

ADA & TITLE VI COMPLAINT PROCEDURE

Marcus Harrison, ADA & Title VI Coordinator
Big Bend Transit, Inc. • 2201 Eisenhower Street • Tallahassee, Florida 32302
Phone: 850-574-6266 • Email: mharrison@bigbendtransit.org

1. Purpose and Commitment

Big Bend Transit, Inc. (BBT) is committed to providing nondiscriminatory and accessible public transportation services. BBT prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and applicable federal transportation requirements.

BBT may administer Title VI and ADA complaints through a common civil rights complaint framework; however, ADA/disability complaints and Title VI complaints are identified, investigated, logged, and reported separately.

2. Title VI Nondiscrimination and Complaint Protections

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin in programs and activities receiving federal financial assistance. BBT will ensure that no person is excluded from participation in, denied the benefits of, or otherwise subjected to discrimination in its transportation programs, services, or activities on those grounds.

Title VI complaints may include, but are not limited to:

- Denial or limitation of transportation service because of race, color, or national origin;
- Providing different or inferior transportation service because of race, color, or national origin;
- Applying fares, eligibility requirements, service rules, policies, or procedures in a discriminatory manner;
- Discriminatory treatment involving routes, schedules, stops, facilities, vehicles, or other transportation services;
- Retaliation, intimidation, coercion, or adverse treatment because a person filed a Title VI complaint, participated in an investigation, or exercised a protected civil right; or
- Failure to take reasonable steps to provide meaningful access to individuals with limited English proficiency, when required.

Limited English Proficiency and Language Assistance

BBT takes reasonable steps to provide meaningful access to individuals with limited English proficiency. Language assistance may include interpretation, translated information, or other appropriate assistance. Individuals needing language assistance may contact the ADA & Title VI Coordinator.

Title VI Complaint Handling

Any person who believes they have been discriminated against by BBT on the basis of race, color, or national origin may file a Title VI complaint. Title VI complaints will be identified and tracked separately from ADA and general customer-service complaints, even when the same intake form or administrative system is used. BBT will promptly and fairly investigate the allegation using the intake, investigation, response, appeal, and recordkeeping procedures described below.

No Retaliation

BBT prohibits intimidation, coercion, retaliation, or other adverse treatment against a person because that person filed a discrimination complaint, participated in an investigation, provided information, or otherwise exercised rights protected by applicable civil rights laws.

3. ADA Nondiscrimination and Complaint Protections

BBT does not discriminate against qualified individuals with disabilities on the basis of disability in its transportation services, programs, facilities, or activities. BBT is committed to accessible transportation and to making reasonable modifications to policies, practices, and procedures when necessary to ensure access for individuals with disabilities.

ADA complaints may include, but are not limited to:

- Vehicle or facility accessibility;
- Wheelchair lifts, ramps, and securement;
- Mobility devices and service animals;
- Reasonable modifications to policies, practices, or procedures;
- Stop announcements and route identification;
- ADA complementary paratransit;
- Access to transportation programs, services, or facilities; or
- Unequal treatment or discrimination based on disability.

A complainant is not required to disclose a medical diagnosis or unnecessary medical information.

4. ADA & Title VI Coordinator

Marcus Harrison is designated as BBT's ADA & Title VI Coordinator and is responsible for coordinating complaint intake, investigation, documentation, response, recordkeeping, and related compliance activities.

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5. How to File a Complaint

A person who believes they have been subjected to discrimination based on disability, race, color, or national origin, or believes BBT has failed to comply with an applicable ADA transportation requirement, may file a complaint. Complaints should generally be submitted within 180 calendar days of the alleged incident.

Complaints may be submitted through any of the following methods:

- Mail: Marcus Harrison, ADA & Title VI Coordinator, Big Bend Transit, Inc., 2201 Eisenhower Street, Tallahassee, Florida 32302;
- Email: mharrison@bigbendtransit.org;
- Telephone: 850-574-6266;
- In person at a Big Bend Transit office during normal business hours; or
- Another accessible method when necessary because of a disability.

Use of the written complaint form is encouraged but is not required when a disability prevents a person from completing it. Staff will provide reasonable assistance and may document an oral complaint on the complainant's behalf. Alternative formats and communication assistance are available upon request.

6. Complaint Intake and Required Information

BBT will request sufficient information to understand and investigate the allegation, which may include:

- Complainant's name and available contact information and preferred contact method;
- Whether the allegation concerns Title VI, ADA/disability, or both;
- Date, time, route/service, vehicle, location, pickup/destination, and trip information;
- A description of what occurred;
- Names or descriptions of involved employees or other persons, if known;
- Witness information and supporting documents, if available;
- The requested resolution or corrective action; and
- Any alternative format, communication assistance, or disability-related accommodation needed during the process.

BBT will not require disclosure of a diagnosis or unnecessary medical information. If additional information is needed, the Coordinator or designee may contact the complainant. Lack of a particular piece of information will not automatically convert an otherwise identifiable civil rights allegation into a general comment.

7. Investigation Process

1. Date-stamp and log the complaint in the appropriate complaint tracking system.
2. Determine whether the allegations involve Title VI discrimination, disability discrimination, noncompliance with an ADA transportation requirement, or another customer-service matter.
3. Acknowledge receipt generally within 10 calendar days, using the complainant's preferred or otherwise appropriate accessible method.
4. Review the complaint for completeness and request additional relevant information when reasonably necessary.
5. Assign the complaint for investigation. When practicable, the investigator will not be the employee directly involved in the incident.
6. Collect and review relevant records, which may include schedules, dispatch records, vehicle information, video, policies, procedures, employee statements, and other documentation.
7. Interview employees, witnesses, contractors, or other involved persons when appropriate.
8. Determine whether the complaint is substantiated and identify any corrective or remedial action.
9. Document findings, disposition, corrective actions, and completion of corrective actions.
10. Provide the complainant with a written response, or a response in another appropriate accessible format, explaining the outcome and basis for the decision.

8. Response Timeframes

BBT will generally acknowledge a sufficiently identifiable complaint within 10 calendar days and will generally issue a final response within 30 calendar days after receipt of a sufficiently complete complaint. These are internal service standards, not limits on BBT's obligation to conduct a fair investigation. Additional time may be used when necessary because of complexity, availability of witnesses or records, or other circumstances. When practicable, BBT will notify the complainant of an extension.

9. Appeal / Reconsideration

A complainant who disagrees with BBT's determination may request reconsideration or an appeal. The request may be made in writing or through another accessible method. To the extent practicable, the appeal will be reviewed by an agency representative who was not responsible for the original determination. Appeal instructions will be included with BBT's final complaint response.

10. External Complaint Rights

Use of BBT's internal complaint procedure does not prevent a person from filing a complaint with the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), the U.S. Department of Transportation, or another appropriate federal or state agency. External agencies may have different filing requirements and deadlines.

11. Complaint Records and Separate Civil Rights Tracking

Title VI and ADA complaints may be processed within the same administrative system used for other civil rights or customer complaints, but Title VI complaints and ADA complaints will be coded, tracked, and reported separately from each other and from general customer-service matters.

BBT will maintain complaint records that include, as applicable:

- Date received;
- Nature and legal basis of the allegation;
- Service, route, vehicle, program, or facility involved;
- Assigned investigator;
- Status and disposition;
- Date of response;
- Corrective or remedial action; and
- Documentation showing completion of corrective action.

Records will be retained in accordance with applicable federal and state record-retention requirements.

12. Staff Training and Complaint Routing

Dispatchers, drivers, customer-service staff, supervisors, managers, and applicable contractors will be trained to recognize potential ADA and Title VI complaints and promptly forward them to the ADA & Title VI Coordinator. Staff will also be informed that accessible formats and reasonable assistance must be provided when requested.

13. Accessibility of Procedure and Materials

This procedure and the ADA & Title VI Civil Rights Complaint Form will be made available to the public, including on BBT's website. BBT will make reasonable efforts to ensure electronic documents are accessible and will provide alternative formats or communication assistance upon request.

14. Coordinator Contact

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