



Agency Council on Coordinated Transportation

Customer Complaint Process Guidelines

The Agency Council on Coordinated Transportation (ACCT) has developed customer comment process guidelines for public transportation providers across Washington State.

The new guidelines offer an easy and accessible way for persons with special transportation needs to have their concerns addressed. This framework provides the necessary process for improving transportation for persons with special needs.

ACCT members representing the following groups took the lead on creating comment process guidelines for riders to use when communicating with providers:

- Developmental Disabilities Council
- Washington State Department of Transportation
- Washington State Transit Association
- Governor’s Committee on Disability Issues and Employment
- Community Transportation Association of the Northwest
- Consumers of public transportation

The 2007 Legislature revised the statute providing for the membership and responsibilities of ACCT. Among the new responsibilities was a requirement to “improve the service experienced by persons with special transportation needs”.

RCW 47.06B.030 (3) - To improve the service experienced by persons with special transportation needs, the council (ACCT) shall develop statewide guidelines for customer complaint processes so that information about policies regarding the complaint processes is available consistently and consumers are appropriately educated about available options. To be eligible for funding on or after January 1, 2008, organizations applying for state paratransit/special needs grants as described in section 226(1), chapter 370, Laws of 2006 must implement a process following the guidelines established by the council.



Governor Gregoire signs ACCT bill into law in 2007.



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Requirements of the Comment Process

It is the intent of the ACCT and its members to improve the experience of riders of public transportation and give them an easy and accessible way to comment on public transportation services. Therefore, the Council has adopted Customer Comment Process Guidelines for public transportation providers serving the citizens of Washington State. Any organization applying for state paratransit/special needs grants on or after January 1, 2008 must include the following general information:

1. A full **description of the options** available to persons of special needs for making comments or complaints about fixed route or demand responsive services
2. A complete **description of the educational or outreach** portion of the comment process.

Specifically, each agency shall provide the following with their application:

- A description of how the organization will address comments
- Copies of comment forms which are made available on buses and in public areas
- Any formally adopted policies related to the comment process, if applicable
- A list of the options for contacting transportation organizations, which shall include regular mail, email, phone, fax, and use accessible formats
- A description of the process that exists and how persons of special needs can access information about the comment process for either fixed route or demand responsive services
The description shall demonstrate:
 - The comment process is concise and easy to understand
 - It is clearly stated that retribution on commenters will not be tolerated
 - Information about the process is prominently located on the Web page, if available
- A description of when information is distributed, including but not limited to:
 - Registration for services
 - Re-evaluation for service
 - No less than every third year thereafter for active paratransit riders

Best Practices

While not included in the above requirements, the Council would like to recognize some best practices that are already used by some public transportation providers:

- Information is provided about how to make a complaint/comment and what will happen after a complaint or comment is made:
 - How long they should wait for a response
 - What options are available to a rider if they are dissatisfied with the response
 - Define which type of comments may not be responded to individually
- The results are monitored, measured, and information about system goals are communicated
- Comment contact information is printed on ID Cards/Passes

Washington State Department of Transportation staff will gather and publish other “Best Practices” to be made available to grant applicants. They will provide examples of well organized comment processes including board-adopted policies, performance measures using *Baldrige* criteria, forms, and contact information.

ACCT is a partnership of members from the legislature, state agencies, transportation providers and consumer advocates whose mission is to direct and promote activities that efficiently use all available state and community resources for special needs transportation across the state.