Unruly Bus Passengers: Transit Crime Scene Prevention

Common Threats and Countermeasures
Common Threats to Public Transit Security

- Drunk and aggressive passengers
- Farebox disputes and escalation
- Rule violators and escalation
- Sex Crimes
- Theft
- Vandalism/Graffitti
- Intimidation
- Gang activity
- Student distractions
- Assault
- Weapons
- Sleepers
- Fugitives
Unruly Passenger Countermeasures

- Training
- Operator Rulebook
- On-board Signage
- On-Board Video/Audio
- “Canned” Messages
- Radio Control, Supervisions, First Responders
- Silent Alarm
- Emotional Intelligence and Conflict Resolution
Training

• The Courteous Art of Bus Rule Enforcement (no Dirty Harrys!)
  • Challenging the Fare
  • Music
  • Food/Drink
  • Smoking
  • Strollers
• Attitude and Escalation
• Sticklers can become Victims
• Remain in your seat, the position of control and authority.
Rulebook

- Current, Relevant, Enforced
- Best Practices to promote Safety
- Fundamentals of doing business
- 2.1 Fighting. Fighting is prohibited. Operators may not pursue or engage any individual for the purpose of conflict or confrontation.
- 2.3 Weapons. Weapons of any sort are not permitted while on duty or on District property.
- 2.12 Touching Passengers. Never touch a passenger, except in self-defense. If a passenger is sleeping, do not touch him or her to awaken them. If they do not respond to your voice, call the Radio Controller for instructions.
2.15 **Silent Alarm.** The Operator shall use the silent emergency alarm when it is unsafe to use voice communications.

3.1 **Professional Conduct.** Operators must conduct themselves in a professional, safe, and courteous manner at all times. Words or acts of hostility toward any person are prohibited.

5.3 **Challenging the Fare.** A reasonable effort must be made to collect the proper fare in a courteous manner. In case of a dispute, do not pursue the matter. Allow the customer to alight the bus or take a seat. When safe to do so, notify the Radio Controller. The Operator must never put him or herself at risk to collect the fare.

5.4 **Detaining Passengers.** Operators must never detain passengers on a bus, unless it is to protect them from a danger outside the vehicle.
Fighting is Prohibited

Operators cannot “mix it up” with the offender. Make it clear that fighting is a terminable offense.
Aggression breeds aggression, escalating a bad situation into an emergency. Respect the offender’s personal space. Handle the situation from the driver’s seat.
Never Touch a Sleeper

Or any other customer. They may be inebriated, confused, armed and violent.
A technique used in school bus operation: If the students are creating a hazardous distraction, the Bus Operator must stop and take a break. Studying the clouds or stretching can be effective. The students (on their way home) will soon beg the driver to return to the bus with promises to behave. Nothing else will work but an armed, uniformed police officer.
On-Board Signage

• Warnings about Operator Assault
• Video/Audio Disclosure
• Rules of Conduct
• Prohibitions (No Smoking, Eating/Drinking, Loud Music)
• These posted announcements assist the Operator.
• Here’s a good policy statement:

BE NICE OR LEAVE —THANK YOU
WARNING
YOUR ACTIVITY ON THIS BUS MAY BE UNDER AUDIO / VIDEO SURVEILLANCE
ASSAULT

ON A BUS OPERATOR IS A CRIME
THAT MAY BE PUNISHABLE BY
IMPRISONMENT IN STATE PRISON FOR UP
TO FIVE YEARS!

SAMTRANS WILL PROSECUTE.
California P.O. Section 2400/380.
For the best ride possible...

- The bus stops only at SamTrans bus stops. If you’re not sure if the bus stops where you want to get off, ask the operator.
- Yield the front seats to seniors or persons with disabilities.
- Pull the “Stop Request” cord before the bus reaches your destination bus stop.
- If you use the bike rack, tell the bus operator that you will be removing your bike from the front rack before you get off the bus.
- If you see a suspicious package or person, please tell the bus operator or call the Transit Police at 1-877-723-7245.
- Do not hold any object out of the bus windows.
- Stay behind the yellow safety line on the floor behind the driver at all times.
- Please take a seat as soon as possible.
- No Smoking on buses or at bus stops.
- All bags and packages should be stowed out of the aisle.

Thank you for your cooperation.
Internal “Canned” Messages Can Avoid Conflict

• A courteous, generic message, no “undertones”
• Can avoid a “show-down”
• Such as:
  • “As a consideration for other passengers, please refrain from using mobile phones or other communication devices. If you must use one, please speak quietly and keep your conversation short, so as not to disturb others on the bus. Thank you.”
  • “Unruly behavior can present a safety hazard - This vehicle will continue in service when all passengers are ORDERLY & SEATED PROPERLY.”
  • “For your safety – no smoking, eating or drinking & radios silent please.”
Trained Support Staff

• Silent Alarm
  – When unsafe to talk
  – Immediate Police response

• Radio Controllers and Responding Supervisors
  – Supportive and thorough
  – Good rapport with First Responders
  – Knowledgeable about 911 requirements
The Best Countermeasure is:

- Prepared
- Calm
- Observant
- Effective
- Emotionally stable
- Psychologically agile
- Empathetic
- Trustworthy with discretion
- In other words...
Emotionally Intelligent Bus Operators

• Bus Operation – a compensated activity of right conduct that serves others in a compassionate, safe and cost-effective manner.

• Achieved by – excellent new hire training, annual recertification training, specialized training, specific skill development in handling aggressive customer behavior, as well as training to master one’s own emotions.

• Memorialized by – an effective and current Rulebook, Standard Operating Procedures, Operational Notices and modeling of appropriate behavior by organizational superiors. An organizational culture of emotional control.

• Emotional Intelligence: managing the behavior of others through controlling our own emotions and behavior. This could become the next standardized technique training for effective and safe bus operation.
The Emotionally Intelligent Bus Operator

• Can empathize with others
• Has emotional self-control
• Is adept at recognizing emotions
• Interprets non-verbal communication
• Anticipates problems, crafts solutions
• Can avoid “emotional hijacking”
• Overcomes negativity
• Avoids threat escalation
• Achieves self-mastery
• Can negotiate a win-win outcome
• Wants to go home in one piece
• Keeps self and others safe
Questions???? and Comments