

**REPORT
OF THE
AMERICAN PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION ASSOCIATION
PEER REVIEW PANEL**

FOR

**LOS ANGELES COUNTY METROPOLITAN
TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY
Los Angeles, California**

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American Public Transportation Association**

**REPORT
OF THE
AMERICAN PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION ASSOCIATION
PEER REVIEW PANEL**

**ON THE
LRT BLUE LINE OPERATIONS**

**PROVIDED AT
L.A. METRO**

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David Genova
Greg Hull**

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.	INTRODUCTION	1
II.	OBSERVATIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS	3
III.	CONCLUSIONS	7
	APPENDIX	8
	A – Peer Review Request	
	B – Peer Review Agenda	
	C – Document List	

I. INTRODUCTION

In July 2010, Mr. Arthur Leahy, Chief Executive Officer, Los Angeles Metro (L.A. Metro), contacted the American Public Transportation Association (APTA) to request a peer review of the agency's *rail operating practices and programs for Metro LRT Blue Line*.

Through discussions between APTA and L.A. Metro staff, it was determined the review would be conducted August 30 – September 2, 2010.

A panel of industry peers was assembled that provided expertise in rail operations, technology and safety. The peer review panel consisted of the following transit individuals.

Bernadette Bridges
Chief Safety Officer
QA and Risk Management
Maryland Mass Transit Administration
Baltimore, Maryland

Tania Fraser
Coordinator, Operations Control Centre
Calgary Transit
Calgary, Ontario, Canada

David Genova
Assistant General Manager,
Safety, Security & Facilities
Regional Transit District
Denver, Colorado

Greg Hull
Director, Security and Operations Support
APTA

The panel convened in Los Angeles on August 30, 2010. Panel coordination and logistical support was provided by APTA Staff Advisor Greg Hull. Mr. Hull also coordinated panel member input in the drafting of this peer review report. Mr. Duane Martin, Deputy Executive Officer, Project Management provided agency liaison support.

Methodology

The APTA peer review process is well established as a valuable resource to the industry for assessing all aspects of transit operations and functions. The peer reviews are conducted on-site by highly experienced transit personnel who are selected on the basis of their subject matter expertise. Through the benefits of on-site interviews of agency staff, review of relevant documents, and inspections the panel concludes its review with a summary of observations and recommendations to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and senior staff of the transit agency.

Scope of Report

The scope of this review focused on evaluating the safety and operating principles of the Metro Blue Line operations. The findings and recommendations provided through this peer review are offered as an industry resource to be considered by Los Angeles Metro in support of the organization's pursuit of continual improvement.

II. OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

L.A. Metro Blue Line's operations are being delivered in a safe manner in line with light rail industry practices and procedures. As provided through this report, there are opportunities to build upon current practices to strengthen the operations further.

1. TRAINING PROGRAM

The training program is taught by experienced instructors and there is a dedicated instructor for each division. At present, there are two vacancies within the Training section. The program curriculum includes features that are consistent with industry practices such as the duration of the program, the program content and key elements.

While it is recognized that annual certification of operators is a state requirement, this activity has been embraced by the Training department and includes awareness for current operational issues and trends. The quarterly lines rides conducted are an effective practice as well as a leading practice in the transit industry.

The program includes post incident/accident refresher training including follow up with unavoidable accidents and is regarded by the panel as an industry best practice. Efficiency checks are conducted in line with industry practice. Fatigue awareness is included in the program and reinforced visually within the workplace. In the event of an incident, the release for duty practice ensures the operator is capable of carrying out his/her duties in a safe manner. Specific training is provided for signal phasing and waiting for fresh "proceed" signals. The operators interviewed indicated that, in their opinion, the training was adequate and the instructors excellent. The inclusion of a 90 day probationary period is a good management tool.

It should be noted that the Expo line will require additional training, as well as additional operators and training staff.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Review training methods to incorporate new formats for maximizing adult learning. Assistance could be obtained from a local college.
- Fill the two vacant staff positions in the Training department.
- Form operator focus groups with a view to obtaining input for annual certification.
- Research available resources required for the Training department to support skills development of training staff as well as reviewing numbers of training staff required.

2. RULES AND PROCEDURES

The rules and procedures are clearly defined within the Metro Blue Line environment. And the process for developing new rules and procedures and inclusion of stakeholders is in line with industry practice. Metro Blue line has developed procedures unique to its operating characteristics. The requirements for the use of horns and bells varies along the line and adds to the complexity of operator duties for operating in this environment. Operator assessment of the rule book indicates that it has evolved into a much larger and more involved document.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Review practices for horn and bell application
- Continue the current practice of direct interface with employees to ensure procedures are fully understood (as illustrated by “bar signal” compliance).

3. SERVICE MANAGEMENT & CONTROL

The use of current technology has enabled Metro Blue Line to effectively manage train movement and respond to emergencies. In addition service planning and scheduling appears to be appropriate.

The panel noted that “make up time” has been built into the Long Beach segment of the line and that a relief operator has now been scheduled to take over at the Metro 7th Street Station terminal. The panel believes that the intent of this arrangement may not be fully understood by the Blue Line operators.

It is noted that the shortage of operators and a high level of absenteeism has necessitated mandatory overtime and additional work days and may also be a factor in the Blue Line having more absenteeism than other lines. Current work conditions include assignments up to 13.5 hours with call back allowed after only 8 hours of rest. Many operators commute long distances to work which may have some impact on fitness for duty. While Metro Blue Line posts a significant amount of information for employees, operators were not aware of their accident or absenteeism trends.

Metro Blue Line has implemented many elements regarding “fitness for duty” including, operators reporting to rail division to start work, CDL license medical evaluations, agility testing, fatigue awareness, medication reporting requirements and sleep disorder information. It is noted that supervisors do not receive training regarding their role in the managing of “fitness for duty”.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Conduct exit interviews with operators who opt out from the Metro Blue Line.
- Review current “fitness for duty” activities and implement a full program that includes awareness training for supervisors and direct interface between supervisors and operators.
- Evaluate work hour assignments and develop a minimum standard of 10 hours rest between shifts.
- Fill operator vacancies and address upcoming Expo Line operator needs.

4. COMPLIANCE AND DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURES

Although the panel did not have the opportunity to fully evaluate Metro Blue Line's disciplinary process, it did find that its operators throughout the Blue Line have an appropriate understanding of the rules and are committed to the compliance of the rules. Efficiency testing has also confirmed that the operators are in general compliance with rules and procedures. It was noted by operators that the quarterly ride checks were welcomed by the operators as an opportunity to interact with supervisors.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Continue with initiatives for ride checks, efficiency checks and direct interface with operators on the main line.
- Review the consistency in the application of discipline.

5. CONSISTENCY WITH BEST PRACTICES

The application of rules, operating procedures, training and management controls by Metro Blue Lines is consistent with effective industry practices. In addition Metro Blue line has implemented engineering, enforcement and educational safety improvements that have reduced the average annual accident rate. It is not certain to the panel the degree to which the Metro Blue Line has adopted the standards published through the APTA Standards Program.

RECOMMENDATION

- Create a position that monitors all newly developed industry standards and communicate these to all appropriate departments for review and adoption.

OTHER OBSERVATIONS

The panel commends Metro Blue line for upgrading the bar signal to LED on the Long Beach line. It would be practical to establish a standard and consistent means to refer to the bar signals to avoid misinterpretation. Currently, the bar signals are being referenced as a “green/ red bar” or “red bar” or a “horizontal bar” which could potentially lead to a conflict of conveying actual conditions between the operator and Control.

With input from the operators, consider implementing a standard device to activate/ depress the horns and bell buttons. It may be appropriate to invite operators to display the various devices they are using in determining the best prototype

Regular opportunities for interaction on a broad range of issues and areas of interest between the operators and supervisors would benefit all parties involved.

Standardize the formal reporting of safety concerns, whether report directly to Control or through the SAFE7 program. Address the concerns noted by operators for personal safety of the public and operators with a more visible presence of law enforcement on the Line.

Review the operator facilities at Metro and 7th to determine if they are to the same standard as provided on other lines.

Lastly, review Metro’s procedure for follow up with employees who are absent from work, regardless of whether the absence is a worker’s compensation claim, short-term or long term claim. Regular and consistent contact by supervisors with employees absent from work can help to foster a caring atmosphere as well as an inducement to return to work.

III. Concluding Remarks

While the panel found that the Metro Blue Line is operating in accordance with effective industry practices, the recent LRT/ vehicle accidents have driven the organization examine any and all opportunities for further improvements. The request for this review is indicative of a progressive transit agency that is committed to continual improvement.

The panel sincerely appreciates the support and assistance extended by the personnel of the Blue Line and other Metro staff. The panel stands available to assist with any clarification or further support that may be needed.