

## **River Parishes Transit Authority Complaint Handling Policy**

### **Policy**

Any complaint concerning the service offered by the River Parishes Transit Authority (RPTA) will be thoroughly and impartially investigated in a professional and consistent manner that complies with relevant standards, best practice and the expectations of the public and the RPTA. Any member of the public who is directly affected by the conduct of those providing the RPTA services or a RPTA policy can make a complaint.

The RPTA supports the public's right to complain. The public can complain about:

1. Actions of individuals who provide the RPTA public transit service, or
2. Policies, practices and procedures of the RPTA.

The RPTA also supports the right of bus drivers and other RPTA staff to complain about the conduct or actions of individuals associated with the RPTA service. Issues about individual employees or RPTA policies, practices and procedures should be made by a driver or through the staff member's existing management structure.

The Public Complaints Handling Policy should not be used by bus drivers and other RPTA staff to lodge complaints against their individual employers or others employed within their organization. Such complaints should be handled through the chain of command within each contractor's organization.

This policy does not invalidate nor supersede the personnel or other policies of any of the RPTA contractors but is intended to serve as a guide for the public to make complaints.

### **Definitions**

Complaint- means an expression of dissatisfaction made to the Operations Manager, related to the conduct of a driver, dispatcher or others involved in provision of the public transit service offered by the RPTA, or policies and procedures of the RPTA as it regards provision of those services, or the complaints handling process itself, where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected.

Complainant- means a person, organization or its representative, making a complaint.

Operations Manager- means the person responsible for the day to day operations of the RPTA transit service.

Frivolous Complaint- means a matter that is trivial, without grounds, without substantial merit, or clearly intended merely to harass, waste time, delay or embarrass.

### **Making Complaints**

Telephone complaints are accepted but must always be followed up in writing either by the complainant or through documented written memorandum by the RPTA representative receiving the complaint. A form is available for the proper documentation of complaints. Complaints may be lodged through the following points of contact and should be made in the order as appears below.

1. RPTA Operations Manager  
149 Woodland Drive LaPlace, LA 70068-5940  
Email:  
Telephone 985/651-1141 or 877/651-1171  
Facsimile 985/651-1138
2. RPTA General Manager and Board Secretary:  
South Central Planning and Development Commission  
P.O. Box 1870 Gray, LA 70359  
Telephone 985/-851-2900  
Facsimile 985/851-4472
3. River Parish Transit Authority Board  
P.O. Box 2444 LaPlace, LA 70069-2444  
Email to info@rpta.org

General feedback on services offered directly to RPTA drivers and dispatchers shall not be considered a complaint. If passengers wish to pursue a complaint they must be advised of the above methods for making complaints and be provided with assistance to make their complaint by the RPTA representatives by providing the member of the public with a complaint form. RPTA and its representatives are to treat all complaints in the strictest confidence and only disclose information and the complainant's personal information as is necessary to provide a resolution and proper response to the complaint and in order to report the facts of such to the RPTA Board.

### **Information to be provided to the Board**

In relation to complaints lodged against a driver, dispatcher or Operations Manager, the RPTA Board must be provided the first and last name of the person when asked by a member of the public. In such circumstances the RPTA may provide the member of the public with a complain form.

### **Information to be provided by Complainants**

Complainants must be prepared to give their name and contact details for the complaint to be fully investigated. A complainant may make an anonymous complaint and while every effort will be made to investigate such complaints there will be limitations where details cannot be checked with the complainant. Anonymous complaints must be recorded and referred to the appropriate area for investigation.

## Process

Two types of formal complaints can be made concerning the RPTA services as follows:

- 1) A complaint regarding the policies of, or services provided by the RPTA
- 2) A complaint regarding the conduct of RPTA representatives.

The following procedures will be followed on all complaints received by RPTA

- 1) The initial complaint may be expressed orally with a written follow-up or by written correspondence and should be made to the RPTA Operations Manager.
- 2) The Operations Manager will notify the RPTA Board or their designated representative of the complaint immediately upon receipt of such complaint but no later than three calendar days from the date the complaint is received.
- 3) The Operations Manager will investigate the complaint and will report the findings to the RPTA Board in writing within nine (9) calendar days of the date of receipt of the complaint.
- 4) The Operations Manager will notify the complainant of his/her findings in writing or by telephone within three days of receipt of the report. If the notification is via telephone a written memorandum will be prepared by the Operations Manager documenting the verbal report.
- 5) If the complainant is aggrieved by the decision, he must forward the complaint in writing (if previously submitted orally) to the RPTA General Manager/Secretary who will forward the complaint and all actions taken by the Operations Manager to the appropriate RPTA Board for their review. This will be accomplished within thirty (30) working days of receipt of the written complaint.
- 6) The RPTA Board will review the complaint and come to a decision at its next available public meeting and their decision will be forwarded to the complainant in writing.
- 7) Depending upon the nature of the complaint, the RPTA Board may appoint a committee to review the complaint and provide the response identified in item 5. If the complainant is aggrieved with the decision of such committee, he must notify the Board's Secretary in writing that he desires to be afforded a hearing by the Board. The complainant will be placed on the next regularly scheduled meeting agenda. The board Secretary will notify the complainant in writing of the date of the hearing.
- 8) The complainant must bring all relevant data, witnesses, etc., to the hearing. The RPTA Board, at the hearing, will review the complaint and forward within fifteen (15) days a certified copy of the minutes of the meeting at which the hearing was conducted and a decision was rendered to the complainant. If a decision is not reached at the hearing, the RPTA Board will inform complainant of an appropriate date to expect a response. Within fifteen (15) working days of reaching a decision of the full Board, the complainant will be notified in writing of the decision and that decision will be final.

### **Record Keeping**

All complaints received by RPTA will be maintained as an official record by the RPTA General Manager for five years from the date the complaint is resolved.

All complaints regarding the RPTA must be recorded centrally through the Operations Manager. Regardless of how or where complaints are received they must all be sent to RPTA Operations manager for recording and action. Should the complaint involve the Operations Manger, these should be reported to the RPTA Board.

The following details are to be recorded with regard to each complaint received.

- 1) The complainant's name and contact details'
- 2) date, time and location of incident;
- 3) the RPTA representative's name and position;
- 4) the conduct, services or related practices complained about;
- 5) a description of the complaint and relevant supporting data;
- 6) whether the complainant wishes to be kept informed of the action taken;
- 7) the due date for a response; and
- 8) actions taken

Where complainants have requested someone to respond to them directly, they shall be given a complaint reference number, relevant individual who will provide follow up on the complaint and their information. The information will be provided at the time the complaint is received;

Complainants must treat staff and agents of the RPTA with courtesy and respect. Abusive language, discriminatory remarks and threatening behavior will not be tolerated and may result in RPTA representatives ceasing communication and refusing to entertain a complaint.

### **Management of Complaints**

- **Minor Complaints**

Minor complaints relating to allegations of discourtesy, minor misconduct and underperformance issues will be addressed and resolved by the Operations Manager both within the workplace and on the road and may involve the Operations Manager dealing directly with the complainant to resolve the issue.

Minor complaints can commonly be resolved through explanation of RPTA service policies or by bringing the complainant's concerns to the attention of the individual who is the subject of the complaint. While the individual will be provided with the substance of the complaint, the complainant's personal details will not be revealed unless express permissions has been obtained from the complainant to release such detail.

Minor complaints against staff that are substantiated will be referred through the appropriate channels of the respective contractors providing services for the RPTA.

- **Serious Complaint (non-criminal)**

Serious complaints relating to allegations of serious misconduct or a serious neglect of duty made against a representative of the RPTA must be immediately referred to the RPTA. A substantiated serious complaint will be investigated immediately.

Where a serious complaint has been lodged against an employee of a contractor of the RPTA, it shall be immediately referred to their supervisor. All substantiated serious complaints shall be recorded in writing including the response to the complaint and any subsequent action involving same. A report on such shall be made to the RPTA Board.

- **Criminal Complaint**

A complaint of a potentially criminal nature (e.g. allegations of criminal misconduct, assault of a passenger; theft of fares or of passenger belongings) must immediately be reported by the Operations Manager to the appropriate law enforcement entity and to the RPTA Board.

The Operations Manager shall formally notify the appropriate Sheriff's department of the complaint and offer assistance to the complainant to make their complaint with Sheriff if the complainant has not already done so.

Assistance to the complainant may be in the form of arranging an appointment with an appropriate member of the Sheriff and/or arranging for a support person. As soon as practicable, the Operations Manager is to notify the RPTA Board and General manager regarding the criminal complaint.

- **Frivolous and Vexatious Complaints**

A complaint may not be dealt with where the Operations Manager is satisfied at any time after receiving the complaint that the complaint is frivolous or vexatious or is being pursued by the complainant for an improper purpose. As a general principle, in considering whether the complaint is frivolous or vexatious or is being pursued by the complainant for an improper purpose, the Operations Manager will have regard to past dealings from the complainant and the circumstances of the complaint. In particular, the Operations Manager may decide that the complaint is frivolous or vexatious or is being pursued in a frivolous or vexatious manner or for an improper purpose. A report on such matters will be prepared and submitted to the RPTA Board for documentation.