



**ALBANY TRANSIT
AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (ADA)
PARATRANSIT SERVICE & RIDER'S GUIDE**

THIS DOCUMENT IS AVAILABLE IN A LARGER FORMAT UPON REQUEST.

HOW TO RIDE ALBANY TRANSIT ADA PARATRANSIT

Albany Transit (Transit) fixed route bus service obliges hundreds of customers with disabilities and special needs. Customers with disabilities may purchase a monthly bus pass to utilize Transit fixed route bus service at a discounted rate. Customers with disabilities may also ride Transit fixed route service at a discounted rate.

Currently, the paratransit program provides approximately 1,500 scheduled passenger trips per month, using a variety of vehicles specially equipped to transport individuals who are unable to use the fixed route bus service due to a disability related impairment. Due to the nature of this service and the ADA requirements, it is very important that each customer carefully follow the guidelines in this booklet. Your cooperation and flexibility will allow ADA paratransit to serve you better and help make it possible for us to serve other eligible riders. This brochure is designed to "Help You Ride" ADA paratransit. In it you will find a wealth of information regarding policies and procedures that are pertinent to making your trip as convenient and hassle-free as possible. For information on eligibility, contact us at 229.446.2700.

AN OVERVIEW

ADA Paratransit is a shared ride, origin to destination, curb-to-curb transportation service. The program provides complementary service for eligible individuals who are unable to use the regular bus service (also called "fixed route") due to a disability related impairment(s). Albany Transit's fixed routes are operated with large buses on set routes. ADA Paratransit Service is only required to be provided up to $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile from the farthest point of each fixed route; however, Albany Transit extends the service area to encompass the jurisdictional limits of Albany, Georgia. Curb-to-curb is Transit's basic ADA paratransit service mode; however,

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provisions are established to ensure that each passenger gets from his or her point of origin to his or her destination point. To meet this origin to destination requirement, service may need to be provided to some individuals, at some locations, beyond the curb-to-curb service. If you presume the need for assistance beyond the curb, advance notice must be provided when you make your reservation. In the instance of providing assistance, Operators are not required to do any of the following:

1. Go beyond the doorway into a building to assist a passenger.
2. Leave the vehicle unattended or lose the ability to keep the vehicle under visual observation.
3. Take actions that would be clearly unsafe.
4. Assisting passengers on unsafe or steeply inclined mobility ramps or stairs.
5. Locking/unlocking doors or activating/deactivating house alarms.
6. Loading/unloading personal items (except as provided for in the "Customer's Responsibilities & Safety Tips" section this guide referencing, how many packages).

ELIGIBILITY PROCESS

Individuals who are interested in using the ADA paratransit service must apply through a written application process. Transit is responsible for determining eligibility for ADA paratransit service. Paratransit has a two-year (2) certification period. ADA paratransit eligibility and recertification is not automatic. ADA Paratransit service is provided to: "Any individual with a disability who is unable, as the result of a physical or mental impairment (including a vision impairment), and without the assistance of another individual (except the operator of a wheelchair lift or other boarding assistance device), to board, ride, or disembark from any vehicle on the system which is readily accessible to and usable by individuals with disabilities."

1. ADA Paratransit Application - Applications are available for pickup at the Transit Dispatch Office at 712 Flint Avenue. The application is also available to download on the Transit webpage at www.albany.ga.us. The application can also be mailed upon request. Related materials are available in all accessible formats (large print, Braille, and audio tape).

2. Categories of ADA Paratransit Eligibility - ADA list three types of individuals with disabilities who are eligible for ADA complementary paratransit. In addition, there are three categories of eligibility that the transit industry uses to classify riders. The following individuals with disabilities are eligible for ADA complementary paratransit:

- A. Any individual who, as the result of a physical or mental disability, is unable to board, ride, or disembark from any accessible vehicle in the fixed route system without the assistance of another individual (excluding the operator). This individual is unable to independently navigate the system.

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- B. Any individual with a disability who needs the assistance of a wheelchair lift or other boarding assistance device; however, no accessible vehicle is available on the fixed route at that time.
- C. Any individual who has a specific disability related condition which prevents the individual from traveling to a boarding location or from a disembarking location associated with the fixed route. This individual is unable to get to or from his transit stop or station because of his disability or his disability prevents him from negotiating environmental barriers.

The application process is based on the evaluation of the applicant's functional ability and may include an interview with the Transit Eligibility Coordinator. This process is not based on medical or diagnostic criteria. In other words, it doesn't matter what your diagnosis is, it matters what your functional ability is. Once Transit has determined that an individual is eligible, a rider's eligibility can be classified in one of three (3) ways:

1. Unconditional – the rider needs ADA paratransit for all trips or "ADA Paratransit Eligible".
2. Conditional – the rider needs ADA paratransit for some trips but can use fixed route service for other trips or "ADA *conditional* Paratransit Eligible".
3. Temporary – eligibility is short-term for the length of time the rider is unable to use fixed route.

Eligibility may be unconditional or conditional depending on circumstances. If Transit determines that an individual is "Not Eligible" for ADA paratransit services, the applicant will receive a letter of denial with an explanation of reasons for the finding of "Not Eligible". The letter of denial will be accompanied with instructions on filing an administrative appeal if desired.

3. Presumptive Eligibility – Transit will process applications within 21 days of receipt of a completed application. Applicants whose applications are not processed within this 21 day period will be granted presumptive eligibility. This means the applicant can start using the ADA paratransit service until the Transit makes a determination.

APPEALS PROCESS

Transit has established an administrative appeals process through which individuals can obtain review of their eligibility determination. Transit requires that an appeal be filed within 60 days of the denial. As noted above, if an individual has been determined "Not Eligible" for Transit ADA paratransit service, the letter of denial will include instructions on filing an appeal.

The applicant will be allowed to present evidence and arguments in person and/or in writing to the appeals board. The appeals board will be comprised of five (5) persons not involved in the initial decision to deny eligibility and will be appointed by the Transportation Director. Written notification of the appeals board decision shall include reasons for its finding and shall be tendered to the appellant in the appropriate accessible format. The appeals board decision should be made within 30 days of the completion of the appeals process. If the decision is not made within 30 days, the individual must be provided service beginning the 31st day, unless and until an adverse decision is rendered on his appeal.

CUSTOMER SERVICE HOURS

Reservations can be made between 8:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m., Monday –Friday, 8:00am- 2:00pm Saturday. The cut-off for next day reservations is 4:00 p.m. the business day before. If you need to make an appointment on Sunday for the following Monday, you may call 229.446.2700 (on Sunday prior to 5:00 p.m.) and leave a voice message. When your message is received on Monday morning, accommodations will be made to add you to the schedule if available.

OPERATIONAL HOURS

ADA paratransit services are available any time the public bus system is in operation, generally 6:15 a.m. to 6:15 p.m.

MAKING A RESERVATION

If you are in an emergency situation, please call 911. ADA paratransit cannot provide service or assume liability if you are in a distress situation. Customers may schedule up to three (3) round-trips within one (1) phone call. When you call, please have the following information ready:

- Your first and last name
- Date when you want to travel
- Your telephone number
- Where you want to go: number, street, apartment number, city, zip code
- Your requested pickup or drop off time
- Your requested return time if you want a round trip
- If you will be bringing a service animal
- If you will be accompanied by a personal care attendant (PCA) and/or companion (including children)
- Any other information the Operator should know to assist with your travel needs

Reservations staff will give you a “be ready” pick-up time. You can expect to be picked up within a 1-hour window of your scheduled pickup time. Be ready to board the vehicle up to 30

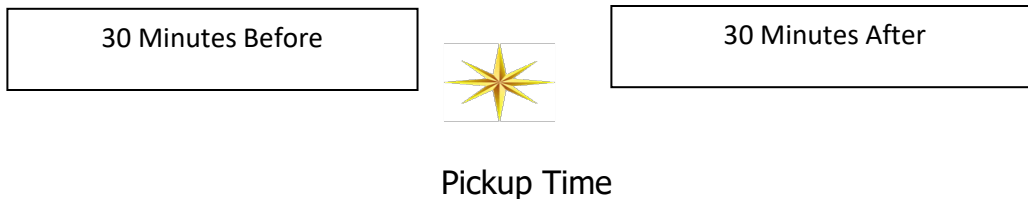
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minutes prior to your pick-up time, and keep in mind, the operator may arrive up to 30 minutes after the pick-up time and still be considered on time. To schedule your reservation, call 229.446.2700.

The ride time on the vehicle is a direct result of:

- The distance you are traveling – longer distances will require more ride time.
- The time of day you are traveling – peak traffic times and the more people requesting to travel at the same time you request may result in a longer ride time.
- Inclement weather – rain will decrease the speed of our vehicles as well as other vehicles traveling over public roadways and will result in a longer ride time.
- Picking up and dropping off other passengers – our service is a shared ride system.

Other passengers will be picked up and dropped off along the way to your destination and may increase your ride time. You should plan to be on the vehicle for a minimum of thirty (30) minutes for any trip and a maximum of twice that of a fixed route trip (up to 60 minutes). When you schedule your "originating" trip, you must also schedule your "return" trip, if you need one. Be sure to schedule it late enough in case your appointment runs late. If you don't schedule a return trip in advance, you may not get a return trip. You may be asked to change your requested pickup time to accommodate your request for a reservation. The ADA allows us to negotiate a revised pickup with you that may be up to one hour before or one hour after your requested pickup time.



You will not be considered a "no-show" if you refuse to board a vehicle that arrives later than the one-hour window.

LATENESS AND NO-SHOWS

Because you will be sharing your ride, it is important that you are ready to board when your vehicle arrives. ADA Paratransit Operator will wait only five (5) minutes upon arrival to your point of origin within the one-hour window of your scheduled pick up time. There are other customers either on board or waiting for their scheduled ride and if you do not board the vehicle within the 5-minute window, you will be marked as a no-show. If a vehicle arrives to pick you up and you are not there you will also be marked as a no-show.

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If you are a no-show for a trip and we are unable to contact you, any subsequent trips scheduled for the same day will be canceled. If you decide not to ride with us, it is very important that you cancel your trip at least one (1) hour before your scheduled pick-up time. If this is not your first occurrence, you may receive a letter of warning or notice of suspension. You may appeal this process if you have information that is contrary to that noted above.

TIP: When you are making a reservation, you must tell the reservationist exactly where you will be waiting. However, at larger facilities, we may tell you to wait in a common pick-up area that has been pre-arranged with the facility. The operator will look for you in the area you tell the reservationist you will be waiting. Do not leave the area as you might miss your ride. You will be marked as a no-show if any of the following conditions occur:

- If you do not board the vehicle within the five (5) minute window of the vehicle arriving at your point of origin and the Operator has arrived within the one-hour window of your scheduled pick up time,
- If you are not at your point of origin when the vehicle arrives, or
- If you did not cancel at least one (1) hour before your scheduled pick-up time.

NO-SHOW POLICY

Transit understands that riders may sometimes miss scheduled rides or forget to cancel rides they no longer need. Transit also understands that riders may sometimes miss scheduled trips or be unable to cancel trips in a timely way for reasons that are beyond their control. However, repeatedly missing scheduled trips can lead to suspension of service. A no-show occurs when a rider fails to appear to board the vehicle for a schedule trip when the driver arrives at the scheduled pickup location within the pickup window and the driver waits at least 5 minutes.

To avoid receiving a no-show, we ask that you contact us at least one (1) hour prior to your scheduled pick-up time to say that you will not be using your reservation. Doing so allows ADA paratransit to provide quality service. You may contact us to cancel your reservation 24-hours a day, 7-days a week at 229.446.2700. Automated recorder is available after operating hours.

Transit does not count as no-shows or late cancellations any missed trips due to our error, such as:

- Trips placed on the schedule in error
- Pickups scheduled at the wrong pickup location
- Driving arriving and departing before the pickup window begins
- Driving arriving late (after the end of the pickup window)
- Drivers arriving within the pickup window, but departing without waiting the required 5 minutes

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Transit does not count as no-shows or late cancellations situations beyond a rider's control that prevent the rider from notifying us that the trip cannot be taken, such as:

- Medical emergency
- Family emergency
- Sudden illness or change in condition
- Appointment that run unexpectedly late without sufficient notice

Riders should contact Transit Dispatch, at 229.446.2700, when experiencing no-shows or late cancellations due to circumstances beyond their control.

When a rider is a no-show for one trip, all subsequent trips on that day remain on the schedule unless the rider specifically cancels the trips. To avoid multiple no-shows on the same day, riders are strongly encouraged to cancel any subsequent trips they no longer need that day.

Each verified no-show or late cancellation consistent with the above definitions count as **1** penalty. Riders will be subject to suspension after meeting all of the following conditions:

- Accumulate **5** penalty points in one calendar month
- Have booked at least **5** trips that month
- Have no-showed or late cancelled at least **10%** of those trips

A rider will be subject to suspension only if both the minimum number of trips booked and minimum number of penalty points are reached during the calendar month. Transit will notify riders by telephone after they have accumulated **3** penalty points and would be subject to suspension should they accumulate **2** additional penalty points that month consistent with the criteria listed in this section of the policy above.

All suspension notices include a copy of this policy, information on disputing no-show or late cancellations, and how to appeal suspensions.

Suspensions begin on Mondays. The 1st violation in a calendar year triggers a warning letter but no suspension. Subsequent violations result in the following suspensions:

- 2nd violation: 5-day suspension
- 3rd and subsequent violations: 10-day suspension

COMPANION AND PERSONAL CARE ASSISTANT (PCA)

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As a certified rider you may arrange to bring one (1) companion along on each ride for the same fare that you would pay. You may add extra fare-paying companions to your trip only on a "space available basis".

A Personal Care Attendant (PCA) is someone whose assistance you must have in order to ride ADA paratransit. As a certified rider needing assistance, the PCA may ride with you at no charge. Your PCA and companion may both ride with you on the same trip. When you are making reservations for your ride, please tell the dispatcher if a companion or PCA will be riding with you.

VISITORS

Transit is required to provide services to visitors (for up to 21 days per year) who are able to present documentation that they are ADA paratransit eligible. If you are ADA paratransit eligible in your home community, your ADA paratransit service provider should make available to you documentation of your eligibility. That documentation must be provided to Transit and is sufficient for receiving services while you are visiting.

FARES

The operator will collect the fare of \$2.50 per trip when you board the vehicle. You must have exact change; operators do not carry money and will not be able to make change. Operators do not accept tips. Please notify Transit if any operator asks for or accepts a tip.

STANDING ORDER OR SUBSCRIPTION SERVICE

Standing Order or Subscription services are not offered at this time. For more information, please call out Dispatch office at 229.446.2700.

HOLIDAY SERVICE

Be advised there are some holidays that fixed-route and ADA paratransit do no provide service.

- | | | | |
|----------------|------------------------|---------------|------------------|
| New Year’s Day | Martin Luther King Day | Memorial Day | Independence Day |
| Labor Day | Thanksgiving Day | Christmas Day | |

CANCELLATIONS

ADA paratransit is a "shared ride" system that needs everyone's cooperation to make it run smoothly. To cancel trips, call 229.446.2700 and speak with a dispatcher. Cancellations can be left on an automated recorder that is turned on 24 hours a day. If you must cancel your reservation, please remember to cancel at least one hour before your pickup time. This will help free up space for others to ride and keep program costs down.

CHANGING RETURN TIMES

Because so many people rely on this service, changes in the scheduled return time will be strictly limited. If you are ready to return earlier than originally scheduled, you may call and ask for an early pick-up. ADA paratransit will do what we can to accommodate this request, but we are unable to guarantee that we will be able to honor an "early pick up" request.

WILL-CALL RETURN TRIPS

Will-Call Return Trips are available, but will be limited and monitored. Will-Call Return Trips are for customers who have scheduled appointments and are really unsure of their return time. The window for will call trip pickup or will call response time is 0 to 60 minutes (0/60+).

An example of a will-call return trip (e.g. customer is finally seen by the doctor and is ready to be picked up): The customer calls 229.446.2700 to let the dispatch office know that they are ready for their return trip. Dispatch will record this request on a will-call log sheet and announce to the ADA paratransit operators that you are ready for pick up. Will-call return trips will be worked within 0 to 60 minutes of a customer's call requesting a return pickup.

BOARDING EARLY

If your vehicle arrives before your scheduled pick-up window (e.g. vehicle arrives at 9:15 for a pick-up window that runs from 9:20-9:50) and you are ready, you may board immediately. If you are not ready and the vehicle arrives early, the Operator must wait five (5) minutes into the pick-up window before leaving. Using the example above, that means the Operator will stay until 9:25 before leaving.

LATE PICK-UPS

It can be frustrating if a vehicle is late picking you up for a scheduled appointment, or to return you home. Please wait at least 30 minutes past your scheduled pick-up time before calling our office. The Operator may arrive up to 30 minutes after the scheduled pick-up time and still be considered on time. Please remember the pick-up time is based on factors such as the time you need to be at your destination, traffic delays, inclement weather and multi-loading of other

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customers. You will not be considered a “no-show” if you refuse to board a vehicle that arrives later than the one-hour window.

CUSTOMER’S RESPONSIBILITIES & SAFETY TIPS

- Be ready to board the bus as early as 30 minutes prior to your scheduled pick up time.
- Wait in a safe, well-lit location.
- Choose a pick-up and drop-off location that allows the Operator not lose sight of his vehicle when assisting you to or from the door (if assistance is requested).
- Let the vehicle come to a complete stop before approaching.
- Allow the Operator to assist you in boarding the vehicle; ask for special assistance if you need it.
- All personal belongings are your responsibility.
- You must load and unload your own belongings (3 bag limit, no more than 20 pounds each).
- Bring a car seat for any children under the age of five (5) years old and make sure that it is used properly.
- Do not eat, drink or smoke in the vehicle, although we do encourage customers who will be away from home for an extended period of time to bring a snack, drink and medications with them.
- Do not use audio or video equipment that may distract the Operator’s attention.
- No disruptive behavior, you may risk suspension.
- No unscheduled stops.
- Proper dress is required, including shoes and shirts.
- No special requests for specific Operators or vehicles can be honored.
- Mandatory use of seat belt and shoulder harness while on board.

WHEELCHAIR CUSTOMERS

Per Section 37.3 of the DOT regulations implementing the ADA of 1990 (49 CFR Parts 27, 37, and 38) defines a wheelchair as 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. An electric scooter is considered a wheelchair as long as it meets the definition of “wheelchair” in Section 37.3 of the DOT ADA regulations. When you make your reservation, be sure to mention if you have difficulties walking, are using a mobility device or are using a wheelchair. Wheelchairs must be provided by the passenger.

AMBULATORY CUSTOMERS

Ambulatory customers may ride the lift if they request it.

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RAMP REQUIREMENTS

ADA regulations require that Ramps have a minimum design load of 600 pounds and that the ramp platform accommodate a wheelchair measuring 30" x 48". Our vehicles are equipped to transport "wheelchairs" which do not exceed 1000 pounds when occupied. An Operator may deny transportation if carrying the wheelchair and its occupant would be inconsistent with legitimate safety requirements, as when, for example, the wheelchair is so large it would block an aisle or would interfere with the safe evacuation of passengers in an emergency.

SEAT-BELT-USE POLICY

All passengers on ADA paratransit vehicles must wear seat belt and shoulder harness while onboard.

SERVICE ANIMALS

Service animals play an important role in ensuring the independence of individuals with disabilities, and it is Albany Transit's policy to welcome any service animal that is trained to assist an individual with a disability on fixed route buses, paratransit vehicles, and in Albany Transit public facilities.

In compliance with 49 CFR Part 37, the transit system allows trained service animals to accompany passengers with disabilities. The driver will not ask for proof of the qualifications of the animal but may ask what tasks the animal has been trained to perform. Albany Transit does not impose species or breed restrictions. However, any animal which is not under the passenger's control, or which becomes a direct threat to the health or safety of other passengers may be restricted from riding. Emotional support animals or "comfort animals" are not service animals within the context of the US DOT ADA regulations.

OXYGEN REQUIREMENT

Travel with oxygen equipment is permitted, but the equipment must be small enough so that the Operator does not have to assist with the loading and unloading of it. The safety and use of this equipment is the responsibility of the passenger.

TRANSIT OPERATORS

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Safe and nondiscriminatory transportation is the responsibility of Transit. Section 37.173 of the DOT ADA regulations require that transit operators are properly trained to assist and treat individuals with disabilities with sensitivity, and to operate vehicles and equipment safely. Transit asserts that all transit operators have been properly trained in all areas to include the use of accessibility equipment and to accommodate the different types of wheelchairs and mobility devices.

Operators are expected to:

- Be courteous.
- Drive safely.
- Wear a seat belt.
- Be properly uniformed.
- Make a good faith effort to locate a passenger.
- Securely tie down wheelchairs using 6-point securement.

Traffic delays, tight schedules, weather conditions, passengers running late and other factors can cause stressful situations that could affect the quality of service for ADA paratransit customers. If an Operator or passenger acts in an unreasonable manner (or contrary to our policies and procedures) the problem should be reported.

LOST ITEMS

If you have lost a personal item and believe it may be in an ADA paratransit vehicle, please call us. If the item is found, you may be asked to travel to a central pick-up point to retrieve it. Transit nor the Operator will be held responsible for any lost items.

CIRCUMSTANCES THAT ARE BEYOND YOUR CONTROL

Examples of situations not within the passenger's control may include but are not limited to:

- A sudden personal emergency.
- Sudden change or decline in health and/or illness.
- Late arrival of the ADA paratransit vehicle.
- Disruptive behavior caused by a disability.

If an investigation reveals your disruptive behavior is due to a disability and is beyond your control, your service may not be suspended. However, Transit may require you to travel with a

Personal Care Assistant (PCA). If your PCA cannot help you to control your behavior, and/or a safety problem continues to exist, your service may be discontinued.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

Transit welcomes your compliments, complaints, and suggestions. It has been our experience that most problems can be easily resolved. However, if you do not call and make us aware that you are having a problem, the problem may persist. Our entire staff wants to serve you as efficiently and professionally as possible. Our dispatch office is equipped with a computer system that tracks all of our rides. It is important to us that all of our riders have a pleasant experience on our system. We are committed to protecting the confidentiality of our riders. See below for an explanation of Transit's complaint resolution process.

COMPLAINT RESOLUTION

To file a complaint, please call 229.446.2700 and provide the following information:

- ♣ Your name, address and telephone number
- ♣ Date and time of the incident
- ♣ Details of the incident, along with the bus number if applicable

All complaints will be investigated and resolved within a timely manner. Please keep in mind that anonymous service complaints cannot receive responses.

HOW TO FILE A TITLE VI/ADA COMPLAINT

Transit is committed to ensuring that no person is excluded from participation in, or denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance on the grounds of race, color or national origin as protected by Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 as amended (*Title VI*). If you feel that you have been subjected to discrimination on the grounds of your race, color or national origin under Title VI, you may file a written complaint with:

Towanna Howard, Human Resources Deputy Director
222 Pine Ave, Suite 340
Albany, GA 317011
229-302-1546 TTY711
thoward@albanyga.gov

or

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Jason Tolbert, Transit Planner
712 Flint Ave.
Albany, GA 31701
229-302-1534 TTY 711
jtolbert@albanyga.gov

All complaints of discrimination on the basis of disability will be promptly and objectively investigated and forwarded to the Human Resources Deputy Director and Transit Planner and promptly and objectively investigated. Complaints are also being submitted to the GDOT.

Albany Transit will promptly communicate its response to the complaint allegations, including its reasons for the response, to the complainant. The response will be documented. Corrective or disciplinary action will be taken for behavior prohibited by this policy, up to and including termination of employment.

Documentation of each complaint will be kept on file for a minimum of one year, and a summary of all complaints will be kept for at least five years. This meets DOT regulations that require FTA grantees to maintain all complaints of noncompliance with 49 CFR Part 27 for one year, and a record of all such complaints, which is permitted to be in summary form, for five years.

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