

**METRO SAN FERNANDO VALLEY SECTOR COUNCIL  
AUGUST 16, 2006**

**SUBJECT:                   CUSTOMER COMPLAINT COMPARISON**

**ACTION:                   RECEIVE AND FILE REPORT**

**BACKGROUND**

At the Sector Council meeting held on July 5, 2006, members of the Council requested an expanded [report on Customer Complaints](#). Specifically, Council representatives wanted to know how the Sector compares to the other four Metro Bus sector operations, Metro as a whole, and to other regional and national operators. This report summarizes data taken from a variety of sources.

**METHODOLOGY**

Information was requested from available reports submitted to the governing bodies of operators that chose to respond to my request for information. Contacts were made to all members of the Bus Operations Sub-Committee for Metro and to a variety of national and other local properties as follows: Atlanta, Georgia (MARTA), Denver, Colorado, (RTD), Houston, Texas, New Jersey Transit (NJTransit), Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (SEPTA), San Diego, California (SDT), St. Louis, Missouri (Bi-State), Riverside, California (RTA), and Washington, DC (WMATA). Requests were sent on July 17, 2006. To the extent necessary, reporting was converted to complaints per 100,000 boardings to make it similar to our reports. Few of the agencies contacted were able to respond to staff requests for information. To that extent, the comparisons are limited and because the sample is small, the properties reporting are presented as east coast, mid-west, and west coast.

**DISCUSSION**

Customer complaints are the most nettlesome issues for the division to deal with because we are dealing with behavioral, mechanical, and environmental concerns simultaneously. Most agencies contacted could not respond to our request. Three do not track complaints. Several sent reports or sample reports.

- Riverside Transit tracks 17 categories of complaints. In May they experienced 0.0238 complaints per 100,000 boardings.
- Culver City tracks by operator and had 39 complaints over a six-month period.
- An east coast and west coast large operator reported as follows:

### **Complaints per 100,000 Boardings**

	<b>FY05</b>	<b>FY06 Q1</b>	<b>FY06 Q2</b>	<b>FY06 Q3</b>	<b>FY06 Q4</b>
East Coast Bus	13.10	11.85	11.80	9.70	12.00
West Coast Bus	15.76	13.29	10.60	11.30	10.11
MTA Metro Bus	3.54	3.13	3.10	2.74	2.43
SFV Sector Bus	4.39	4.11	3.74	2.59	2.52

Metro’s system-wide rate as well as that of the San Fernando Valley Sector is lower than both the East Coast and West Coast reporting operators. As noted above, the SFV rate over the past four fiscal years has also been significantly lower than a Mid-West Metro Bus Operator.

<b>System/Sector</b>	<b>FY03</b>	<b>FY04</b>	<b>FY05</b>	<b>FY06</b>	<b>June 2006</b>
Metro System-wide	4.23	4.51	3.54	2.41	2.06
San Fernando Valley Sector	6.32	5.45	4.39	3.24	2.56
San Gabriel Valley Sector	3.57	3.80	2.95	2.18	1.88
Gateway Cities Sector	2.63	3.08	2.58	1.69	1.60
South Bay Sector	4.02	4.63	3.61	2.50	2.04
Westside Central Sector	4.84	5.30	4.10	2.53	2.22
Metro Rail	1.25	1.11	1.45	1.02	0.63
Mid-West MetroBus	17.00	10.00	9.00	8.50	n.a.

As reported at each of our Council meetings, the volume of complaints is decreasing for the MTA as a whole and in particular with the sector. However, the unprecedented heat experienced in the last two months has not only raised the temperatures of our passengers and operators but has also played havoc with electrical components on our equipment and in some major cases traffic signal systems which fail.

Customer disputes often arise from fare disagreements, language barriers to communication, or requests for information that the operator may not satisfy. Another class of complaints comes from alleged “No Shows” or “Pass-ups” while other complaints are “blind” because someone observes a behavior and alleges misconduct on the part of the operator. The latter behavior is often characterized as “unsafe driving behavior.” It is hard to follow-up on a specific concern in this arena unless a pattern of complaints emerge. Staff has also received complaints alleging on-board incidents from 1-2 months ago as well as complaints that an

operator provided a courtesy to another passenger causing them a slight delay. This neither negates nor belittles the complaints we receive, and staff researches each one.

Clearly, the San Fernando Valley Sector has the highest complaint rate of all of the MTA sectors per 100,000 boardings with Gateway Cities having the lowest rate. Clearly, the San Fernando Valley Sector has the highest complaint rate per 100,000 boardings of all of the sectors. But this is due, in large part, to demographics and service abnormalities.

Many bus routes in the San Fernando Valley sector have long headways (period between the departure of a bus and the arrival of a following bus.) Those headways may be as long as 45 minutes; whereas routes in the downtown area of Los Angeles, for example, have headways that are largely under 10 minutes. A bus which fails to arrive as scheduled is quickly followed by another line coach.

Conversely, the single most distinguishing characteristic of the San Fernando Valley services is that we operate more one-way route miles than any other sector but we do not have the service hours to continue to increase frequency. Simply stated, if a bus breaks down or runs late because of traffic, the wait for the following bus is longer than experienced by customers in other parts of our system. Given the constancy of the triple digit heat this summer, the shortage in manpower, and the structure of our services all have contributed to a higher rate of complaints as well as service delays for this sector.

Interestingly, and much to the credit of the San Fernando Valley Sector staff, an analysis of complaints related to operator behavior shows a somewhat different picture. Metro Customer Relations tracks the number of Operator Performance Related Complaints per 100 Operators.

- This indicator is comprised of complaints about Unsafe Operators, Operator Discourtesy, Pass-Ups, Operator Conduct, Accessible Service Pass-Ups and Accessible Service Behavior.
- San Fernando Valley Sector Operators generally rate around the system average. During the month of April 2006, the Sector had the second lowest rate of complaints in this category.

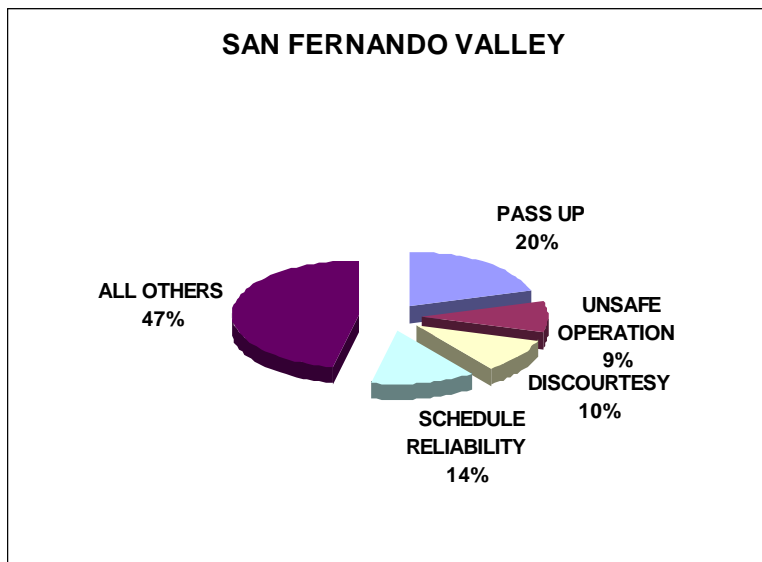
<b>System/Sector</b>	<b>April '06</b>	<b>May ' 06</b>	<b>June '06</b>
Metro System-wide	10.20	9.64	9.43
San Fernando Valley Sector	9.60	9.67	9.43
San Gabriel Valley Sector	11.70	8.62	8.31
Gateway Cities Sector	7.92	7.65	9.31
South Bay Sector	11.60	9.37	8.68
Westside Central Sector	10.60	11.82	11.87

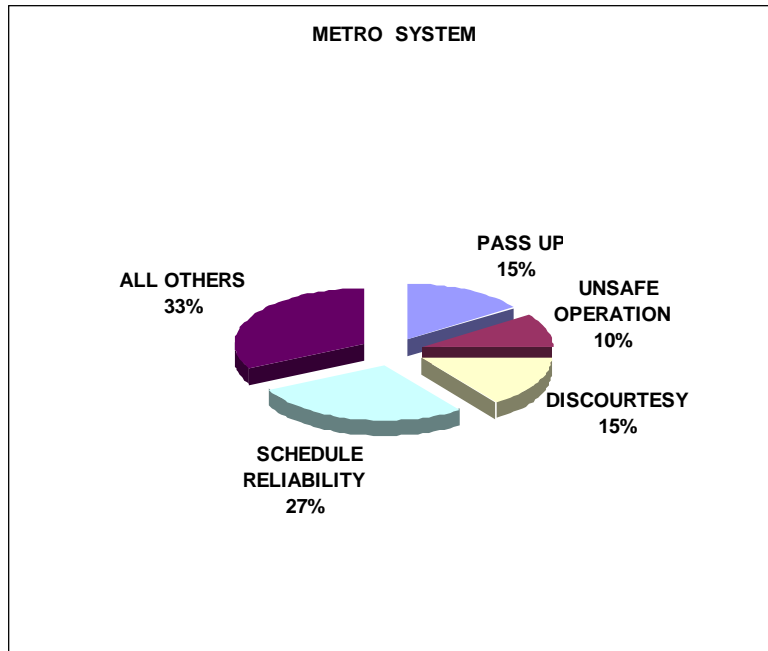
Source: Monthly Customer Input Reports

- For the months of May and June 2006, in the categories of complaints per 100 operators, the Sector is below or at the system average.

Based on the results presented above, customers in the SFV are more likely to complain about a wider variety of issues. However, when we are compared to the rates of complaints on an operator basis the results are consistent across all MTA bus sectors. In May and June, the Operator performance complaint categories actually show the San Fernando Valley as quite comparable to other sectors. Finally, in a year over year comparison, the San Fernando Valley Sector has reduced complaints by 51% from last year and the agency, as a whole, reduced complaints by 41% in the same period.

In June, as measured by Customer Relations, MTA recorded 926 total complaints. The San Fernando Valley Sector accounted for 148 of the total or 15.9%. Exhibit 1 below compares the San Fernando Valley complaints in major categories to the system as a whole.





Based on the above charts, in June, Pass-up complaints was the most significant issue category for the Valley. For the Metro system as a whole, Schedule Reliability at 27% of all complaints received was more significant. The SFV sector improved substantially in the June month concerning Operator Discourtesy complaints. Unsafe Operation was the same as system wide, and Schedule Reliability complaints were also reduced compared to the system as a whole. The “All other” category is much larger for the SFV than the system which means that nearly 50% of the complaints are for other than operator actions.

None of the above means that the Sector staff is pleased by the overall results. In prior reports given to the Council, comments have always focused on the concept that one complaint is too many. Nor do we offer excuses for them. Instead, staff has implemented a number of initiatives over the past year that has directly affected our complaint rates. These initiatives include the Operator Panel at Division 15, structured interviews with each operator, customer relations training, and the application of progressive discipline where warranted by an identified and continuing pattern of behavior. A new course is being developed for customer relations training for operators that are computer based. The new training curriculum presents situations to operators and assists them in making choices to help defuse potential complaint based situations.

### **Sector Response to Trends**

The sector staff will continue to monitor services, respond to complaints and make adjustments in services. On August 2, 2006, we held a public hearing to begin the implementation of the Metro Connections program. One of the primary goals of the program is to increase the reliability of the service through route adjustments that shorten trip lengths and provide sufficient times for operators to recover from delays encountered on a day-to-day basis. In addition, under the new contract additional meal and rest times have been

incorporated into the agreement to further enhance the ability of the operator to both get a break as well as stay on time. Staff has argued that if service reliability can be improved and schedules are maintained then complaints will be further reduced.

### **Conclusion**

San Fernando Valley sector staff is keenly aware of complaints as an issue for both management and operators alike. While not all recorded complaints are legitimate, each one is given the same weight, are investigated fully, and operators are contacted. Staff will be concentrating on improvements in service reliability and on-time performance through implementation of the Metro Connections program. The better able we are to deliver the service, the more likely complaints are going to decline. Lastly, new training programs for customer relations activities will also benefit our employees and will raise awareness of specific issues related to customer support and interaction.

Prepared by:

Gary S. Spivack,  
Acting General Manager

# **COMPARISON OF CUSTOMER COMPLAINTS**

**SAN FERNANDO VALLEY SECTOR COUNCIL**

**AUGUST 16, 2006**



**Metro**

# GOOD ENOUGH ISN'T

- **COMPLAINTS ARE MOST NETTLESOME ISSUES FOR STAFF**
- **EACH COMPLAINT IS RESEARCHED AND WHERE POSSIBLE CUSTOMERS ARE CONTACTED**
- **STAFF DOES NOT OFFER APOLOGIES OR EXCUSES; WE LOOK FOR OPPORTUNITIES TO IMPROVE:**
  - **SCHEDULE REDESIGN, METRO CONNECTIONS**
  - **OPERATOR PANEL**
  - **TRAINING AND RE-TRAINING**
  - **APPLICATION OF DISCIPLINE**



**Metro**



# CUSTOMER COMPLAINTS

- **MUST DEAL WITH ENVIRONMENTAL, MECHANICAL, AND BEHAVIORAL ISSUES**
- **UNPRECEDENTED HEAT IN LAST TWO MONTHS:**
  - **TESTED OUR METTLE**
  - **TESTED OUR EQUIPMENT**
  - **TESTED OUR RESOLVE TO GET TO THE ROOT CAUSE OF THE ISSUE**

# COMPLAINT CONDITIONS

- **BEHAVIORAL COVERS BOTH OPERATOR AND PASSENGER**
- **MECHANICAL COVERS THE ABILITY OF THE FLEET TO FUNCTION UNDER ALL CONDITIONS AND THAT ALL PARTS PERFORM**
- **ENVIRONMENTAL COVERS WEATHER AS WELL AS SURROUNDINGS**

# ORIGIN OF CUSTOMER DISPUTES

- **FARE DISAGREEMENTS**
- **ALLEGED NO-SHOW OR PASS-UP**
- **“BLIND” OBSERVANCE OF A BEHAVIOR WITHOUT ENOUGH INFORMATION TO TIE IT TO OPERATOR PERFORMANCE – UNSAFE DRIVING BEHAVIOR**
- **UNTIMELY COMPLAINTS FOR 1-2 MONTHS AGO**

# OBSERVATIONS

- **OUR CUSTOMERS ARE MORE LIKELY TO CALL IN THAN OTHER SECTORS**
- **OUR SERVICE IS COMPRISED OF MORE MILES PER SERVICE HOUR; HENCE A BREAKDOWN/DISRUPTION MAY CAUSE A LONGER WAIT**
- **IT TAKES US LONGER TO REPLACE A VEHICLE BECAUSE OF DISTANCE AND LACK OF BUSES AND OPERATORS AT TIME OF NEED**

# COMPLAINTS/100,000 BOARDINGS

	<b>FY05</b>	<b>FY06 Q1</b>	<b>FY06 Q2</b>	<b>FY06 Q3</b>	<b>FY06 Q4</b>
<b>East Coast Bus</b>	<b>13.10</b>	<b>11.85</b>	<b>11.80</b>	<b>9.70</b>	<b>12.00</b>
<b>West Coast Bus</b>	<b>15.76</b>	<b>13.29</b>	<b>10.60</b>	<b>11.30</b>	<b>10.11</b>
<b>MTA Metro Bus</b>	<b>3.54</b>	<b>3.13</b>	<b>3.10</b>	<b>2.74</b>	<b>2.43</b>
<b>SFV Sector Bus</b>	<b>4.39</b>	<b>4.11</b>	<b>3.74</b>	<b>2.59</b>	<b>2.52</b>

# COMPLAINTS PER 100,000 BOARDINGS

System/Sector	FY03	FY04	FY05	FY06	June 2006
Metro System-wide	4.23	4.51	3.54	2.41	2.06
San Fernando Valley Sector	6.32	5.45	4.39	3.24	2.56
San Gabriel Valley Sector	3.57	3.80	2.95	2.18	1.88
Gateway Cities Sector	2.63	3.08	2.58	1.69	1.60
South Bay Sector	4.02	4.63	3.61	2.50	2.04
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Metro Rail	1.25	1.11	1.45	1.02	0.63
Mid-West MetroBus	17.00	10.00	9.00	8.50	n.a.

Source: Monthly Customer Relations Reports



# COMPLAINTS PER 100 OPERATORS

System/Sector	April '06	May '06	June '06
Metro System-wide	10.20	9.64	9.43
San Fernando Valley Sector	9.60	9.67	9.43
San Gabriel Valley Sector	11.70	8.62	8.31
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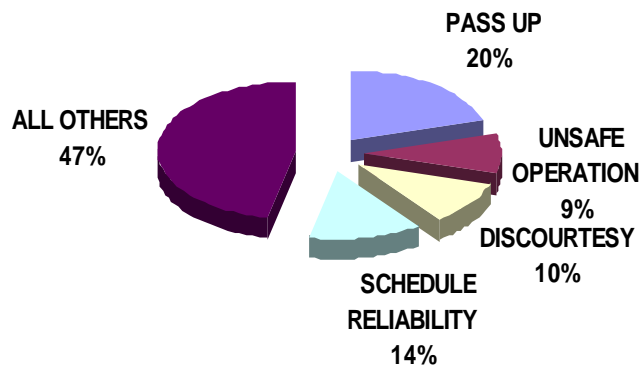


**Metro**

# COMPLAINT CATEGORIES

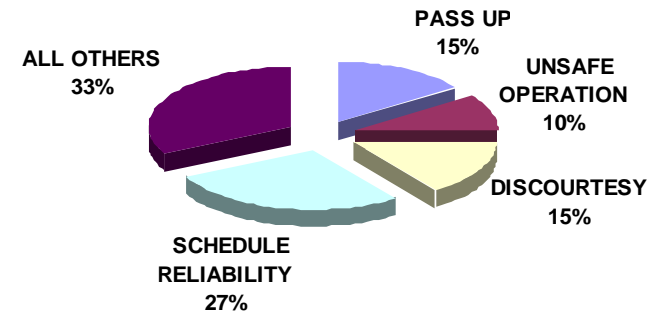
## SFV

SAN FERNANDO VALLEY



## METRO

METRO SYSTEM





# QUESTIONS

- **DISCUSSION**

METRO SAN FERNANDO VALLEY GOVERNANCE COUNCIL  
August 16, 2006

**SUBJECT:** REPORT ON CUSTOMER COMPLAINTS

**ACTION:** RECEIVE AND FILE

**BACKGROUND:**

The Customer Complaint Report provides Sector Complaint Data in comparison to Metro Operations. The form and content of this report will be modified each month to include salient issues that are requested by the Governance Council.

**DISCUSSION**

The following item is presented for discussion:

Metro San Fernando Valley Customer Complaint Report – YTD June 2006.

Prepared by Metro San Fernando Sector Administration and Finance Staff.

Copies of Agendas or Agenda Items may be obtained by contacting  
Metro San Fernando Valley at (818) 701-2800.

# Metro San Fernando Valley Customer Complaint Report

## Customer Complaint Summary

Customer Complaint Summary - 06/05 - 06/06 - Metro San Fernando Valley

	Jun-05	Jul-05	Aug-05	Sep-05	Oct-05	Nov-05	Dec-05	Jan-06	Feb-06	Mar-06	Apr-06	May-06	Jun-06
Total Complaints	242	224	210	204	200	201	191	135	121	156	117	141	148
12-Month Average	215	211	207	201	202	205	209	203	196	191	185	179	171
Complaints per 100K	4.71	4.41	4.06	3.96	3.93	4.04	4.27	2.88	2.63	2.76	2.54	2.48	2.75
Schedule Adherence	90	108	100	109	92	92	70	61	44	55	37	52	57
Passed Up	51	39	32	28	34	30	40	29	14	23	15	30	30
Unsafe Operation	32	24	15	21	16	20	27	15	12	14	15	14	14
Operator Discourtesy	28	22	22	13	15	25	16	10	19	26	19	16	15
All Others	41	31	41	33	43	34	38	20	32	38	31	29	32
Operator Commendations	0	30	28	12	7	17	14	6	7	21	16	15	7

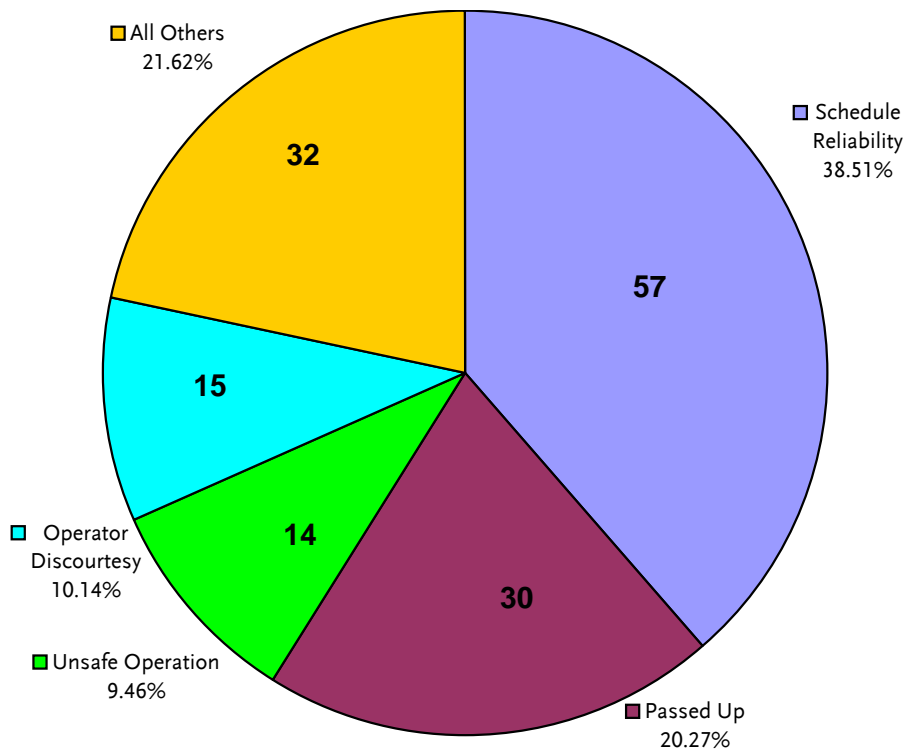
Customer Complaint Summary - 06/05 - 06/06 - Metro Operations

	Jun-05	Jul-05	Aug-05	Sep-05	Oct-05	Nov-05	Dec-05	Jan-06	Feb-06	Mar-06	Apr-06	May-06	Jun-06
Total Complaints	1245	1340	1472	1085	1152	967	883	872	940	1044	810	812	926
12-Month Average	1287	1275.4	1276.3	1237.1	1234.7	1236	1227	1201	1170	1130	1097	1052	1025
Complaints per 100K	3.74	4.02	3.34	2.61	2.76	2.43	2.26	2.13	2.29	2.08	1.95	1.75	2.06
Schedule Adherence	342	460	533	414	365	308	268	277	291	257	314	196	253
Passed Up	263	230	205	156	203	136	158	146	137	194	127	155	141
Unsafe Operation	136	135	122	107	101	110	101	98	94	107	75	76	90
Operator Discourtesy	155	148	182	125	114	116	107	115	135	150	122	140	141
All Others	349	367	430	283	369	297	249	236	283	336	172	245	301
Operator Commendations	92	128	112	67	84	69	66	55	54	89	76	91	94

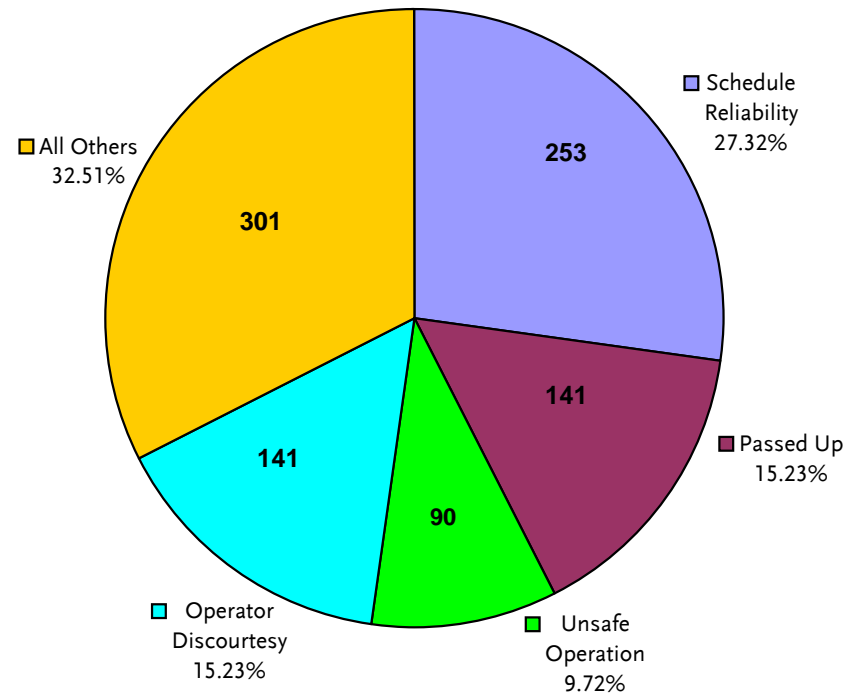
# Metro San Fernando Valley Customer Complaint Report

## Major Complaints Category Distribution June-06

148 Total Complaints - Metro SFV

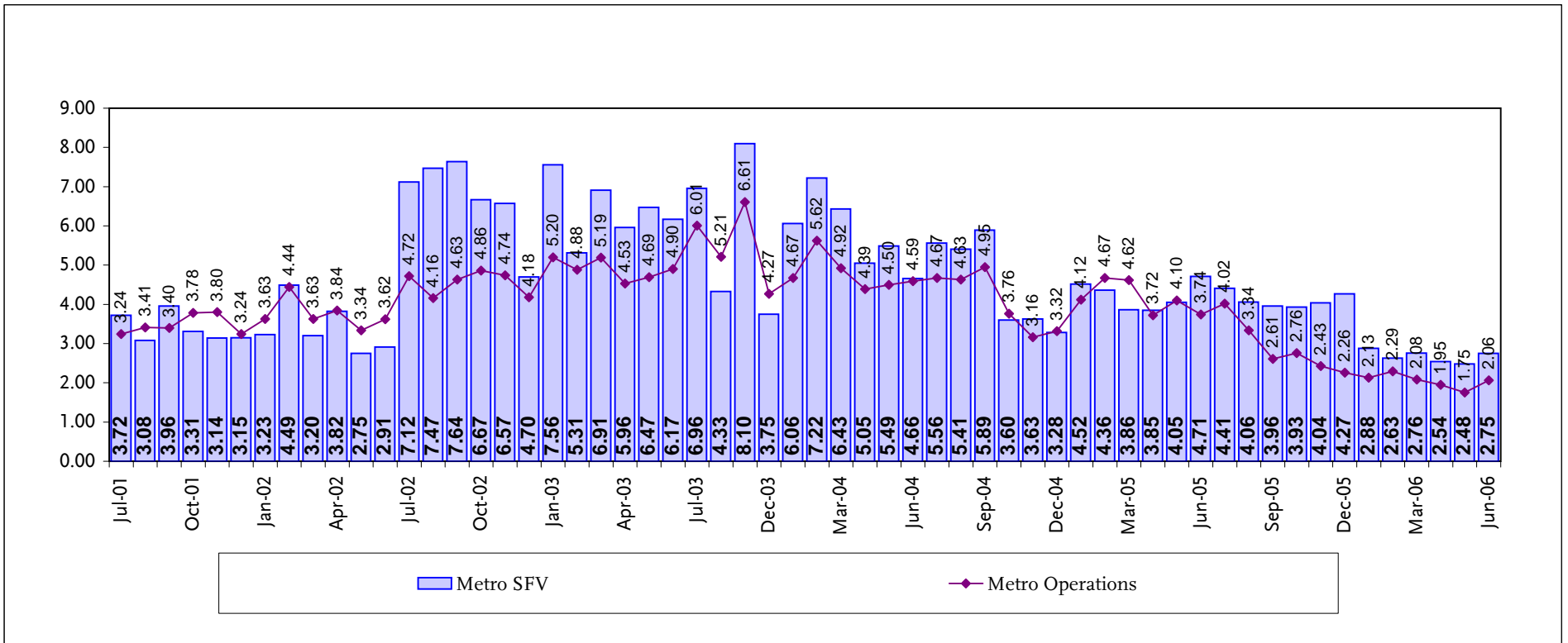


926 Total Complaints - Metro Operations



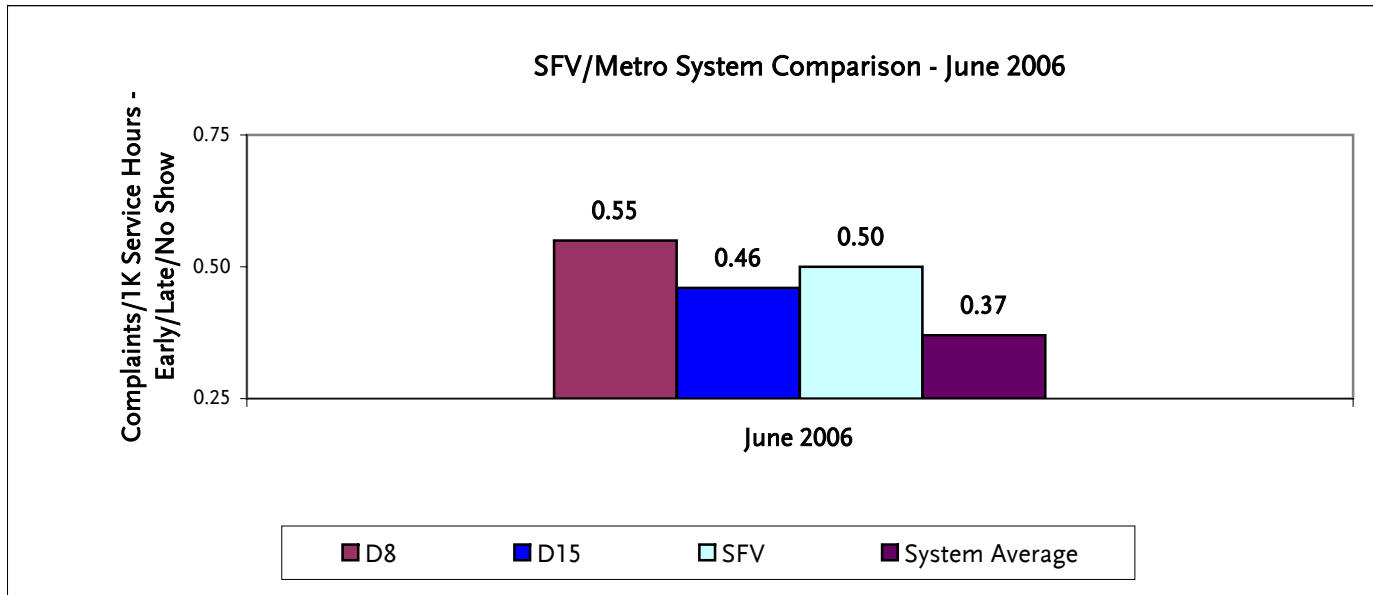
# Metro San Fernando Valley Customer Complaint Report

Complaints per 100,000 Passenger Boardings  
2001-2006



# Metro San Fernando Valley Customer Complaint Report

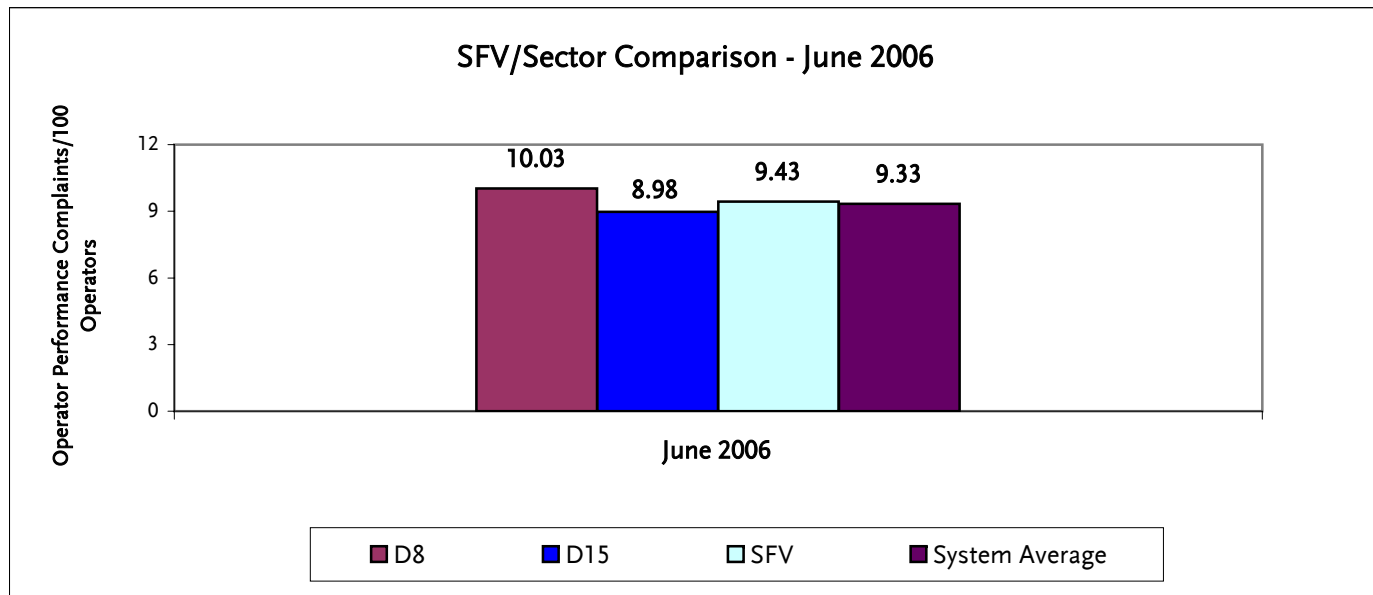
Schedule Performance Categories  
Per 1,000 Service Hours



Schedule Performance Categories: Early; Late; No Show.

# Metro San Fernando Valley Customer Complaint Report

## Operator Performance Categories Per 100 Operators



Operator Performance Categories: Unsafe Operation; Passed Up; Operator Discourtesy;  
Operator Conduct; Accessible Svc. Pass-Up; Accessible Svc. Behavior.

# Metro San Fernando Valley Customer Complaint Report

## TOTAL/MAJOR COMPLAINTS -- 12 MONTH COMPARISON - METRO SFV

### Total/Major Complaints -- 12 Month Comparison

	Jun-05	Jul-05	Aug-05	Sep-05	Oct-05	Nov-05	Dec-05	Jan-06	Feb-06	Mar-06	Apr-06	May-06	Jun-06
Total Complaints	242	224	210	204	200	201	191	135	121	156	117	141	148
3 Month Moving Average	217	227	225	213	205	202	197	176	149	137	131	138	135
12 Month Moving Average	215	211	207	201	202	205	209	203	196	191	185	179	171
Complaints/100K Boarding	4.71	4.41	4.06	3.96	3.93	4.04	4.27	2.88	2.63	2.76	2.54	2.48	2.75
12 Mo. AVG Com./100K Boardings	4.39	4.30	4.19	4.02	4.05	4.09	4.17	4.03	3.89	3.80	3.69	3.56	3.39
Schedule Reliability	90	108	100	109	92	92	70	61	44	55	37	52	57
12 Month Average Schedule	90	89	90	89	90	92	92	89	85	82	79	76	73
Pass Ups	51	39	32	28	34	30	40	29	14	23	15	30	30
12 Month Average Passup	38	38	37	35	35	35	36	36	34	33	31	30	29
Unsafe Operation	32	24	15	21	16	20	27	15	12	14	15	14	14
12 Month Average Unsafe	23	23	21	21	21	21	22	22	21	20	20	19	17
Operator Discourtesy	28	22	22	13	15	25	16	10	19	26	19	16	15
12 Month Average Discourtesy	23	23	23	21	21	22	22	21	21	21	20	19	18
All Others	41	31	41	33	43	34	38	20	32	38	31	29	32
12 Month Average - All Others	41	39	37	34	34	35	36	35	35	35	34	34	34

Schedule Reliability	37.19%	48.21%	47.62%	53.43%	46.00%	45.77%	36.65%	45.19%	36.36%	35.26%	31.62%	36.88%	38.51%
Pass Ups	21.07%	17.41%	15.24%	13.73%	17.00%	14.93%	20.94%	21.48%	11.57%	14.74%	12.82%	21.28%	20.27%
Unsafe Operations	13.22%	10.71%	7.14%	10.29%	8.00%	9.95%	14.14%	11.11%	9.92%	8.97%	12.82%	9.46%	9.46%
Discourtesy	11.57%	9.82%	10.48%	6.37%	7.50%	12.44%	8.38%	7.41%	15.70%	16.67%	16.24%	11.35%	10.14%
S*P*U*D* % Avg. of Total	<b>83.05%</b>	<b>86.16%</b>	<b>80.48%</b>	<b>83.82%</b>	<b>78.50%</b>	<b>83.08%</b>	<b>80.10%</b>	<b>85.19%</b>	<b>73.55%</b>	<b>75.64%</b>	<b>73.50%</b>	<b>79.43%</b>	<b>78.38%</b>
All Others	16.95%	13.84%	19.52%	16.18%	21.50%	16.92%	19.90%	14.81%	26.45%	24.36%	26.50%	20.57%	21.62%
SUM	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

## TOTAL/MAJOR COMPLAINTS -- 12 MONTH COMPARISON - METRO OPERATIONS

	Jun-05	Jul-05	Aug-05	Sep-05	Oct-05	Nov-05	Dec-05	Jan-06	Feb-06	Mar-06	Apr-06	May-06	Jun-06
Total Complaints	1,245	1,340	1,472	1,085	1,152	967	883	872	940	1,044	810	812	926
3 Month Moving Average	1,268	1,314	1,352	1,299	1,236	1,068	1,001	907	898	952	931	889	849
12 Month Moving Average	1,287	1,275	1,276	1,237	1,235	1,236	1,227	1,201	1,170	1,130	1,097	1,052	1,025
Complaints/100K Boarding	3.74	4.02	3.34	2.61	2.76	2.43	2.26	2.13	2.29	2.08	1.95	1.75	2.06
12 Mo. AVG Com./100K Boardings	4.12	4.07	3.96	3.77	3.68	3.62	3.53	3.37	3.17	2.96	2.81	2.61	2.47
Schedule Reliability	342	460	533	414	365	308	268	277	291	257	314	196	253
12 Month Average Schedule	405	405	414	401	397	397	394	384	374	354	350	335	328
Pass Ups	263	230	205	156	203	136	158	146	137	194	127	155	141
12 Month Average Passup	236	232	227	217	215	212	207	203	196	190	182	176	166
Unsafe Operation	136	135	122	107	101	110	101	98	94	107	75	76	90
12 Month Average Unsafe	144	143	140	136	135	137	136	134	127	121	114	105	101
Discourtesy	155	148	182	125	114	116	107	115	135	350	122	140	141
12 Month Average Discourtesy	146	144	145	142	142	143	144	143	143	158	154	151	150
All Others	349	367	430	283	369	297	249	236	283	336	172	245	301
12 Month Average - All Others	355	351	351	341	346	348	346	338	331	324	314	301	297

Schedule Reliability	27.47%	34.33%	36.21%	38.16%	31.68%	31.85%	30.35%	31.77%	30.96%	24.62%	38.77%	24.14%	27.32%
Pass Ups	21.12%	17.16%	13.93%	14.38%	17.62%	14.06%	17.89%	16.74%	14.57%	18.58%	15.68%	19.09%	15.23%
Unsafe Operations	10.92%	10.07%	8.29%	9.86%	8.77%	11.38%	11.44%	11.24%	10.00%	10.25%	9.26%	9.36%	9.72%
Discourtesy	12.45%	11.04%	12.36%	11.52%	9.90%	12.00%	12.12%	13.19%	14.36%	33.52%	15.06%	17.24%	15.23%
S*P*U*D* % Avg. of Total	<b>71.97%</b>	<b>72.61%</b>	<b>70.79%</b>	<b>73.92%</b>	<b>67.97%</b>	<b>69.29%</b>	<b>71.80%</b>	<b>72.94%</b>	<b>69.89%</b>	<b>86.97%</b>	<b>78.77%</b>	<b>69.83%</b>	<b>67.49%</b>
All Others	28.03%	27.39%	29.21%	26.08%	32.03%	30.71%	28.20%	27.06%	30.11%	13.03%	21.23%	30.17%	32.51%
SUM	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%