

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

**Contract Bus Operator Safety and
Compliance Checks for the Period
October to December 2012**

The majority of contracted bus operators are performing their duties at a high level. However, rule violations were noted during approximately 5 percent of the rides in areas related to ADA Compliance and Bus Uniforms.



Metro

**Los Angeles County
Metropolitan Transportation Authority**

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DATE: May 31, 2013

TO: Chief Executive Officer
Metro Board of Directors

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

SUBJECT: Report on Contract Bus Operator Safety and Compliance Checks for the Period October to December 2012 (Report No.13-AUD-13)

The subject draft report is enclosed for your review.

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 Disability Act compliance matters.

This report summarizes our observations of contracted bus operations for the period October to December 2012. During the period, we completed 111 observations of contracted bus operators. Overall, we found that most operators performed their duties in accordance with Metro policies and rules. We found rule violations in 5 of the 111 observations made. Because we were observing contracted bus operators, no written notifications were issued.

On May 16, 2013, we provided Metro management with a draft report for their review; no comments were received from management.

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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.

Metro has contracts with three companies (Southland Transit, Veolia Transportation, and MV Transportation) that provide bus operation service on various local bus lines. As part of their agreement with Metro, the contract bus operators are required to follow policies and procedures consistent with those followed by Metro’s bus operators. This report summarizes our observations of bus operator performance during the period October to December 2012. The OIG Audit and Investigation Units jointly performed this review.

This is our 13th quarterly report to Metro management since the inception of the OIG “ride along” program. This is the 3rd quarterly report that covers contracted bus operators. 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 objectives of our review was to determine whether contracted bus operators were complying with safety and customer service policies as well as various ADA compliance laws and regulations.

We reviewed a Metro report¹ that showed customer complaints on contracted bus lines for the period of January to August 2012. Based on this report, we selected 10 bus lines (4 from Southland, and three each from Veolia and MV) for observation. During the period of October to December 2012, we completed 111 observations of contracted bus operators. We used a checklist to evaluate operator performance.

This review is not an audit; therefore Government Auditing Standards are not applicable to this review.

¹ Report prepared by the Customer Relations Department.

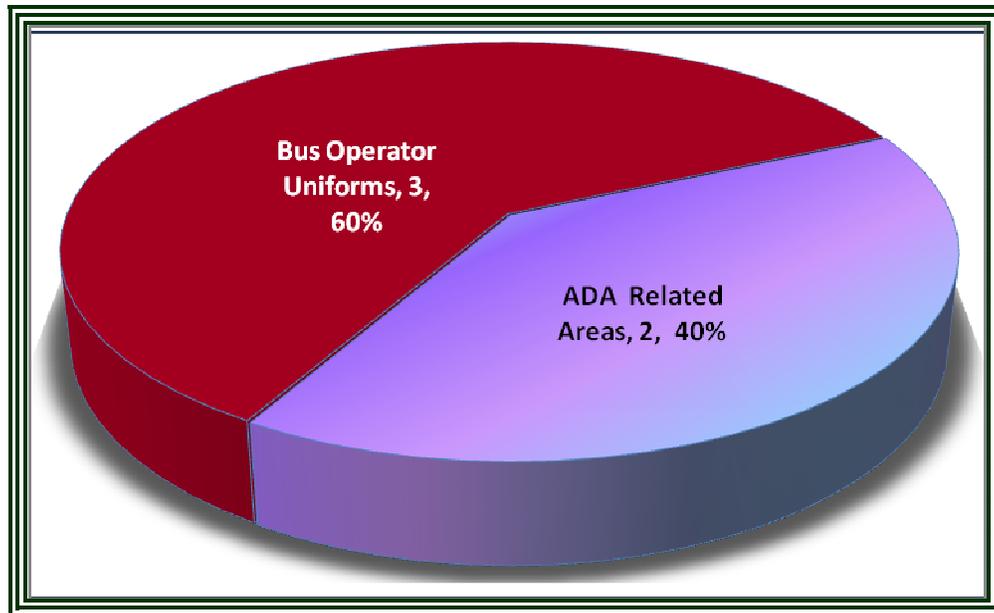
BACKGROUND

The agreements between Metro and the three contractors contain Operator Procedures and Vehicle Operation Requirements that contracted bus operators are to follow. The policies and procedures that are contained in these agreements are consistent with those followed by Metro’s bus operators and they 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 procedures cover areas such as vehicle operations, operator’s code of conduct, customer relations, and fares.

RESULTS OF REVIEW

Our observations of bus operator performance showed that the majority of operators complied with Metro policies and rules. Of the 111 observations made by OIG observers, no violations were found during 106 (95%) observations. However, 5 violations were found during 5 (5%) of the observations. The 5 violations observed were in the areas of ADA (2) and Bus Uniforms (3); see chart below.

Chart 1: Violations by Category



1. Contractor Dispatch Not Called When Wheelchair Unsecured

During the 16 observations where a wheelchair customer boarded a Metro bus, we observed that 11 wheelchair patrons declined to be secured. However, in two of these instances, the operator did not send the required notification to Contractor Dispatch that the wheelchair customer declined securement. Section F.15 of the Operator Procedures states: "If the customer refuses securement, contractor dispatch must be notified immediately as required by the rules and procedures." Metro's Transportation Contract Services was notified of the two violations.

2. Bus Operators Not in Metro Approved Uniforms

We observed three operators who were not dressed in accordance with Metro's uniform policy. Specifically, one bus operator wore a shirt with no badge number. The remaining two bus operators wore jackets that did not denote the operators' badge number. Section 5.1.5 of the Vehicle Operation Requirements states: "Operators must be in MTA approved uniforms while in service. Contractor shall ensure all drivers wear uniforms and badges at all times while providing services to the contract." Section 5.1.5 also provides a general guideline for bus operator uniforms, which include that operator's badge number be worn on the right sleeve of all shirts and jackets. Metro's Transportation Contract Services was notified of these violations.

CONCLUSION

During the quarter of October to December 2012, we completed 111 observations of contracted bus operators. We found that the majority of contracted bus operators perform their duties at a high level and take pride in providing the best customer service to bus patrons. The number of violations noted during the 3 quarters where contracted bus operators were observed has decreased significantly over time.

- Our first report² on contract bus operations covered the period of April to June 2010, and noted 60 violations.
- Our second report³ on contract bus operations covered the period of July to September 2011, and noted 20 violations
- Our current review found 5 violations.

The Service Operations Superintendent who oversees contract bus services offered the following comments regarding the decrease in violations observed:

² Report No. 11-AUD-06, dated October 29, 2010.

³ Report No. 12-AUD-06, dated January 4, 2012.

“All contract operators are required to comply with Metro’s ADA policies and procedures. All operators are trained to proficiency as Metro operators. The Mystery Rider Program⁴ has helped decrease the number of violations in addition to the increased Liquidated Damage assessed for ADA violations, which was incorporated into the Scope of Work of the contracts. ADA violations are now Major Rule violations and as such, a \$250.00 liquidated damage is assessed versus the \$100.00 liquidated damage previously assessed.”

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 to contract bus service providers compliance with rules related to:

- Calling contractor dispatch when wheelchairs are not secured, and
- Wearing Metro approved uniforms that display the operator’s badge number.

During our observations, we also noted operators who carried out their duties in an exemplary manner. We provided this information to Transportation Contract Services. Examples are:

- Operator did a very nice job assisting a total of four wheelchair patrons.
- Operator was very helpful and friendly to all bus patrons. He took time to assist a patron who was boarding the bus with a stroller.
- Operator did a very good job assisting a wheelchair patron.
- Operator was very helpful with bus patrons. One customer had problems with the bike rack, and operator got out of his seat to assist the patron with the bike.
- Operator was very patient and attentive while assisting a wheelchair patron. He got out of his seat and assisted wheelchair patron in boarding the bus.

The Service Operations Superintendent stated that she will have the contractors acknowledge those operators who provided exemplary service.

⁴ There are two programs to evaluate bus operator performance; one program is performed by a consultant firm and the other is performed by the Office of Inspector General.

**Summary of Violations Observed
Contracted Lines
October to December 2012**

Observation Areas	Instances Observed
ADA Related Areas	
Wheelchair patron not secured, Contractor Dispatch not called	2
Bus Uniforms	
Operators not in Metro Approved Uniforms	3
TOTAL	<u>5</u>

Summary of Observation Results For the Last Four Quarters

Observation Areas	Instances Observed			
	Jan to Mar 2012 (A)	Apr to Jun 2012 (A)	Jul to Sep 2012 (A)	Oct to Dec 2012 (A) (B)
ADA Related Areas				
Operator did not rise from seat and move to securement area	1	4	6	0
Operator did not ask to secure wheelchair patron	1	0	1	0
Wheelchair patron not secured, BOC (Contractor Dispatch) not called	3	2	3	2
Wheelchair patron denied boarding, BOC not called	0	0	0	0
Wheelchair patron passed up	0	0	0	0
Stops not announced when AVA not in use	0	0	0	0
Assistance not offered to patron who appears to have special needs	0	0	0	0
Operator Safety Areas				
Using personal cell phone while driving bus	0	1	0	0
Unnecessary conversation	0	1	0	0
Eating or drinking while driving	1	4	4	0
Not wearing seat belt	3	1	6	0
Not obeying traffic laws	1	0	0	0
Operator Discourtesy	0	0	0	0
Bus Uniforms				
Bus Operator was not wearing approved uniform	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>3</u>
Total Violations Observed	<u>10</u>	<u>13</u>	<u>20</u>	<u>5</u>
Number of Observations Made	157	153	170	111
Number of Observations with Violations	<u>9</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>5</u>
Percentage of Observations with Violations	<u>6%</u>	<u>8%</u>	<u>9%</u>	<u>5%</u>

(A) Multiple violations were noted during some of the observations.

(B) Contracted Bus Lines

Report Distribution

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