



**Metro**

Metropolitan Transportation Authority

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**July 8, 2005**

**TO: BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

**THROUGH: ROGER SNOBLE,**  
**CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER**

**FROM: JOHN B. CATOE, JR.,**  
**DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER**

**SUBJECT: CUSTOMER COMPLAINTS UPDATE**

**ISSUE**

The Board requested a report on customer complaints, including the protocol for managing and responding to customers with complaints and a summary of customer complaint averages.

The attached board report (Attachment A) on Customer Service Complaints Update was withdrawn from the Executive Management and Audit Committee agenda in May 2005 and is being distributed to the Board via a board box.



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**EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT AND AUDIT COMMITTEE  
MAY 19, 2005**

**SUBJECT: CUSTOMER COMPLAINTS UPDATE**

**ACTION: RECEIVE AND FILE**

**RECOMMENDATION**

Receive and file this status report on customer complaints.

**ISSUE**

The Board requested a report on customer complaints, including the protocol for managing and responding to customers with complaints and a summary of customer complaint averages.

**DISCUSSION**

Metro has an established process and system for managing customer complaints. Customers with complaints, suggestions or commendations can communicate with the agency through various means:

- ❑ Via telephone at 1-800-COMMUTE or 213-922-6235.
- ❑ Via e-mail at [customerrelations@metro.net](mailto:customerrelations@metro.net) or by using the customer comment form on the metro.net web site.
- ❑ Via walk-in at any Metro Customer Service Center, Sector office or at the Gateway HQ Building.
- ❑ Directly to Operations Management at each Sector Office and Operating Division.
- ❑ Via direct communication with policy makers at public meetings (Sector Governance Councils, Metro Board)

**Complaint Types and Averages**

Metro customer input is categorized into 45 coded topics addressing customer complaints, comments/suggestions and employee commendations.

There are four major complaint groups, which comprise 70–75 percent of all complaints on average. The distribution of these major complaint types has changed little over time:

- ❑ Schedule-Related complaints (Early, Late and No-Show bus reports) range from 30-35 percent of the total.
- ❑ Passed Up reports constitute 16-20 percent of total complaints.
- ❑ Unsafe Operation reports constitute 10-15 percent of total complaints (reports received from bus passengers as well as motorists and pedestrians).
- ❑ Operator Discourtesy reports constitute 9-12 percent of total complaints.

A comprehensive list of all complaint categories is found in Attachment A.

### Complaint Management Process

Customer input that contains a sufficient level of detail is entered into the Passenger Comment Management System (PCMS), a distributed database program shared by Customer Relations and Operating Divisions. PCMS cross-references certain elements of the customer's report – e.g. operator Badge number or bus number – with current operations data to determine to which Division the report will be directed. When a report is received and entered into the system, an e-mail advisory message summarizing the report is also generated to Division management and other key staff members. This allows management and staff to keep aware of complaints regarding their area of responsibility without having to constantly monitor the PCMS system.

Upon receipt of a complaint report, Divisions take appropriate steps to investigate. These steps include, but are not limited to, checking delay and incident reports, which may indicate the reason for a late bus or cancelled run, or contacting the Operator to question him or her about an allegation of discourtesy or other questionable behavior. The customer may also be contacted to provide additional information. If the customer has requested it, attempts are made to contact and inform them of findings or actions taken. After the report has been resolved, Division staff enters into the PCMS record a summary of the investigative or remedial steps taken, and closes the report. Incident reports are typically closed in less than a week, and often sooner.

### Reporting

To maintain a strong focus on service, customer input is monitored, summarized and reported upon in a variety of ways:

- ❑ Every business day, a senior analyst continually monitors PCMS reports for quality control. *Ad Hoc* management reports are also available during this time.
- ❑ The *PCMS Aging Report*, analyzing Division effectiveness in promptly addressing complaints, is distributed to Senior, Sector and Division Management on a weekly basis.
- ❑ The *Customer Input Report* – also distributed to Senior, Sector and Division Management – summarizes all customer input activity for the previous calendar month.
- ❑ The *Sector/Board Complaint Summary* examines various aspects of Sector complaint handling performance during the previous calendar month. This report is distributed to Board Members and Senior, Sector and Division Management.

- Monthly reports by the General Managers are delivered to their Governance Councils. Each sector reports its progress against specific customer complaint goals for that sector.

### Recent Improvements to Complaint Management

In response to MTA Board and Governance Council concerns that some customer complaints were not being adequately addressed, staff has taken specific actions:

- In the spring of 2004, at the direction of the Deputy Chief Executive Officer, PCMS procedures were tightened. Emphasis was placed on timely review, investigation and close-out of customer reports and improved documentation of Division actions. Such documentation can include, but is not limited to: actions staff or management took to resolve a specific complaint, the response provided to the customer/complainant if feedback was requested, and the number of complaints the operator has had in the past.
- In the weeks and months following the increased scrutiny of complaint handling and reporting, the percentage of complaint reports closed within 90 days system-wide improved from 68 percent in April 2004 to current performance levels which approach 100 percent.
- Metro Operations General Managers have instituted an aggressive program to monitor operators with multiple complaints. Program elements include 1) establishing individual complaint reduction goals; 2) random follow-up checks/undercover rides; 3) ATMS vehicle GPS tracking and performance reports; 4) utilizing Digital Video downloads.
- Operations Central Instruction has developed and implemented a new training program for bus operators, "Start in Customer Service." This program is provided to all new operator trainees and is used in re-training operators with multiple customer complaints. In addition, all division supervisors, managers and assistant managers are strongly encouraged to attend. The course is designed to teach basic customer service skills. It explains tools and tips to assist bus operators in determining appropriate and optimal ways of interacting and communicating with our customers. (see Attachment B)

### NEXT STEPS

Commencing with the new fiscal year, PCMS will implement a "resolution code" entry when the division closes out a complaint. The resolution code will permit a more quantifiable representation of complaint causes and disposition – something not currently available – and should result in more thorough and meaningful analyses of customer input.

### ATTACHMENTS

- A. Customer Input Categories
- B. Start in Customer Service Training Program

Prepared by: Andrea Burnside, Managing Director, Operations Administration

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Deputy Chief Executive Officer

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Roger Snoble  
Chief Executive Officer



# Metro Bus

## Customer Input Categories

PCMS

Category	Description
004	Misc. Request/Comment
020	Refund Request <\$2.00
021	Refund Request >\$2.00
035	Bus Stop (Damage/Location/etc.)
040	Facilities Complaint
100	Early Schedule
110	Late Schedule
120	No Show
130	Off Route
135	Layover Zone
140	Faulty Equipment
142	Heat/Air Conditioning
143	Dirty Bus
148	Headsign Problems
150	Transfer Problems
160	Charged Wrong Fare
162	Senior I.D. Card
163	HC I.D. Card
164	Student I.D. Card
170	Improper Curb Stop
180	Unsafe Operation
190	Accident
200	Passed Up
210	Carried Past Stop
215	Failure to Call Stops
220	Op. Discourtesy
221	Gen. Emp. Discourtesy
223	Sexual Harassment
225	Commendation (Operator)
226	Commendation (General)
230	Crowded Bus (Add'l Svc Rq.)
260	Passenger Conduct
270	Operator Conduct
300	Incorrect Info - Bus Operator
310	TeleInfo/Trip Planner Complaint
400	Misc. Complaint
500	Accessible Service - Pass Up
501	AccSvc Pass Up (Advised)
502	AccSvc Pass Up (Denied)
503	AccSvc Pass-Up (Equipment)
504	AccSvc Transit Failure (Other)
505	AccSvc Operator Behavior
506	AccSvc Wchr Securement
700	Dec 19 2004 - Svc Changes
701	Proposed Sched.Chngs - Dec04

## **“Start In Customer Service”**

Operations Central Instruction has created a new interactive customer service training program for bus operators, “Start in Customer Service.” The program covers areas such as:

### **The Benefits of Providing Good Customer Service**

For the operator...

- Reduce Stress
- Avoid Misunderstandings
- Improve Efficiency
- Increase Your Value
- Build Rapport

For Metro...

- Ensures repeat business from the customer
- Builds good reputations of Metro in the community
- Helps public vote for Metro

### **Metro’s Five-Step Approach to Providing Customer Service**

#### *1. Show appreciation for the customer*

- Take responsibility for how you handle yourself with the customers
- Stop blaming the customer
- Reorganize your priorities – customer service should be among the top of the list
- Make a good impression on the customers
- Build a professional relationship with the customers
- Treat customers with respect
- Do not take customers for granted

#### *2. Prepare for the workday*

- Greet each customer with a pleasant and professional attitude
- Maintain a pleasant and professional attitude throughout your route
- Do not expect customers to cause problems
- Have good hygiene
- Dress professionally in a comfortable uniform
- Gather needed materials from the train room
- Perform bus inspections daily prior to, during and after your route

3. *Interact with dignity*

- Greet and welcome each customer onto your bus
- Speak to the customers as if you respect and value them
- Happily answer the customers' questions
- Be friendly and courteous
- Be respectful when speaking
- Focus on the person, not the circumstance
- Be proactive with information
- Use polite facial expressions
- Use appropriate body language
- Deal with disorderly conduct per the SOPs or contact dispatch
- Resolve conflict in a manner that will leave the customer with a good impression

4. *Listen to the customer*

- Be empathetic
- Don't take it personal
- Resolve the problem

5. *Thank the customer*

- Give your undivided attention
- Maintain eye contact
- Ask questions for clarification
- Focus on the content of the message, not the delivery
- Be empathetic and have compassion
- Don't take complaints personally
- Resolve the situation at the fare box