

# Tar River Transit Complaint and Investigative Procedures

These discrimination complaint procedures outline the process used by Tar River Transit (TRT) to process complaints of alleged discrimination filed under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and related nondiscrimination laws that are applicable to TRT programs, services, and activities. Complaints will be investigated by the appropriate authority. Upon completion of an investigation, the complainant will be informed of all avenues of appeal. Every effort will be made to obtain early resolution of complaints at the lowest level possible by informal means.

## FILING OF COMPLAINTS

- 1. Applicability** – These procedures apply to the beneficiaries of our programs, activities, and services, such as the members of the public and any consultants/contractors we hire.
- 2. Eligibility** – Any person or class of persons who believes that he/she has been subjected to discrimination or retaliation prohibited by any of the Civil Rights authorities based upon race, color, sex, age, national origin, creed (religion) or disability, may file a written complaint. The law prohibits intimidation or retaliation of any sort. The complaint may be filed by the affected individual or a representative and must be in writing.
- 3. Time Limits and Filing Options** – A complaint must be filed no later than 180 calendar days after the following:
  - The date of the alleged act of discrimination; or
  - The date when the person(s) became aware of the alleged discrimination; or
  - Where there has been a continuing course of conduct, the date on which that conduct was discontinued or the latest instance of the conduct.

Complaints may be submitted to the following entities:

- **Tar River Transit/Todd Gardner at PO Box 1180, Rocky Mount, NC 27802, 252-972-1596, todd.gardner@rockymountnc.gov**
  - **North Carolina Department of Transportation**, Office of Civil Rights, External Civil Rights Section, 1511 Mail Service Center, Raleigh, NC 27699-1511; 919-508-1830 or toll free 800-522-0453
  - **US Department of Transportation**, Departmental Office of Civil Rights, External Civil Rights Programs Division, 1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE, Washington, DC 20590; 202-366-4070
  - **Federal Transit Administration**, Office of Civil Rights, ATTN: Title VI Program Coordinator, East Bldg. 5<sup>th</sup> Floor – TCR, 1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE, Washington, DC 20590
  - **US Department of Justice**, Special Litigation Section, Civil Rights Division, 950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20530, 202-514-6255 or toll free 877-218-5228
- 4. Format for Complaints** – Complaints shall be in **writing** and **signed** by the complainant(s) or a representative and include the complainant's name, address, and telephone number. Complaints received by fax or e-mail will be acknowledged and processed. Allegations received by telephone or in person will be reduced to writing, may be recorded, and will be provided to the complainant for confirmation or revision before processing. Complaints will be accepted in other languages, including Braille.
  - 5. Discrimination Complaint Form** – The Discrimination Complaint Form is consistent with the FTA Certifications & Assurances, "Nondiscrimination Assurance."
  - 6. Complaint Basis** – Allegations must be based on issues involving race, color, national origin, sex, age, creed (religion) or disability. The term "basis" refers to the complainant's membership in a protected group category.

Protected Categories	Definition	Examples	Applicable Statutes and Regulations
			FTA
Race	An individual belonging to one of the accepted racial groups; or the perception, based usually on physical characteristics that a person is a member of a racial group	Black/African American, Hispanic/Latino, Asian, American Indian/Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, White	Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. 49 CFR Part 21. 49 U.S.C. 5332(b). FTA Circular 4702.1B
Color	Color of skin, including shade of skin within a racial group	Black, White, brown, yellow, etc.	
National Origin	Place of birth. Citizenship is not a factor. Discrimination based on language or a person's accent is also covered.	Mexican, Cuban, Japanese, Vietnamese, Chinese	
Sex	Gender	Women and Men	49 U.S.C. 5332(b); Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972
Age	Persons of any age	21-year-old person	Age Discrimination Act of 1975
Disability	Physical or mental impairment, permanent or temporary, or perceived.	Blind, alcoholic, para-amputee, epileptic, diabetic, arthritic	Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973; Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990
Creed	Religion.	Muslim, Christian, Hindu, Atheist	49 U.S.C. 5332(b)

### Complaint Processing

1. When a complaint is received, an Acknowledgment Letter and a Complainant Consent/Release Form will be mailed to the complainant within ten (10) business days by registered mail.
2. We will consult with the NCDOT Title VI Program to determine the acceptability and jurisdiction of all complaints received. (Note: If NCDOT will investigate, the Title VI Program will be responsible for the remainder of this process. We will record the transfer of responsibility in our complaints log).
3. Additional information will be requested if the complaint is incomplete. The complainant will be provided 15 business days to submit any requested information and the signed Consent Release form. Failure to do so may be considered good cause for a determination of no investigative merit.
4. Upon receipt of the requested information and determination of jurisdiction, we will notify the complainant and respondent of whether the complaint has enough merit to warrant investigation.
5. If the complaint is investigated, the notification shall state the grounds of our jurisdiction, while informing the parties that their full cooperation will be required in gathering additional information and assisting the investigator.
6. If the complaint does not warrant investigation, the notification to the complainant shall specifically state the reason for the decision.

### Complaint Log

1. When a complaint is received, the complaint will be entered into the Discrimination Complaints Log with other pertinent information and assigned a **Case Number**. (Note: All complaints must be logged).
2. The complaints log will be submitted to the NCDOT's Civil Rights office during Title VI compliance reviews. (Note: NCDOT may also be request the complaints log during pre-grant approval processes).
3. The **Log Year(s)** since the last submittal will be entered (e.g., 2015-2018, 2017-2018, FFY 2018, or 2018) and the complaints log will be signed before submitting the log to NCDOT.
4. When reporting **no complaints**, check the **No Complaints or Lawsuits** box and sign the log.

## **INVESTIGATIVE GUIDANCE**

- A. Scope of Investigation** – An investigation should be confined to the issues and facts relevant to the allegations in the complaint unless evidence shows the need to extend the issues.
- B. Developing an Investigative Plan** – It is recommended that the investigator prepares an Investigative Plan (IP) to define the issues and lay out the blueprint to complete the investigation. The IP should follow the outline below:
1. Complainant(s) Name and Address (Attorney name and address if applicable)
  2. Respondent(s) Name and Address (Attorney for the Respondent(s) name and address)
  3. Applicable Law(s)
  4. Basis/(es)
  5. Allegation(s)/Issue(s)
  6. Background
  7. Name of Persons to be interviewed
    - a. Questions for the complainant(s)
    - b. Questions for the respondent(s)
    - c. Questions for witness(es)
  8. Evidence to be obtained during the investigation
    - a. Issue – e.g., Complainant alleges his predominantly African American community was excluded from a meeting concerning a future project which could affect the community.
      - i. Documents needed: e.g., mailing list which shows all physical addresses, P.O. Box numbers, property owner names, and dates when the meeting notification was mailed; other methods used by the RPO to advertise the meeting.
- C. Request for Information** – The investigator should gather data and information pertinent to the issues raised in the complaint.
- D. Interviews** – Interviews should be conducted with the complainant, respondent, and appropriate witnesses during the investigative process. Interviews are conducted to gain a better understanding of the situation outlined in the complaint of discrimination. The main objective during the interview is to obtain information that will either support or refute the allegations.
- E. Developing an Investigative Report** – The investigator should prepare an investigative report setting forth all relevant facts obtained during the investigation. The report should include a finding for each issue. A sample investigative report is provided on the next page.

## TEMPLATE Investigative Report

**I. COMPLAINANT(S) NAME** (or attorney for the complainant(s) – name and address if applicable)  
Name, Address, Phone: 999-999-9999

**II. RESPONDENT(S)** (or attorney for the respondent(s) – name and address if applicable)  
Name, Address, Phone: 999-999-9999

**III. APPLICABLE LAW/REGULATION**  
[For example, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (42 U.S.C. 2000d); 49 CFR §21.11; 49 CFR §26.53)]

**IV. COMPLAINT BASIS/(ES)**  
[For example, Race, Color, National Origin, Creed (Religion), Sex, Age, Disability)]

**V. ISSUES/ALLEGATIONS**  
[Describe in logical sequence, each allegation including the prohibited basis for the alleged discriminatory conduct, (e.g., race, color, creed, sex, national origin, age, or disability) and the specific statutory or regulatory provision the allegation would violate, if proven to be true.]

Issue #1 – Complainant alleges that transit system failed to inform minority communities of rate increases.  
Issue #2 – Complainant alleges that transit system has not sufficiently publicized or held public meetings to share information regarding fare increases and route changes that impacts low-income and minority citizens.

**VI. BACKGROUND**  
[Provide detailed information regarding the complaint, including a historical overview of the case, including any activities or actions taken prior to accepting the complaint for investigation.]

**VII. INVESTIGATIVE PROCEDURE**  
[Describe in detail, methods used to conduct the investigation, such as document requests, interviews and site visits. Include witnesses' names and addresses, documents received and/or reviewed, emails sent and received.]

**VIII. ISSUES / FINDINGS OF FACT**  
[Provide a detailed description of the investigator's analysis of each allegation, based on clear and factual findings. Include specific evidence used to support your findings.]

**IX. CONCLUSION**  
[State whether discrimination did or did not occur. Conclusions must be evidence-based and defensible. Test conclusions by considering all possible rebuttal arguments from the respondent and complainant. Both respondent and the complainant should be given an opportunity to confirm or rebut the assertions of the other party and your findings, but all the evidence you've presented should speak for itself.]

**X. RECOMMENDED ACTIONS**  
[Outline what should be done to remedy the findings or, if necessary, provide justice for the complainant.]

### APPENDIX

[Include in the Appendix any supplemental materials that support your findings and conclusion.]