
- Exact type, color, year, and number of limousines/cars rented.
- Amenities to be included in each vehicle.
- Names of drivers, if possible.
- Hourly rate, if applicable.
- Total cost, including gas and mileage.

- Overtime fees.
- Deposit amount due.
- Balance and date due.
- Cancellation and refund policy.
- Type of substitution, if acceptable.
- Company Representative's signature
- Your signatures.

### **Payment**

Most wedding transportation companies require full payment before your wedding day. Some will ask for a 50% deposit upon booking and the remaining 50% due before your wedding day.

Confirm the cancellation policy with the wedding transportation company before signing the contract and putting down a deposit.

### **Backup Plans**

*Having a "Plan B" is always a good idea when it comes to planning your wedding...Here's a look at some ways to cover your bases...*

It is important to have contingency plans in place for backup transportation and locations.

*Backup Transportation:* You should keep the contact information of your second choice wedding transportation company in case of last minute cancellation or inability of your primary company to fulfill your reservation.

*Backup Location:* Discuss your backup location with your transportation company. Make sure they have the address and directions.

Be sure to address the contingency plans in your written contract.

### **Checklists**

#### **Timeline**

- Interview Limousine Companies
- Select Limousine Company
- Choose Vehicle(s)
- Confirm Wedding Day Itinerary

#### **Styles**

- Town Car
- Regular Limousine
- Stretch Limousine
- Exotic Limousine
- Limousine Bus
- Horse-Drawn Carriage
- Trolley

#### **What to Look For**

- Inspect Vehicles

- Check Vehicle Models
- Check Vehicle Years
- Consider Vehicle Colors
- Check for Amenities

#### New Trends

- Pre-Wedding Day Limo Service
- Pre-Wedding Limo Service
- Exotic Stretch Limo
- Limousine Buses

#### Package/Options

- Theme
- Determine Length of Rental
- Determine Type of Vehicle
- Wedding Packages
- Multiple Car Discount

#### Keys to Success

- Determine Mileage and Gas Charges
- Determine Overtime Charges
- Pre-Wedding Day Errands
- Entire Wedding Day Package
- Bridal Party Transportation
- Guest Transportation
- Check National Limousine Association Accreditation
- Determine Limo Fleet Models
- Check Vehicle Colors
- Inspect Vehicles In-person
- Book Transportation Early if Prom
- Season
- Farm-outs
- Determine Driver's Attire
- Photographs Inside Limo
- Determine Decoration Guidelines
- Site Inspection
- Printed Directions

#### Valet Parking Keys to Success

- Reception Guest Arrival Plan
- Previous Venue Experience
- Vendor Parking
- Negotiate Valet Package
- Determine Event Contact
- Shuttle Buses
- Traffic Detectors
- Rent Parking Lot

#### Things to be addressed

- Determine Driver Attire

- Double-check Directions
- Provide Driver with Directions
- Verify Limo Accessibility
- Stick to Timeline
- Provide Driver with Backup
- Venue Information

## **Worksheet**

*Deciding on the themes and styles of your wedding is a complex task...Here's a worksheet to help you plan out your ideal wedding transportation experience...*

### **Bride & Groom Vehicle Type**

- Specialty Limo
- Limo Bus
- Stretch Limo
- Regular Limo
- Town Car
- Classic Car
- Exotic Car
- Own Car
- Horse-Drawn Carriage
- Trolley
- Other

### **Transportation to Ceremony Location**

- Bride
- Bride's Father
- Bride's Mother
- Bridal Attendants
- Groom

### **Attendants & Family Transportation**

- Groom's Father
- Groom's Mother
- Groom's Attendants
- Bride's Grandparents
- Groom's Grandparents
- Other Guests

### **Guest Transportation**

- Bus
- Van
- Limo Bus
- Stretch Limo
- Regular Limo
- Town Car
- Own Cars
- Buses
- Vans

- Own Cars
- Parking Attendants
- Valet Parking Costs

**Transportation to Reception Location**

- Bride and Groom
- Bride's Father
- Bride's Mother
- Bridal Attendants
- Groom
- Groom's Father
- Groom's Mother
- Groom's Attendants
- Bride's Grandparents
- Groom's Grandparents
- Other Guests

**Transportation from Reception Location to Hotel**

- Bride and Groom
- Bride's Father
- Bride's Mother
- Bridal Attendants
- Groom
- Groom's Father
- Groom's Mother
- Groom's Attendants
- Bride's Grandparents
- Groom's Grandparents
- Other Guests

**Wedding Transportation Budget = \_\_\_\_\_**

This guide is provided by Spirit Unlimited Professional DJ Entertainment to assist new couples as they navigate their way through the year leading up to their wedding day. Included are only suggestions and ultimate decisions need to be made by the couple. Spirit Unlimited Professional DJ Entertainment is not responsible for negative outcomes as a result of following guidelines.