



## Board Report

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### OPERATIONS, SAFETY, AND CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE COMMITTEE MAY 16, 2019

**SUBJECT: OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR GENERAL REPORT ON BUS OPERATOR SAFETY  
BARRIER USE AND EFFECTIVENESS STUDY**

**ACTION: RECEIVE AND FILE**

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

RECEIVE AND FILE Report on Bus Operator Safety Barrier Use and Effectiveness Study.

#### **ISSUE**

To improve safety, the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) conducted a study to evaluate the use and effectiveness of barriers to prevent assaults on operators.

#### **BACKGROUND**

Assaults on bus operators is an ongoing problem throughout the public transportation industry. Many agencies have implemented programs that include the use of bus operator safety barriers to reduce and/or prevent such assaults. Metro began installing barriers in 2015.

The OIG understands that an important goal for Metro is to protect the bus operators from assault. We partnered with an expert on transit safety to perform a study of bus operator safety barrier use and effectiveness. The purpose of this study was to:

- Evaluate the effectiveness of safety barriers in reducing assaults on bus operators.
- Determine the use of barriers by operators, and reasons why barriers are not used by some operators.
- Determine industry best practices.
- Determine operator experience and perception of enhanced security.
- Survey operators, supervisors and managers on the effectiveness of barriers.

## **DISCUSSION**

Overall, the report found that the bus operator safety barrier systems were generally effective in reducing the assault rate, but further actions are needed.

### **Key Findings and Recommendations**

- **Finding:** Safety barriers and onboard camera systems appear to be effective deterrents to assaults on bus operators.  
**Recommendation:** Metro should continue to install bus operator safety barriers and camera monitor systems throughout its fleet, and monitor the effectiveness of both systems in preventing assaults on bus operators.
- **Finding:** Data pertaining to the bus operator use of safety barriers during assaults is inconsistently collected by stakeholders.  
**Recommendation:** Metro should standardize the collection of data to identify the types of assaults and whether the bus was equipped with a safety barrier and if so, whether the barrier was in use.
- **Finding:** Assaults occur more frequently on certain lines and at certain times.  
**Recommendation:** Metro should use assault trend analysis results to review current policing and fare enforcement strategies and determine whether security personnel are being appropriately deployed toward routes and times of day when most assaults occur.
- **Finding:** Metro's bus operators do not consistently use the safety barriers. OIG field observations showed that only 18 percent of the operators used both the top and bottom portions of the barriers. A survey of bus operators showed that 59 percent stated that mandatory use of the barriers would not reduce assaults, but 72 percent felt that the barriers were very effective or somewhat effective in reducing assaults. Approximately 50 percent of the bus Supervisors and Managers surveyed believed mandatory use of the barriers would be beneficial in preventing assaults on operators. In addition, five of six transit agencies surveyed require mandatory use of safety barriers, while only one agency allowed optional use.  
**Recommendation:** Metro should make use of the barriers mandatory until Metro can determine if barrier usage contributes to or causes accidents or increases accident frequency. Metro should also collect data to substantiate and study the issues identified as to why operators do not use barriers.
- **Finding:** Although most of Metro's bus operators, supervisors, and managers believe the safety barriers are effective in preventing assaults, nearly half believe other additional protective measures are needed.  
**Recommendation:** Metro should further study why bus operators feel safety barriers do not make them feel more secure, evaluate the current design of safety barriers to determine if operators' concerns, such as glare and right site visibility, can be addressed, and establish a committee to investigate these issues and determine appropriate mitigations.

- **Finding:** Metro's training programs pertaining to the use of safety barriers and de-escalation training could be improved.  
**Recommendation:** Metro should review safety barrier and de-escalation training to evaluate scope, frequency, content, method of delivery, consistency of delivery, and employee engagement and understanding.
- **Finding:** Metro's experiences with assaults on its bus operators and the actions it is taking to prevent these types of incidents is consistent with other transit properties.  
**Recommendation:** Metro should continue to follow its current strategies and implement current programs to prevent assaults on bus operators, and consider using best practices to identify in more detail where the greatest risks reside and employ tactics such as targeted fare enforcement and policing patrols to address problem areas.

## **FINANCIAL IMPACT**

Adoption of the recommendations in this report does not increase the financial impact on the agency since the barriers have been installed or are in the process of being installed. Reducing assaults on operators could decrease any medical costs, workers' compensation, and employee time off due to injury.

## **IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS**

The recommendations in this report support Strategic Plan Goal 2.1 (improving security), Goal 5.6 (fostering and maintaining a strong safety culture), and Goal 2 (delivering outstanding trip experiences). The bus operator safety barriers are an essential tool to protect bus operators from assaults, which is a crime. Preventing assaults would protect our employees, allow the buses to operate without hindrance, and prevent customer delay.

## **NEXT STEPS**

Metro management should:


- Continue to implement the recommendations in the report to improve operator safety.
- Report the results periodically to the Board on the effectiveness of operator safety matters.

## **ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment A - OIG Report on Bus Operator Safety Barrier Use and Effectiveness Study  
Attachment B - Management Response to Study

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