

FTA's Reasonable Modification Rule

In March 2015, the Federal Transit Administration issued a final rule concerning reasonable modification of transportation policies and practices. The ruling mandates that all public transit providers must make reasonable modifications/accommodations by making changes to policies, practices and procedures if needed by an individual to participate in the recipient's program or activity. Modifications will be made to avoid discrimination on the basis of disability.

The following exceptions apply:

1. When the modification/accommodations would cause a direct threat to the health or safety of others;
2. Would result in a fundamental alteration of service;
3. Without the requested modification, the individual with a disability is able to fully use the entity's services, programs, or activities for their intended purpose.
4. Would result in an undue financial or administrative burden.

The reasonable modification rule has implications for every rural public transportation system. Disabled and elderly passengers can now request that you alter your standard operating procedures to ensure they have access to your services. For example, if your policy states that you provide curb to curb service a wheelchair bound person could request door to door service. If that request does not meet the exceptions as noted above, the accommodation should be approved.

To comply with the reasonable modification/accommodation rule, rural public transit systems receiving Section 5311 funds will have to implement the following procedures:

1. Make information about how to contact the transit system to make requests for reasonable modifications readily available to the public through the same means it uses to inform the public about its policies and practices.
2. The information shall be accessible to and usable by individuals with disabilities.
3. Designate a responsible employee to coordinate compliance.
4. Adopt procedures that incorporate due process standards and provide for the prompt and equitable resolution of requests for reasonable accommodation. A complaint appeals process must be implemented to allow passengers to appeal a denial for a reasonable modification of service.
5. Individuals requesting modifications shall describe what they need in order to use the service. The request does not need to include the term "reasonable modification."
6. When possible, the request and resulting modification shall be determined prior to providing transportation service. In some circumstances, transit drivers shall make the determination to provide or deny a service modification in the field. The driver may contact transit system management before making the determination.

Rider handbooks and policy/procedural manuals must be updated to indicate the transit system is in compliance with the requirements listed above. Template complaint and complaint appeal forms will be provided by NDOR.

Please note, in 49 CFR Part 37 Subsection 37.5(h) the regulation states the following:

It is not discrimination under this part for an entity to refuse to provide service to an individual with disabilities because that individual engages in violent, seriously disruptive, or illegal conduct or represents a direct threat to the health or safety of others. However, an entity shall not refuse to provide service to an individual with disabilities solely because the individual's disability results in appearance or involuntary behavior that may offend, annoy, or inconvenience employees of the entity or other persons.

If you have any questions, please contact Kari at 402-479-4694, kari.ruse@nebraska.gov.