



# Information Item

**Date: May 8, 2014**

To: Mayor and City Council  
From: Edward F. King, Director of Transit Services  
Subject: Big Blue Bus Safety and Training Update

## **Introduction**

The purpose of this report is to provide the City Council an overview of the progression of the Big Blue Bus (BBB) Safety, Security and Training Program.

## **Background**

A Safety and Training Division was created in 2012 to address safety, security and training program needs. The Safety and Training Division is responsible for:

- Training and re-training for all Motor Coach Operators (MCOs) (including state-mandated Vehicle Transit Training)
- Training Motor Coach Operator Trainees (new student training)
- Bus operations training for transit maintenance employees
- Accident investigation and the evaluation (grading) of accidents/incidents (whether the accident is determined to be preventable or non-preventable)
- Oversight of vehicle and property security programs and projects
- Administration/facilitation of the Accident Review Committee (ARC)
- MCO Line Instructor Training Program, and
- The annual safety awards program.

The division works closely with Risk Management, Human Resources, the City Attorney's Office, and the Fire and Police Departments in its efforts to adhere to regulatory guidelines and standards. The division is comprised of seven employees: the division manager, safety/security coordinator, three training coordinators, and two staff support positions.

## **Discussion**

In 2011, BBB did not have an established and functional System Safety Program Plan (SSPP), which is a component of a comprehensive safety/security program required by the Federal Transit Administration; nor did it have a systematic approach to the development and administration of a safety and training program. As such, industry best practices were not codified in a safety plan or training program to be deployed or followed by the department. Although basic required training was provided to MCOs and new students, there was minimal, if any, accident re-training, coaching and counseling of MCOs post-accident and accidents were not thoroughly investigated.

Data that was gathered did not accurately reflect the overall safety record and additionally, reporting inconsistencies required the re-creation of many reports. In FY2011, BBB had a total of 672 accidents and 104 preventable accidents. The National Safety Council's definition of a preventable accident is that the operator of the vehicle did everything he or she could humanly do in order to prevent the accident. These numbers translate into accident rates of 12.7 accidents and 1.96 preventable accidents per 100,000 miles.

In 2012, updated accident grading standards were developed to ensure that accidents are consistently and fairly graded through a defined process with the operations and safety and training managers conferring on a weekly basis. The ARC administration and the process for hearings were also reviewed and, as a result, additional meetings were scheduled to provide an expeditious review of appeals.

In FY2012, the number of total accidents declined to 666, and 80 preventable with rates of 12.6 and 1.51 per 100,000 miles, respectively.

Over the last two years, staff has formulated and monitored industry best practice (metrics) to improve training programs, evaluate vehicle safety, evaluate route schedules and bus stops and coach/counsel MCOs to reduce accidents. Data on accident type, locations, routes, times of day, and operator behavior are reviewed to determine patterns or areas where additional training and MCO coaching/counseling is required. In addition, MCO Line Instructors engage in providing observation feedback while they conduct line instruction to new students or during the course of their regular driving duties. This is valuable feedback for our operations and scheduling staff.

In November 2013, BBB successfully recruited a new Safety and Training Manager who has more than 20 years of experience in transit and is a recognized leader in the industry for his work in employee and industrial safety, reduction of preventable and non-preventable bus accidents, and ingenuity in developing and facilitating bus operator training and re-training programs. The Safety and Training Manager is now a direct report to the department director as required in MAP21, which is a funding and authorization bill to govern United States federal surface transportation spending enacted in 2012.

The Safety and Training division, in order to improve training and development programs, has:

- Developed new employee selection practices for hiring prospective Motor Coach Operators, which includes pre-placement job-specific functional testing on a bus. This was done with assistance from Risk Management and Human Resources.
- Instituted quarterly safety meetings for all MCOs, in addition to the mandatory annual VTT training program, where an open forum/dialogue discussion of items related to safety and security is encouraged.
- Initiated quarterly maintenance safety meetings.

- Implemented a training program for all maintenance personnel who road test buses and perform road call maintenance for the BBB fleet.
- Established a cross-functional safety team of employees which meets monthly to review proposed service changes, evaluates system-wide and route specific on time performance, schedule adherence, and bus stops. Schedules, bus stops and adherence are evaluated for safety and industry best practice to ensure MCOs operate buses in compliance with the vehicle code and municipal code as well as have appropriate rest/relief breaks at the end of the respective bus lines.

The impact of the organizational changes has resulted in overall improvements in accident rates this fiscal year. Through March 2014, the total FY13-14 YTD accident rate is 9.31 and the preventable accident rate is 1.6. The number of total accidents has been reduced by 20% and preventable accidents are flat. These numbers are more consistent with the industry norm.

### **Summary**

The safety and training goals of BBB are to improve safety, minimize liability losses, minimize industrial accidents, and achieve a superior fleet safety record. Safety issues are being aggressively addressed and general safety programs are being implemented to address both customer and employee safety throughout the system.

Efforts are being made in the following areas:

- Safety culture
- Employee safety recognition
- Training
- Substance abuse prevention program
- Accident classification counseling
- Emergency management/system security
- Safety communications

Expected results from these efforts include:

- Reduction in the number of claims and injury pay-outs
- Reduction in the total number of accidents and preventable accidents
- Improved employee morale
- Embracing industry best practices
- Ensuring a safe work environment

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