

**Los Angeles County  
Metropolitan Transportation Authority  
Office of the Inspector General**

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**Bus Operator Safety and  
Compliance Checks for the Period  
January to March 2012**

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*The majority of bus operators are performing their duties at a high level.  
However, rule violations were noted during approximately 6 percent of the rides  
in areas related to ADA Compliance and Safety.*



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Metropolitan Transportation Authority**

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**DATE:** June 7, 2012

**TO:** Metro Board of Directors  
Chief Executive Officer

**FROM:** *Jack Shigetomi*  
Jack Shigetomi  
Deputy Inspector General for Audits

**SUBJECT: Report on Bus Operator Safety and Compliance Checks for the Period  
January to March 2012 (Report No. 12-AUD-16)**

The Office of the Inspector General implemented an undercover “ride along” program to monitor bus operations. This program is intended to supplement any action that Metro might undertake to monitor and confirm bus operator compliance with safety and customer service policies, such as the prohibition on use of cell phones while driving, calling out stops if the automated system is not in use, and various Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance matters.

This report summarizes our observations of bus operations during January to March 2012. During the period, we completed 157 observations of Metro bus operators. Overall, we found that most operators performed their duties in accordance with Metro policies and rules. We found rule violations in 9 of the 157 observations made; one observation had more than one violation. There were a total of 10 violations and 6 written notifications were issued. For all of the written notifications, management took appropriate corrective action.

On May 29, 2012, we provided Metro management with a draft report for their review.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

In October 2009, the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) implemented an undercover “ride along” program to monitor bus operator performance to assist Metro in improving the efficiency and effectiveness of operations. This program is intended to supplement any action that Metro might undertake to monitor and confirm bus operator compliance with safety and customer service policies, such as the prohibition on use of cell phones while driving, calling out stops if the automated system is not in use, and various Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance matters. The OIG Audit and Investigation Units jointly performed this review. This report summarizes our observations of bus operator performance during the period January to March 2012.

As part of this monitoring program, OIG observers issue written notifications<sup>1</sup> to bus operators who commit significant violations. These violations include actions such as using personal cell phones, not wearing a seatbelt, and not following certain ADA policies such as wheelchair securement. The immediate notification of the violations observed provides information to operators and management in a timely manner which is in accordance with union policy and gives management the ability to take further action, if deemed necessary.

Since the inception of the “ride along” program, we have issued nine previous reports. Two of these reports covered contract bus operations. Each quarterly report had a different focus for selecting the operators to be observed, such as Metro bus lines with the greatest number of complaints, bus operators who received the most complaints, and bus lines that received the most ADA complaints.

## **OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE OF REVIEW**

The objective of our review was to determine whether bus operators were complying with safety and customer service policies as well as various ADA compliance laws and regulations.

For this quarter, we focused on lines that received the most operator performance complaints. We obtained a report<sup>2</sup> that showed the 5 divisions that had the highest average number of operator performance complaints for the period of June to August 2011. Based on this report, we selected 14 bus lines from the 5 divisions for observation. During the period of January to March 2012, we completed 157 observations of Metro bus operators. During the observations, we used a checklist to evaluate operator performance.

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<sup>1</sup> The OIG modified the TOS Initial Report Forms by crossing out “TOS” and adding “OIG” on the forms. One copy of the form is given to the operator and a copy is sent to the applicable division manager.

<sup>2</sup> Report prepared by the Customer Relations Department.

The audit portion of this review followed Government Auditing Standards. However, Government Auditing Standards were not always followed in other portions of the review, because of the nature of the observations, which included inspections conducted by OIG investigators.

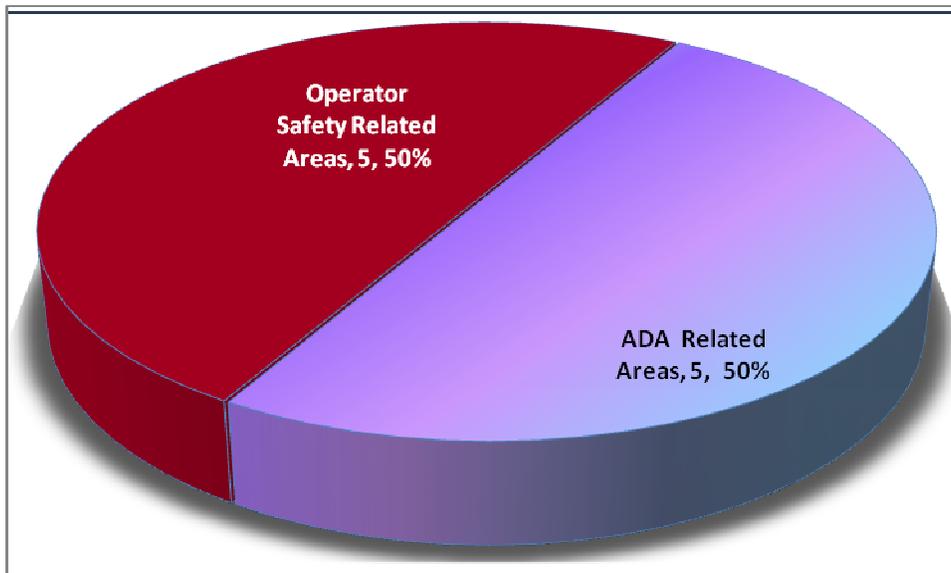
**BACKGROUND**

The Operator’s Rulebook and Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) contains policies and procedures governing Metro bus operations. The rules and SOPs in the manual are based on the principles of safety and customer service, and the premise that every individual who boards a bus deserves a high standard of care and deserves to be treated with respect and dignity. The manual covers areas such as vehicle operations, operator’s code of conduct, customer relations, and fare collection.

**RESULTS OF REVIEW**

Our observations of bus operator performance showed that the majority of operators complied with Metro policies and rules. Of the 157 observations made by the OIG observers, no violations were found during 148 (94%) observations. However, 10 violations were found during 9 (6%) of the observations (one observation noted two violations). A total of 6 written notifications were issued. The 10 violations observed were in the areas of ADA (5) and safety (5); see chart below.

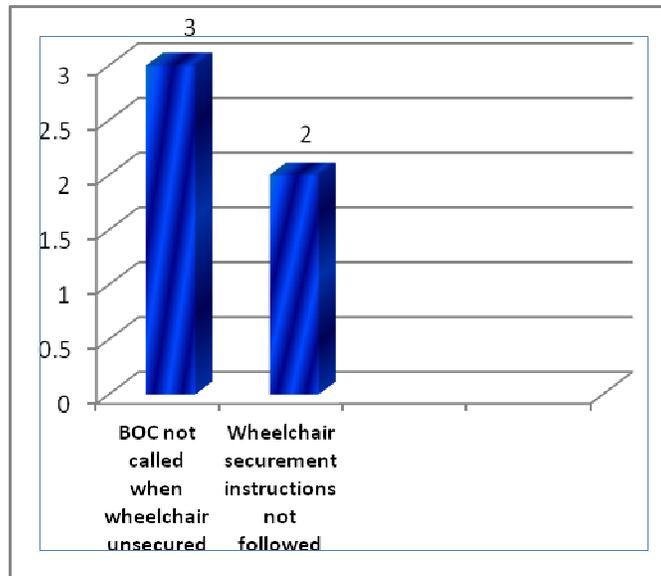
**Chart 1: Violations by Category**



**A. ADA Related Areas**

We noted 5 ADA related violations as shown in the chart below:

**Chart 2: Violations Related to ADA Areas**



**1. BOC not Called when Wheelchair Unsecured**

Twenty-one of 27 wheelchair customers who boarded the bus declined to be secured. However, Bus Operations Control (BOC) was not notified on 3 of the 21 occasions. Section 7.110 of the Operator’s Rulebook states: “In the event a customer in a wheelchair refuses to be secured, Operators may not refuse to transport the customer; however, notify BOC of the customer’s refusal to be secured at the time the wheelchair boarding is reported.”

**2. Wheelchair Securement Instructions not Followed**

During our observations, 27 wheelchair patrons boarded a Metro bus. We found that one operator did not follow wheelchair securement procedures in two areas. Specifically, the bus operator did not (a) rise from his seat and move to the securement area as required by policy, and (b) inform the customer that his/her wheelchair would be secured. Operations General Notice OPS# 11-070 states: “When boarding a customer using a wheelchair, the Operator is required to:

- Rise from the operator’s seat,
- Move to the securement area,

## Bus Operator Safety and Compliance Checks

- Request that customers who may be seated in the designated wheelchair securement area move to another seat, and
- Lift the seat and prepare the area for wheelchair securement.”

Operations General Notice OPS# 11-070 was revised on October 14, 2011, to state:

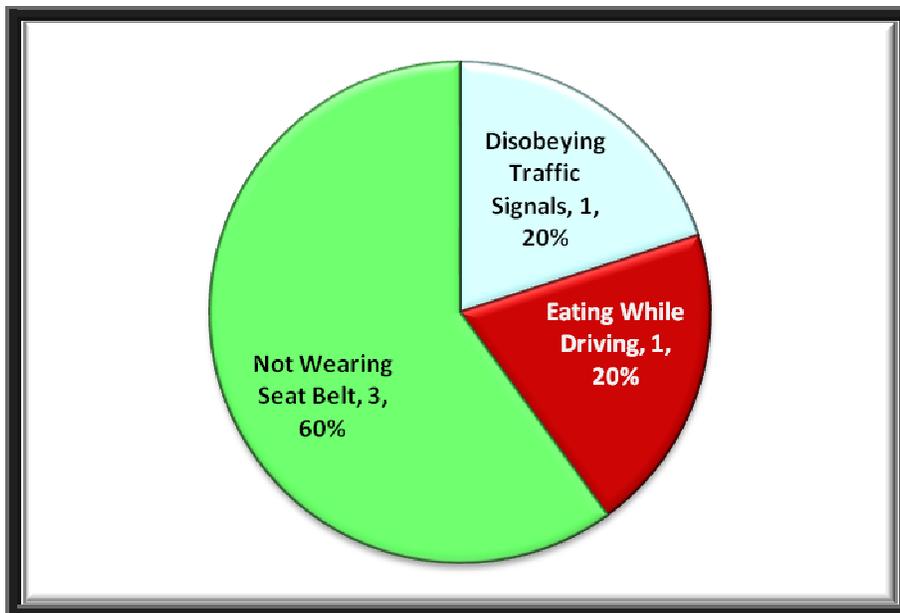
When the customer has boarded and is in the securement area, the Operator must: Announce in a clear, distinct voice, “*With your permission*, I am going to secure your wheelchair.”...If the customer is a regular rider who has previously made it known that he/she does not wish to be secured, the operator is to continue to ask the customer each and every time they board the bus in a clear, distinct voice, “*Do you still want to ride unsecured?*”

We provided the operator with a written notification of the violations. Management advised that the operator was issued counseling and training per the contract provision on progressive discipline, and the incident was recorded in the operator’s human resources counseling file.

### **B. Operator Safety Areas**

We noted five violations in the area of safety. The violations included not wearing seatbelts, eating while driving, and disobeying traffic signals, as shown in the chart below:

**Chart 3: Violations Related to Operator Safety Areas**



**1. Not Wearing Seatbelt**

We observed 3 bus operators not wearing their seatbelts while operating Metro buses. We provided the operators with a written notification of this violation. Section 2.39 of the Operator’s Rulebook states: “The use of seatbelts and shoulder belts (if equipped) is mandatory when operating any Metro vehicle.” Usage of seatbelts helps to protect the operator from serious injury or death in case of an accident. Upon receiving the written notifications, the Transportation Managers took the following actions:

- The first operator was disciplined and a written warning was issued for violation of Rule 2.39.
- The second operator received counseling and training.
- The third operator was counseled and the matter has been noted on his record.

**2. Eating While Operating Bus**

We observed 1 operator eating a sandwich while operating a Metro bus. Section 4.14 of the Operator’s Rulebook states: “Operators must not consume food and/or beverages at any time while operating any Metro vehicle or while riding as a passenger, whether vehicle is in or out of service.” Eating while driving a bus could distract the operator and increase the risk of injuries or accidents. The bus operator received a written notification of this violation. Management advised that the operator was issued a major rule violation and also received a warning.

**3. Disobeying Traffic Signals**

We observed one bus operator who did not obey traffic signals. During our observation, the bus operator ran two red lights. Section 3.118 of the Operator’s Rulebook states: “When approaching an intersection, operators must be operating under control so that a safe stop can be made before entering the cross walk. When waiting at a signal, do not proceed into either the crosswalk or the intersection until the signal turns green and it is safe to enter.” The bus operator received a written notification of this violation. Management informed us that the incident was recorded in operator’s HR counseling file and the operator was issued a “Caution.”

## **CONCLUSION**

During the quarter, we completed 157 observations of Metro bus operators. We found that the majority of Metro bus operators are performing their duties at a high level and take pride in providing the best customer service to bus patrons. Below are examples of bus operators who performed their jobs in a commendable manner:

- On February 14, 2012, bus operator (28943) called out each and every stop, even though the AVA System was on and working.
- On March 13, 2012, bus operator (34428) went out of her way to accommodate and assist a wheelchair customer.
- On March 30, 2012, bus operator (19771) had an unruly customer on the bus who was hollering obscenities out the window. The operator quickly and professionally brought this potentially volatile and unsafe situation to an end by rising from his seat and moving to the rear of the bus to politely address the customer. The customer then exited the bus.

Of the 157 observations we made, no violations were found during 148 (94%) observations. However, 10 violations were found during 9 (6%) of the observations (one observation noted two violations). A total of 6 written notifications were issued. To ensure that operator performance stays at a high level, management should continue to stress the importance of adhering to all policies and procedures. Based on the results of our review, management should emphasize compliance with rules related to:

- securing wheelchairs,
- wearing seatbelt when operating bus,
- refraining from eating or drinking while operating a bus, and
- obeying traffic signals.

## Summary of Violations Observed January to March 2012

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Observation Areas	Instances Observed
<b>ADA Related Areas</b>	
Operator did not rise from seat and move to securement area	1
Operator did not ask to secure wheelchair patron	1
Wheelchair patron not secured, BOC not called	3
<b>Operator Safety Areas</b>	
Eating while driving	1
Not wearing seatbelt	3
Not obeying Traffic Laws	<u>1</u>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<u>10</u>

## Summary of Observation Results For the Last Four Quarters

Observation Areas	Instances Observed			
	Apr to Jun 2011	Jul to Sep 2011 (A, B)	Oct to Dec 2011 (B)	Jan to Mar 2012 (B)
<b>ADA Related Areas</b>				
Operator did not rise from seat and move to securement area	(C)	(C)	3	1
Operator did not ask to secure wheelchair patron	0	1	2	1
Wheelchair patron not secured, BOC not called	2	1	7	3
Wheelchair patron denied boarding, BOC not called	0	0	1	0
Wheelchair patron passed up	0	0	0	0
Stops not announced when AVA not in use	2	14	0	0
Assistance not offered to patron who appears to have special needs	3	0	3	0
<b>Operator Safety Areas</b>				
Using personal cell phone while driving bus	0	0	1	0
Driving unsafely	0	0	0	0
Eating or drinking while driving	1	0	3	1
Not wearing seatbelt	2	2	4	3
Not obeying traffic laws	0	1	0	1
Operator Discourtesy	0	0	0	0
<b>Bus Uniforms</b>				
Bus Operator was not wearing approved uniform	<u>0</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
<b>Total Violations Observed</b>	<u>10</u>	<u>20</u>	<u>24</u>	<u>10</u>
<b>Number of Observations Made</b>	128	105	147	157
<b>Number of Observations with Violations</b>	<u>10</u>	<u>19</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>9</u>
<b>Percentage of Observations with Violations</b>	<u>8%</u>	<u>18%</u>	<u>10%</u>	<u>6%</u>

- (A) Review of contract bus operators
- (B) Multiple violations were noted during some of the observations.
- (C) Criteria was not in effect at beginning of our review period.

## Final Report Distribution

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