

Introduction

Consistent with the premise that government at all levels exists first and foremost to serve the interests of the people, it is the mission and intent of Southwest Ohio Regional Transit Authority (SORTA) to at all times fully comply with Ohio's Public Records Act (Ohio Revised Code §149.43).

Public Records Policy

1.0 Public Records Defined

1.1 All records kept by SORTA are public unless they are exempt from disclosure under state or federal law. In accordance with the Ohio Revised Code, SORTA defines public records as any document in any format— paper, electronic (including, but not limited to, business e-mail) – that is created, received by, or comes under the jurisdiction of SORTA and documents the organization, functions, policies, decisions, procedures, operations, or other activities of the agency.

2.0 Record Inspection

2.1 Public records are available for inspection during regular business hours, with the exception of published holidays. Public records will be made available for inspection promptly. Requestors are not required to make an appointment in advance to inspect public records; however, SORTA recommends they do so to expedite the inspection process and avoid unnecessary delays. Copies of public records will be made available within a reasonable period of time. "Prompt" and "reasonable" take into account the volume of records requested; the proximity of the location where the records are stored; and the necessity for any legal review and redaction of the records requested.

3.0 Handling Requests

3.1 All requests for public records must be directed to:

SORTA
Attn: Public Records Officer
525 Vine Street, Suite 500
Cincinnati, OH 45202

Request can also be submitted electronically to:

<https://sorta-oh.nextrequest.com/requests/new>

No specific language is required to make a request for public records. However, the requestor must at least identify the records requested with sufficient clarity to allow SORTA to identify, retrieve, and review the records. If it is not clear what records are being sought, SORTA will contact the requestor for clarification,

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inform the requestor of the manner in which SORTA keeps its public records, and allow the requestor to revise the request.

The requestor does not have to put a records request in writing, and does not have to provide his or her identity or the intended use of the requested public record. However, the law does permit SORTA to ask for a written request, the requestor's identity, and/or the intended use of the information requested, if (1) the information would benefit the requestor by enhancing SORTA's ability to identify, locate, or deliver the public records that have been requested; and (2) SORTA has informed the requestor that a written request is not required and that the requestor may decline to reveal the requestor's identity or intended use.

In processing the request, SORTA does not have an obligation to create new records or perform new analysis of existing information. Although not required by law, SORTA may accommodate the requestor by generating new records when it makes sense and is practical under the circumstances.

In processing a request for inspection of a public record, an office employee must accompany the requester during inspection to make certain original records are not taken or altered.

4.0 Denial of Requests

4.1 If the requestor makes an ambiguous or overly broad request or has difficulty in making a request for public records, the request may be denied. However, the denial will provide the requestor an opportunity to revise the request by informing the requestor of the manner in which records are maintained and accessed by SORTA. Any denial of public records requested will include an explanation, including legal authority.

5.0 Redactions of Records

5.1 If portions of a record are public and portions are exempt, the exempt portions may be redacted but each redaction must be accompanied by a supporting explanation including legal authority. When making public records available for public inspection or copying, SORTA shall notify the requestor of any redaction or make the redaction plainly visible.

6.0 Copying and Mailing Costs

6.1 Under Ohio Public Records Act, those seeking copies of public records may be charged only the actual cost of making copies. The charge for standard photocopies is \$.10 per page; the charge for records stored on compact disc(s) is \$1.00 per disc; there is no charge for electronically-stored records that are e-

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mailed. If a request involves an unusually large number of documents or requires special copying processes, SORTA may utilize the services of an outside vendor and the requestor will be responsible for the actual copying cost incurred. If a requestor asks that documents be mailed, he or she may be charged the actual cost of the postage and mailing supplies. A requestor may be required to pay in advance for costs involved in providing the copies. SORTA may, in its discretion, waive copying costs that total \$1.00 or less.

If a requester is making the request for commercial purposes, SORTA may limit the number of records transmitted by United States mail to ten (10) per month.

7.0 Electronic Records

7.1 Records in the form of e-mail, text messaging, and instant messaging, including those sent and received via a hand-held communications device are to be treated in the same fashion as records in other formats, such as paper or audiotape.

Public record content transmitted to or from private accounts or personal devices is subject to disclosure. All employees or representatives of SORTA are required to retain their e-mail records and other electronic records in accordance with applicable records retention schedules.

8.0 Records Retention Schedules

8.1 SORTA records are subject to records retention schedules. SORTA's current schedules are available at 525 Vine Street- Suite 500, Cincinnati Ohio, 45202 a location readily available to the public as required by Ohio Revised Code §149.43(B)(2).