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**U.S. Department
of Transportation**

Office of the Secretary
of Transportation

General Counsel

1200 New Jersey Ave., S.E.
Washington, DC 20590

August 25, 2016

John Greenwald Jr.
[REDACTED]

File No. **FY 2016-218**

Dear Mr. Greenwald:

This is in response to your Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request dated June 25, 2016. You requested a copy of all complaints submitted about the DOT Headquarters Cafeteria, for the calendar years 2014 and 2105.

Pursuant to the FOIA, 5 U.S.C. § 552, enclosed are the requested records, with the exception of personal cell phone numbers. The cell phone numbers are protected by FOIA Exemption 6, which protects against a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy. 5 U.S.C. § 552(b)(6) and 49 CFR 7.23(c)(6).

I am the person responsible for this determination. If you are dissatisfied with this response, you may appeal to Judith S. Kaleta, Deputy General Counsel, U.S. Department of Transportation, 1200 New Jersey Ave., S.E., Washington, DC 20590. If you prefer, your appeal may be sent via electronic mail to ost.foia.appeals@dot.gov. An appeal must be received within 45 days of the date of this determination and should contain any information and arguments you wish to rely on. The Deputy General Counsel's determination will be administratively final.

If you have any questions, please call me at (202) 366-5546.

Sincerely,

Kathy Ray
FOIA Officer

Enclosures

Whitmire, Tawanta (OST)

From: Peters, Inga <Inga.Peters@sodexo.com>
Sent: Thursday, May 07, 2015 4:00 PM
To: OST Cafeteria Manager (OST); Swafford-Brooks, Lisa (OST)
Subject: RE: Sell by Date

Lisa,
Thank you for your observation and your feedback.
I am sorry about the confusion with the date on the Simply to Go prepared items. The STG items are prepared daily and they are rotated out every 24 hours, boxes are coded so we know what day they are prepared. Our label program prints the date that the labels are printed automatically, unless we remember to eliminate the date prior to printing. This did not happen and many labels were printed with the incorrect date, instead of throwing out the expensive labels, the staff marked out the date since the date was incorrect. I assure you that the salad was prepared no more than 24 hours prior. If the salad was prepared on May 4 you would have noticed the lettuce dark, very wilted and soggy, we do not use preservatives on our lettuce or our salads so they do not last this long. We check the STG items daily for quality and any from the previous day are removed.

I am trying to have the program changed so that the dates do not print automatically so we do not continually have this issue.

Again I apologize for the inconvenience and miscommunication on the use by date. If you have any further questions please contact me.

THANK YOU!

Inge Peters
General Manager
Sodexo, Department of Transportation
1201 4th Street SE,
Washington, DC 20590
202-610-3018 – Office
202-253-5942 – DOT Cell
(b)(6) – Cell

From: Tawanta.Whitmire@dot.gov [mailto:Tawanta.Whitmire@dot.gov] **On Behalf Of** ostcafeteriamanager@dot.gov
Sent: Thursday, May 07, 2015 3:32 PM
To: Peters, Inga
Subject: FW: Sell by Date

Please respond.

From: Swafford-Brooks, Lisa (OST)
Sent: Thursday, May 07, 2015 12:06 PM
To: OST Cafeteria Manager (OST)
Subject: Sell by Date

Hello,

I received this email address from the DOT intranet. I thought it was important to share something I noticed about Sodexo this morning. I purchased a grilled balsamic chicken garden salad from downstairs at the coffee stand in the West Building. After I started eating the salad, I notice something strange about the price tag on the salad. Sodexo

apparently blacked out the sell by date so customers are unable to see when the salad is prepared. I am sure you can verify this by looking at the other salads that are left at the coffee stand. Also, I kept a the actual tag. I normally don't make complaints about the problems I see with Sodexo, but this is a serious food safety issue and someone can really get sick. It looks like the sell by date is May 5 – it is hard to tell since it is blacked out. I am not trying to get a refund. I just don't want myself or colleagues to end up in the hospital because of Sodexo's actions.

Thank you

Lisa Swafford-Brooks

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Whitmire, Tawanta (OST)

From: Rivero, Maria (OST)
Sent: Monday, May 04, 2015 9:32 AM
To: OST Cafeteria Manager (OST)
Subject: Incident on 5/4/2015

Good Morning

This morning I picked up a biscuit and put it in my container. I didn't touch any other biscuits. The woman behind the counter said "Ma'am I was just getting ready to put the tongs out and I said "that's ok", trying to be nice. She proceeded to say "No it's not" and something to the effect that it was rude of me to do what I did. As I said before I did not touch any of the other biscuits, it was rude and unnecessary for her to say anything to me.

I don't know her name but it was about 9:15 this morning and afterwards she proceeded to go help with checkout, standing next to her supervisor, who was wearing glasses. I didn't approach the supervisor because I didn't want to make a scene.

I feel like her behavior was rude and she didn't need to put me on the spot in front of other customers. I hope you will address this.

Thank you

Maria Rivero
Legal Instruments Analyst
U.S. DOT/OST/Dockets Office
Maria.Rivero@dot.gov
202-366-1918

Whitmire, Tawanta (OST)

From: Jackson, Barbara (MARAD)
Sent: Monday, June 15, 2015 8:09 AM
To: OST Cafeteria Manager (OST)
Subject: Re: Dissatisfied Customer

Good morning,

I bought a bagel w/cream cheese and 2 butters. I was told that the butter was \$0.33 because it did not come with the bagel. Note: Some folks like butter and cream cheese on their bagel. It's sad that customers are being charged \$0.33 for butter. For now own I will go to Starbucks for my bagel with cream cheese and butter because they don't charge for either one.

Whitmire, Tawanta (OST)

From: Wright, Tami (OST)
Sent: Monday, June 15, 2015 12:03 PM
To: OST Cafeteria Manager (OST)
Cc: Carr, Annette (OST)
Subject: Sodexo Customer Service

To Whom It May Concern:

After many discussions among customers, I write this letter with the hope that the DOT Cafeteria Manager truly takes heed to the comments expressed by many of the customers (former and current) and trusting that this information will be considered during efforts to enhance the customer service in our cafeteria.

Recently, the cafeteria has implemented a few new policies/procedures that may work well for them; however, it may not be the best practice/experience from a customer service perspective. Specifically:

- **Breakfast items:** A decision was recently made to place bacon at the grill versus making it available to customers on the a la cart line. While I understand that it was a decision lead for pricing purposes versus weight of item, it is very inconvenient for the customer to stand in line for a slice of bacon or for the manager to believe that customers should be okay with going ahead of other customers in the line for any reason, including but not limited to interrupting the cook for bacon. I personally shared my thoughts with the manager (name unknown, white female) who left me with the feeling that pricing of the bacon was more important than convenience for the DOT employees.
- **Coffee Section:** The staff continues to shift employees from the coffee area despite the customer service provided to a majority of its employees. Preparing specialty coffee apparently takes skill and just when you have established a good rapport and they know the desired requests of the customer, the staff sends the employee off to another section and the process begins all over again. It seems that during the past few months, the coffee area has had three difference employees. I must say that Sabrina has been a welcomed employee to the coffee section and has mastered the requests of her customers. However, to my dismay, she was moved today to another section. I must also note that this is a growing discussion among customers, many of whom have either gone back to other places for coffee and simply chose not to go to the cafeteria at all since their customer service is not consistent.
- **Omlette/Grilling Stations:** It takes entirely too long to order a breakfast omlette. While the employee is extremely nice, most often it takes at least 20 minutes to receive your order. It is a running joke that it is necessary to submit a leave slip when you order an omlette. This is no secret, as there is typically a crowd waiting to receive their order. As such, it is perplexing to the DOT employees why they do not increase the number of cooking plates or change the cooking strategy. The change of employees to the grill station has also been challenging.
- **Food supply:** There have been continued challenges with stocking popular items (e.g., cranberries, soy milk, fruit, vegetables, Deer Park, etc.)

As a manager, I am quite familiar with the need to move employees as the workload dictates. However, it seems from the "outside looking in" that the management team is not aware of the consequences of their action from the customer service perspective. Many Sodexo employees have developed relationships with the DOT employees and share their personal employee experiences as they attempt to address and resolve challenging Sodexo practices within the cafeteria at the lowest possible level. While the purpose of this email is simply to share concerns with the hope that these

matters will be considered during the efforts to enhance the customer service, I also trust that these practices/changes are not personality driven among the staff as rumored, since the latter may serve as a detriment to the service that Sodexo currently provides.

Thank you, in advance, for your consideration of these matters.

Tami L. Wright

Tami L. Wright, Associate Director
Compliance Operations Division, S-34
Departmental Office of Civil Rights
Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, S.E., W78-316
Washington, D.C. 20590
Phone: (202) 366-5988
Fax: (202) 493-2064
Email: tami.wright@dot.gov
Toll Free: (866) 355-7147
Federal Relay Voice: (202) 855-1000
Federal Relay Text: (202) 855-1234

One Mission, One Goal, One Team!

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Whitmire, Tawanta (OST)

From: Whitmire, Tawanta (OST) on behalf of OST Cafeteria Manager (OST)
Sent: Friday, August 28, 2015 9:20 AM
To: Turner, Doris (OST); OST Cafeteria Manager (OST)
Subject: RE: Reasonable Accommodations

Hi Doris,

I have received your concern and submitted it to Sodexo and will discuss it with the GM, Inga Peters to address your concerns.

From: Turner, Doris (OST)
Sent: Tuesday, July 14, 2015 10:41 AM
To: OST Cafeteria Manager (OST)
Subject: Reasonable Accommodations
Importance: High

Ma'am/Sir-

Please allow me to introduce myself and provide my background. I am an FAA employee on Detail to DOT, S-60 office. During my career at the FAA, I created and conducted a program to insure our facilities and systems were made accessible to employees with disabilities. We followed federal laws and requirements in force at the time. I was concurrently the Office of Civil Rights Headquarters People with Disabilities (PWD) Program Manager (PM) for over 3 years. I enjoyed the time as PWD PM in educating senior managers/executives and other program managers 1) how to make our facilities accessible at minimal direct cost; 2) advocating the relevant issues regarding reasonable accommodations, enumerating the benefits for inclusion of our employees with disabilities. "Access" is about getting the individual into the workplace (ramps, automatic door openers, accessible bathroom stalls, etc.). "Reasonable accommodation" covers how the employee accomplishes the assigned tasks.

This morning I overheard a most unfortunate conversation. And being a person with 2 knee surgeries, wear a shoe lift and have back alignment issues, I have empathy with a Sodexo employee. First, the employee apparently has requested an economical, inexpensive reasonable accommodation to relieve bursitis pain. Ergonomic floor mats are an industry standard to relieve stress and strain on joints from prolonged standing on hard floor surfaces. From a corporate stand, would Sodexo rather pay \$5 to \$20 per station & improve employee morale or pay \$MEGA bucks in a Discrimination Lawsuit, in addition to paying for employee sick leave for DR appointments?? A lawsuit is what Sodexo is facing.

Second, any person can advocate for a PWD to have access or reasonable accommodations made. (That would be me right now.) The manager may ask for additional documentation from a medical professional (DR, Physical or Occupational Therapist), but it should be a reasonable request and not prolonged. Please, the solution is very simple. The benefits will (again) improve morale and aid in relief from pain. Additionally, DOT has a Disability Resource Center in West Building, 5th floor that may be able to assist or provide ideas, however they may not be able to provide the mats/equipment.

Third, this/your Sodexo unit is in a federal leased building. Contractors are required to follow federal law. Sodexo really has no choice but to provide the accommodation.

Overall, I would like to believe you are a reasonable person. I think maybe you have been focused or distracted by some other pressing issues and maybe you didn't have an opportunity to really give the matter your full attention. I ask that

you imagine yourself in the employee's situation – what would you want to happen for yourself? Respecting the employee and addressing their concern will go miles for you.

If you would like to discuss this matter in greater detail I can be reached by email or by phone (preferred). Please, let's do the right thing.

Doris A. Turner

USDOT Nat'l Response Program, S-60

202-366-2662

*When the Nation needs courage,
the Courageous GO ARMY!*

Whitmire, Tawanta (OST)

From: Peters, Inga <Inga.Peters@sodexo.com>
Sent: Monday, September 21, 2015 3:59 PM
To: OST Cafeteria Manager (OST)
Subject: RE: Poor customer service today at the Grill station

Importance: High

PLEASE FORWARD TO Dan.

Dan,

Thank you for your feedback. I apologize for the poor customer service you received, this is not the customer service or the attitude that my staff are taught. This is very unacceptable. I will follow up and hope that your future experiences are good experiences in our café.

If there is anything I can do for you please let me know.

Inge Peters
General Manager
Sodexo, Department of Transportation
1201 4th Street SE,
Washington, DC 20590
202-610-3018 – Office
202-253-5942 – DOT Cell
(b)(6) – Cell

From: Tawanta.Whitmire@dot.gov [mailto:Tawanta.Whitmire@dot.gov] **On Behalf Of** ostcafeteriamanager@dot.gov
Sent: Monday, September 21, 2015 3:51 PM
To: Peters, Inga
Subject: FW: Poor customer service today at the Grill station

FYI

Tawanta Whitmire

*Building Management Specialist
Office of Facilities, Information and Asset
Management, M90- W58-204
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590
202/366-6044 (Office)
202/366-3192 (Fax)
Email: Tawanta.Whitmire@dot.gov*

Your feedback is important. Please take a moment to complete the M Customer Service Survey.

From: Stillson, Dan (FHWA)
Sent: Tuesday, September 15, 2015 10:16 AM
To: OST Cafeteria Manager (OST)
Subject: Poor customer service today at the Grill station

Good morning,

Occasionally the Grill station has a substitute cook, and the one from this morning (and the same problem has happened with the same person before) had a poor customer service attitude.

I don't usually say anything, but when I do, it's because it was bad.

I went down to the cafeteria a few minutes before 9:30 (got in late because of really bad traffic – and was really looking forward to breakfast), got coffee, and then went over to the hot food station where the already-prepared egg, potatoes, grits, etc. is located. Unfortunately, all the egg was already out, and the person manning that station said they weren't making anymore, but the Grill station would. So I walked over to the Grill station, and there was a person there already getting something. But when it came to be my turn, the Grill cook said he was closed. I told him that I had been told I could come over to the Grill station (all I needed was 2 eggs scrambled – very little time and effort to do). His response: "Who told you that??" in an accusatory tone. Instead of going ahead and doing it, he started cleaning up and turned away from me. I went back over to the hot food station to tell the person there, and she said "He said THAT?" and went over to talk to him – but he sent her away, as far as I could tell, and continued on with his attitude of NOT CUSTOMER ORIENTED.

I also mentioned this to one of the cashiers, and asked her to relay my concerns to Cafeteria management.

I ended up going over to Harris Teeter – where the customer service was better, and they had just made a huge, new batch of scrambled egg.

I hope that the substitute cook at the Grill station is not invited to return – his poor attitude is driving away customers and giving the Sodexo Cafeteria a bad reputation.

Thanks,
Dan

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Whitmire, Tawanta (OST)

From: Peters, Inga <Inga.Peters@sodexo.com>
Sent: Thursday, October 01, 2015 3:56 PM
To: Whitmire, Tawanta (OST)
Subject: RE: Cafeteria Issue

Tawanta,
Can you forward this to Jessica if you approve

Jessica,
Thank you for informing us of this situation. I apologize that you experienced this.

I investigated this morning and verified that all the carafes were filled correctly. I have never witnessed this nor have we ever been informed of this happening previously. Did you notice the color of the milk when you poured it, the soy milk is a definite cream color not white like the milk or half and half. To assure that this definitely does not happen we will from now on put out the Soy in its original container.

Again I apologize for the incident

Inge Peters
General Manager
Sodexo, Department of Transportation
1201 4th Street SE,
Washington, DC 20590
202-610-3018 – Office
202-253-5942 – DOT Cell
(b)(6) – Cell

From: Tawanta.Whitmire@dot.gov [mailto:Tawanta.Whitmire@dot.gov]
Sent: Thursday, October 01, 2015 10:47 AM
To: Peters, Inga
Subject: FW: Cafeteria Issue

Please respond.

Tawanta Whitmire
Building Management Specialist
Office of Facilities, Information and Asset
Management, M90- W58-204
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590
202/366-6044 (Office)
202/366-3192 (Fax)
Email: Tawanta.Whitmire@dot.gov
Your feedback is important. Please take a moment to complete the [M Customer Service Survey](#).

From: Ellis, Angel (OST)
Sent: Wednesday, September 30, 2015 4:40 PM
To: Pettrone, Jessica; Ellis, Angel (OST)
Cc: Whitmire, Tawanta (OST); OST Cafeteria Manager (OST)
Subject: Re: Cafeteria Issue

Thank you, Jessica for your feedback. I have copied the cafeteria COR and OST Cafeteria Manager mailbox to have this issue addressed by Sodexo's GM, Inge Peters. We appreciate you bringing this to our attention. If there are any issues in the future, please feel free to email the OST Cafeteria Manager mailbox and or Tawanta Whitmire, the cafeteria COR to get those issues resolved. Thank you again.

Sent from my BlackBerry 10 smartphone on the Verizon Wireless 4G LTE network.

From: Pettrone, Jessica
Sent: Wednesday, September 30, 2015 1:05 PM
To: Ellis, Angel (OST)
Subject: FW: Cafeteria Issue

Hi Angel, I contacted my OA focus group member for cafeteria per this website:
<http://dotnet.dot.gov/employeeservices/cafeteria-feedback.html> to provide her with the below feedback, and she reached out to me to let me know she had no idea what I was talking about! But she did mention that I should contact you with any cafeteria concerns I have. Please see my comment below.

Best,
Jessica

Jessica Pettrone
(202) 366-1346

From: Pettrone, Jessica
Sent: Wednesday, September 30, 2015 3:41 PM
To: McGill, Joyce (FHWA)
Subject: Cafeteria Issue

Hi Joyce,

I wanted to provide some feedback on the cafeteria in the hopes that we can prevent this situation from recurring. I am lactose intolerant and, as such, am a big fan of the soy milk provided at the coffee station. Today I bought my usual morning coffee and went back to my desk. Well, it appears the milk in the "Soy Milk" carafe was not, in fact, soy milk. I have been suffering through terrible stomach pains all day as a result (lactose pains can last for hours and hours!). I mentioned this to several other people, and everyone I spoke with gave me a similar example of the same thing happening to them (skim milk carafe containing half and half, etc.). I was quite surprised as this has never happened to me before, but it sounds like it is not an unusual occurrence. I would love it if we could ensure that Sodexo does not mix carafes and their contents! Going forward, I am always going to taste the soy milk first to make sure I know what I'm getting.

Thank you,
Jessica

Jessica Pettrone
Attorney Advisor/TIFIA Counsel
Office of the Chief Counsel
Federal Highway Administration

U.S. Department of Transportation
Room E84-311
1200 New Jersey Avenue SE
Washington DC 20590
(office) (202) 366-1346
(mobile) (202) 763-6654
jessica.petrone@dot.gov

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Whitmire, Tawanta (OST)

From: Peters, Inga <Inga.Peters@sodexo.com>
Sent: Thursday, June 05, 2014 4:29 PM
To: OST Cafeteria Manager (OST); Shaw Whitson, Francine (FHWA)
Subject: RE: Yesterday in Cafeteria

Hello Francine,

Thank you so much for your feedback, we appreciate all feedback in order to help us serve our customers better. I apologize for your negative experience.

In response to your question about the shrimp running out at the action station. The action station themes run two days in a row, except for Wednesday the carving station. We ordered what was the amount of shrimp we usually use for this menu item. I apologize that you were miss-informed about the purchase of only one bag ordered, Only one case was ordered, which contains several bags.

We were much busier then we usually are and used more of the shrimp on the first day of the menu item at the station. The following day we only had one bag left for the second day so we used this bag until gone. We had no means of purchasing more for our second day. I cannot guarantee that this will not happen from time to time, when we do not know about large groups in the building and there is a change in the usual number of customers it is possible that something like this may happen. As stated previously, we order according to past history usage so that we can assure fresh products in the café every day and not have left over items.

Again thank you for your feedback. Please ask for Chef Matt Galo, Retail Supervisor Noreen Johnson or myself if you have any other issues in the café so we may resolve for you immediately.

Inge Peters
General Manager
Sodexo, Department of Transportation
1201 4th Street SE,
Washington, DC 20590
202-610-3018 – Office
202-253-5942 – DOT Cell
(b)(6) – Cell

From: Tawanta.Whitmire@dot.gov [<mailto:Tawanta.Whitmire@dot.gov>] **On Behalf Of** ostcafeteriamanager@dot.gov
Sent: Tuesday, June 03, 2014 9:25 AM
To: Peters, Inga
Subject: FW: Yesterday in Cafeteria

Please respond

From: Shaw Whitson, Francine (FHWA)
Sent: Wednesday, May 28, 2014 11:12 AM
To: OST Cafeteria Manager (OST)
Subject: Yesterday in Cafeteria

Good Morning Ms. Whitmire,

Yesterday's menu had a shrimp risotto offered. However, when I arrived in the cafeteria around 12:15 pm, the chef informed us that she was already out of shrimp because only one bag of shrimp had been ordered. This is really a shame

when you offer a particular entrée, yet the necessary ingredients are not available. Truly, I must tell you I was very disappointed and had to settle for something else. Should I expect this type of occurrence to continue in the future? Thank you.

Francine Shaw Whitson

Team Leader, TPM Programs

FHWA, Office of Transportation Performance Management

1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE, Suite E76-338

Washington, DC 20590

Email: FSWhitson@dot.gov

Telephone: (202) 366-8028

Fax: (202) 366-9981

"For things to change, first I must change.....Unknown"

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