

STUDENT SENATE BILL 2025-1053

TITLE: Resolution Addressing Disability Access to Public Transportation at UF

AUTHOR(S): Graduate Senator AJ Ceylan, Change Caucus Leader Max Banach

SPONSORS: Deputy Minority Party Leader Victoria Peters, Graduate Senator Modupeola Lawal, Graduate Senator Antonio Hendricks, Senator Andrew Larsen, Senator Cielo Hughes, Senator Angela Liang

WHEREAS, the University of Florida (UF) is committed to providing a safe, welcoming community for all students, as stated in its core values [1]; and,

WHEREAS, over 7,000 Gators are registered with the UF Disabilities Resource Center to help them “access, remove barriers, and engage with faculty and staff to promote an accessible campus community for all” [2]; and,

WHEREAS, 10% of adults in the U.S. identify as having an “invisible disability” that is “not visibly noticeable” [3][4]; and,

WHEREAS, UF is committed to assisting “students with physical disabilities who need the assistance of the lift . . . to live the full ‘college life’” yet challenges remain in ensuring equal transportation access [5]; and,

WHEREAS, RTS stops such as Turlington Plaza Stop along Newell Dr, the VA Hospital stop along Archer Rd, and the 2nd Avenue Center Apartment stop require those with physical disabilities to make additional vertical movement in order to board the bus, presenting unnecessary barriers to access; and,

WHEREAS, alternative lift-equipped paratransit services provided by the city through RTS and by UF Transportation and Parking Services (TAPS) through GatorLift for those unable to use the fixed-route service with vans still require the user to take vertical steps in order to board [6][7]; and,

WHEREAS, UF students have communicated to the UF Student Senate that some Gatorlift vans and RTS buses have inoperable wheelchair lifts, providing an additional barrier to vehicular entry and increasing dependence on external assistance; and,

WHEREAS, the Americans with Disabilities Act “requires state and local governments to ensure people with disabilities have equal access to public programs and services” and that they “must ensure people with disabilities are able to access public spaces and transportation” [8]; and,

WHEREAS, in December 2024, the United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) “published a final rule that will increase accessibility for transit users by providing local

governments and other owner-operators of the public right-of-way clear, uniform, and technically defined standards of accessibility to guide their design decisions for new construction and alterations of transit stops in the public right-of-way” [9]; and,

WHEREAS, TAPS or UF Facilities have not publicly released any accessibility audits assessing whether all existing stops comply with new USDOT accessibility standards or if improvements are needed; then,

THEREFORE, LET IT BE RESOLVED that the UF Student Senate re-affirms its commitment to advocating for an accessible, equitable, and inclusive public transportation system at UF.

THEREFORE, LET IT BE FURTHER RESOLVED that UF Student Senate recommends RTS implement a disability awareness training course in the event they do not have one already in place, as possible by law, and if so, allow annual continuation training for all bus drivers.

THEREFORE, LET IT BE FURTHER RESOLVED that UF Student Senate urges patience and understanding when working with disabled passengers when boarding and disembarking buses while ensuring all passengers are seated prior to driving.

THEREFORE, LET IT BE FURTHER RESOLVED that UF Student Senate suggests TAPS and RTS conduct an accessibility audit of all on-campus bus stops to ensure usability for all Gators, should a disability accessibility assessment not already be part of their audit process.

THEREFORE, LET IT BE FURTHER RESOLVED that UF Student Senate encourages disability access standards be a priority in the design of future bus stops both on and off-campus.

THEREFORE, LET IT BE FURTHER RESOLVED that UF Student Senate commends the efforts of disability advocacy groups, the Disability Resource Center, and other student organizations such as Disability Ambassadors that continue to push for improved accessibility across UF’s campus.

THEREFORE, LET IT FINALLY BE RESOLVED that UF Student Senate requests that RTS, in collaboration with UF administration, allocate resources toward upgrading or replacing any buses and vans with malfunctioning wheelchair lifts to ensure all vehicles are fully ADA-compliant.

Proviso: A copy of this resolution shall be sent to Assistant Vice President of Facilities Services Mark Helms, Planning Design and Construction Director Linda Dixon, RTS Transit Director Jesus Gomez, RTS Business Services Manager Kimberly Sweigard, TAPS Senior Director Will MacDonald, Disability Ambassadors Co-President Sam Gardner, and Disability Ambassadors Co-President Kelsey Cook.

- [1] - <https://www.ufl.edu/about/core-values/#el-877a98b1>
- [2] - <https://disability.ufl.edu/#:~:text=The%20Disability%20Resource%20Center%20works,accessible%20campus%20community%20for%20all.>
- [3] - <https://www.accessliving.org/newsroom/blog/five-things-you-didnt-know-about-invisible-disabilities/#:~:text=Invisible%20disabilities%20are%20common&text=According%20to%20the%20CDC%2C%2061,of%20those%20are%20invisible%20disabilities.>
- [4] - <https://webfiles.ehs.ufl.edu/ResourceGuideUF.pdf>
- [5] - <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/say.31337>
- [6] - <https://go-rtts.com/ada-2/>
- [7] - <https://taps.ufl.edu/alternative-transportation/gator-lift/>
- [8] - [https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC10961913/#:~:text=Title%20II%20of%20the%20ADA,35101\).](https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC10961913/#:~:text=Title%20II%20of%20the%20ADA,35101).)
- [9] - <https://www.transportation.gov/briefing-room/dot-issues-final-rule-establishing-accessibility-standards-pedestrian-facilities>