



Metro

FEBRUARY 13, 2006

TO: BOARD OF DIRECTORS

THROUGH: ROGER SNOBLE

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

FROM: JOHN B. SAPOE, Jr.
DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

SUBJECT: AUTOMATIC VOICE ANNUNCIATION SYSTEM

ISSUE:

There has been a series of complaints related to improper functioning of the Automatic Voice Annunciation System (AVA) currently used on Metro's bus fleet. This report summarizes the nature of the problems being encountered, and the steps Metro is taking to mitigate these problems.

BACKGROUND

Metro uses an AVA system to make verbal announcements of all bus stops on the bus system (approximately 18,500 stops). When the AVA system is functioning properly, this system should make verbal announcement prior to a bus reaching a stop, as well as announcing a buses' arrival at a stop.

During the December 2005 schedule update (aka the December "Shake-up"), Metro experienced a number of technical problems getting all 2,500 buses in our fleet to properly upload stop announcements. After discussions with the contractor, modifications to the AVA software were made, and the AVA system was later successfully uploaded to the bus fleet. A few weeks after the AVA deployment, Metro started getting additional complaints from bus operators and the public regarding the operation of the AVA. The problems reported were isolated into three different categories: (1) Internal speaker volume too loud, (2) External speaker volume too loud and (3) erroneous data announcements on the 901 Line.

To resolve the internal speaker volume problem, instructions were issued to all operating personnel on how to manually control the volume of the internal speaker through the ATMS control head on the buses. Additionally, to minimize the noise impact of the external announcements, exterior stop announcements were reprogrammed to only operate between 12:00 Noon to 6:00 PM (the exterior

announcement was not fully deactivated so that Metro personnel could continue working to measure and correct the audio level to meet safety standards). Based on complaints filed, it is understood that the majority of AVA complaints were received due to external announcements being made at night when there was relatively little street noise. This AVA programming has been updated on all buses currently in operation.

There have been some reports of cases where the AVA system has not been functioning properly, and Operators have not been calling stops. Metro's policy in these cases are explicit; if the AVA system is not functioning properly, Operators shall make verbal stop announcements using a buses' public address system. It is a major rule infraction for an Operator to fail to announce stops in these circumstances.

Metro is continuing to work with Orbital Sciences Corp, the vendor of this AVA equipment, to remedy erroneous data announcements experienced solely on the 901 Line. Software problems have been identified and modifications will download to buses by February 20, 2006.

Metro staff will continue to validate the AVA operations on all buses, and with the assistance of the Safety department, will determine the appropriate audio level that will meet OSHA safety standards.

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