

**STORAGE NAME:** h1951.sa.doc  
**DATE:** April 16, 2001

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
COMMITTEE ON  
STATE ADMINISTRATION  
ANALYSIS**

**BILL #:** HB 1951 (PCB SA 01-17)  
**RELATING TO:** Public Records Exemption to an Individual's Health or Eligibility for Paratransit Services Under Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act  
**SPONSOR(S):** Committee on State Administration and Representative(s) Brummer  
**TIED BILL(S):** None  
**ORIGINATING COMMITTEE(S)/COUNCIL(S)/COMMITTEE(S) OF REFERENCE:**  
(1) STATE ADMINISTRATION YEAS 4 NAYS 0  
(2)  
(3)  
(4)  
(5)

---

I. SUMMARY:

Twenty-seven county governments provide ADA (Americans with Disability Act) Paratransit Services. In order to assure proper eligibility for paratransit services, an applicant must complete an application, which requires disclosure of medical and disability information, one's social security number, and additional identifying information. Currently, there is not a public records exemption for this information.

This bill creates a public records exemption for all personal identifying information that is contained in records relating to an individual's health or eligibility for paratransit services under Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act and that is made or received by local government entities or their service providers. This bill allows release of such identifying information

- With the express written consent of the individual or the individual's legally authorized representative;
- In a medical emergency, but only to the extent necessary to protect the health or life of the individual; or
- By order of a court upon a showing of good cause.

This bill provides a public necessity statement as is required by the Florida Constitution.

This bill does not appear to have a fiscal impact on state or local governments.

II. SUBSTANTIVE ANALYSIS:

A. DOES THE BILL SUPPORT THE FOLLOWING PRINCIPLES:

- |                                   |                              |                             |   |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|---|
| 1. <u>Less Government</u>         | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> | N/A <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. <u>Lower Taxes</u>             | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> | N/A <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. <u>Individual Freedom</u>      | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> | N/A <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. <u>Personal Responsibility</u> | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> | N/A <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. <u>Family Empowerment</u>      | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> | N/A <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

For any principle that received a "no" above, please explain:

B. PRESENT SITUATION:

**Public Records Law**

Florida Constitution

Article I, s. 24(a), Florida Constitution, expresses Florida's public policy regarding access to government records as follows:

Every person has the right to inspect or copy any public records made or received in connection with the official business of any public body, officer, or employee of the state, or persons acting on their behalf, except with respect to records exempted pursuant to this section or specifically made confidential by this Constitution. This section specifically includes the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of government and each agency or department created thereunder; counties, municipalities, and districts; and each constitutional officer, board, and commission, or entity created pursuant to law or this Constitution.

Article I, s. 24(c), Florida Constitution, does, however, permit the Legislature to provide by general law for the exemption of records from the requirements of s. 24. The general law must state with specificity the public necessity justifying the exemption (public necessity statement) and must be no broader than necessary to accomplish its purpose.

Florida Statutes

Public policy regarding access to government records is also addressed in the Florida Statutes. Section 119.07(1)(a), F.S., provides:

Every person who has custody of a public record shall permit the record to be inspected and examined by any person desiring to do so, at a reasonable time, under reasonable conditions, and under supervision by the custodian of the public record or the custodian's designee.

### Open Government Sunset Review Act of 1995

Section 119.15, F.S., the Open Government Sunset Review Act of 1995, provides that an exemption may be created or maintained only if it serves an identifiable public purpose and may be no broader than is necessary to meet the public purpose it serves. An identifiable public purpose is served if the exemption meets one of the following purposes, and the Legislature finds that the purpose is sufficiently compelling to override the strong public policy of open government and cannot be accomplished without the exemption:

1. Allows the state or its political subdivisions to effectively and efficiently administer a governmental program, which administration would be significantly impaired without the exemption;
2. Protects information of a sensitive personal nature concerning individuals, the release of which information would be defamatory to such individuals or cause unwarranted damage to the good name or reputation of such individuals or would jeopardize the safety of such individuals. However, in exemptions under this subparagraph, only information that would identify the individuals may be exempted; or
3. Protects information of a confidential nature concerning entities, including, but not limited to, a formula, pattern, device, combination of devices, or compilation of information which is used to protect or further a business advantage over those who do not know or use it, the disclosure of which information would injure the affected entity in the marketplace.

### **ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) Paratransit Services**

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 requires that public entities, which operate non-commuter fixed route transportation services, also provide complementary paratransit<sup>1</sup> service for individuals unable to use the fixed route system.<sup>2</sup> The U.S. Department of Transportation issued regulations that specify to whom and under what circumstances this service is to be provided. In addition, the regulations require public entities which are subject to the complimentary paratransit requirements to develop and administer a process for determining if individuals who request service meet the regulatory criteria for eligibility.<sup>3</sup>

Eligibility for complementary paratransit service is directly related to the inability of a person with a disability to use the existing fixed route service. The regulations describe three specific circumstances under which a person would be considered ADA paratransit eligible. The three categories of eligibility are

- 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

---

<sup>1</sup> Section 427.011(9), F.S., defines "paratransit" as "those elements of public transit, which provide service between specific origins and destinations selected by the individual user with such service being provided at a time that is agreed upon by the user and provider of the service." Taxis, limousines, buses, and other demand-responsive operations provide paratransit service.

<sup>2</sup> ADA Paratransit Eligibility Manual – Final Report, September 1993.

<sup>3</sup> *Id.*

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.

- Any individual with a disability who needs the assistance of a wheelchair lift or other boarding assistance device and is able, with such assistance, to board, ride, and disembark from any vehicle which is readily accessible to and usable by individuals with disabilities if the individual wants to travel on a route of the system during the hours of operation of the system at a time, or within a reasonable period of such time, when such a vehicle is not being used to provide designated public transportation on the route.
- Any individual with a disability who has a specific impairment-related condition that prevents such individual from traveling to a boarding location or from a disembarking location on such system.<sup>4</sup>

In Florida, 27 county governments provide ADA Paratransit Services. In order to assure proper eligibility, an applicant must complete an application, which requires medical and disability information, one's social security number, and additional identifying information.<sup>5</sup> Currently, there is not a public records exemption for this information.

#### C. EFFECT OF PROPOSED CHANGES:

This bill amends s. 119.07(3), F.S., to create a public records exemption for

[a]ll personal identifying information that is contained in records relating to an individual's health or eligibility for paratransit services under Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act and that is made or received by local government entities or their service providers.

This bill provides for exceptions to this exemption. The information can be released:

- With the express written consent of the individual or the individual's legally authorized representative;
- In a medical emergency, but only to the extent necessary to protect the health or life of the individual; or
- By order of a court upon a showing of good cause.

The stated public purpose served by this public records exemption is to protect health related information that is of a sensitive personal nature concerning certain individuals. In addition, the public necessity statement, as required by Art. I, s. 24 of the Florida Constitution, states that an

---

<sup>4</sup> ADA Paratransit Eligibility Manual – Final Report, September 1993, chapter 1.

<sup>5</sup> Handout from the Department of Management Services, Americans with Disability Act / Paratransit Services Public Records Exemption, March 2001.

individual's expectation and right to privacy in all matters relating to his or her personal health and eligibility for paratransit services necessitates this exemption.

This exemption is made subject to the Open Government Sunset Review Act of 1995 and will repeal on October 2, 2006, unless reviewed and saved from repeal through reenactment by the Legislature.

D. SECTION-BY-SECTION ANALYSIS:

See "Effect of Proposed Changes."

III. FISCAL ANALYSIS & ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT:

A. FISCAL IMPACT ON STATE GOVERNMENT:

1. Revenues:

None.

2. Expenditures:

None.

B. FISCAL IMPACT ON LOCAL GOVERNMENTS:

1. Revenues:

None.

2. Expenditures:

None.

C. DIRECT ECONOMIC IMPACT ON PRIVATE SECTOR:

None.

D. FISCAL COMMENTS:

None.

IV. CONSEQUENCES OF ARTICLE VII, SECTION 18 OF THE FLORIDA CONSTITUTION:

A. APPLICABILITY OF THE MANDATES PROVISION:

This bill does not require counties or municipalities to spend funds or to take action requiring the expenditure of funds.

B. REDUCTION OF REVENUE RAISING AUTHORITY:

This bill does not reduce the authority that counties or municipalities have to raise revenues in the aggregate.

C. REDUCTION OF STATE TAX SHARED WITH COUNTIES AND MUNICIPALITIES:

This bill does not reduce the percentage of a state tax shared with counties or municipalities.

V. COMMENTS:

A. CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES:

None.

B. RULE-MAKING AUTHORITY:

None.

C. OTHER COMMENTS:

None.

VI. AMENDMENTS OR COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE CHANGES:

None.

VII. SIGNATURES:

COMMITTEE ON STATE ADMINISTRATION:

Prepared by:

Staff Director:

---

Heather A. Williamson, M.S.W.

---

J. Marleen Ahearn, Ph.D., J.D.