

## **COMPLAINT PROCEDURE / POLICY HANCOCK COUNTY PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION**

The Hancock County Public Transportation Program (HCPT) is in the business of providing public transportation services in Hancock County. It is the policy of HCPT that all persons utilizing public transportation services ("customers") shall be treated with respect and courtesy when making suggestions or filing complaints. In an effort to ensure that all transportation customers are accorded the right to file both informal and formal complaints concerning HCPT services, the following procedures have been established and must be followed by HCPT personnel and personnel of its transportation service providers:

### Types of Complaints

Complaints may be either informal or formal in nature. Both types of complaints shall be investigated in the same manner. A formal complaint is one in which the customer states his/her name, phone number, etc. so that HCPT may make contact after investigating the complaint. An informal complaint is one in which contact information is not provided and the customer wishes to remain anonymous.

Supervisors shall be responsible for taking both types of complaints. All HCPT drivers and other personnel shall refer all persons wishing to file a complaint or suggestion to their supervisor. A supervisor shall never refuse to take a complaint and shall never assume that any complaint is too minor to document.

### Step One---Taking the Complaint

All complaints shall be taken in a polite and professional manner using the attached complaint form. If the customer is angry, ask him/her to calm down so that the complaint can be documented in an efficient and effective manner. Supervisors shall not argue with customers and should remain calm and in control. HCPT personnel (supervisors, drivers and other personnel) should never state an opinion or give the customer any more information than is necessary to document the nature of the complaint. If the customer is unhappy with the manner in which the complaint is being taken, supervisors should refer the person to the Transit Director.

All facts relative to the complaint shall be recorded on the complaint form. The nature of the complaint must be described on the complaint form in the space provided. As much information shall be obtained as possible, keeping in mind that the name and address of the complainant will not be provided by those customers wishing to file an informal complaint. Once the supervisor has obtained all the necessary information, the customer shall be advised that his/her complaint will be investigated and that he/she will be contacted (if a formal complaint) with the results once the investigation is completed. After the complaint form is completed, the complaint shall be investigated by the supervisor. If the initial complaint involves a supervisor, the customer should be referred

to the Transit Director, who will then complete the complaint form and investigate the complaint. All complaints are and should remain confidential to protect both the customer and HCPT personnel and personnel of its transportation service providers.

### Step Two---Investigating and Resolving the Complaint

Upon receiving the complaint form, the supervisor will number the form and record it in the complaint log. If the complaint involves an employee, verification that the employee was actually on duty at the time of the incident will be made. All complaints must be handled in a consistent manner.

The supervisor or Transit Director, if the complaint involves a supervisor, must begin the investigation of the complaint within ten working days of the date the complaint was filed in order to ensure that the details of the event are fresh in the minds of all involved. All employees involved in the complaint will be interviewed by the supervisor or Transit Director. As the investigation progresses, it is important for the investigator to be fair and keep an open mind. The objective should be to get the "big picture" of the incident. The investigator shall suggest ways to resolve the problem and/or a method for dealing with a similar situation in the future. All actions resulting from the complaint must be documented in writing on the complaint form and attachments (if necessary), by the supervisor or Transit Director. Results of the investigation by the supervisor shall be forwarded to the Transit Director for his/her review. For formal complaints, the customer will be advised in writing by the supervisor or Transit Director of the results of the investigation. Every effort should be made to complete the investigation and notify the customer of the results within 30 business days of the date the initial complaint was filed.

If more information is needed to resolve a complaint, HCPT may contact the complainant. The complainant has 30 business days from the date of the letter to send requested information HCPT. If HCPT is not contacted by the complainant or does not receive the additional information within 30 business days, the HCPT may administratively close the complaint. In addition, a complaint may be administratively closed if the complainant no longer wishes to pursue their case.

Complaints involving Reasonable Modification Requests will be issued either a Letter of Closure or Letter of Finding. Please see the Reasonable Modification Policy for more information pertaining to complaints falling into this category.

If the investigation of the complaint results in the need to discipline an employee, the supervisor or Transit Director will administer such discipline.

If the customer is not satisfied with how the complaint was resolved, he/she has the right to appeal the decision, within ten (10) calendar days of the date on any notice letter or the date of the decision, if no written notice provided. The submission date shall be the postmark date for mailed items, the date of any email received, or the date received if delivered in person. The customer may appeal, as follows:

- All decisions made by supervisors may be appealed to the Transit Director.
- All decisions made by the Transit Director may be appealed to the Hancock County Board Chair.
- All decisions made by the County Board Chair may be appealed to the Hancock County Public Transportation Committee. The HCPT Committee's decision shall be final.

A customer appealing a decision must state in writing the reasons why he/she disagrees with the supervisor's, Transit Director's or Board Chair's decision. The Transit Director, Board Chair or HCPT Committee shall reply in writing to the customer within 30 days of the date the written appeal is received.

#### Conclusion

Customer complaints are a serious matter. HCPT is in the business of providing quality public transportation for the residents of Hancock County. If there is supporting evidence to suggest that HCPT is not living up to that standard, appropriate action must be taken to correct the matter. All customers are important and losing a customer because of inappropriate actions by an employee is not acceptable.

Approval:

Finance Committee: March 11, 2021

Hancock County Board: Updated March 16, 2021