

Committees:

Planning Committee
External Affairs Committee
Rider Complaint Committee
Board of Directors

Finance and Audit Committee
Operations Committee
Paratransit Committee
Financing Corporation

SUBJECT: Report on Procedures for Operators Related to Potential Criminal Activity, and Report on New Program to Reduce Customer Disturbances on School Trips

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Information Only Briefing Item Recommended Motion

Receive Staff Report

Fiscal Impact:

Cost of materials and advertising (within FY 09-10 Marketing budget); \$5,000
Cost for bus monitor program (within FY 09-10 Transportation budget); approximately \$200,000

Background/Discussion:

The second edition of the Operator User Guide (OUG) is nearly complete and will be printed and distributed to all transportation staff this fall. Attachment 1 is an excerpt that provides guidance on how to handle situations with customers on the bus. This excerpt is part of a larger chapter on General Security Policies and Procedures. At the beginning of the chapter is the following preamble, which underscores the need for operators to be observant and use good judgment:

Security within the AC Transit system can directly impact the transportation experience for employees and customers alike. Security awareness is everyone's responsibility, and Bus Operators who are prepared when an abnormal situation occurs can improve the outcome simply by having an awareness of what to do. Obviously, there is no way to address every situation that may occur on AC Transit; however, this section of the Operator User Guide will provide some general guidelines toward responding to various situations that may occur on the AC Transit system.

Please see Attachment 1 for more detailed information.

New Program to Reduce Customer Disturbances on School Trips

On school days, the District serves about 55 middle and high schools with approximately 260 supplemental school trippers each day, carrying about 7,000 students on those trips. Skyline High School, in Oakland, has about 20 school trippers, the most of any school in the service area. Additionally, many other schools are served

by basic service. Seven District Supervisors are assigned to assist with bus loading at schools in the afternoon. Since approximately the year 2000, the District has hired "bus monitors" to ride certain school trippers, primarily those that use MCI coaches. This fall the District has about 40 bus monitors. The monitors assist operators by providing an adult presence on the bus and reporting any problems or suspicious behavior to the operator. They do not discipline students. As a general rule, operators are trained that they should never remove a student from a bus, even when the student is causing trouble. Instead, they are instructed to always call Central Dispatch, who may then send a supervisor or sheriff's deputy to handle the situation.

Over the years, the District has had different programs to partner with the schools to promote good behavior by students riding the buses. However, there have not been any effective programs for the past few years, in part related to resources. This summer, though, staff from the Marketing and Transportation Departments began working on a new program designed to educate students and their parents about the need to follow the law when riding public transit.

The Marketing Department created the flyer shown in Attachment 2, and distributed nearly 29,000 of the flyers to 40 schools to which the District provides school tripper service. The schools, in turn, distributed flyers to parents and students through the mail or at "Back to School" orientation sessions. An additional three schools requested electronic copies of the flyer to distribute to their students and parents.

The District will reinforce the flyer promotion with posters for the schools and advertising in selected school newspapers, including the Oaktown Teen Newspaper, which is written by students and distributed to 10,000 high school and middle school students, including all of the Oakland schools. Display ads will also run in the school newspapers at Kennedy High School in Richmond and Skyline High School in Oakland. The ads will direct students to an online quiz that will reinforce the bus conduct rules and practices, and offer participants a chance to win free bus passes.

In addition to the promotional flyer, the Chief of Protective Services has begun meeting one on one with administrators to develop partnerships at some of the schools at which students have exhibited problematic behavior on the buses. At Community Day School, where the school provides bus passes to the students, the principal and AC Transit developed a pilot program that will be rolled out in September. Under the program, students who violate behavior standards outlined in the District's flyer will be reported to the school through the Protective Services Department. The school will then take responsibility for notifying the student and the student's parent(s) or guardian and issue a warning; future offenses will result in further notification and discipline by the school, including suspension of the student's bus pass for up to two weeks. In September, the Chief of Protective Services plans to meet with administrators at two other schools in Oakland to see how they work with the District. Because most schools do not provide students with bus passes, as at Community Day School, programs at other schools will have to be structured differently. Updates to this program will be included in the General Manager's Quarterly Report.

Prior Relevant Board Actions/Policies:

Funding for the bus monitor program is included in the FY 09-10 fiscal year budget.

Attachments:

Attachment 1: Excerpt from Operator User Guide, General Security Policies and Procedures, Bus Operator Interactions
Attachment 2: Going Places, Making Choices (Marketing flyer for students)

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Date Prepared: August 31, 2009

Excerpt from 2009 Operator User Guide

General Security Policies and Procedures

Bus Operator Interactions

It is very important for Bus Operators to always remain aware of the customers and the environment on the coach. Your safety and the safety of your passengers depend upon your ability to see or hear clues indicating there may be a problem and react properly.

Always try to remain calm, and refrain from doing anything that will draw attention to you or cause the situation to become worse.

Minor Disturbances

1. Try to focus on your role and determine what you can do to resolve the disturbance if it is an AC Transit issue.
2. If the issue is between customers then you should focus on whether the situation is a momentary problem.
3. If the situation elevates, you may give a verbal warning that unless they stop their behavior you will stop the coach and request a Sheriff's Deputy.
4. If the situation continues, do not risk the safety of you and your customers, notify CD of the circumstances, your current location and request for a Deputy to meet you at your next scheduled stop.

Fare Disputes

1. Try to step through the process to explain the discrepancy you observed.
2. Use good judgment and try to resolve the situation fairly.
3. Avoid arguing and when possible, give the customer the benefit of the doubt.
4. If it seems necessary and appropriate, you may accept an inappropriate fare.
5. If the customer is a repeat fare problem, notify CD of the circumstances, your current location and request for a Road Supervisor or if appropriate a Deputy to meet you at your next scheduled stop.

Hostile or Threatening Customers

1. If there is a disturbance between customers on your coach and anyone is threatened with physical violence, do not get involved or say anything to those involved.
2. Immediately notify CD of the circumstances, provide a description of the suspect(s) involved, your current location and request for a Deputy to meet you at your next scheduled stop.
3. If you don't feel it will endanger your safety, consider using the PA system to announce that a Deputy Sheriff is responding and will meet at your next stop.

4. If necessary pull over and safely secure the coach immediately, if necessary, and open both doors to keep from trapping the suspects or enflaming the situation.
5. If the suspect(s) exit the coach, try to remain aware of their location and provide this information to CD to share with the responding Deputy Sheriffs.
6. If it is necessary to prevent harm to anyone, consider driving to another location; however, notify CD.
7. If there is a period of time prior to the arrival of Law Enforcement, provide Courtesy Cards to all passengers and request for them to be filled out prior to them leaving the area.

Suspicious Items

It is the responsibility of every AC Transit employee to be aware of anything out of place, items left behind in a facility or on a bus, and items that are suspicious in nature. If you locate a potentially suspicious package or substance, you should consider the following:

1. Notify CD or Law Enforcement immediately.
2. When you first discover a suspicious item or package (wires, timer, bottled liquid) do not move or touch it. Take a mental picture of the item; however, you should move away from the item immediately.
3. If the item is on your bus, immediately off load all customers as quickly as possible, and do not allow anyone to board the bus.
4. If the item is outdoors, go upwind and situate yourself as far away as possible.
5. Remain in a safe place until advised by Emergency Personnel that the situation is clear.

GOING PLACES

Making Choices

Constratulations! You're being self-sufficient when you go places on AC Transit rather than waiting for someone to take you to school, to the game, or over to your friend's house. Riding the bus is an easy way to get yourself where you want to go. It's also a privilege of independence, and your positive behavior on the bus makes a difference for everybody. Love your bus.

The following rules and practices are not meant to be downers. But it's real talk.

Leave no artifacts. Tagging buses or bus stops could require you cash out for damages.

Keep it clean. Always take your own trash off the bus.

Treat it like your home. Don't do damage to the bus.

Be cool. You have better things to do than pushing and fighting on the bus.

Give respect, get respect. Disruptive or assaultive behavior against bus drivers and other bus riders is against the law.



Please don't stop the music. Just wear headphones, because playing music without them is not allowed.

Turn down noise pollution. Check your headphone volume so that other riders can't hear your tunes.

The poles are not for dancing. Engaging in sexual behavior or indecent exposure on the bus is prohibited.

You're not outside. So stop with the loud talking and yelling on the bus. Besides, do you really want everyone to know your business?

Watch your mouth. Avoid cursing and using offensive language on the bus.

Talk quietly on cell phones. If you can't hear or have to talk loud on your phone, maybe send a text message instead.

Don't do it. Smoking, eating or drinking on the bus is prohibited.

Pay what you owe. It's not a free ride...pay your \$1 or use a valid ticket (and try to keep your ticket in good shape so it works).

Listen up. The bus driver is in charge. So when you are asked to do something, you need to do it.

It always feels like somebody's watching me. Monitors may be riding your bus and will report disruptive behavior to the bus driver. Plain-clothes sheriffs may also be on board and will take direct action against bad behavior.

Final destination. Keep in mind that bad behavior on the bus could result in the immediate termination of your ride, and repetitive bad behavior could lead to the suspension of your riding privileges. Conduct that violates the law will be referred to legal authorities for criminal prosecution.

Alameda-Contra Costa Transit District
Call 511
Visit www.actransit.org



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