



# NTTA Ombudsman:

## *Our Commitment to Customer Service*

*The North Texas Tollway Authority is committed to providing motorists outstanding customer service, both on and off the road. With this in mind, the NTTA established a pilot Ombudsman program to review customer concerns in an unbiased and impartial manner.*

*The NTTA Ombudsman ensures fairness and consistency by reviewing disputed invoices that are unable to be resolved in its Customer Service Department. Separate from the collections process, the program is carried out by the Internal Audit Department, which reports directly to the NTTA Board of Directors. The Ombudsman will address customer concerns, review the escalation and dispute resolution process to ensure NTTA followed its established business rules, and determine whether the issue was handled appropriately and equitably.*

*A summary of circumstances and responses is listed below with all personally identifiable information removed in compliance with customer privacy laws and guidelines. For more details about the NTTA Ombudsman program, please contact the NTTA at 972-818-6882 or [CustomerService@ntta.org](mailto:CustomerService@ntta.org).*

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### **Customer# 0005**

**Summary of circumstances:** The customer stated the following concerns:

- NTTA waited to bill the customer 19 months from date of transactions.
- Administrative fees totaling near \$1,000 were added.
- Customer thought taxes and vehicle registration fees already paid for roads and bridges.
- NTTA refused to provide the exact location tolls were incurred.
- A collection agency has pursued the customer for total charges and threatened traffic violation tickets and others repercussions.

**Ombudsman's response:** The Ombudsman validated the tolls started as ZipCash invoices and escalated to violations through the standard process including the addition of administrative fees during violation process and forwarding unpaid invoices to a collection agency. The Ombudsman confirmed that the ZipCash invoices were sent to a previous address that is still listed as the owner address with the Department of Motor Vehicles. Consistent with the NTTA standard process, the Authority waived the administrative fees because of the incorrect address, and only tolls are due. Reprints of the violation invoices showing the exact date, time, location and amounts of tolls are available for the customer.

Vehicle registration fees, gas tax revenues and other taxes are not used to build, maintain and operate NTTA toll roads. Rather, NTTA toll roads are funded largely through the sales of bonds that are repaid by collecting tolls from motorists who use the road. The Texas Legislature and regional transportation officials have made a policy decision to rely on toll roads as a way to advance much needed mobility projects. Learn more about how toll roads are funded and how the NTTA puts toll revenues to work in North Texas at [eTa: Where Do My Tolls Go](#).

### **Customer #0004**

**Summary of circumstances:** Customer drove on an NTTA toll road and received a ZipCash invoice, which the customer paid. The customer then contacted the NTTA and requested a refund, stating that the road and bridge fees that are paid when registering a vehicle should cover toll road operations.

**Ombudsman's response:** The Ombudsman validated that the tolls were properly charged and that the customer paid the ZipCash invoice. The customer's ZipCash invoice payment handled in accordance with the NTTA's standard processes.

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### Customer #0003

**Summary of circumstances:** Customer received a violation notice for transactions that occurred in 2008 as a result of driving through TollTag-only lanes. The customer called Customer Service and was offered the option of paying tolls plus reduced administrative fees. The customer stated the transactions had been paid online.

**Ombudsman's response:** The Ombudsman validated the transactions on the invoice. The assessment of tolls and reduction of administrative fees was handled in accordance with the NTTA's standard processes. There was no indication that the transactions had been paid previously. The customer's transactions in 2008 were processed as violations because the NTTA's ZipCash payment option was not yet available at those toll booths. The customer incurred transactions in 2009 on roadways where the ZipCash payment option was available.

The NTTA recently implemented [changes to its toll collection procedures](#) to allow all transactions not paid with TollTags or cash to be processed as ZipCash, the cashless payment option for non-TollTag customers driving on roadways where all-electronic tolling is in place (President George Bush Turnpike, Sam Rayburn Tollway and the Wycliff Avenue toll plaza of the Dallas North Tollway). Cash payment is still available on Dallas North Tollway, Mountain Creek Lake Bridge and the Addison Airport Toll Tunnel, but customers without TollTags who do not pay cash on these roads now receive invoices at the higher ZipCash toll rate before violation fees are assessed.

### Customer #002

**Summary of circumstances:** Customer stated that arrest warrants were issued due to non-payment of tolls. Customer claims that the warrants were resolved, and he/she thought that the TollTag account started over with a clean slate. Customer claimed that the NTTA never sent an invoice. The customer also claimed that another warrant was sent although the original warrant had been paid a year ago. Additionally, the customer stated that toll bills were paid upon receipt yet the NTTA sent notices including administrative fees for the same invoice. Customer stated that a debit card was provided to pay for the tolls, but he/she continued to receive invoices with fees. Customer stated that when he/she contacted the NTTA regarding this situation, staff could not locate the debit card information.

**Ombudsman's response:** The Ombudsman validated charges submitted to the customer. All communication with the customer (including invoices) was sent to the current address; no invoices were returned for incorrect address. Some violations started as ZipCash invoices that then incurred additional fees as the invoices escalated through the collection and citation process consistent with standard NTTA procedures. Other violations that resulted from driving in TollTag-only lanes started as violations with the addition of administrative fees, and they escalated through the collection and citation process consistent with standard NTTA procedures. Although previous warrants were issued, only the courts received payment for four out of five citations, leaving four of the actual toll violations unpaid to NTTA by the customer. As of April 26, 2010 the customer had three open citations. Although the customer is a TollTag customer, his/her account held a negative balance for all or most of 2007, 2008 and 2009, and the account currently has a negative balance. According to NTTA business rules, TollTag customers that consistently maintain a negative balance are charged tolls at the higher ZipCash rate, and initial invoices issued prior to Feb. 8, 2010, are automatically considered toll violations if customer drove through a TollTag-only lane. As requested by the customer, copies of all ZipCash invoices and violation notices for three of the family's four cars were sent on April 15, 2010.

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### **Customer #0001**

**Summary of circumstances:** Customer claimed to receive multiple invoices with duplicate charges on the customer's TollTag account. The customer's TollTag account periodically ran a negative balance when credit card(s) associated with the account expired. Although the customer occasionally replenished funds to the account, the balance was insufficient to cover continual transactions on NTTA toll roads. Each time this happened, invoices were issued for the toll transactions at the higher ZipCash toll rate. If the invoices were not paid within the allotted time, late notices were issued in addition to new invoices for additional transactions.

The customer requested the NTTA provide a payment plan or partial payment option as a means for the customer to pay off existing invoices and violations as well as future toll transactions. The customer stated that he/she was required to pay the entire balance owed rather than paying each invoice separately.

**Ombudsman's response:** The Ombudsman reviewed the billing and found no duplicate charges. The customer's account was billed appropriately and handled in accordance with the NTTA's standard processes. The amount invoiced is due and will continue to escalate through the invoice process.

The NTTA does not offer payment plan options; however, payments are accepted for each invoice independently rather than only for the total balance owed per account. NTTA has followed up with its Customer Service staff to ensure this option is communicated accurately to customers.

