

# **Occupational Health Internship Program (OHIP)**

## **Amalgamated Transit Union Local 192**

**Summer 2014**



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# **Bus Operators and The Right to Access Restrooms**

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## **Abstract**

During our eight-week project, we worked with Amalgamated Transit Union Local 192 (ATU Local 192), a union that represents the over 1,100 bus operators employed by AC Transit in the San Francisco Bay Area. Our project examined the operators' ability to access safe and clean restrooms, and the health and safety issues that were emerging from that. The objectives of our project were to interview and survey workers to best assess the health and safety problems they were experiencing in the workplace, specifically, honing in on the issue of restroom access, anxiety, and scheduling. The results of our research imply that access to restrooms on the job for bus operators is a serious issue. Our findings reveal that bus operators do not have access to sanitary and safe restroom facilities, nor do they often get the chance to use the restroom due to tight scheduling. As a part of our giveback we produced a flyer to build public awareness around the problem of restroom access. ATU Local 192 intends to use this piece of advocacy material to promote changes to scheduling and to improve the quality of restroom facilities, through building public awareness, as well as using our final OHIP report for their bargaining efforts to promote restroom access on the job.

## **Introduction**

### *Background*

Bus operators around the world face a plethora of health problems, from workplace anxiety to high rates of hypertension, to ergonomic hazards including sitting for long periods, to workplace violence; the occupation of a bus driver comes with a high price in regards to health. They are burdened with the task of staying on schedule regardless of traffic conditions, poor vehicle ergonomics, and constant contact with the public, all while expected to drive safely. When compared to the general population, urban bus drivers have higher rates of cardiovascular disease, gastrointestinal disorders, musculoskeletal problems, and sickness related absenteeism. This has been traced back by many researchers to the multitude of stressor dimensions that drivers face throughout their workday. All of these dimensions create an environment that leads bus operators to be one of the most stressed and least healthy work populations in the world. Perhaps one of the lesser known serious health issues that drivers face, yet one of the more pervasive, is their limited access to restrooms while on the job.

### *Health Impacts of Limited Restroom Access*

Bus operators are often unable to access their restroom breaks at layover points, because of tight scheduling and a lack of available sanitary restrooms. Although, there is not a great deal of academic literature specifically on the effects of restroom access on bus operators' health, general articles about the impacts of infrequent urination informed our survey. Having limited access to restroom breaks can lead to a multitude of health problems for both men and women. Infrequent voiding may lead to high levels of urinary tract infections, bladder infections, and weakening of the bladder. In fact, having frequent urinary tract infections can develop into more serious bladder infections and result in renal damage. Additionally, this issue seems to affect women operators' health and well-being at a greater rate. Not only have studies found that women have to void more frequently than men, but they are also more susceptible to bladder infections and anatomically more vulnerable to unsanitary restroom facilities. Prior research has found that women that voided three times or less a day suffered from urinary tract infections more often than those who voided four or more times throughout the day.

A lack of restroom access may also influence transit worker safety by increasing accident risk in a manner comparable to alcohol consumption. The extreme urge to void has roughly the

same effect on attentional speed as having a 0.05% Blood Alcohol Concentration (BAC). The effect on working memory is twice that of a 0.05% BAC and 24 hours without sleep.

### *Cal/OSHA Requirements Regarding Bathroom Access*

*CCR Title 8. CAL/OSHA Regulations*

*Chapter 4. Division of Industrial Safety*

*Subchapter 7. General Industry Safety Orders*

*Article 9. Sanitation*

*§3360. Scope and Application.*

*This article applies to all places of employment.*

*Exception: Mobile crews or normally unattended work locations provided employees have readily available potable water for drinking, and readily available transportation or other effective arrangements to nearby toilet and washing facilities.*

California Code of Regulations (CCR) Title 8, section 3360 (Cal/OSHA regulations) requires employers to provide mobile workers access to restrooms. However, the language is vague. Whereas Cal/OSHA regulations clearly define restroom access for non-mobile workers, the language is less clear for mobile laborers such as bus drivers. The Cal/OSHA sanitation standard states, “readily available transportation or other effective arrangements to nearby toilet and washing facilities” must be available to mobile workers. However, “effective arrangements” are not defined, so this code has been open to different interpretations by management and workers.

### *Background on AC Transit*

In the large urban sprawl of Alameda and Contra Costa Counties in the San Francisco Bay Area, bus operators face these stressors and health conditions while employed at AC Transit. With a weekday ridership of over 192,000 people, AC Transit is the third largest transit system in the state of California and the largest bus-only operator, employing more than 1,148 bus operators. According to AC Transit, the bus ridership is largely dependent on buses to get around; 72% of adult riders report being low-income, two-thirds of the ridership are people of color, and more than a fifth are youths aged 13-17 years old. An occupation that used to be predominantly white and male, over the past 30-years has radically changed in demographics to predominantly black, with almost half of all operators identifying as female. The job of AC

Transit bus operators entails driving through high-crime areas and violence on buses is not an uncommon occurrence.

AC Transit bus operators work in a split shift, meaning they drive their route for three to six hours, then have a break that can be anywhere from one hour to three hours before their next shift. These split shifts create long workdays for drivers, where drivers will often be on the clock for at least 10 hours a day. The routes themselves are very tightly scheduled. At any given stop, the arrival time and the departure time is within the same minute (e.g. the bus arrives at the stop at 1:30 p.m. and is scheduled to depart at 1:30 p.m.). According to the operators' contract with AC Transit, breaks at layover points are required to be at least six minutes for a one-way trip under an hour and at least 12 minutes for a one-way trip over an hour. Bus operators can use the restroom during this break time and are also technically allowed to stop at any time during their route to use the restroom. Drivers also have breaks at their layovers points, when again, technically, they should be able to use the restroom. AC Transit bus drivers, however, have continued to report that they are often unable to take restroom breaks, a problem we planned to explore with this project.

For this project we partnered with ATU Local 192 which represents 1,614 transit employees, including the AC Transit bus operators. The Local, along with ATU International, is campaigning to change the conditions of restroom access to make it a functional reality for bus operators.

## **Methods**

A comprehensive survey was created (see Appendix 1 for a copy of the survey). The survey incorporated questions from a previous ATU International restroom access questionnaire and was informed by previous studies on voiding. Union members contributed to the research by participating in preliminary focus groups and interviews, suggesting questions, and providing feedback on survey drafts, described below.

Participants for the preliminary focus group were recruited from the union executive board meeting. Four board members with experience as AC Transit operators participated in a focus group to help develop the survey. The participants were reminded that confidentiality would be maintained. They provided verbal consent to the recorded focus group, which lasted roughly 60 minutes.

Seven formal interview participants were recruited from the union hall and bus division break rooms where operators wait between shifts, known as “gillie rooms.” Participants were informed that the interview would help in developing the survey and that confidentiality would be maintained. The formal interview participants provided written consent.

The written surveys were disseminated to operators from all three AC Transit bus divisions. The majority of surveys were completed in the AC Transit division gillie rooms. All operators that appeared to be free were asked if they would like to participate. Three surveys were completed online via Google forms by interested operators who were asked to participate in the gillie room, but could not due to time restraints. Three surveys were administered at the union hall to operators who were visiting and interested in participating in the project. All potential participants were told that the health and safety survey was confidential, would take around 20 minutes, and that they could be entered in a raffle for participating. After completing the survey, participants were thanked for their time.

Additionally, we physically tracked bus schedules on six bus routes, lasting from 30 minutes to two hours, to assess the feasibility of the schedule and the potential barriers to keeping to the bus schedule. The published schedule times were compared to the times that buses actually departed. Using our tracking tool, we also noted reasons for delays, such as traffic or large passenger loads.

## **Results**

### *Demographics*

Of the 98 bus operators who completed the questionnaire, 44% identified as female, 55% as male, and 1% as other. Sixty-eight percent of respondents identified as black. Participants were between 23 and 64 years old, with the largest portion (33%) being between 33 and 44 years old. Roughly 48% of respondents worked at AC Transit for over 10 years.

### *Lack of break time and scheduling*

The operators worked an average of 48.0 hours per week. Their shifts lasted from 2 hours to over 13 hours, with 39% of respondents working 8-9 hours a day and 53% of respondents working over 10 hours a day. The average break time at the end of the line was 7.6 minutes. However, some operators reported that they could not always take their breaks. Forty three

percent of the operators reported being forced to miss a scheduled break very frequently (see fig. 1).

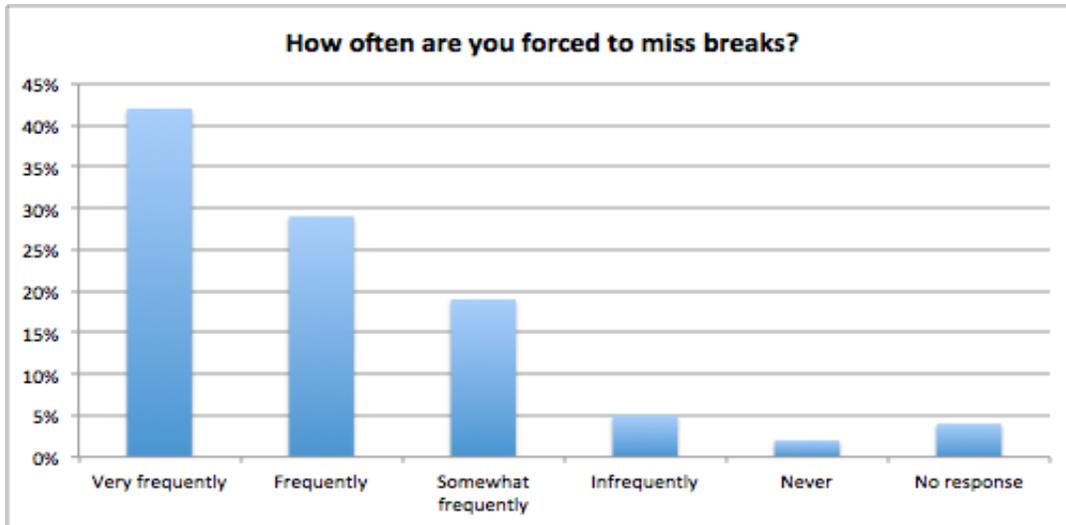


Fig. 1

Of the 88 operators who missed breaks very frequently, somewhat frequently, or frequently, 94% reported doing so in order to stay on schedule (see fig. 2).

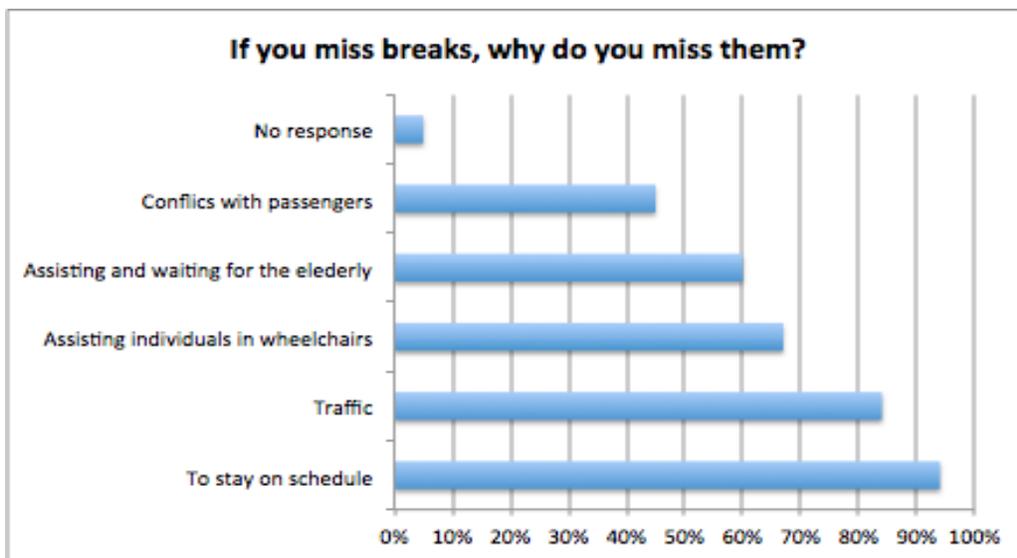


Fig. 2

This may explain why only 5% of the operators surveyed described peak hour schedules as very reasonable, whereas 40% said they were not reasonable at all (see fig. 3). Bus scheduling was the top stressor, very frequently causing 43% of operators stress.

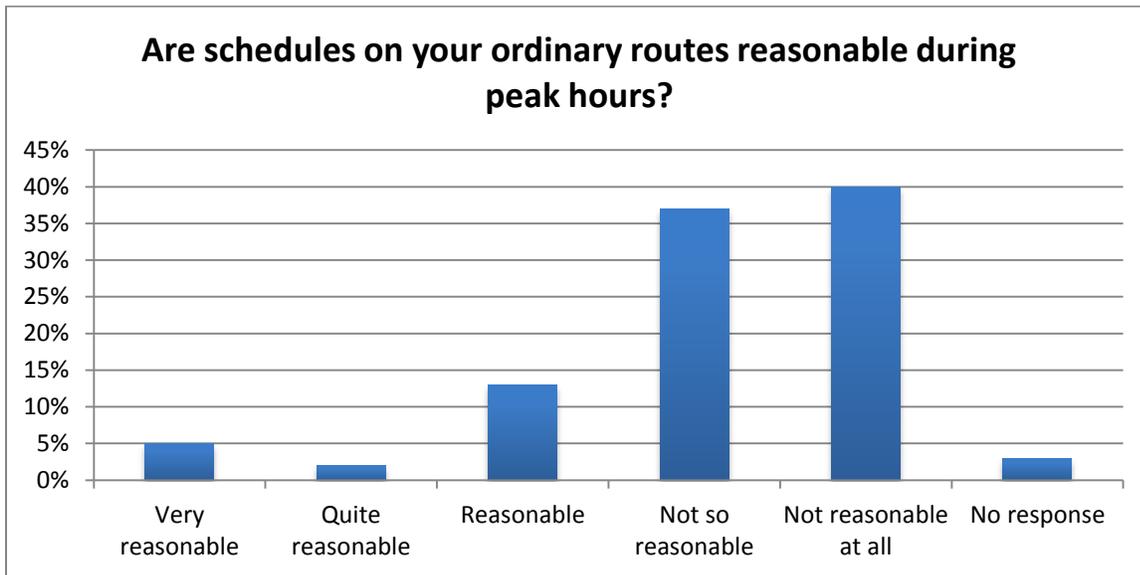


Fig. 3

When operators brought scheduling concerns to management’s attention, 68% reported that management did not take any action (n=60, see fig. 4). The next most common response was pressuring operators to stick to schedules, which 18% of participants reported.

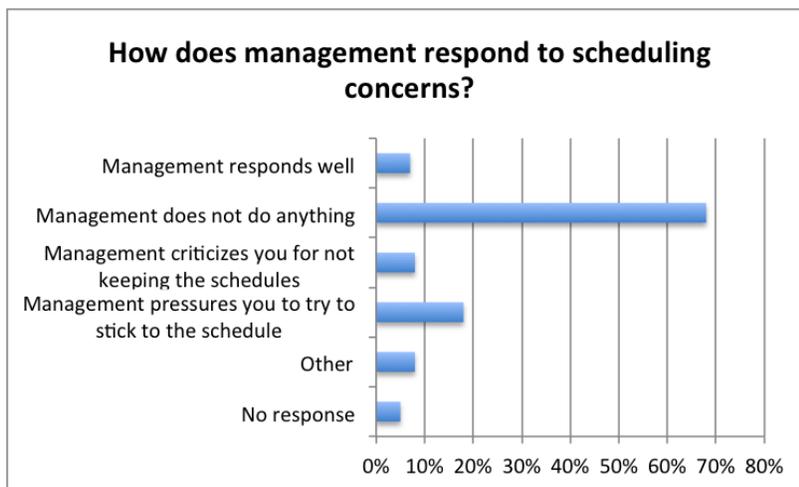


Fig. 4

### Access to facilities

Schedules and time played a key role in restroom access. Of the operators that reported being prevented from using the restroom (n=65), 86% of operators said this was due to scheduling (see fig 5). At layover points the longest walk to the restroom lasted from 1 minute to 20 minutes round trip, averaging 6.2 minutes. Upon arriving to the restroom, 49% of respondents reported that the restroom was occupied frequently or very frequently.

Factor Preventing Restroom Use	Percent of Respondents
Scheduling	86%
Lack of Sanitary Facilities	77%
Location	70%
Passengers	34%
Pressure from Supervisors	23%
Other Operators	5%

Fig. 5

Operators without restroom access improvise in a number of ways. If the public restrooms were not available while working, respondents reported using a cup or a bottle (17%), using a tree (16%), and using a plastic bag (8%) (see fig. 6).

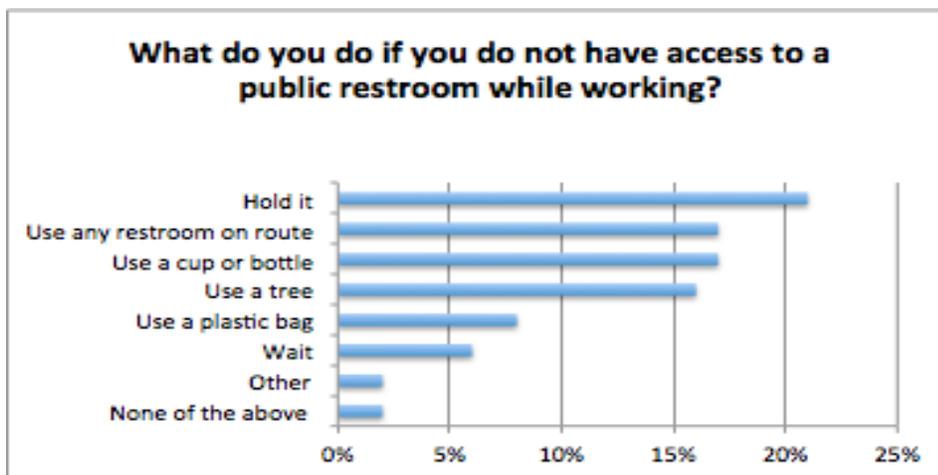


Fig. 6

However, sometimes these emergency actions could not be taken. Twenty percent of operators surveyed have accidentally relieved themselves on the job. Thirteen percent have almost relieved themselves. Eighty-five percent of the operators that have accidentally relieved themselves said this was due to a lack of restroom access (n=20). Some operators have adapted to these conditions. One survey participant explained, “I am forced to wear Depends” because there is too much leaking with sanitary napkins. In order to avoid having to use the restroom, 74% of operators reported drinking fewer liquids. Another participant responded, I “hold my bladder and avoid drinking anything because I will have to go to the bathroom and may not be able to go.” Additionally, operators listed a number of layover locations that do not have a restroom (see appendix 2).

#### *Safety and sanitation of facilities*

In the questionnaire we asked operators seven questions about quality of the restroom facilities that they used. Only 7% of respondents strongly agreed with the statement “I have access to safe restrooms,” whereas 33% disagreed with the statement. One operator recounted events at the 40th and San Pablo facility "my daughter said that it was so dark in there you had to kick the door to make sure that nobody was in there and going in and rob you." Furthermore, only 7% agreed with the statement “I have access to clean restrooms,” while 39% disagreed with the statement. This may be why 77% of the operators (n=65) reported that the lack of sanitary facilities prevents them using the restroom (see fig. 5). These conditions have led operators to carry their own supplies, with 19 reporting that they bring their own toilet paper, towels, or sanitizers. According to interviewees, homeless individuals occupy facilities for extended periods. Interviewees also report finding hypodermic needles in these restroom facilities, which were also often generally unsanitary.

#### *Health effects of inadequate and limited access to restrooms*

The lack of restroom access has affected job performance and mental health. With regards to job performance, 65% of operators reported the need to use the restroom negatively impacts their ability to drive. And 40% of operators reported the lack of restroom access causes

them stress very frequently. One driver even told us, “I think the number one killer of us all is stress.”

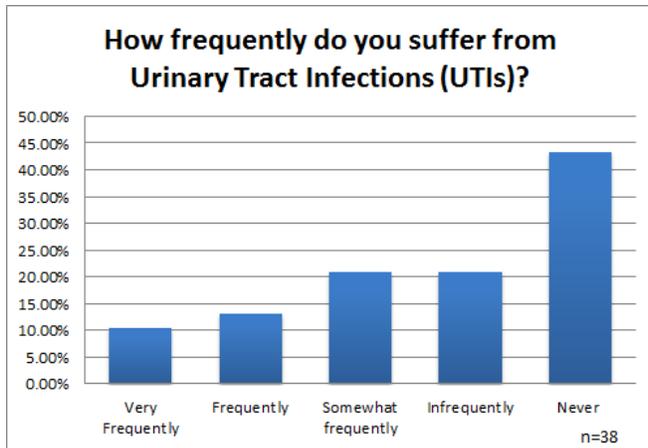


Fig. 7

That data also suggests that women are bearing the brunt of some of the health effects of infrequent voiding. In regards to accidentally voiding on the job, 43.6% of female operators responded that they either relieved themselves or almost relieved themselves while on the job, compared to 26.7% of male operators who responded to the question. Out of women who responded to the question, 44.7% reported that they either: very frequently, frequently, or somewhat frequently suffered from Urinary Tract Infections (see fig. 7), compared to 6% of men who answered the same question. During a bus ride along one female operator told us, “I got so many bladder infections.” While over 50% of both sexes reported that they often do not have access to safe restrooms, 58.5% of women reported that they do not have access compared to 53.1% of men. Additionally, 72% of women reported that that they had been caught off guard with their menstruation while driving.

*Bus Observations and Schedule Tracking*

As described earlier, we conducted six bus route observation ride-alongs. Many of our observations corroborated survey and interview findings about delays. For instance, in our survey we found that over 80% did not consider the schedule reasonable during peak hours, but that number slipped to 56% during off-peak hours. We conducted formal observations of bus lines ten times this summer; looking at variables such as traffic conditions, passenger behavior, and passenger loads.

Scheduled Stop Location	Scheduled Departure	Actual Time Departed
Bayfair	1:20	1:20
San Leandro	1:41	1:41
98th and International Blvd.	1:53	1:53
Seminary and International Blvd.	2:07	2:06
International and 34th	2:17	2:14
23rd and Broadway	2:23	2:20
14th and Broadway	2:41	2:04
40th and Telegraph	2:54	2:55
Telegraph and Alcatraz	3:03	3:04

While riding the buses we were able to observe first-hand many of the issues that drivers dealt with. On a late-morning bus ride on the 57 towards Foothill Blvd. and 108th Ave., the operator spent three minutes assisting a person in a wheelchair onto the bus. During the course of the route there was a physically aggressive person on the bus. The operator maintained a vigilant eye on the man while safely maneuvering the bus through traffic. The early afternoon 1 towards Downtown Berkeley BART that departed from Bay Fair Bart Station at 1:20 p.m. was only two minutes late (see fig. 8). Additionally, the bus only lost time in a heavier traffic area of downtown Oakland, where masses of riders were coming on the bus and there were more cars on the road. Even though the bus arrived two-minutes late at the end of the route, the driver still had enough time to quickly go use the restroom.

Fig. 8

At 3:59 we boarded the 1R towards Bay

Fair BART Station (see fig. 9), the traffic on this trip was very slow and the driver was not able to quickly pull away from stops due to large passenger loads. For instance at 82nd and International Blvd., a large passenger load came on the bus, taking three minutes before the bus operator was able to pull out of the stop. At 90th and International Blvd. the operator was not able to pull the bus out of the stop for three minutes because of fare issues and the large passenger load. These traffic and passenger situations were not variables that either operator could control, yet were

<b>1R Towards Bay Fair BART</b>		
<b>Scheduled Stop Location</b>	<b>Scheduled Departure</b>	<b>Actual Time Departed</b>
Berkeley BART	3:58	3:59
Telegraph and Alcatraz	4:10	4:14
14th and Broadway	4:28	4:33
International and 34th	4:46	4:53
Seminary and International Blvd.	4:53	5:00
98th and International Blvd.	5:06	5:15
Bay Fair	5:25	5:35

Fig. 9

causing the operators to be delayed. The bus did not arrive at the Bay Fair BART Station until 5:35 p.m., ten minutes after the scheduled time. This left the driver with four minutes for a break as he had to leave to start his next route at 5:39 p.m. When talking to the driver he told us that he started his day pulling out at 6:41 a.m. and wouldn't be done until 7:30 p.m.

We found in our other observations that the ability of the operators to keep to their schedules was very much dependent on external factors of traffic and passengers. On the 40, the operator was able to keep the schedule because there were not big passenger loads and there was not a great deal of traffic congestion. However, the bus passes by many schools so the likelihood of keeping to the schedule during the school year seems low, because passenger loads increase substantially (see appendix 3 for the 40 line scheduling tracking charts). On the 51B the driver was 10 minutes late to the start of the line because the amount of time allotted for her to get from her division to the pick up spot was insufficient. This created an extra burden on the driver in front of her, who had to pick up the bulk of the passengers (see appendix 3 for the 51B line schedule tracking charts). When we arrived at the Berkeley Marina, the end of line, she had six minutes for her break, which was taken up by tourists asking for directions.

## **Worker Stories**

While completing our project we were introduced to a number of workers. While we wish that we could include some of each person's story, due to our page limit we have chosen two that we believe come close to accurately describing the overall experience of working for AC Transit.

### *Chantelle*

Chantelle<sup>1</sup> is an outgoing and passionate woman just waiting to have her voice heard. She has been working for AC Transit as a bus operator for almost 17 years. She began as a driver for Paratransit in the town of Vallejo, a city 40-miles north of Oakland. For six months she would frequently encounter an AC Transit driver that often recommended she switch employers. Finally, she applied to work for AC Transit, got a call back, and has been working at AC Transit ever since. While Chantelle's job is challenging, she enjoys it and that it allows her to support her daughter. Though Chantelle doesn't play much football, she has plenty experience performing what she calls the "football huddle" when using the restroom while at work. During her interview she had no problem rolling up her pants when demonstrating and explaining the difficult position: "you gotta make sure you lean, but you can't let your pants touch the back and you can't touch the wall, so you gotta lean like this and you end up soiling yourself." Mastering this careful balancing act is not the only issue that Chantelle faces when on the job. While stopping to use the restroom at Lafayette Square, a scheduled layover point on 11<sup>th</sup> and Jefferson Streets near Lake Merritt, "you have to worry about carrying a purse. You can't leave your purse on the bus. One of *them* may steal it. Then you gotta be carrying your purse. And you have to worry about one of them attacking you or if the door don't close, one of the old men come looking. I mean for real."

In addition to the filthy and dangerous facilities, some of Chantelle's restroom worries have come from a combination of the urgency of voiding, supervisors, and facility policies. She explained:

If you find a place where you gotta go, here's the issue. The issue is well you need to buy something. And I'm doing the pee pee dance. I'm like [*Chantelle taps her feet and has an uncomfortable facial expression*]. *I don't got time*. I gotta go to the bathroom. Then, ok, I will buy something on my way out. You walk outside with a bag. Guess who's

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<sup>1</sup> All worker names have been changed in this report to maintain anonymity.

looking at you? Supervisor. ‘Oh, so you stopped in the middle of the run to go buy something?’ No, really I hit the button to go use the bathroom.

Additionally, Chantelle explained that when female operators menstruate unexpectedly and request relief they not only have to announce it on the Satcom radio to the dispatcher, but also face-to-face to some supervisors. In her opinion, “it’s an embarrassment because I had to tell you instead of saying it’s a personal problem and leave it at that ...It feels like *an invasion* of privacy... It’s a true embarrassment.”

Beyond causing humiliation, Chantelle believes the lack of restroom access at her job has caused her to develop frequent bladder infections. While attempting to arrive at her time points on schedule, she is rarely able to use the restroom regularly. Chantelle suggests that schedulers actually drive the bus lines because “graphs is beautiful on the computer and I always said if the people from downtown would put on a uniform and drive a bus for about two weeks they would understand much better what we go through.”

### *Rafael*

Though the bus operators were the main focus of our study, because mechanics themselves came up to us clearly wanting to voice their concerns, we felt that it would benefit the union membership to include information about other employees. Rafael has been a mechanic with AC transit for 20 years. He first entered the field by working with his uncle. Prior to working for AC transit, he was a mechanic “on the outside” for five years. Like Chantelle, Rafael suggests AC transit management spend more time in the field to see firsthand what the requirements and rigors of the job are:

Management doesn’t know what goes on. All they do is look at numbers. To really understand what goes on they need to put on a pair of coveralls and not even work, just be next to a guy who’s working and see what he does. Rick Fernandez [*a previous AC Transit General Manager*] he actually came in and went under the buses and said, ‘Ok. Tell me what’s what,’ That’s what you call a hands-on manager. He didn’t just work with numbers, he knew what the numbers meant.

Regardless, fifty-two-year-old Rafael takes pride in ensuring the buses are safe. He explains, “my philosophy I use is I think of my grandmother being on the bus.” He begins work at six o’clock in the morning and ends at two o’clock. He is lucky to always be able to take his

scheduled breaks. Just as bus operators experience more stress than one would expect, Rafael believes as a mechanic there is “a little more stress than you think a mechanic has. We just don’t fix the bus. The bus breaks down, we have to go out there.”

Since beginning to work for AC Transit, Rafael has seen changes in his physical health. He was just on workers’ compensation for over six months after having shoulder surgery. In addition, Rafael has developed asthma. He stays informed and knows his condition is common among the mechanics. He informs us that a recent OSHA study concluded that asthma could be linked to his line of work. However, Rafael still enjoys his job. When asked what his favorite part is he replied, “working with these people. We’ve gotten to be like family.”

## **Challenges and Successes**

### *Challenges*

During the course of this project we encountered a few challenges and experienced some unanticipated successes. The first challenge was related to the sampling. It was often difficult—even if only initially, to get some participants interested in completing the survey. A few of the operators felt that the union already had sufficient information about restroom access and that an additional survey was unnecessary. This may have been related to their belief that restroom access would always be an issue. Having become frustrated and having endured the conditions so long, some individuals felt that nothing could realistically be done to improve conditions. Yet, others who maintained that restroom access was not an issue were also initially uninterested in participating; they felt there was no need for the project. Thus, our sample may not contain operators at the extremes—those with the very best and worst restrooms. Additionally, because we recruited from the gillie rooms, our sample primarily consisted of operators who were healthy enough to work. And while we attempted to recruit operators that worked nights and weekends, there were very few when we visited the gillie rooms to distribute surveys. Because operators often asserted to us that restrooms were often closed or had limited hours during the weekend and at night, we feel we may not have enough data from operators with those shifts.

Another challenge was relying on self-reported data. Due to funding and time constraints, medical monitoring was not a feasible method of obtaining health information. Since participants provided information about their medical conditions, there is the possibility

that some of the information is not current. Using self-reported information meant that there were more opportunities for bias. Additionally, there did appear to at times be literacy issues when operators were filling out the survey, however this was infrequent and does not seem to have impacted our results.

### *Successes*

One of the main successes of the project was the degree to which the workers participated during various stages of the project. Though we felt it was critical with our lack of experience driving buses to have operators help us develop the survey, in the beginning we thought that the operators would be too busy or tired to provide their feedback. However, a number of operators were happy to assist in creating the survey. A few times we just casually mentioned the survey and the operators were eager to revise a draft and provide suggestions. This enabled us to develop a survey with accessible language that addressed their concerns.

This interest in the project may explain why we exceeded our original goal of 90 participants. At one division we had a participation rate close to 100%. Some operators that wanted to assist even encouraged their fellow operators to complete the survey; the operators naturally became involved in the recruitment process.

We were also fortunate to be able to have operators attend a workplace mapping workshop led by Occupational Health Specialist Dorothy Wigmore. The five attendees drew out bus lines and included items like traffic, restrooms, and passenger-heavy stops. Because some operators drove the same line at different times, they had some different experiences of the conditions, but they could also bond over the similarities. After completing his map, Jared, who once had aspirations of taking over for Charles M. Schulz, looked at his piece of art with a sense of accomplishment as he replied, “some of my best work,” while snapping a picture with his phone.

Thus, one of the greatest successes of the project was making the workers feel proud. Though some initially doubted that what they said could be of any use, they were reminded that they have a unique set of skills and knowledge base. During her interview, Chantelle said, “I feel kind of important... I participated. I like this.”

### **Recommendations**

Our research shows that many bus operators are often unable to use the restroom due to their unsafe and inconvenient locations, along with the restrooms' unsanitary nature. Moreover, schedules that do not take into account the day-to-day issues that operators face prevented operators from using the restroom. We hope that our recommendations will be considered by AC Transit and other transit agencies to improve current conditions bus operators are facing around lack of restroom access and tight scheduling, to create a working environment that enables operators to access their scheduled breaks and sanitary restroom facilities.

### *Extend Route Times*

As tight and unrealistic scheduling is the largest barrier to restroom access, our first recommendation is around the issue of scheduling. We recommend that schedules are assessed to be more feasible for the driver, as there are many outside issues that often prevent operators from keeping to their schedules. Specifically, we recommend two changes in scheduling. The first recommendation is for departure times to be adjusted to account for high passenger loads and operators assisting passengers in need of help. As it currently stands, drivers are supposed arrive and pull-out of the stop within the same minute. Due to the requirements of the bus operators' job, such as waiting for elderly to take their seat, large passenger loads, and assisting those who are disabled, many drivers are not able to pull-out of the stop within that timeframe. Therefore, we propose that departures be scheduled to be two minutes after the arrival time, allowing for these frequent disruptions in the schedule.

### *Add Buses During Peak Hours in High Traffic Areas*

Our other recommendation is for AC Transit to add a bus to routes in high traffic areas during peak hours. In our survey, we found that around 80% of respondents reported that the schedule during peak hours was not reasonable. To add another bus would lessen the stressors that bus operators face while driving, due to the more reasonable passenger loads and a better ability to realistically meet the schedule. Additionally, this would have the potential to allow for operators to access their breaks at layover points as it would create more time for operators to maneuver through traffic.

There are economic advantages to this as well. Several studies have found that occupations with high stress rates have a high turnover rate. Greiner found that hypertensive

employees are more likely to leave MUNI than non-hypertensive employees. With a turnover rate of 25% and 44% of operators reporting that they are very frequently stressed from scheduling, AC transit could benefit from reducing employee stress. Additionally, studies have examined the causes of absenteeism among bus drivers, a disproportionate number stem from stress-related disorders such as gastrointestinal problems and psychosomatic disorders, such as headaches and anxiety. Self-reported job stress has even been associated with absenteeism. A link between stress and turnover rate can be argued. Therefore, we believe not only is altering the schedule a benefit to bus operators, but also to AC Transit. If operators are less stressed it is very likely that absenteeism and turnover rate will go down. Long and Price also found that one-fourth of operating costs are attributed to driver absenteeism. By altering the schedule to create less stress among bus operators AC Transit has the opportunity to help reduce stress in the workplace for operators, but also create better retention and save money in the long run.

#### *Operator Only Restrooms*

On this issue of the quality of restrooms, we recommend that AC Transit provide operator only restrooms at layover locations that currently do not offer safe, clean, or geographically close restrooms. As we have noted earlier in our report, many drivers have reported not having enough time to use the restroom, due to far or extremely unsanitary facilities. When asking operators what type of improvements they would like to see occur, many reported having AC Transit operator only restrooms would be a welcome improvement. In compliance with Title 8, these facilities should have hand washing facilities. It is imperative that these restrooms have internal plumbing, soap dispensers, and paper towel dispensers. Such essentials are included with the ADA compliant lavatory buildings available from toilets.com for \$15,017, with discounts available for bulk orders (see appendix 4 for details and pictures). The model of the self-cleaning restroom that has been put into place in San Francisco seems like another very sanitary option for AC Transit to install in locations that currently do not have facilities that are safe, clean, and reasonably located for operators to access.

An alternative to this (and we say this if only resources around self-cleaning private restrooms is exhausted) is for AC Transit to install portable restrooms with sinks included, and provide a weekly cleaning service at locations that currently do not have adequate restrooms available for operators. These restrooms would be locked, and the code only given to AC Transit

employees. In a preliminary search we found that ADA approved portable restrooms with sinks will cost around \$1,300, such facilities should be cleaned weekly to keep it sanitary.

#### *Access to Existing Restrooms*

Due to the lack of sanitary and vacant BART public restrooms, an effort should be made to allow AC Transit employees to use BART employee restrooms, as they were previously permitted. This is recommended because of the unsanitary conditions of the restrooms and long wait times that drivers have reported for the public BART restrooms. Not only would this change in policy improve the quality of restrooms available to operators, but it would also better enable operators to keep to their schedules as they wouldn't have to wait in lines with public.

In locations where portable restrooms are not a feasible option, existing relationships that AC Transit has with private businesses that provide restrooms to operators should be strengthened. Reliable accounting should be practiced so businesses that are providing safe and clean restrooms at a reasonable distance from layover locations are paid consistently for their services. Additionally, some of the restrooms listed on the paddles require operators to purchase an item in order to use the restroom. This policy puts an unfair burden on operators, especially when operators have voiced that it puts them in an uncomfortable position with supervisors and passengers when they are seen leaving a private business with food. Because of this, AC Transit should take this into account when negotiating restroom contracts with private businesses. Furthermore, operators have reported that many times staff at private businesses are not made aware that they are allowed to use the restroom, so operators are denied access. To help with this communication problem, AC Transit should distribute materials to businesses they have contracts with, so all employees know that operators are allowed to use the businesses' facilities. These improvements will ensure that these businesses continue contracting with AC Transit and provide quality restrooms for operators to use.

#### *Modify Reporting Process*

Though operators are not to be held accountable for restroom conditions, under contract they are encouraged to report unsatisfactory facilities by completing a restroom complaint form. An effort should be made to inform operators of where the restroom complaint forms are located. They should be included in each operator's pouch so that operators can complete the forms immediately after

using a restroom on the road. Another option would be to store the forms in a visible area in gillie rooms where operators can easily fill them out during their breaks. Additionally, operators should be notified as to how each complaint was handled. This follow-up may restore faith in the reporting process, promote additional reporting, and encourage AC Transit to consistently maintain restrooms. However, reporting should be seen as a secondary way to provide restrooms that are consistently clean and available, not as the only method to ensure that facilities are clean.

### *Improved Supervisor-Operator Relations*

Since 21.6% of operators reported missing their scheduled breaks because of their fear of being reprimanded by management and only 17% felt that their supervisors are there to help them, we propose that AC Transit work to improve the relationship between supervisors and operators. Such a plan would entail hiring more supervisors from the pool of current AC transit operators, as was done in the past. The diversity of these newly appointed supervisors should reflect the diversity of the workers they oversee. Instituting such a change would improve operator moral and increase supervisor understanding of the actual conditions on the roads and feasibility of schedules. We highly recommend that all supervisors be trained to communicate appropriately and effectively to increase open dialogue between supervisors and operators. Such training should also focus on eliminating formal punishment and informal verbal retaliation toward operators that fall behind schedule or use the restroom, facilitating an environment that promotes regular breaks and voiding.

### *Increased Restroom Inspections*

In our observational research and our interviews with operator we found many restrooms were not in sanitary conditions. Due to these findings, we strongly urge AC Transit to increase their inspections and maintenance of current restroom facilities that it provides for operators. It also should not be up to drivers to report that facilities are not up to a proper standard cleanliness. So we recommend twice-weekly inspections of restrooms to ensure that they are properly stocked with supplies and are sanitary enough to use.

### *Participatory Research*

Through our questionnaire and talking to individual bus drivers, we found that scheduling was one of the biggest causes of stress among the bus operators and one of the main deterrents of restroom access. We understand that scheduling is a complicated and difficult process, so we recommend that the bus operators themselves continue this research through their own schedule tracking in the fall, when schools are in session and ridership increases, and in years to come. This method would enable bus operators to offer their input to AC Transit, to help create a schedule that would reflect the realities of their job.

#### *Improve Cal-OSHA Regulations for Mobile Workers*

Finally, we recommend that Cal/OSHA clarify and refine the language of Title 8 to specify the requirements of “effective arrangements to nearby toilet and washing facilities.” The language in this regulation is too vague, leading to conflicting interpretations of adequate compliance. A clear definition of legal requirements under this regulation would facilitate employer compliance as well as legitimate worker complaints about violations.

#### *Broad Scope*

We hope this study will be used by transit agencies to look at their policies surrounding scheduling and restroom access. These issues surrounding restroom access that bus operators are facing are not isolated at AC Transit. While recognizing the complexity of creating a manageable schedule and managing a transit agency, we hope this study can be utilized by AC Transit and other transit agencies to develop schedules and restroom facilities that meet the needs of bus operators. Additionally, we intend for the ATU International and locals to utilize this report and the data from it for their organizing purposes around these pervasive problems among urban transit systems. We also hope that this paper will be a stepping stone for bus operators around the world to obtain access to safe and clean restrooms as a basic human right.

### **Personal Reflections**

*Michelle*

I will admit that I used to be one of the impatient bus riders, frustrated when the bus was just five minutes late to pick me up. Because I was in such a hurry to reach my destination, I never truly noticed the bus operators and how they felt. However, this internship has been an eye opening experience for me. Since operators are the public face of transit, we hold them accountable for every inconvenience, from the fare system to arrival time. However, I learned that the bus operator realistically is not responsible for many of these hassles. This has led me to view all workers with a new perspective. I have learned there are very few “easy” jobs. Each has its unique hazards if you will, but also necessary psychological investment. I am certain that this mentality will benefit me in the future as I continue in the field of occupational health. I am so grateful to have been given this internship opportunity, to have met such an inspiring group, and received such a warm welcome to ATU Local 192. I hope that this reports results in overall improvements that benefit the transit system as well as ATU members themselves.

*Elana*

This summer has truly been an amazing experience. It has opened my eyes to the realities of how strenuous of a job driving a bus is. Everyday drivers are given the responsibility of safely driving hundreds of people, most who rely on AC Transit as their main form of transportation. I have been able to witness first hand how many roles drivers play, from acting as social workers to being prominent community figures. Truly seeing the reality of their work has made the lack of basic human dignity they often receive that much harder swallow. Many people do not know that restroom access is such a serious issue for bus operators, and I sincerely hope that work we have done this summer and the product we have created will help successfully advocate for access to proper restroom facilities on the job. No one should have to wear incontinence pads to work because there isn't proper restroom access. The respect of adequate restroom access that is given to an office worker should be no different than the respect given to bus operators. This experience has really highlighted to me how important unions are to ensure workers are able to access basic dignities on the job. I am just overcome by the hospitality of ATU 192 and the dedication I have seen this summer. It is not every job that you get to come into a work environment that is filled with so many passionate people who are advocating fiercely for their own rights and for the rights of their fellow human beings. I am so thankful that I had the opportunity to do this project and meet so many fantastic people.

## **Acknowledgements**

We would like to thank ATU Local 192 for being such gracious hosts and warmly welcoming us. This project would not have existed without all of the formal participants and all of the other ATU members that increased our understanding of the realities of life as a transit worker. A very special thanks to our ATU 192 supervisors, Yvonne Williams and Ed Nash, who provided us with invaluable knowledge and resources. Our academic mentor Valeria Velazquez, the rest of the UC Berkeley LOHP staff, and OHIP provided us with fantastic support for this study. This project would not have been possible without the financial support of The California Wellness Foundation, NIOSH, and AOEC. We would also like to give a big thank you to Dorothy Wigmore for leading the mapping workshop. We were so happy that Dr. June Fisher could assist in the development of this project and impart her wisdom on us. We were very fortunate to have Karen Messing take time out of her busy schedule to introduce us to activity analysis. Most importantly we would like to extend our utmost gratitude and appreciation to all the bus operators for sharing their stories and shedding light on this prevalent issue.

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## Appendix 1: ATU Health and Safety Survey

### INSTRUCTIONS

Thank you for participating in our survey. The purpose of this survey is to gather more information on bus operator health and safety. All of your answers are confidential. The results will be presented to the ATU Local 192 executive board and general membership as well as to union and AC transit health and safety committees. Feel free to write in the margins to add more feedback, and please answer the questions to the best of your ability. Funding for this project was provided by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, the California Wellness Foundation, the University of California, and a number of other health organizations.

### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. What is your job title? \_\_\_\_\_

2. What is your current division? \_\_\_\_\_

3. How long have you worked with AC transit?

- 0-1 years
- 2-4 years
- 5-9 years
- 10-15 years
- 16-21 years
- 22-27 years
- 28-33 years
- 34+ years

4. Have you worked as a driver for another company before?

Yes  No

b. If so, for how long? \_\_\_\_\_

5. What is your gender?  Female  Male  Other

6. Age?

- 23-33 years old
- 34-44 years old
- 45-54 years old
- 55-64 years old
- 65-74 years old
- 75 years or older

7. Please select **all** races that you identify with.

Black  White  Hispanic/Latino  
 Asian/Pacific Islander  Other \_\_\_\_\_

8. What shift do you work most often?

Early Morning  Midday  Night

9. On average, how long do your shifts last for?

- 2-3 hours  4-5 hours
- 6-7 hours  8-9 hours
- 10-11 hours  12-13 hours
- 13+ hours

10. On average, how long are your trips (driving the line both ways)?

\_\_\_\_\_ hours

11. On average, how many hours a week do you work?  
\_\_\_\_\_ hours

12. Which line(s) are you currently driving?  
\_\_\_\_\_

13. Have you ever suffered (or currently suffer) from any of the following? **Check all that apply.**

- Bladder infection  Constipation
- Kidney stones  Kidney infection
- Hemorrhoids  Weak bladder
- Kidney damage  Hypertension
- Fibroid Tumor  Diabetes
- Other \_\_\_\_\_  None of the above

14. How frequently do you suffer from Urinary Tract Infections (UTIs)?

- Very frequently
- Frequently
- Somewhat frequently
- Infrequently
- Never

15. Do you take hypertension medication?

Yes  No

### SCHEDULING

1. What routes experience the most delays? Why?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. Are schedules on your ordinary routes reasonable during peak hours?

- Very reasonable
- Quite reasonable
- Reasonable
- Not so reasonable
- Not at all
- I don't know

3. Are schedules on your ordinary routes reasonable during **off-peak** hours?

- Very reasonable
- Quite reasonable
- Reasonable
- Not so reasonable
- Not at all
- I don't know

4. Have you ever brought scheduling concerns to management's attention?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

b. If yes, how does management respond? **Check all that apply.**

- Management responds well (implements changes, is understanding, etc.)
- Management does not do anything
- Management criticizes you for not keeping the schedule
- Management pressures you to try to stick to the schedule
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

### RESTROOM ACCESS

1. Are there restrooms on your line for you to use?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

b. If you answered "yes," how many? \_\_\_\_\_

2. Does your paddle list restrooms for you to use on your line?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know OR N/A

b. If you answered "yes" to question 2, do you have to purchase an item at the location in order to use the restroom?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know OR N/A

3. Mark whether you agree or disagree with the following statements.

a. I have access to clean bathrooms on my line(s).

- Strongly Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Somewhat disagree
- Disagree

b. I have access to safe bathrooms on my line(s).

- Strongly Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Somewhat disagree
- Disagree

c. I have access to bathrooms that are equipped with hot water.

- Strongly Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Somewhat disagree
- Disagree

d. I have access to bathrooms that are stocked with soap.

- Strongly Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Somewhat disagree
- Disagree

e. I have access to bathrooms that are equipped with toilet paper on my lines.

- Strongly Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Somewhat disagree
- Disagree

f. I have access to bathrooms that are equipped with towels.

- Strongly Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Somewhat disagree
- Disagree

g. I have access to bathrooms that are equipped with properly functioning toilets on my line(s).

- Strongly Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Somewhat disagree
- Disagree

4. While driving your current line, what is the average time you have to wait to use the restroom? \_\_\_\_\_minutes

5. How long is the longest walk from the layover point to the restroom? \_\_\_\_\_minutes round-trip

6. How often is the restroom occupied?

- Very frequently
- Frequently
- Somewhat frequently
- Infrequently
- Never

7. Are there any layover locations that do not have a restroom?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

b. If yes, what is the location(s)? \_\_\_\_\_

8. What do you do if you do not have access to a public restroom while working? **Check all that apply.**

- Use a tree
- Use a cup or bottle
- Use a plastic bag
- None of the above
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

9. What is your average break time at the end of the line to use the restroom? \_\_\_\_\_

10. How often are you forced to miss a scheduled break?

- Very frequently
- Somewhat frequently
- Frequently
- Infrequently
- Never

b. If you miss breaks, why do you miss them? **Check all that apply.**

- To stay on schedule
- Conflicts with passengers
- Traffic
- Other transit
- Assisting individuals in wheelchairs
- Assisting and waiting for elderly individuals
- Fear of being reprimanded by employer for being behind schedule
- Fear of being reprimanded by riders for being behind schedule
- Weather conditions
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

11. Have you developed a health problem due to a lack of restroom access?

- Yes       No       I don't know

b. If you answered yes, please explain: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

12. Have you had an already existing condition get worse due to a lack of restroom access?

- Yes       No       I don't know

b. If you answered yes, please explain: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

13. Do you consciously drink fewer liquids to avoid having to use the restroom on the job?

- Yes       No       I don't know

14. Have you ever accidentally relieved yourself on the job?

- Yes     Almost     No       I don't know

b. If yes, was this due to a lack of restroom access?

- Yes       No       I don't know

c. If, yes how many times has this occurred?

- 1-2
- 3-4
- 5-7
- 8+

15. Have you ever been disciplined for taking restroom breaks?

- Yes       No       I don't know

b. If you answered yes, how were you disciplined?

- Counseling
- Letter
- Suspension
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

16. Do you feel pressure from supervisors to postpone using the restroom?

- Yes       No       I don't know

17. Does the need to use the restroom impact your ability to drive?

- No, does not impact driving ability
- Yes, it impacts my driving negatively
- Yes, it impacts my driving positively
- I don't know

18. Does something prevent you from using the restroom?

- Yes       No       I don't know

b. If you answered yes, what prevents you from using the restroom? **Check all that apply.**

- Lack of sanitary facilities
- Pressure from supervisors
- Passengers
- Other \_\_\_\_\_
- Scheduling
- Location
- Other operators

19. Have you ever been caught off guard with your monthly and were unable to access the restroom?

- Yes  
 No  
 Not applicable

20. How have you coped with restroom conditions (for example, do you hold your bladder, bring sanitary wipes, etc)?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

21. How do passengers respond if you stop a bus to use the restroom? **Check all that apply.**

- Passengers do not respond
- Passengers are upset, but do not take actions
- Passengers let me know how they are feeling (yell, raise voice, threaten, etc.)
- Passengers complain to management
- Does not apply. I do not stop the bus to use the restroom.
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

b. If passengers complain to management, how does management respond to complaints from passengers for stopping the bus to use the restroom?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

22. Is there anything else regarding restroom access that you would like to share?

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2. Has your level of stress increased with more years of employment with AC transit?

Yes       No       I don't know

b. If yes, why has your stress increased?

	Never	Infrequently	Somewhat Frequently	Frequently	Very Frequently
Traffic congestion	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Scheduling	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Risk of assault/violence by passengers	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Relationship with management	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Lack of recognition of work	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Lack of restroom access	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Health concerns	<input type="checkbox"/>				
<input type="checkbox"/> Other _____					

**STRESS**

1. How often do the following cause you stress?

	Never	Infrequently	Somewhat Frequently	Frequently	Very Frequently
Traffic congestion	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Scheduling	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Risk of assault/violence by passengers	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Relationship with management	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Lack of recognition of work	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Lack of restroom access	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Health concerns	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Other _____					

3. Do you feel your supervisors are there to help you?

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4. How could your employer reduce workplace stress?

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**Appendix 2: Layover Locations Without a Restroom**

**Thank you for taking the time to participate in our survey!**

<b>Layover Location / Bus Line</b>	<b>Percent of Respondents Listing the Location</b>
Foothill Square (57 and 45 lines)	10%
11 <sup>th</sup> and Jefferson (40, 14, and 20 lines)	8%
Point Richmond (72M and 607 lines)	5%
Merritt College (54 line)	4%
Fruitvale Ave. and Macarthur Blvd.	3%
Castro Ranch Rd. & San Pablo (74 line)	2%
Union City BART (97, 200, 216, 275, DB and DB1 lines)	2%
Oakland Airport (21 line)	2%
University Village (52 line)	2%
Bay Farm Island (OX line)	1%
Ohlone College (210, 216, 251 lines)	1%
Lake Merritt BART (88 line)	1%
Berkeley Way	1%
801 line (all-nighter)	1%
60 line	1%
1R line	1%
CB line	1%
U line	1%

### **Appendix 3: Schedule Tracking**

<b>51B Towards Berkeley Marina</b>		
Scheduled Stop Location	Scheduled Departure	Actual Time Departed
Rockridge BART	3:03 PM	3:13 PM
Bancroft and Telegraph	3:19 PM	3:36 PM
Berkeley BART	3:25 PM	3:30 PM
University and San Pablo	3:37 PM	3:40 PM
Berkeley Marina	3:35 PM	3:44 PM

<b>51B Towards Rockridge BART</b>		
Scheduled Stop Location	Scheduled Departure	Actual Time Departed
Berkeley Marina	3:50 PM	3:52 PM
University and San Pablo	3:57 PM	3:59 PM
Berkeley BART	4:07 PM	4:07 PM
Durant and Telegraph	4:13 PM	4:12 PM
Rockridge BART	4:29 PM	4:33 PM

**Appendix 3 Continued**

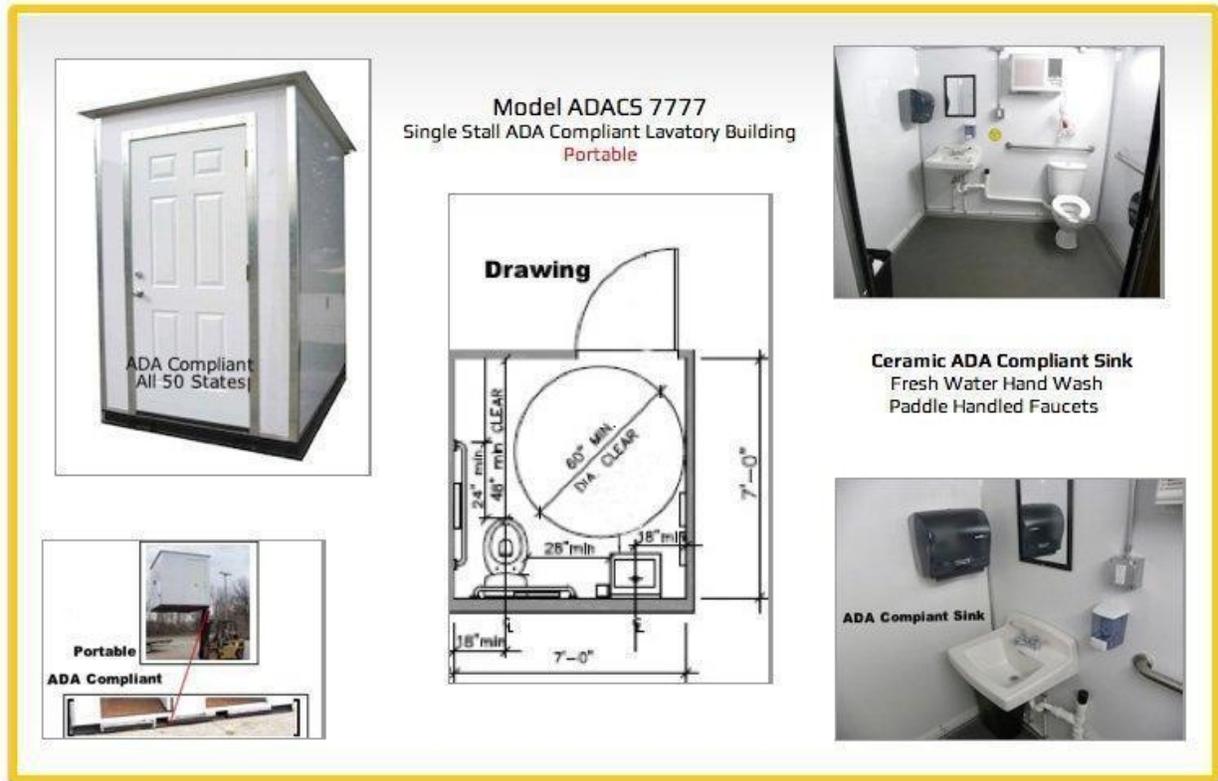
<b>40 Towards Downtown Oakland</b>		
Schedule Location Stop	Scheduled Departure	Actual Time Departed
Bay Fair Bart	2:49 PM	2:48 PM
Estudillo Ave and Bancroft	3:03 PM	3:01 PM
Easmont Transit Center	3:21 PM	3:20 PM
Seminary and Foothill	3:26 PM	3:24 PM
35th Ave and Foothill	3:37 PM	3:35 PM
First Ave and International	3:52 PM	3:50 PM
11th and Jefferson	4:00 PM	4:01 PM

<b>40 Towards Bay Fair BART</b>		
Schedule Location Stop	Scheduled Departure	Actual Time Departed
11th and Jefferson	4:24 PM	4:22 PM
35th and Foothill	4:46 PM	4:46 PM
Eastmont Transit Center	5:03 PM	5:00 PM
Bay Fair BART	5:34 PM	5:31 PM

**Appendix 4: Example of Recommended Restrooms**

(from correspondence with a toilets.com representative)

## Single ADA Compliant or Shower Stall Building



Price for the Single Stall ADA Compliant Lavatory Building is \$15,017.00 each plus freight. Volume discounts would depend on quantity and delivery schedule.

**Handicap Stall** 7' x 7' (Maximum Privacy Stall) 2.133m x 2.133m  
4" Steel Frame With Enclosed Steel Tine Ports for Easy Relocation  
Ceramic Toilet - Plastic Water Saving Cistern

### **Features**

Grab Bars on Both Sides of Ceramic Toilet  
Handicap Ceramic Sink with Paddle Handle Faucets  
Automatic Shut Off Water Faucets

Automatic Soap & Paper Towel Dispensers - Large Capacity Toilet Paper Holder  
Mirror - Clothes Hooks - Waste Basket  
Linoleum Floor Covering - Scuff Resistant, Non-Slip  
Internal Plumbing  
Walls Constructed With Recycled Non-Porous ABS and FRP  
Honeycomb Recycled Polypropylene Aluminum Covered Corners  
Aluminum or Stainless Steel Fasteners Throughout  
36" Composite Door/Paddle Handle & Inside Lock & Outside Key Lock for Off Hours  
2.5 Gallon Hot Water Heater or Tankless Water Heater  
Automatic Exhaust Fan  
Safety Lights  
60 Amp Electrical Service (English or US)  
Combination Air Conditioning & Heat Unit

### **Options**

Water and Waste Holding Tanks - Water Pressure Pump System - Bidet  
Macerator Lift Pumping System - Drinking Fountain  
All of our Comfort Stations and Lavatory Buildings are delivered fully assembled and are ready to use in 30 to 45 minutes.

## **Level It – Plumb It – Use It**

### **References**

**We were the exclusive sanitation manufacturer and service company for the 1996 Summer Olympic Games in Atlanta, Georgia; Woodstock '99 in Rome, New York; Air Shows; the 2003 Phish Concert in Lewiston, Maine; the 2004 Phish Concert in Newport, Vermont; 15 years as the Sanitation Contractor for the New Orleans Mardi Gras; most natural disasters from 1973 to the present; plus over one hundred thousand smaller events over the last 40 years.**