

**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 2011**

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*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.*



**Metro**

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Metropolitan Transportation Authority**

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**DATE:** August 10, 2011

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

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

**SUBJECT: Final Report: Bus Operator Safety and Compliance Checks for the Period  
January to March 2011(Report No. 12-AUD-01)**

The subject 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 (ADA) compliance matters.

Overall, we found that most operators performed their duties in accordance with Metro policies and rules. We found rule violations in 3 of the 112 observations made and observers issued 1 written notification of a violation.

The report does not contain any recommendations; therefore, a management response to the report is not required.

If you have any questions, please contact me at (213) 244-7305.

Enclosure: Audit Report

cc: Karen Gorman  
Paul Taylor  
Patricia Soto  
Lonnie Mitchell  
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Roman Alarcon  
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## **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 January to March 2011.

This was the third quarterly reporting period that OIG observers issued written notifications<sup>1</sup> 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 five previous quarterly reports on bus operator evaluations. One 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 had 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 that received the most bus operator performance complaints. We obtained a report<sup>2</sup> showing the most number of bus operator performance complaints by bus line for the period of January to November 2010. From this report, we selected 10 bus lines with the highest number of complaints for observation. During this period, we completed a total of 112 observations of bus operators performance. 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> The report was prepared by the Metro 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 investigations staff.

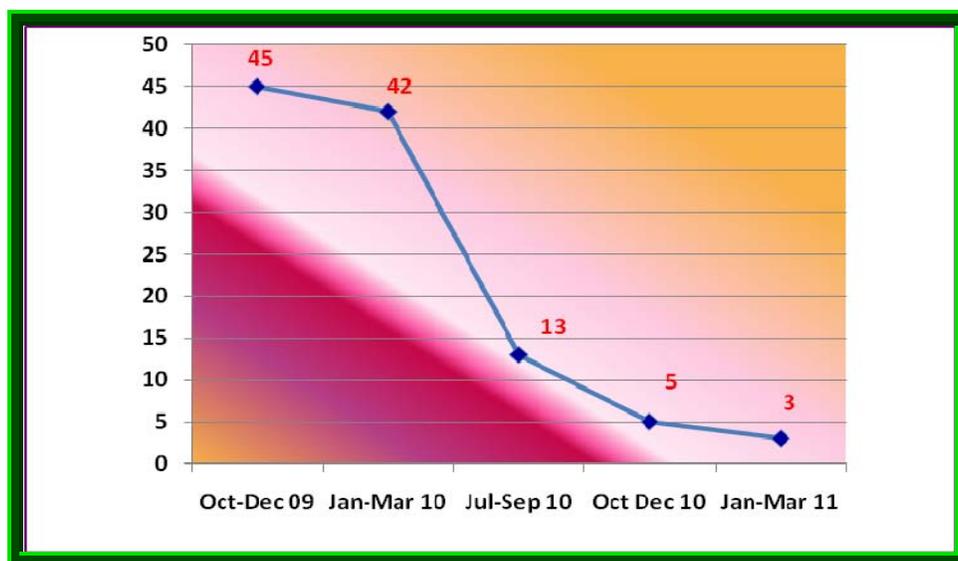
## **BACKGROUND**

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.

## **RESULTS OF REVIEW**

Our observations of bus operator performance found that the majority of bus operators complied with Metro policies and rules. We found that there were no violations in 109 of 112 (97%) observations. Violations involving not calling out stops and not wearing seat belts were noted in 3 (3%) of the observations. Of the three observations of violations, one warranted a written notification to the operator. The number of violations observed during this review was less than prior quarterly reviews. A trend of less violations continues, which may reflect the bus assessments and Metro management oversight efforts to improve bus operator performance.

**Chart 1 – Violations Observed During Quarterly Reviews<sup>3</sup>**



<sup>3</sup> The quarterly review for April to June 2010 is not included in the chart because it focused on contract bus services.

**1. 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.” This is an ADA issue because calling out stops when the AVA system is inoperable is vital for blind patrons to know when to disembark.

**2. Not Wearing Seat Belt**

During one observation, we found that a bus operator was not wearing a seat belt. We provided the operator and division management with written notification concerning this matter. The observer noted that the bus operator was a good driver; however, he just did not have on his seat belt. 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.

**NUMBER OF VIOLATIONS HAVE DECREASED**

We found since the inception of our Bus Safety and Compliance Check program in October 2009, violations in many of the Safety and ADA areas have decreased over time. A comparison of operator violations found during the first two quarters (quarters ending December 2009 and March 2010) of our program to the most recent two quarters (quarters ending December 2010 and March 2011) showed the following:

Observation Area	Number of Violations Observed	
	Oct 09 to Mar 10	Dec 10 to Mar 11
Operator not wearing seat belt	18	3
Stops not announced when AVA not in use	11	4
Using personal cell phone while operating bus	3	0
Operator eating or drinking while driving	8	0
Driving unsafely	8	0

We believe that these improvements in bus operator performance and adherence to rules is attributable to the operator evaluations made by the OIG, contractor<sup>4</sup> operator performance evaluations, and ongoing Metro management efforts to stress to bus operators the importance of adhering to safety and ADA policies and procedures.

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<sup>4</sup> Metro has a contract with the Mobility Advancement Group to perform bus operator assessments.

During our performance observations, we continue to emphasize to the OIG observers to look for operators who provide exemplary service. During this quarterly review, we observed two operators who performed their duties in a commendable manner.

- On March 31, 2011, an operator (28054) quickly reacted to avoid a collision with a grey jeep that made an illegal right turn in front of the bus.
- On March 14, 2011, an operator (18399) was exceptionally courteous to patrons. The operator also called out stops even though the AVA system was working.

## **CONCLUSION**

We found that the number of operator violations has decreased since we began our undercover “ride along” program in October 2009. During the current quarterly review, we found rule violations in approximately 3 percent of the observations made. The review 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.

On July 28, 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

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Observation Areas	Instances Observed
<b>ADA Related Areas</b>	
Operator did not ask to secure wheelchair patron	0
Wheel chair patron not secured, BOC not called	0
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
<b>Operator Safety Areas</b>	
Using personal cell phone while driving bus	0
Driving unsafely	0
Eating or drinking while driving	0
Not wearing seat belt	1
Not obeying Traffic Laws	0
Operator Discourtesy	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<u>3</u>

## Final Report Distribution

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