

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

**Bus Operator Safety and
Compliance Checks for the Period
April to June 2013**

*The majority of 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 Safety.*



Metro

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Metropolitan Transportation Authority

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DATE: October 23, 2013

TO: Arthur Leahy
Chief Executive Officer

FROM: 
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SUBJECT: Bus Operator Safety and Compliance Checks for the Period April to June 2013
(Report No: 14-AUD-02)

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 bus operations for the period April to June 2013. During the period, we completed 128 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 6 of the 128 observations made, during one observation, more than one violation was observed. In total, there were 7 violations observed and 3 written notifications of violations were issued by OIG staff during a ride. For all of the written notifications, management took appropriate corrective action. We also gave notifications of positive performance of three operators to their managers.

On October 10, 2013, we provided Metro management with a draft report for their review; no comments were received from management.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
INTRODUCTION	1
OBJECTIVE AND SCOPE OF REVIEW	1
BACKGROUND	2
RESULTS OF REVIEW	2
A. ADA Related Areas	3
1. Metro’s Wheelchair Securement Policy Not Followed	3
2. BOC Not Called When Wheelchair Unsecured	3
B. Operator Safety Related Areas - Operator Not Wearing Seatbelt	4
CONCLUSION	4
ATTACHMENTS	
A. Summary of Violations Observed	5
B. Summary of Observation Results for the Last Four Quarters	6
C. Final Report Distribution	7

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 action¹ 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 April to June 2013.

As part of this monitoring program, OIG observers issue commendation recommendations for extraordinary services and written notifications² to bus operators who commit significant violations. These violations include actions such as using personal cell phones, not wearing a seat belt, 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.

This is our 15th quarterly report to Metro management since the inception of the OIG “ride along” program. Three of the previous 14 reports covered contract bus operations. Our prior quarterly reviews had different focuses 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.

OBJECTIVE 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 with the most customer complaints during the period of December 2012 to February 2013. We analyzed a Metro report³ that showed customer complaints by bus line for this time period. Based on this report, we selected 12 bus lines that had the most complaints for observation. During the period April to June 2013, we

¹ Since 2009, Metro has engaged a contractor to make undercover rides to evaluate bus operator performance. In addition, division personnel conduct line rides for operator performance evaluation. Line rides are also conducted post-accident and for customer complaints.

² 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.

³ Report prepared by the Metro Customer Relations Department.

Bus Operator Safety and Compliance Checks

completed 128 observations of Metro 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.

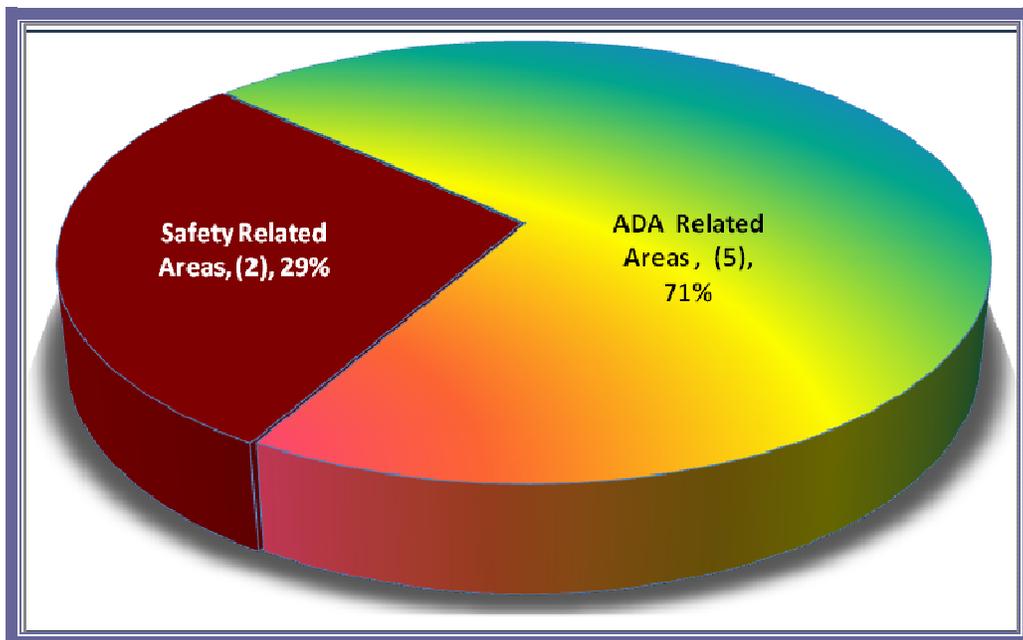
BACKGROUND

The Operator’s Rulebook and Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) contains policies and procedures governing Metro bus operator performance. 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 (1) a high standard of care and (2) 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 128 observations made by OIG observers, no violations were found during 122 (95%) observations. However, 7 violations were found during 6 (5%) of the observations (one observation had more than one violation). A total of 3 written notifications were issued. The 7 violations observed were in the areas related to ADA (5) and safety (2); see chart below.

Chart: Violations by Category



A. ADA Related Areas

We observed 5 ADA related violations:

- One operator did not adhere to Metro’s Wheelchair Securement Policy, and
- Four operators did not send the required notification to Bus Operations Control (BOC) that a wheelchair patron declined to be secured.

1. Metro’s Wheelchair Securement Policy Not Followed

Section 7.110 of the Operator’s Rulebook and Standard Operating Procedures states: “When boarding a customer using a wheelchair, the Operator is required to:

- Rise from the Operator’s seat
- Move to the securement area
- Request that customers who may be seated in the designated wheelchair securement area move to another seat
- Lift the seat and prepare the area for wheelchair securement

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.’”

During our observations, one bus operator did not rise from his seat and announce that he was going to secure the customer’s wheelchair. The OIG observer provided the operator with a written notification of this violation. In response to the written notification, division management advised that the operator would be counseled and trained.

2. BOC Not Called When Wheelchair Unsecured

Twenty-seven of the 32 wheelchair customers boarding Metro buses during our observations declined securement. However, in four of these instances, the operator did not send the required notification to BOC that the wheelchair customer declined to be secured. Section 7.110 of the Operator’s Rulebook and Standard Operating Procedures 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.” Management advised that operators would be counseled and trained.

B. Operator Safety Related Areas

Operator Not Wearing Seatbelt: We observed two bus operators not wearing a seat belt while operating the Metro bus. 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 seat belts helps to protect the operator from serious injury or death in case of an accident. The OIG observers provided the two operators with a written notification of this violation. In response to the written notifications, division management advised that the incident will be recorded as a major rule violation and operators would be counseled.

CONCLUSION

During the quarter, we completed 128 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. 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:

- following wheelchair securement procedures,
- calling BOC when wheelchairs are not secured, and
- not wearing seat belt when operating bus.

During our observations, we also noted operators who carried out their duties in an exemplary manner. When we noted excellent performance, we sent an email to the Division Transportation Operations Manager. Examples are:

- Operator’s quick and skillful reaction avoided a collision with a vehicle that pulled in front of bus.
- Operator dealt with a rude customer in an extraordinary manner.
- Operator went out of his way to be extremely helpful to patrons.

Summary of Violations Observed April to June 2013

Observation Areas	Instances Observed
ADA Related Areas	
Wheelchair securement policy not followed	1
BOC not called when wheelchair patron unsecured	4
Operator Safety Areas	
Operator not wearing seat belt while driving	<u>2</u>
TOTAL	<u>7</u>

Summary of Observation Results For the Last Four Quarters

Observation Areas	Instances Observed			
	July to Sep 2012 (A)	Oct to Dec 2012 (B)	Jan to Mar 2013 (A)	Apr to Jun 2013 (A)
ADA Related Areas				
Operator did not rise from seat and move to securement area	6	0	0	1
Operator did not ask to secure wheelchair patron	1	0	0	0
Wheelchair patron not secured, BOC/ Contractor Dispatch not called	3	2	4	4
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	1	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	0	0	0
Unnecessary conversation	0	0	1	0
Eating or drinking while driving	4	0	1	0
Not wearing seat belt while driving	6	0	2	2
Not obeying traffic laws	0	0	0	0
Operator Discourtesy	0	0	0	0
Bus Uniforms				
Bus Operator was not wearing approved uniform	<u>0</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
Total Violations Observed	<u>20</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>7</u>
Number of Observations Made	170	111	138	128
Number of Observations with Violations	<u>15</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>6</u>
Percentage of Observations with Violations	<u>9%</u>	<u>5%</u>	<u>6%</u>	<u>5%</u>

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

(B) Contracted Bus Operators.

Final Report Distribution

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