



Metro

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**OPERATIONS COMMITTEE
SEPTEMBER 20, 2007**

SUBJECT: EVALUATION OF METRO'S POLICY ON BUSES IN REVENUE AND NON-REVENUE SERVICE ON FREEWAYS

ACTION: RECEIVE AND FILE

RECOMMENDATION

Receive and file report on the feasibility of establishing a new policy or policy amendment restricting Metro buses in revenue and non-revenue service to the outmost lane on all freeways.

ISSUE

At the June 21, 2007 Operations Committee, Director Antonovich presented a motion requesting staff to return within 60 days with a new policy that restricts Metro buses in revenue and non-revenue service to the outermost lane on all freeways, makes the second most outermost lane only available for passing and creates exceptions for Metro buses in revenue service on express bus routes, transitway routes and when the left lanes are used to exit or enter a freeway.

DISCUSSION

Staff conducted a review of Metro's current Rules and Standard Operating Procedures (Attachment A) regarding operating buses on freeways. Although the existing procedures (Rule 3.49, 3.50, SOP 3.144), which are consistent with other transit agencies surveyed, do not restrict the operation of buses to any particular freeway lane, they do include defensive driving techniques such as avoiding unnecessary lane changes, adjusting the speed of the bus to conditions of the road, light, weather and traffic. They also provide safety guidance when operating on freeways by requiring buses to slow down and not operate side-by-side in adjacent lanes with any large vehicles (bus, truck, etc) while allowing these other vehicles to advance.

Staff also reviewed the training module (Attachment A) used for bus operators regarding operation on freeways. The module, which is based on the Transportation Safety Institute's (TSI) guidelines, addresses safety issues such as merging traffic, maintaining a safe following distance, changing lanes on the freeway and exiting the freeway. The TSI training

module recommends buses travel in the second lane of a three lane highway to prevent hazards from merging traffic.

Although Metro's existing rules and training address the hazards associated with operating on freeways, staff will revise these documents to explicitly restrict buses from operating in the number one lane (not including the HOV lane) with certain exceptions such as: when the other lanes are blocked by a stalled vehicle or due to an accident, or when necessary to merge on or off a freeway, or in the event of a construction reroute. These revisions will enhance the safety of our operations while providing an efficient alternative to transit riders to driving their personal automobiles.

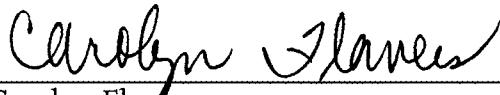
NEXT STEPS

Safety is Metro's number one goal and staff will revise its operating procedures and update its training modules to incorporate the changes described above. The implementation of the revised rules will be completed in December 2007 and copies of the revised documents will be provided via a Board Box in January 2008.

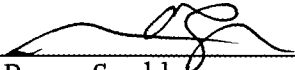
ATTACHMENT

- A. Standard Operating Procedures and Training Module- Freeway Related

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Chief Operations Officer



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Chief Executive Officer

ATTACHMENT A

3.142 Off-Street Terminal Operation

At any off-street terminal, Operators must be operating under control at all times. Unless otherwise posted, speed should not exceed 8 MPH, and should be further reduced if conditions warrant. During any layover exceeding 1 minute, place the gear selector in the neutral position, shut off the engine, and set the parking brake. Operators are not required to remain on the bus as long as the bus has been properly secured. If a vehicle has been tagged by the Maintenance Department "DO NOT SHUT OFF ENGINE," contact BOC before arriving at terminal to receive instructions on alternate location to layover while engine idles if terminal has a "No Noise" policy. If layover exceeds 1 minute, secure the vehicle before exiting. (See Rules 3.04 & SOP 2.118)

3.143 Freeway Bus Stop Lanes

When entering or operating through any freeway bus stop lane, slow the bus to a safe speed, (maximum 10 MPH), and never exceed the posted speed limit. Operate through all freeway stops, even if there are no customers waiting. For customer safety and comfort, make every effort to avoid excessive dust, water, or obstructions near freeway bus stops. (See Rule 3.48 & SOP 3.130)

3.144 Freeway Lanes

When operating on a freeway, avoid unnecessary lane changes. Operate the bus defensively and adjust the speed of the bus to conditions of the road, light, weather, and traffic. Buses are not restricted to any particular lane on the freeway; however, good judgment should be used regarding the choice of traffic lanes. (See Rule 3.49)

3.145 Left Turn across Railroad Tracks

When a railroad track is located in the middle of a divided roadway at a signal-controlled intersection, wait in the number one lane until the left turn can be safely completed. (See Rule 3.51 & 3.53)

3.146 Exempt Railroad Crossings

Operators are not required to make a stop at a railroad crossing where an "Exempt" sign is posted, (unless train is present). (See Rule 3.51 & 3.54)

3.147 Stop Not Required Railroad Crossings

A stop is not required at a railroad crossing if any of the following conditions apply:

- Railroad Flagman or Law Enforcement Officer are directing traffic
- Nearside traffic signal controlled intersection (unless flashing red)
- "Tracks Out of Service" sign posted (See Rule 3.51)



3.44 Emergency Vehicles

Upon the approach of an emergency vehicle with lights and / or siren activated, immediately move to the right lane or shoulder, if possible, and stop. If moving to the right is not possible, unless directed otherwise by law enforcement personnel, Operators should move to the right of the lane in which they are traveling in, come to a complete stop and remain in position until the emergency vehicle has passed.

3.45 Caravans

When operating buses in a caravan, adhere to rules regarding following distance as outlined in Rule 3.21. Additional following distance is required for each additional adverse condition and/or when speeds exceed 40 MPH. (See SOP 3.128)

3.46 School Zones

When operating through school zones where students are present, proceed with caution and do not exceed 25 MPH or the posted speed limit if less than 25 MPH.

3.47 Off-Street Terminal / Station Operation

(Delete - duplicated in 3.04)

3.48 Freeway Bus Stops

Operators must operate through designated bus turnouts and freeway bus stop lanes when in service, whether there are customers waiting or not. Never pass other buses servicing the same freeway stop. (See SOP 3.143)

3.49 Freeway Lanes

While on the freeway a bus should never operate side-by-side in adjacent lanes with any large vehicle (bus, truck, etc.) If a large vehicle is keeping pace with the bus, remove foot from accelerator and allow the other vehicle to advance. (See SOP 3.144)

3.50 Slow Moving Vehicles (Freeway)

Any Metro bus unable to keep up with the flow of traffic (less than the posted speed limit) should be operated in the right hand lane to avoid creating a hazardous condition. Be cautious of merging traffic. If the speed of the bus is so slow it interferes with the safe operation of other vehicles it is recommended that the bus be taken off the freeway and surface streets be used. Notify BOC immediately of the situation via a voice call as soon as it is safe to do so.

MODULE 7: FREEWAYS

Objectives

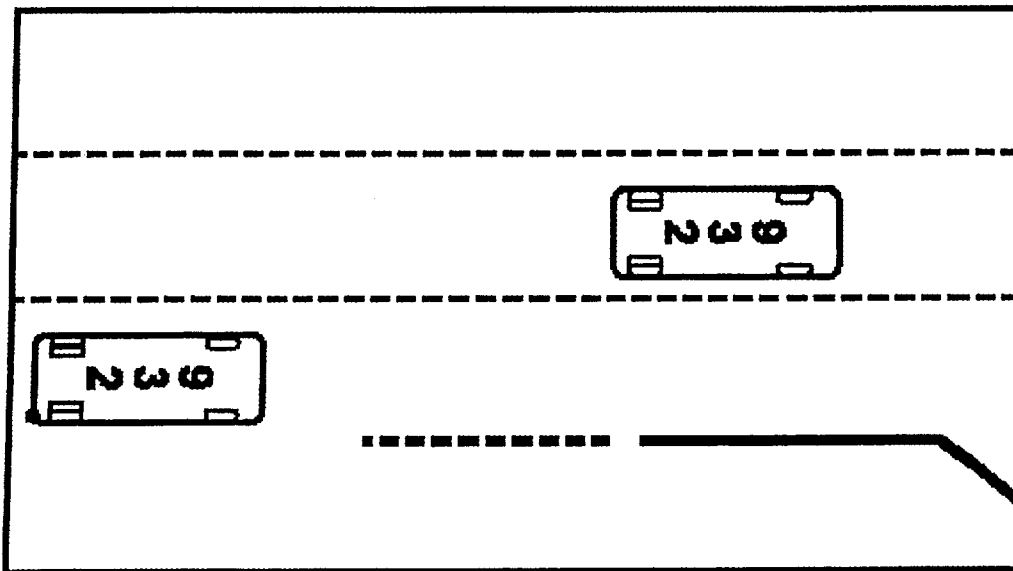
At the end of this module of instruction, you will be able to:

- Understand the procedures to safely enter freeways
- Safely drive on freeways including changing lanes
- Know the procedures for safely exiting freeways

Driving On The Freeway

Steps for Driving on the Freeway

1. Use the 4 second rule for speeds under 40 m.p.h., and the 5 second rule for speeds over 40 m.p.h.
2. Look for traffic hazards, such as vehicles stopped ahead
3. Travel in the right lane when exiting
4. On an Freeway with 3 lanes or more, travel in the second lane to prevent hazards from merging traffic



NOTES:

Questions

1. When should you activate your turn signal when merging onto the freeway?

2. What is the recommended following distance on the freeway?

3. In which lane should you travel on the freeway?

4. Why should you maintain your speed when changing lanes on the freeway?

5. Name two ways you can communicate the movement of your bus to other cars on the freeway.

6. Name three hazards you should watch for when driving on the freeway.

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