

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

**Bus Operator Safety and
Compliance Checks for the Period
October to December 2010**

*Overall, the majority of bus operators are complying with Metro Policies.
Although we found some operator violations, the number of violations was less
than reported for prior quarterly periods.*

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Metro

**Los Angeles County
Metropolitan Transportation Authority**

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DATE: April 29, 2011

TO: Board of Directors
Chief Executive Officer

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Deputy Inspector General – Audit

SUBJECT: Bus Operator Safety and Compliance Checks for the Period of October to December 2010. Report No. 11-AUD-11

INTRODUCTION

The Office of the Inspector General (OIG) has implemented an undercover “ride along” program to monitor bus operations, as part of our mandate to uncover fraud, waste, and abuse, as well as, 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 American with Disability Act (ADA) compliance matters. The OIG Audit and Investigation Units jointly performed this review. This report summarizes our observations of bus operations during the period October to December 2010.

This was the second quarterly reporting period that OIG observers issued written notifications¹ to bus operators who committed significant violations. These violations include the use of cell phones, not wearing a seat belt, and not following ADA policies. 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.

We have issued four previous quarterly reports on bus operator evaluations. One report² focused on Metro bus lines with the greatest number of complaints, another report³ focused

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 Bus Operator Safety and Compliance Checks, October to December 2009 (Report No. 10-AUD-07, issued February 24, 2010)

³ Bus Operator Safety and Compliance Checks, January to March 2010 (Report No. 11-AUD-10, issued August 20, 2010)

on Metro bus operators who had received the most complaints, the third report⁴ covered observations of contracted bus operations, and the fourth report⁵ covered bus lines that received a high number of complaints dealing with ADA issues.

OBJECTIVE, SCOPE, AND METHODOLOGY 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 quarterly period, we focused on lines that received the most ADA complaints. We obtained a report⁶ showing customer complaints related to ADA issues by bus line for the period of January to September 2010. From this report, we selected 10 bus lines with the highest number of ADA complaints for observation. During this period, we completed a total of 111 observations of bus operators. We used a checklist to evaluate operator performance.

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 investigations staff.

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 fares.

⁴ Bus Operator Safety and Compliance Checks, April to June 2010 (Report No. 11-AUD-06, issued October 29, 2010).

⁵ Bus Operator Safety and Compliance Checks, July to September 2010 (Report No. 11-AUD-09, issued February 7, 2011)

⁶ The report was prepared by the Metro Customer Relations Department.

RESULTS OF REVIEW

Our safety and compliance checks showed that the majority of bus operators complied with Metro policies and rules. We found no violations in 106 (95%) of the 111 observations, and noted violations in 5 (5%) of the observations. OIG observers issued 2 written notifications for violations cited. The number of violations observed during this review was less than prior quarterly reviews.

Chart 1 – Breakdown of Violations



1. Wheelchair Securement

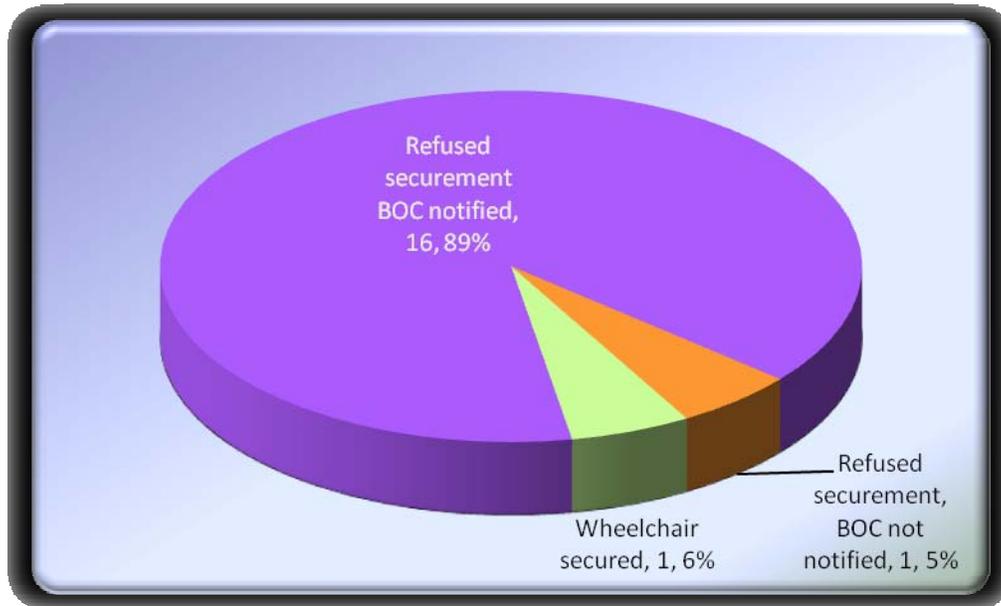
During 18 safety and compliance checks, patrons in wheelchairs boarded the bus. For these instances, we observed that:

- All 18 bus operators asked each patron in a wheelchair if they wanted to be secured.
- One patron in a wheelchair was secured.
- 17 wheelchair patrons declined to have their wheelchair secured. In 16 of the 17 instances, the operators notified⁷ Bus Operation Control (BOC) as required by the Operator’s Rulebook and Standard Operating Procedures. In one instance the bus operator did not. 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

⁷ When a wheelchair patron is unsecured, operators are required to input this information (using a numbered code) into the Automated Transportation Management System.

the customer; however, notify BOC of the customer’s refusal to be secured at the time the wheelchair boarding is reported.”

Chart 2 - Observations Related to Wheelchair Securement



2. Calling Out Stops

On five bus rides, we observed that the Automatic Voice Annunciation (AVA) system was not on or not working. During two of these rides, the operator did not call out stops as required by Metro policy. Section 7.03 of the Operator’s rulebook states: “In the event that the Automatic Voice Annunciation system is not operational, make announcements in a clear distinct voice.”

3. Not Wearing Seat Belt

During two observations, we found that the bus operators were not wearing a seat belt. We provided the operator and division management with written notifications concerning these instances. One Division Manager advised us that the operator was charged with a violation. Using seat belts helps prevent serious injury to the operator in event of an accident or sudden stop. 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...”

CONCLUSION

We found rule violations in approximately 5 percent of the observations made. Based on the results of our review, Operations management needs to emphasize compliance with rules related to:

- wheelchair securement,
- calling out stops, and
- wearing seat belts.

The review found that the majority of Metro bus operators performed their duties at a high level and took pride in providing the best customer service to bus patrons. We observed several operators who performed their duties in a commendable manner:

- An operator was very courteous and greeted each and every patron that entered the bus (Line number 150, Operator number 28566).
- An operator went out of her way to provide assistance to a wheelchair patron (Line number 720, Operator number 71584).
- An operator went out of his way to provide assistance to patrons, in particular the operator took time to help an elderly woman who used a walker (Line number 207, Operator number 25600).
- The AVA system was not working, the Bus Operator called out each and every stop, and he also went out of his way to be courteous to all patrons (Line number 720, Operator number 14047).

We believe that the Operations Department should acknowledge commendable operators by calling or writing a memo to commend them, congratulating them at a division meeting, or inviting them to be recognized at an Operations Committee meeting.

On April 8, 2011, we provided Metro management with a draft report for their review. Management did not have any comments to this report.

Summary of Violations Observed

Observation Areas	Instances Observed
ADA Related Areas	
Operator did not ask to secure wheelchair patron	0
Wheel chair patron not secured, BOC not notified	1
Wheel chair patron passed-up	0
Stops not announced when AVA not in use	2
Patron appeared to have special needs, no assistance offered	0
Operator Safety Areas	
Using personal cell phone while driving bus	0
Driving unsafely	0
Eating or drinking while driving	0
Not wearing seat belt	2
Not obeying Traffic Laws	<u>0</u>
TOTAL	<u>5</u>

Final Report Distribution

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