

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

**Bus Operator Safety and
Compliance Checks for the Period
July to September 2013**

*The majority of bus operators are performing their duties at a high level.
However, rule violations were noted during approximately 2 percent of the rides
in areas related to ADA Compliance and Safety.*



Metro

Los Angeles County
Metropolitan Transportation Authority

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DATE: February 25, 2014

TO: Arthur Leahy
Chief Executive Officer

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

SUBJECT: Bus Operator Safety and Compliance Checks for the Period July to September 2013 (Report No: 14-AUD-03)

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 July to September 2013. During the period, we completed 170 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 4 of the 170 observations made (two violations were observed during one observation). In total, we observed five violations, and two written notifications of violations were issued by OIG staff during the ride. For all five violations, division management took appropriate corrective actions.

On February 11, 2014, 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. The OIG Audit and Investigation Units jointly performed this review. This report summarizes our observations of bus operator performance during the period July to September 2013.

As part of this monitoring program, OIG observers issue written notifications¹ 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 16th quarterly report to Metro management since the inception of the OIG “ride along” program. Three of the previous 15 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.

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 ADA related customer complaints during the period of January to May 2013. We analyzed a report² that showed customer complaints by bus line for this time period. Based on this report, we selected 14 bus lines that had the most ADA related complaints for observation. During the period July to September 2013, we completed 170 observations of Metro bus operators. We used a checklist to evaluate operator performance.

¹ 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.

² Report prepared by the Metro Customer Relations Department.

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

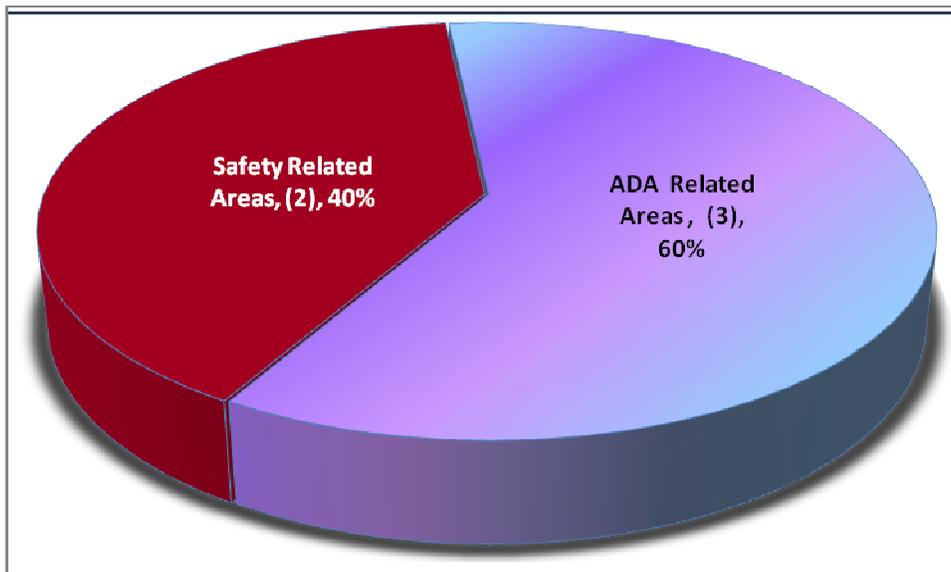
BACKGROUND

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 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 170 observations made by OIG observers, no violations were found during 166 (98%) observations. However, 5 violations were found during 4 (2%) of the observations (one observation had two violations). A total of 2 written notifications were issued. The 5 violations observed were in the areas of ADA (3) and safety (2); see chart below.

Chart: Violations by Category



A. ADA Related Areas

BOC Not Called When Wheelchair Unsecured: Twenty-five of the 26 wheelchair customers boarding Metro buses during our observations declined securement. However, in three of these instances, the operator did not send the required notification to BOC that the wheelchair passenger 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; but shall notify BOC by sending the appropriate text message using BRTT.” After we confirmed that the BOC was not notified, we advised the appropriate Division Transportation Manager of the violation. The Managers advised that the operators were counseled and issued a Trans-19 for this violation.

B. Operator Safety Related Areas

1. Operator Not Wearing Seatbelt

We observed one bus operator not wearing his seat belt while operating a Metro bus. Section 2.39 of the Operator’s Rulebook states: “The use of seatbelts and shoulder belts (if equipped) is required 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 observer provided the operator with a written notification of this violation. In response to the written notification, division management advised that incident will be recorded as a major rule violation and operator would receive counseling and training.

2. Operator Not Following Established Bus Route

Section 2.09 of the Operator’s Rulebook states: “Unless directed by law enforcement, fire department personnel or Metro Management or Supervisory authority, Operators must never deviate from designated routes or park or layover in an unauthorized location.” We observed one bus operator who did not stop at a designated stop along the bus route. It appeared to observer that bus operator was unfamiliar with this particular route. Management advised that operator will be issued a Trans-19 for a major rule violation and will be counseled by the instruction department on the bus route.

CONCLUSION

During the quarter, we completed 170 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

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policies and procedures. Based on the results of our review, management should emphasize compliance with rules related to:

- Inform BOC when a wheelchair passenger declines to be secured,
- wearing seat belts when operating bus, and
- following established bus routes.

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:

- Bus operator was professional and remained calm while dealing with a passenger who appeared to be intoxicated and did not want to pay his fare.
- Bus operator called out all stops, even though AVA system was working.
- Bus operator was very courteous and helpful to patrons that boarded the bus.

Summary of Violations Observed July to September 2013

Observation Areas	Instances Observed
ADA Related Areas	
Wheelchair patron not secured, BOC not informed	3
Operator Safety Areas	
Operator not wearing seat belt while driving	1
Operator not following established bus route	1
TOTAL	<u>5</u>

Summary of Observation Results For the Last Four Quarters

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

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

(B) Contracted Bus Operators.

Final Report Distribution

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