

**FORT BEND COUNTY**  
**PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION DEPARTMENT**

**Charter Service Policy**

*Effective October 1, 2014*

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FORT BEND COUNTY PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION DEPARTMENT (Fort Bend Transit) has developed a policy to provide charter services for Fort Bend County residents. This service is available to organizations within Fort Bend County that meet the eligibility criteria.

**A. Eligibility**

**Fort Bend Transit is federally funded and must adhere to the rules and regulations of the Federal Transportation Authority (FTA). Under Federal Charter Service Regulations Fort Bend Transit may provide charter service to qualified organizations.**

**1. Transportation of Government Officials**

*The specific trip purpose must be for official government business, which can include non-transit related purposes. This charter trip will require additional information for reporting purposes to Federal Transit Administration (FTA). Per FTA, Fort Bend Transit is allowed up to 80 hours cumulative of charter service for transportation of Government Officials per County Fiscal Year (October 1<sup>st</sup> – September 30<sup>th</sup>).*

**2. Qualified Human Service Organizations (QHSEO)**

*An organization may be required to be registered through the FTA website prior to contacting Fort Bend Transit. If an organization receives funding, directly or indirectly from the programs listed in Appendix A of the regulation (see attached), the organization is not required to register on the FTA's charter registration website. Otherwise, the organization is required to register. The organization must have completed the required registration for charter service eligibility. This registration process usually requires a minimum of ninety (90) days for completion. Per FTA, Fort Bend County Transit may provide charter service only if the organization is registered at least 60 days before the date of the request for service. Reservations will not be accepted until an organization has met the registration requirement of the FTA. The specific trip purpose for the organization must either be for educational or entertainment events/activities.*

**An organization can register at <http://www.fta.dot.gov/CharterRegistration>**

### **3. Elderly and/or Disabled Organizations**

*The specific trip purpose must be for educational or entertainment events/activities.*

### **4. Transportation of Employees, Contractors and Government Officials**

*Fort Bend Transit is allowed to transport their employees, other transit systems' employees, transit management officials, transit contractors and bidders, government officials and official guests to or from transit facilities or projects within its geographic service area for the purpose of conducting oversight functions such as inspection, evaluation, or review.*

## **B. Reservations**

1. Reservations will be accepted up to ninety (90) business days in advance of the trip request, but no later than fifteen (15) business days prior to the requested date of the charter trip. Reservations will be accepted Monday - Friday (excluding County holidays) between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m.
2. A signed contract for service from the organization requesting service must be in place before reservations will be accepted. The contract must be executed by the organization's representative with authority to contract for services and expend organization's funds. The contract document will define service dates, service times, and itineraries, pick up and drop off locations.
3. When making a reservation, the organization must provide Fort Bend Transit with contact information and a name for a primary contact person who will be in attendance for the entire trip. This individual will be identified to the driver(s) assigned as the individual authorized to make decisions for the entire group during the service day.
4. It is the policy of Fort Bend Transit to only accept Charter reservations for educational or entertainment trips for organizations that qualify. Charters will be offered seven (7) days a week. First pick-ups may begin as early as 8:00 a.m. and last drop offs must be completed before midnight.

## **C. Availability**

1. An organization is allowed two (2) trips per County Fiscal Year (**October 1 through September 30.**)
2. A maximum of sixty-four (64) passengers is allowed for one trip, which would consist of two (2) buses with a capacity of thirty-two (32) passengers each. If additional buses are requested and available then additional buses may be utilized.
3. Services offered Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. are subject to fleet availability. Fort Bend Transit will determine which vehicles will be used

considering the size of the group, the activity of the group, the need for specially equipped buses, and/or fleet availability.

#### **D. Fees**

1. Charter trips are available at a flat rate of \$25.00 per hour, per vehicle, with a two-hour minimum.
2. Changes to itineraries or cancellations made within three (3) business days of the requested trip will result in a change/cancellation fee of twenty percent (20%) of the total estimated cost of the charter. That amount will be deducted from the deposit made to secure the date and any remaining deposit funds will be refunded if applicable. All itinerary changes or cancellations must be received in writing (paper or electronic) with the signature of the authorized organization representative.
3. The organization chartering the trip will be responsible for any damages incurred during the trip which include, but not limited to, vandalism, gross littering, or any visible damages to the bus. Fees can range from a minimum of \$25.00 up to a reasonable amount determined by the Advisory Committee based on the damages.

#### **E. Payment**

1. A deposit equal to 50% of the total estimated cost for the planned services is required at contract execution. The remaining balance will be due within fifteen (15) business days of organization's receipt of final invoice. Payments can be made only with an organization check. Cash payments will NOT be accepted.

#### **F. Service Areas**

1. Charter trips must originate and end within Fort Bend County. No trips will be provided outside of the boundaries of Fort Bend County, except under special exceptions. Exceptions must be approved by the Advisory Committee.

#### **G. Policies**

1. **All passengers must follow and adhere to vehicle safety rules.**
2. Drivers are instructed to wait for passengers for up to thirty (30) minutes from the pick-up time listed on the contract. After 30 minutes of waiting for the passengers, dispatch will contact the group's primary contact person.
3. Unscheduled stops will be made at the discretion of the driver in consultation with the designated organization's primary contact person.


4. No smoking, alcoholic beverages or illegal drugs will be permitted on any bus at any time.
  5. Passengers are allowed to bring soft drinks, juices, water, and light snacks on board vehicles and are responsible for securing such items while the vehicle is moving. All waste materials must be held by the passengers in a secured location until they can be disposed of properly.
  6. Ice chests are allowed on-board providing that they can be properly secured when the vehicle is moving. Ice chests must be removed if the driver determines that they cannot be transported securely and safely.
  7. The driver reserves the right at his or her sole discretion to request law enforcement or emergency medical assistance.
  8. Although Fort Bend Transit will make every effort to meet the terms of a contract, there may be instances, due to unforeseen circumstances that make it necessary to substitute the type of bus reserved with a comparable and equivalent vehicle.
  9. Fort Bend Transit reserves the right to cancel the contract or trip, with advance notice whenever possible, due to safety concerns associated with severe weather or other emergencies.
  10. **The driver reserves the right to request that any passenger exit the bus if:**
    - a. The passenger smokes, possesses alcoholic beverages or has illegal drugs.
    - b. The Guidelines in accordance with this policy are violated.
    - c. Any activity occurs that limits the driver's ability to drive safely or affects the safety of passengers.
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### **Definitions:**

1. **Charter service-** *Transportation provided by a recipient at the request of a third party for the exclusive use of a bus or van for a negotiated price. An affiliated group of people and/or an organization traveling to and from a specific location on a bus or buses that do not allow other passengers not part of the groups affiliation to travel along with the group.*
2. **Transportation of Government Officials-** *People elected or appointed to administer a government.*
3. **Elderly and/or Disabled Organizations-** *A group or organization of individuals that are advanced age or individuals with disabilities. Elderly individual includes, at a minimum, all persons that are sixty (60) years or over.*
4. **Qualified Human Service Organizations (QHSEO)-** *An organization that serves persons who qualify for human service or transportation related programs or services due to disability, low income or advanced age.*
5. **Reservation-** *An act of reserving a charter for pick up and drop off locations within the charter boundaries and service areas.*

6. *Special Exceptions - Include but are not limited to trips into Houston and ending in downtown Houston and trips into the Museum District of Houston.*
7. *Advisory Committee – The Advisory Committee is headed by the Fort Bend County Public Transportation Department and consists of one representative from each of the County Commissioner's Office, a representative from the County Judge's Office and several Fort Bend County community representatives.*

**FORT BEND COUNTY PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION DEPARTMENT**



County Judge Signature

Robert E. Hebert, County Judge

Printed Name and Title

9-23-14

Date

CC Approved Date:

9-23-14

Revised Date: