



**OPERATIONS COMMITTEE  
OCTOBER 21, 2004**

**SUBJECT: BUS STOP ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**ACTION: RECEIVE AND FILE**

**RECOMMENDATION**

Receive and file report on bus operators announcing stops.

**ISSUE**

At the April 22, 2004 Board Meeting, Directors Fasana and LaBonge requested staff to report back to the Operations Committee on bus operators announcing stops.

**DISCUSSION**

As required by law, MTA's basic instruction program for bus operators includes a module discussing the duties and responsibilities of all bus operators under the Federal Transit Administration's (FTAs) Rules and Regulations for persons with disabilities. Examples of subjects under this training module include, but are not limited to:

- American's with Disability Act (ADA) Law
- General guidelines related to announcing destination/transfer/point of interest; speaking slowly and clearly; parking close to the curb; kneeling the bus; making priority seating available; providing extra boarding/alighting time; use of the bus public address system
- Signs of aging and disabilities (visible and less obvious)

Additionally, operators are required to comply with MTA policies for providing assistance to customers with disabilities in the Operators Rulebook and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs). Operators who fail to comply are subject to disciplinary action for this major rule violation.

In addition to Transit Operation Supervisors' (TOS) monitoring bus operators, the MTA is developing a bus monitoring program using persons with disabilities to report on the accessibility features of the individual's trip. MTA's County Counsel recommended that the agency continue a former monitoring program created as a result of a lawsuit. Staff is modifying the program to include all ADA service requirements and using volunteers.

Elements to be observed by the monitors include announcement by the operator of “all stops,” major intersections, and requested stops. The monitors will receive training on the FTA’s Rules and Regulations and how to complete and submit the evaluation form (see form in Attachment A). The program will begin in early 2005.

Upon receipt of the evaluation form, the MTA’s ADA Compliance Officer will forward a copy of the form to the Operation’s ADA Unit. Depending on the contents of the report, the ADA Unit will issue a commendation or assign an undercover TOS to investigate the operator. The undercover TOS may use a wheelchair, a walker, or other mobility device to determine if the operator is complying with MTA policies. Following the undercover TOS’s evaluation, the operator may be praised or disciplined.

The United States Department of Transportation, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) regulations at 49 CFR sections 37.167 (b) and (c) require that bus and rail stop announcements be made on fixed route systems as follows:

- (b) On fixed route systems, the entity shall announce the stops as follows:
  1. The entity shall announce at least at transfer points with other fixed routes, other major intersections and destination points, and intervals along a route sufficient to permit individuals with visual impairments or other disabilities to be oriented to their location.
  2. The entity shall announce any stop on request of an individual with a disability.

(c) Where vehicles or other conveyances for more than one route serve the same stop, the entity shall provide a means by which an individual with a visual impairment or other disability can identify the proper vehicle to enter or be identified to the vehicle operator as a person seeking a ride on a particular route.

Many transit operators around the country have similar training, disciplinary, and compliance monitoring programs in place. However, as reported by the Community Transportation Association (CTA) in an article, *Calling Out Stops: A Simple Act, Often Forgotten*:

“..except in relatively few communities, the pattern of non-compliance is about the same as when the ADA was signed into law. The severity of the compliance issue on the stop announcement guarantee has been flagged on two other fronts. First, the American Public Transit Association (APTA) several years ago conducted a survey of its members on ADA compliance issues and found that the problem of noncompliance with respect to the ADA stop announcement guarantee ranked second only to difficulties in implementing the ADA as a result of federal cutbacks in transit operating subsidiaries. Second, a number of class action lawsuits filed in recent years against transit agencies have included allegations of widespread noncompliance by fixed route operators in calling out stops...”

National compliance rates are not tracked, but the American Council of the Blind (ACB) – a national advocacy organization for people with visual disabilities – has estimated that the average compliance rate for fixed-route bus operators in calling out stops is approximately 10 to 15 percent nationally.

Many transit systems, including MTA, have begun to implement high tech solutions to the stop announcement issue. MTA's Advanced Transportation Management System (ATMS) will automate stop announcements for passengers. The next bus stop will be announced automatically by the Automatic Voice Annunciator (AVA) system, using state-of-the-art navigation and software systems. AVA utilizes the ATMS' Automatic Vehicle Location (AVL) system for location input and MTA Bus Schedule System for routes and schedules. Using the Global Positioning System (GPS) and Dead Reckoning (DR), AVA monitors the location of the bus and compares that with the bus schedule to predict the next stop.

Once ATMS is fully functional in the entire bus fleet in early 2005, the bus stop announcements will be shown in text as well as heard. They will be fully compliant with the ADA.

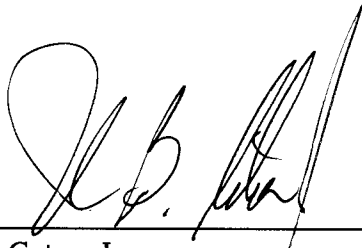
### **NEXT STEPS**

The MTA will continue to implement the operator training, monitoring and new technology programs discussed above to improve service for our disabled customers and comply with the requirements of the ADA.

### **ATTACHMENT**

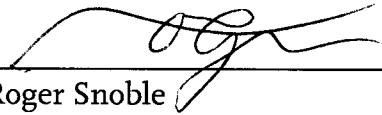
A. Metro Bus Rider's Evaluation Form

Prepared by: Andrea Burnside, Managing Director Metro Operations



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John B. Catoe, Jr.  
Deputy Chief Executive Officer



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Roger Snoble  
Chief Executive Officer



METRO BUS RIDER'S EVALUATION FORM

DRAFT, Revised 9/16/04

Rider's Identification: \_\_\_\_\_ Agency: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

BUS STOP – PRIOR TO BOARDING BUS

- 1. Boarding Origin: Street: \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. Nearest Cross Street: \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. Your Destination: \_\_\_\_\_
- 4. Direction: N S E W
- 5. Line Number: \_\_\_\_\_
- 6. Bus Run: \_\_\_\_\_
- 7. Bus Number: \_\_\_\_\_
- 8. Operator Badge Number: \_\_\_\_\_
- 9. Boarding Time: \_\_\_\_\_ AM \_\_\_\_\_ PM
- 10. Time Exited Bus: \_\_\_\_\_: \_\_\_\_\_ AM \_\_\_\_\_ PM \_\_\_\_\_
- 11. How many people, including you, were at the bus stop? \_\_\_\_\_

BUS BOARDING

- 12. Did the bus stop? YES  NO
- 13. How many people got on the bus? \_\_\_\_\_
- 14. When you boarded, were the priority seats occupied? YES  NO
- 15. Did you or another rider board the bus using a wheelchair? YES  NO

(If yes, go to number 16, please answer a. - d)

- a. Did the lift or ramp work properly? YES  NO  N/A
- b. Did the Operator provide or offer assistance to secure the wheelchair? YES  NO  N/A
- c. Was the wheelchair secured? YES  NO  N/A
- d. Was the lap/shoulder belt used? YES  NO  N/A
- 16. Did the Operator request anyone to move from the priority seating area for a customer with a disability or a senior adult? YES  NO  N/A



**METRO BUS RIDER'S EVALUATION FORM**

DRAFT, Revised 9/16/04

17. Were non-wheelchair riders allowed to use the lift or ramp upon request?

YES  NO  N/A

**BUS TRIP**

18. Did the operator move the bus before all riders crossed the safety line?

YES  NO

19. Were the following announced?

- a. All Stops
- c. Major Intersections
- e. Stops On Request

YES  NO

YES  NO

YES  NO  N/A

20. Was the external P.A. System used to announce a stop where there were more than one bus line serving that bus stop?

YES  NO  N/A

**SERVICE ANIMALS**

21. While you were on the bus, was a service animal boarded?

YES  NO  N/A

- a. Was the service animal allowed to ride the lift with the owner?
- b. Did the Operator question the rider about his/her service animal?
- c. What did the Operator ask? \_\_\_\_\_

YES  NO  N/A

YES  NO

**OTHER RIDERS WITH DISABILITIES**

22. Did the Operator deploy the lift or ramp when requested to do so for a rider who does not use a wheelchair?

YES  NO  N/A

23. Did the Operator board anyone with a respirator or oxygen tank?

YES  NO  N/A

Comments:

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