



By signing below I acknowledge receipt of STAR Transit's Quick Reference Rider Guide and the Rules for Riding the Bus.

Rider's Signature

Date

Rider's Printed Name

Operated by:



STAR TRANSIT

Quick Reference Rider Guide

STAR Transit is Non-Emergency Demand Response Transportation that is open to the general public of St Tammany Parish to meet the transportation needs of its residents. Destinations include but are not limited to medical, employment, recreation, social activities, and shopping. Our goal is to provide friendly customer service, experienced safe drivers and reliable transportation to the general public.

STAR Transit will not directly or through contractual or other arrangements, discriminate on the basis of race, color, gender, national origin, or disability in the provision of services, program benefits, or employment. The system provides fully accessible transportation for persons with disabilities and will abide by all applicable federal, state and local laws, and regulations.

Contact Information:

(985) 327-0185

Ridership Eligibility:

STAR Transit services are available to any resident throughout the geographic area of St Tammany Parish. All passengers seventeen (17) and under must be escorted by a person at least eighteen (18) years or older. Rider registration includes information such as home address, phone number with voice mail capability, emergency contact information, and ambulatory status.

STAR Transit URBAN:

Urban areas are typically comprised of the cities of Slidell, Covington, Mandeville, and parts of Lacombe.

STAR Transit RURAL:

Rural areas are typically comprised of the town of Pearl River, Folsom, Madisonville, Sun, Bush, and parts of Lacombe and Covington. Rural areas are determined by the 2010 census map.

Service Hours:

Urban STAR Transit ride service hours are Monday through Friday, 7:00AM-5:00PM.

Rural STAR Transit ride service hours are Monday through Friday, 7:00AM-4:00PM.

No service will be available for the following observed holidays: New Year's Day; Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday; Mardi Gras Day; Good Friday; Memorial Day; Independence Day; Labor Day; Thanksgiving Day and Friday after; Christmas Eve and Christmas Day.

If holiday falls on a weekend, service will not operate on the day the holiday is officially observed.

Office Hours:

Office hours are Monday through Friday, 7:30AM – 5:00 PM. Voice mail is available after hours, on weekends, and on holidays.

Scheduling:

All reservation requests are taken on a first come, first served basis and upon availability. Reservation requests are taken Monday through Friday from 7:30 AM - 2:00PM. **Drivers are not allowed to take reservation requests for passengers.** To assure a ride, it is advisable to book your ride, make changes or cancellations 7 days in advance.

Please have the following information available when calling in a reservation request:

- Name of the passenger(s)
- Home address and phone number of passenger
- Telephone number and complete address of where passenger needs to go

- Date of the requested trip
- Time the passenger needs to arrive (appointment time)
- Time passenger needs to be picked up for the return trip home
- If applicable, type of assistance needs passenger uses (mobility aids, impairments, etc.)
- Will there be a guest; child or Personal Care Attendant (PCA) accompanying the passenger

Making Changes:

Due to scheduling limitations, **riders are not allowed to change the ride destination the day of the ride.** All requests for a reservation and scheduling decisions are made at the scheduling office by calling 985-327-0185. You may not board the bus and ask the driver to change your booked destination.

Fares:

STAR Transit fares are based upon the distance of the trips and will be told to the persons scheduling the trips at the time they schedule the trip. The fare applies to all persons, except a personal care attendant (PCA) accompanying a rider, and children under the age of five (5). **Exact fares must be paid prior to boarding the vehicle (cross the white line). Service will be refused or denied if the fare is not paid before boarding. Fares cannot be prepaid. Drivers cannot provide change at any time.** One guest is allowed per rider at the same mileage rate as the passenger. Guests must be identified at the time the rider makes their reservation request.

RIDERS WITHOUT PROPER FARE WILL NOT BE TRANSPORTED
Current fare schedule:

Distance in Miles	Cost One-Way	Cost Round-Trip
0 – 10 miles	\$1.50	\$3.00
11-25 miles	\$2.50	\$5.00
26+ miles	\$4.00	\$8.00

Drivers do not make unscheduled stops. Trips of 26 miles or greater are only reserved if the schedule permits. Passengers age sixty (60) and older are considered seniors and if they register as a COAST client, will be eligible for free fare. Disabled, Medicare cardholders and children between the ages of 6-12 will be eligible for half-fare if they apply. Children under 5 years of age are allowed to ride free. All passengers seventeen (17) and under must be escorted by a person at least eighteen (18) years or older.

Pickup Times/Wait Policy:

Riders need to be ready for pickup ten (10) minutes before their advised pick-up time and also in view of the driver. Pick-up times are planned to ensure clients arrive at their appointments on-time. The driver will wait for **FIVE** minutes after the pick-up time to allow for a rider to walk to the bus, for example, from their front porch. Upon arrival the driver will toot the horn to immediately notify the rider he/she is there. STAR Transit will also attempt to reach you by telephone. If the dispatcher cannot make contact with you, they will assume you are not taking your ride and you will be considered a no-show for that ride. Your return ride will be cancelled unless you notify STAR Transit at 985-327-0185.

Delays:

Due to the number of rides we provide, it is not always possible for buses to run exactly on schedule. It is important for you to allow **extra time** to assure your scheduling needs can be met. Drivers may be as late as 20 minutes past your scheduled pick-up window. **We do not offer ‘will call’ service.** If you are ready for pick-up more than 60 minutes earlier than your scheduled pick-up time, you can call to ask for your pick-up time to be moved. Original scheduled fares still apply and will not be waived. We will try to accommodate, but consideration will first be provided to other scheduled riders’ pick-up times.

Cancellations:

If a passenger is unable to make a scheduled trip, he/she must call the scheduling office no later than one (1) hour prior to the scheduled pick up time to cancel. STAR Transit office hours are 7:30AM to 5:00PM. Cancellations may be left on the voice mail after hours, on weekends, and on holidays.

“No-Shows”:

A “No-Show” is when a vehicle arrives at a pick up location, waits the allotted time, and the passenger does not get on the vehicle. Drivers may arrive at a passenger’s pick up location within a one half (1/2) hour window. The driver is to wait no longer than five (5) minutes beyond the scheduled vehicle arrival time. STAR Transit will try to reach the rider by telephone within the 5 minutes to notify them the bus is outside. If the passenger is not at the pickup location in that time frame, it will be considered a “No-Show”. And if a client cancels their trip less than one (1) hour prior to their pick up time it will be considered a “No-Show”.

Each “No-Show” will be recorded. A monthly notification will be sent to passengers by mail with total “No-Shows”. After three (3) “No-Shows” in a six (6) month period, the passenger will receive a notice by mail of a suspension and when the passenger is eligible to return to the service. Excessive cancellations and “No-Shows” may result in the cancellation of ridership for an extended period of time to be determined by STAR Transit.

Excessive cancellations – Excessive cancellations is defined as a client having at least 8 ride reservations for a calendar month and cancels more than 25% of their rides, then they should receive an excessive cancellation letter. If a client receives Zero Excessive Cancellation letters in 6 months, then this process re-starts.

Excessive Cancellation policy:

1st letter: Initial Excessive Cancellations warning with a copy of the policy

2nd letter: Final written warning

3rd letter: 1-week suspension

4th letter: 2-week suspension

5th letter: 1-month suspension

6th letter: Permanently suspended

No Show Policy:

If a client receives at least one (1) No Show, they will receive a No-Show warning letter.

If a client receives a 2nd No Show within 6 months, they will receive a Final Warning letter.

If a client receives a 3rd No Show within 6 months, they will receive a suspension for 1 week.

If they receive a 4th No Show a suspension for 2 weeks.

If they receive a 5th No Show a suspension for 4 many weeks.

If they receive a 6th No Show permanent suspension.

If a client receives ZERO No Show letters within 6 months, this process starts over.

Service Animals:

Service animals will be permitted to ride on the STAR Transit system. The rider must inform the scheduler that they are traveling with a service animal when they make their ride request.

Mobility Devices:

STAR Transit complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) by accommodating all wheelchairs and mobility aids in use. Passengers may use wheelchairs, canes, walkers and other mobility devices on

vehicles. Walkers will be folded for transport. It is recommended that riders remove all personal items from the walker during transport.

Wheelchairs must meet the ADA definition of a wheelchair. Wheelchair means a mobility aid belonging to any class of three-or more wheeled devices, usable indoors, designed or modified for and used by individuals with mobility impairments, whether operated manually or powered. Some large, powered mobility devices do not fit in our buses. If you have a concern, please mention it at time of making a request for a reservation. Many wheeled devices (such as scooters) are not approved by the manufacturer to serve as a transport device. In that case, the rider will sit in a seat with a seatbelt. For safety reasons, passengers using three-wheel scooters will transfer out of their scooter into the seat of the vehicle. The driver will secure the wheeled mobility device. Drivers are prohibited from lifting or carrying customers. Drivers are not permitted to lift individuals required or wanting to transfer from a scooter or wheelchair to regular vehicle seating. Such riders must provide their own personal care attendant to assist in their transfer. (Such attendants will be permitted to ride without charge). Transportation will not be provided to passengers who refuse or otherwise neglect to furnish a needed PCA. All mobility devices are required to be secured within the vehicles at all times. Drivers do not assist riders beyond the street curb.

Personal Assistance to Riders:

Due to scheduling demands, drivers must limit personal assistance to riders. Drivers will be responsible for passengers entering and exiting the bus safely. Drivers are permitted to assist riders with activities directly related to boarding and disembarking the vehicle. Drivers will not perform any task which may cause injury to him/herself or the passenger. Drivers will not leave the bus unattended or unlocked, and will not leave the bus when other riders are on board except to operate the wheelchair lift. STAR Transit provides curb to curb service only. **Passengers are responsible for all packages they bring on to the vehicle and are limited to the packages that they can carry and hold in their seat.** Riders may bring grocery or personal items purchased at stores on the vehicle, **limited to what the rider can carry when boarding the bus (in one trip).** Riders may not expect STAR Transit to transport furniture items, including televisions, cases of water, computers, equipment with gasoline, gardening items such as potting soil, or any items of weight exceeding 10 pounds. Riders may not expect STAR Transit to assist with packages.

Medical Equipment:

Passengers may travel with portable oxygen or other equipment provided by medical providers. For safety reasons, oxygen tanks and other equipment must be positively controlled/secured by the rider to prevent them from falling or becoming dislodged and striking other objects or passengers in the vehicle.

Seat Belt Policy:

Seat belts or securement devices must be worn at all times and until the vehicle comes to a complete stop to ensure the safety of all riders and compliance with state laws. Passengers transported in wheelchairs must use lap and shoulder belts as designed. Refusal to wear seat belts or the appropriate securement system will result in suspension of service. However, if a particular mobility device cannot be secured by the existing securement system, service will not be suspended and all accommodations will be attempted.

Conduct on the Bus:

Passengers who use STAR Transit must be courteous and considerate both to drivers and other passengers. Drivers are responsible for the welfare and behavior of all passengers while on board the agency's vehicles. Likewise, passengers are expected to follow the driver's instructions regarding the same. Inappropriate conduct including behaviors which present a danger to other riders will not be tolerated.

The following behavior is inappropriate and will not be tolerated on agency vehicles.

Category 1 Violations:

1. Carrying of Weapons
2. Fighting
3. Possession of Illegal Drugs
4. Having Open Containers of Alcohol on Vehicle
5. Destroying/vandalizing STAR Transit property

Category 2 Violations:

1. Drinking non-alcoholic and/or eating (unless medically required)
2. Use of tobacco products
3. Foul and/or unacceptable language
4. Lack of good personal hygiene
5. Horseplay
6. Bothering other passengers
7. Listening to electronic devices without headphones
8. Disrespect for STAR Transit employees
9. Refusal to pay fares
10. Boards with more packages than can be secured in seat

STAR Transit will not tolerate a rider who violates any or all of the above. Riders committing Category 1 violations will be permanently terminated from STAR Transit. The rider may appeal this refusal of service according to the guidelines outlined below. In the interim, the rider will be suspended from utilizing STAR Transit until the decision is made through the appeal process.

Violation of Category 2 will result in a documented verbal warning for the first incident. Incident #2 will result in a written warning. Three incidents will result in a one week suspension of that rider. A fourth incident will result in termination of service. The rider may appeal this refusal of service according to the guidelines outlined below. In either instance, the rider will receive written notification from STAR Transit of the suspension. If his or her appeal fails, they will be refused service.

Appeals Process For Suspension of Services:

A rider who wishes to appeal a decision to suspend services has sixty (60) calendar days to file a written appeal with STAR Transit. The rider will be notified by STAR Transit within ten (10) business days of the receipt of the appeal or after the hearing in person. The STAR Transit Contractor will also notify the St Tammany Parish Department of Grants of the appeal for suspended services. The individual making the appeal has the right to be heard in person and may be represented by an individual of his or her choice.

The St Tammany Parish Department of Grants staff will complete an investigation of the reasons for the suspension. The written notification will include the procedures which may be utilized to appeal the decision if unfavorable to the rider. The St Tammany Parish Department of Grants will make a decision within ten (10) business days after the hearing date and inform the individual of the decision in writing. Those who are denied service will be provided with the reasons the denial was upheld.

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color and national origin in programs and activities receiving Federal financial assistance. STAR Transit is committed to ensuring that no person is excluded from participation in, or denied benefits of its transit services on the basis of race, color, or national origin, as protected by Title VI Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Circular 4702.1. If you believe you have been subjected to discrimination under Title VI, you may file a complaint.

Attachment #4 can be used. For information on our nondiscrimination obligations or how to file a complaint, please contact COAST by any of the methods listed below.

MAILING ADDRESS:

St. Tammany Parish Department of Grants
21454 Koop Drive, Room 327
Mandeville, LA 70471

E-MAIL ADDRESS:

startransit@stpgov.org

BUSINESS PHONE:

(985) 809-2989

FAX NUMBER:

(985) 898-5205

HOW TO FILE A WRITTEN COMPLAINT:

- Complaints should be submitted in writing within 180 calendar days of the alleged incident. The complaint should include the following information:
 1. Your name, mailing address, and how to contact you (i.e., telephone number or email address)
 2. How, when, where and why you believe you were discriminated against. Include the location, names and contact information of any witnesses
 3. Other information that you deem significant
- Within fifteen working days, STAR Transit shall confirm receipt of the complaint and inform the complainant of the investigation process.
- Within sixty (60) days, should the complaint have merit, St Tammany Parish Government/STAR Transit shall commence an investigation of the allegation(s). If the complaint is regarding discrimination, an investigation will determine whether there is a reason to believe that a failure to comply with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 has occurred. In addition, the St Tammany Parish Transportation Administrator will render a recommendation for action in a report of findings or resolution.
- Within ninety (90) days, St Tammany Parish Government/STAR Transit Transportation Administrator will notify the Complainant in writing of the final decision reached, including the proposed disposition of the matter. If the Complainant is dissatisfied with the final decision rendered by the Grants Project Manager for Transit, he/she may file an appeal within ten (10) working days with the St. Tammany Parish Chief Administrative Officer (CAO). The CAO shall have thirty (30) days to review and render a written decision either to concur or deny the appeal.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

STAR Transit is committed to ensuring that no person is excluded from participation in or denied the benefits of its services on the basis of a person's disability under Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. Any person who believes he or she has been subjected to discrimination on the basis of disability by STAR Transit may file a complaint under this procedure. It is against the law to retaliate against anyone who files a complaint or cooperates in the investigation of a complaint. STAR Transit investigates complaints received no more than 180 days after the alleged incident. Attachment # 1 to this document is the STAR Transit ADA Complaint Procedures. Attachment # 2 to this document is the STAR Transit ADA Complaint Form.

Reasonable Modification Policy

Star Transit is committed to providing equal access and opportunity to qualified individuals with disabilities in all programs, services, and activities. Star Transit recognizes that, in order to have equally effective opportunities and benefits, individuals with disabilities may need reasonable modifications to policies and

procedures. Star Transit will adhere to all applicable federal and state laws, regulations, and guidelines with respect to providing reasonable modifications, as necessary, to afford equal access to programs for persons with disabilities. Star Transit does not discriminate on the basis of disability in admission to, participation in, or receipt of services and benefits under any transit program or activity. Star Transit will take appropriate steps to ensure that persons with disabilities have an equal opportunity to participate. No qualified individual with a disability shall, by reason of such disability, be excluded from participation in or be denied the benefits of the services, programs, or activities of Star Transit, or be subject to discrimination by Star Transit. Attachment # 3 to this document is the STAR Transit Reasonable Modification Policy.

RULES OF THE ROAD

PASSENGERS SHALL:

1. Buckle up or be buckled up if in a wheelchair and remain seated and buckled up until vehicle stops
2. No eating or drinking
3. Be ready on time for scheduled pick up
4. Inform the driver of special health problems if applicable; use lift if bus steps are difficult
5. Comply with fare policy, overpayment is a donation to COAST
6. Secure carry-on items, medical equipment and packages at your seat
7. Allow driver to open and close doors
8. Abide by driver's instructions
9. Board and de-board bus in one trip
10. Not board with more packages than can be secured in seat

THE DRIVER:

1. Will assist a rider into and out of the van/bus (Origin to Destination) at the curb; drivers will not enter residences or places of business.
2. Will not wait longer than five (5) minutes for any rider to appear for scheduled pick-up.
3. Will not take articles into a rider's residence or help carry items on and off the bus.
4. Will not leave the van unattended or leave other passengers on the bus to assist a rider past the curb.
5. Will not transport any rider who is too ill to sit up and be secured in seat, or is vomiting, or bleeding, or recovering from anesthetics.
 - a. Will notify the dispatcher of the rider's condition.
 - b. Advise medical authorities whether the rider needs medical attention if necessary. If the rider requires medical attention, STAR Transit will be unable to continue transport.
6. Will limit conversation with riders to ensure safety requirements are met.
7. Will refuse ride if the rider does not pay fare upon entering the bus.
8. Will not pull into residential driveways.
9. Will refuse ride if the rider cannot secure their carry-on items at their seat

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Be advised that STAR Transit is not responsible for passengers' items left on the vehicles.



ADA Complaint Procedures

ADA Policy Statement

STAR Transit is committed to ensuring that no person is excluded from participation in or denied the benefits of its services on the basis of a person's disability under Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. Any person who believes he or she has been subjected to discrimination on the basis of disability by STAR Transit may file a complaint under this procedure. It is against the law to retaliate against anyone who files a complaint or cooperates in the investigation of a complaint. The STAR Transit investigates complaints received no more than 180 days after the alleged incident.

The St. Tammany Parish Government's Grants Project Manager-Transit shall be responsible for overseeing investigations and responses to complaints of discrimination based on disability.

How to File a Complaint

Fill out an ADA Discrimination Complaint Form. Forms and process information are available online at the St. Tammany Parish Government website www.stpgov.org/residents/transportation and the St. Tammany Council on Aging (COAST) <http://coastseniors.org/wpress/services/transportation/> or by request at STAR Transit, 21454 Koop Drive, Suite 327, Mandeville, LA 70471 (985) 809-2989.

Complaints can be filed orally or in writing and should contain:

1. The name, address and telephone number of the individual or representative filing the complaint; complaints filed on behalf of third parties must describe or identify the alleged victims of the discrimination;
2. An explanation of the discrimination or denial of service;
3. The date the alleged violation(s) occurred; and
4. Signature of the person filing the complaint.

Complaints may be submitted to STAR Transit as follows:

1. Mail completed form to STAR Transit, Attn: Perry Felarise, Grants Project Manager-Transit, 21454 Koop Drive, Suite 327, Mandeville, LA 70471;
2. Complaints may also be faxed to (985) 898-5205;
3. In person at St. Tammany Parish Department of Grants, 21454 Koop Drive, Suite 327, Mandeville, LA 70471. Hours of Operation: Monday – Friday 8:00 AM – 4:30 PM.
4. The complaint may be submitted over the telephone by calling (985) 809-2989.

If assistance is needed in filling out the complaint form or information is needed in another language or other accessible format, call the St. Tammany Parish Grants Office at (985) 809-2989. The Grants Project Manager-Transit or a Grants Department staff member will offer instructions on how to file a written complaint or provide another accessible format as requested.

Once the complaint is received, the STAR Transit will review it to determine if our office has jurisdiction. The complainant will receive an acknowledgement letter informing him/her whether the complaint will be investigated by our office.

Eligibility

All complaints are considered formal and shall be investigated unless:

1. The complaint is withdrawn;
2. The complainant fails to provide required information after numerous requests;
3. The complaint is not filed within the 180-day time- frame of the incident or event;
4. The basis of the complaint is not covered by ADA Title II.

Complaint Review and Investigation

The STAR Transit has 60 days to investigate the complaint from the receipt of the complaint. If more information is needed to resolve the case, STAR Transit may contact the complainant. The complainant has 30 business days from the date of the letter to send requested information to the investigator assigned to the case. If the investigator is not contacted by the complainant or does not receive the additional information within 30 business days, the STAR Transit can administratively close the case. A case can be administratively closed also if the complainant no longer wishes to pursue their case.

If the decision is made not to investigate the complaint, the complainant will be notified in writing within 20 calendar days and the notification shall state the specific reasons the complaint was deemed to not have investigative merit.

The investigation process will include review of any and all relevant documents, reports, video, etc. As well, focused interviews with key contacts will be conducted as applicable to obtain facts and evidence regarding the allegations in the complaint. The investigator will elicit information from all contacts and witnesses that can provide firsthand information about the incident, event or action specified in the complaint. All relevant documentation, including interview notes and/or recordings will be dated. Additionally, a chronological contact sheet will be maintained in the case file throughout the investigation.

The investigation will address only those issues relevant to the allegations of the complaint and confidentiality will be maintained to the maximum extent feasible.

Resolution

After the investigator reviews the complaint, he/she will issue one of two letters to the complainant: a closure letter or a letter of finding. A closure letter summarizes the allegations and states that there was not a Title II violation and that the case will be closed. A letter of finding summarizes the allegations and the interviews regarding the alleged incident, and explains whether any disciplinary action, additional training of the staff member, or other action will occur. If the complainant wishes to appeal the decision, he/she has 60 days after the date of the letter or the letter of finding to do so.

A person may also file a complaint directly with the Federal Transit Administration, at FTA Office of Civil Rights, 1200 New Jersey Avenue SE, Washington, DC 20590

File Retention

The St. Tammany Parish Department of Grants retain copies of ADA related complaints for one year and a summary of all ADA related complaints for at least five years.

STAR TRANSIT----- ADA COMPLAINT FORM

Section I:
Name:
Address:
Telephone (Home/Cell):
Telephone (Work):
Email:

Do you require an accessible format?

Large Print

TTY/TDD

Audio Tape
Other
Section II:

Are you filing this complaint on your own behalf? *

Yes

No

*If you answered "yes" to this question, go to Section III.

If not, please supply the name and relationship of the person for whom you are filing:

Have you obtained permission from this person?

Yes

No

Section III:

If you believe you were discriminated against based on a disability, please provide as much detail concerning the alleged discrimination.

Date of Alleged Discrimination (Month, Day, Year): _____ Time: _____

Vehicle ID or Name: _____ Location: _____

Name(s) of Employee(s) involved: _____

Explain as clearly as possible what happened and why you believe you were discriminated against. If more space is needed, please use the back of this form.

Section IV

Have you previously filed an ADA complaint with STAR TRANSIT?	Yes	No
Contact name:	Telephone number:	
Section V		
Have you filed this complaint with any other federal, state, or local agency, or with any federal or state court?		
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No If		
yes, check all that apply:		
<input type="checkbox"/> Federal Agency: _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Federal Court: _____	
<input type="checkbox"/> State Agency: _____	<input type="checkbox"/> State Court: _____	
<input type="checkbox"/> Local Agency: _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Local Court: _____	
Please provide contact information for the person you spoke to at the above agency:		
Name:	Title:	
Agency:		
Address:		
Telephone:		

You may attach any written materials or other information that you think is relevant to your complaint. Your signature and date are required below:

Signature

Date

If you need assistance completing this form, please contact the St. Tammany Parish Department of Grants at: 985-809-2989 or email startransit@stpgov.org.

Please submit this form in person at the address below, or mail to:

STAR Transit
 Attn: Perry Felarise
 21454 Koop Drive, Suite 327
 Mandeville, LA



Reasonable Modification Policy

Background

On March 13, 2015, as part of the Federal Register Vol. 80, No. 49 (80FR13253), the Federal Department of Transportation (DOT) issued a Final Rule effecting 49 CFR Parts 27 and 37: Transportation for Individuals with Disabilities; Reasonable Modification of Policies and Practices. The purpose behind this final rule is:

“...specifically to provide that transportation entities are required to make reasonable modifications/accommodations to policies, practices, and procedures to avoid discrimination and ensure that their programs are accessible to individuals with disabilities.”

Policy

Star Transit is committed to providing equal access and opportunity to qualified individuals with disabilities in all programs, services, and activities. Star Transit recognizes that, in order to have equally effective opportunities and benefits, individuals with disabilities may need reasonable modifications to policies and procedures. Star Transit will adhere to all applicable federal and state laws, regulations, and guidelines with respect to providing reasonable modifications, as necessary, to afford equal access to programs for persons with disabilities. Star Transit does not discriminate on the basis of disability in admission to, participation in, or receipt of services and benefits under any transit program or activity. Star Transit will take appropriate steps to ensure that persons with disabilities have an equal opportunity to participate.

No qualified individual with a disability shall, by reason of such disability, be excluded from participation in or be denied the benefits of the services, programs, or activities of Star Transit, or be subject to discrimination by Star Transit.

Reasonable Modifications

A reasonable modification is a change or exception to a policy, practice, or procedure that allows disabled individuals to have equal access to programs, services, and activities. Star Transit will make reasonable modifications to policies, practices, and procedures when necessary to ensure access to transit services for qualified individuals with disabilities, unless:

1. Making the accommodation would fundamentally alter the nature of the public transportation service.
2. Making the accommodation would create a direct threat to the health or safety of other passengers.
3. The individual with a disability is able to fully use Star Transit's service without the accommodation being made.
4. Where granting the request would cause an undue financial and administrative burden.

Eligibility Criteria

An individual is eligible to be considered to receive a reasonable modification if that individual has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of the major life activities of such individual, a record of such impairment, or been regarded as having such impairment.

Requests for Reasonable Modifications

Star Transit provides information about how to make requests for reasonable modifications readily available to the public through its website and rider policy guidelines. Star Transit will follow these procedures when taking requests:

1. Individuals requesting modifications shall describe what they need in order to use the service.
2. Individuals requesting modifications are not required to use the term "reasonable modification" when making a request. Personnel at Star Transit will determine if the request represents a reasonable modification and proceed in accommodating the request accordingly.
3. Whenever feasible, Star Transit requests that individuals make such requests for modifications at the time of the trip reservation before Star Transit is expected to provide the modified service.
4. Where a request for modification cannot practicably be made and determined in advance (*e.g.*, because of a condition or barrier at the destination of which the individual with a disability was unaware until arriving), operating personnel shall make a determination of whether the modification should be provided at the time of the request. Operating personnel will consult with Star Transit management before making a determination to grant or deny the request.

Requests for accommodation may be submitted in any written format (i.e. letter, email). Alternative means of filing a request, such as personal interviews, phone calls, or taped requests, will be made available for persons with disabilities if unable to communicate their request in writing or upon request. The reasonable accommodation process begins as soon as the request for accommodation is made.

Interactive Process

When a request for accommodation is made, Star Transit will make every effort to engage in a good faith interactive process with the individual requesting an accommodation to determine what, if any accommodation shall be provided. Communication will be a priority throughout the entire process. That communication will include information about the request, the process for determining whether an accommodation will be provided, and the potential accommodations.

Time Frame for Processing Requests and Providing Reasonable Modification

Star Transit will process requests for reasonable accommodation and then provide accommodations, where appropriate, in as short a time frame as reasonably possible. Star Transit recognizes, however, the time necessary to process a request will depend on the nature of the accommodation(s) requested and whether it is necessary to obtain supporting information.

Granting a Reasonable Modification Request

As soon as Star Transit determines a reasonable accommodation will be provided, that decision shall be immediately communicated to the individual. This notice must be in writing in order to maintain the required information for reporting purposes. Upon request, alternative means of response will be provided in addition to the written response.

In choosing among alternatives for meeting nondiscrimination and accessibility requirements with respect to new, altered, or existing facilities, or designated or specified transportation services, Star Transit shall give priority to those methods that offer services, programs, and activities to qualified individuals with disabilities in the most integrated setting appropriate to the needs of individuals with disabilities.

Denying a Reasonable Modification Request

As soon as Star Transit determines a request for reasonable accommodation will be denied, Star Transit will communicate the basis for the decision in writing to the individual requesting the modification. The explanation for the denial will clearly state:

1. Specific reasons for the denial;
2. Any alternative accommodation that may create the same access to transit services as requested by the individual; and
3. The opportunity to file a complaint relative to the Star Transit's decision on the request.

Complaint Process

Any person who believes she or he has been discriminated against in obtaining a reasonable modification may file a formal complaint. Star Transit has a process for recording, investigating, and tracking complaints from qualified individuals. Complaints are taken by the St. Tammany Parish

Department of Grants via telephone at (985) 809-2989. In addition, individuals can file a complaint via email to startransit@stpgov.org. Alternative means of filing complaints, such as personal interviews or taped requests, will be made available for persons with disabilities if unable to communicate their request in writing or upon request.

Star Transit investigates complaints generally within 10 days after receipt. Once the complaint is received, the complainant will receive an acknowledgement of receipt typically within three days after the complaint was filed. If more information is needed to resolve the complaint, Star Transit may contact the complainant. If the information is not received within 30 days from the date of the original complaint, the complaint will be marked undetermined and closed.

After Star Transit investigates the complaint, a decision will be rendered in writing to the complainant. Star Transit will issue either a Letter of Closure or Letter of Finding.

1. *Letter of Finding* – This letter will summarize the complaint, any interviews conducted regarding the complaint, and explain what actions will be taken by Star Transit to address the complaint.
2. *Letter of Closure* – This letter will explain why Star Transit has determined the complaint does not merit accommodation under the Americans with Disabilities Act and that the complaint will be closed.

If the complainant disagrees with the decision of Star Transit, an opportunity to appeal the decision may be pursued provided Star Transit receives the notice of appeal within 21 days of the initial decision.

In the event of appeal, the complainant will be granted all due process, including the ability to present additional evidence, present the case in person during an appeal hearing, and to be represented by counsel.

Designated Employee

Star Transit's designated official responsible for processing reasonable modification requests and handling complaints is:

Perry Felarise, Grants Project Manager-Transit Transit
21454 Koop Drive, Room 327
Mandeville, LA 70471
startransit@stpgov.org

Record Retention

Star Transit will maintain all records related to reasonable modification requests and denials for at least three (3) years.

STAR TRANSIT----- TITLE VI COMPLAINT FORM

Have you filed a complaint with any other federal, state or local agencies? (Circle one) Yes / No If so, list agency / agencies and contact information below:								
Agency:	Contact Name:							
Street Address, City, State & Zip Code:	Phone:							
Agency:	Contact Name:							
Address, City, State & Zip Code:	Phone:							
I affirm that I have read the above charge and that it is true to the best of my knowledge, information and belief.	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 80%; padding: 5px;">Complainants Signature:</td> <td style="padding: 5px;">Date:</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;"> <hr style="border: 0; border-top: 1px solid black;"/> </td> <td style="padding: 5px;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;">Print or Type Name of Complainant</td> <td style="padding: 5px;"></td> </tr> </table>		Complainants Signature:	Date:	<hr style="border: 0; border-top: 1px solid black;"/>		Print or Type Name of Complainant	
Complainants Signature:	Date:							
<hr style="border: 0; border-top: 1px solid black;"/>								
Print or Type Name of Complainant								
Date Received: _____ Received By: _____								