

Policies regarding the use of cell phones

Information compiled January 4, 2005

The Question: This member is considering updating their policy for cell phone use for operators and paratransit drivers. Their goal is to reduce phone usage while driving. Their questions are:

- Does your agency have a cell phone usage policy for your coach operators?
- If yes, does it prohibit cell phone use while driving? Does it allow cell phone use at other times?
- Have you ever had to enforce the policy?
- Is there disciplinary action taken for not following the policy? If so, what disciplinary action?

If you have a written policy, please ask your human resources director to upload the policy into the "transit policies" section of the WSTIP website under your agency name.

Intercity Transit says ... Our Operators Manual prohibits the use of cell phones while driving. We have needed to discipline several Operators for violating this policy. We do give one warning prior to discipline. We have no issue if their phone usage doesn't interfere with the performance of their duties or, as I said, occur when driving.

Clallam Transit says ... Clallam Transit does have a written policy on the cell phone issue as part of the employee manual. It says:

"The use of private cell phones while operating a bus is not allowed. If a call must be made on a company phone, the operator shall pull into a bus stop and make the call."

CTS enforces the policy as best we can. Disciplinary action may occur with a violation of policy. Disciplinary action would range from a "caution" to suspension and potentially termination. The degree of the discipline would be driven by the severity of the particular infraction and the cumulative record during the 12 month period preceding the present infraction.

Community Transit says ... Our policy is in our sop is as follows:

3.26 Conversations:

1. Personal or business calls on a personal cell phone while the coach is in motion is not permitted. This includes hands-free sets.
2. Do not allow your conversation to interfere with your safe driving/operating of the coach and customer service.

3. While on or reporting for duty, friends, relatives or children may be permitted to ride in any CT vehicle or be at a CT facility with management approval.

Yes, we have enforced this policy up to termination, depending on severity.

Island Transit says ... The use of a personal cell phone while operating any Island Transit vehicle is prohibited at all times. A personal cell phone must be turned off at all times while operating a transit vehicle. Personal cell phone use will be permitted during a break/lunch period only.

If an accident is caused because of personal cell phone usage while operating an Island Transit vehicle, it will be considered unprofessional and reckless driving. This will be cause for disciplinary action up to, and may include, termination.

Grays Harbor Transit says ... Here is our cell phone policy: "For safety purposes Operators may carry cell phones while on duty, however Operators are not permitted to use a cell phone while driving his/her bus." Violating this policy is violating a work rule and discipline is levied per policy guidelines.

Jefferson Transit says ... We don't have a cell phone use policy.

Kitsap Transit says ... The Operations Department informs me that operators are allowed to carry cell phones. The phones may never be used while the bus is in motion. Operators may use phones on breaks or layovers as long as it does not interfere with duties. Operators may use cell phones in an emergency, or when they must contact dispatch and they are in a "dead zone". If they are observed using a cell phone while the bus is moving, they are disciplined with a "Friendly Reminder."

Link Transit says ... Use of cell phones is addressed in our labor contract. It states:

20.5 Use of Equipment and Telephones:

10.5.1 Link property, equipment, vehicles, labor or services shall be used for Link purposes only. Employees shall limit personal telephone calls. No personal long distance calls shall be allowed unless the call is charged to the Employee's credit card or the charges are reversed.

20.5.2 No Employee shall utilize any of Link's vendor accounts to purchase items for their own use.

20.5.3 The use of cellular phones is not allowed while operating or occupying Link vehicles.

We have had to discipline a couple of silly kids that forgot to follow the rules. They received "coachings" which is basically just a chat with their sup telling them not to do that again!

Mason Transit says - MTA does not currently have a Cell Phone Usage Policy, nor does our contractor. I would be interested in viewing what other's might have, and will visit the transit policies section in the near future.

Pullman Transit says ... Pullman Transit does not have a written policy on the use of cell phones, but we do prohibit our drivers from using them while driving. When they are stopped in a safe place and it does not interfere with normal operation of the route or the paratransit system they may use their phones.

We do not have a written policy, thus there is no disciplinary action we can take. If we felt it was a problem and the City prohibited police, fire, engineers and inspectors from using their city issued cell phones while driving we would write or at least encourage a policy. I suppose we could use "Insubordination" for refusal to stop using the cell phone while driving as a reason to discipline, since we consider it a safety issue. We hope that time never comes.

Skagit Transit says ... Our current policy is the listed in the policies section of the website. We are in the process of updating.

Spokane Transit says ... Section 4.36 in our "operators handbook" prohibits drivers from using any "personal appliance" to include cell phones while the vehicle is in operation.

Twin Transit says ... **Our cell phone use policy is as follows:**

Cell phones are to be used for company business. This can include a call home if it is related to company business (e.g. employee is unexpectedly working late, checking on family members in an emergency, etc.)

Use of cell phones while driving is prohibited. Drivers are allowed to use the cell phones when their bus is safely stopped.

Cell phones are intended (1) for use by drivers when they need to communicate information to each other or the office, that would be inappropriate to broadcast over a radio transmission, and (2) for drivers to be able to request emergency assistance after hours when they are not supported by dispatch.

Drivers are required to log all outgoing and incoming calls to their cell phones during their shift. The phone bill is looked at for patterns of abuse, or excessive charges. However, we do not scrutinize every single call listed on the cell phone bill.

This policy has been enforced in the past, and there was disciplinary action taken for not following the policy. This occurred under previous management however, and there have been no instances where the policy needed to be enforced, or disciplinary action taken under our current manager.

The disciplinary action taken under previous management was suspension without pay for 30 days.

We are in the process of formalizing this into a written policy, and at that time we will upload it to the WSTIP website.

Valley Transit says ... We are developing a cell phone use policy for our new personnel rules. Our current policy prohibits use while driving. They can bring it to work but cannot use it while on the bus or in motion. Our operators will make a call while they have a smoke break at a transfer point. We have had to discipline one operator for improper use. He was banned from carrying a phone at work for six months and a written warning. We have no specific discipline schedule with this policy. It is based on our general progressive discipline, oral, written, one-day suspension, five-day suspension, termination. See section 9.3 in the attached policy. Our policy is posted in the policies section of the website.

Whatcom Transit says ... WTA does not allow cell phone usage while driving. Operators are allowed to use their cell phones, but outside of the bus, or on the Paratransit side they may be only used during approved breaks, and only to call out after the vehicle is stopped, properly parked, and secured. During unpaid meal breaks, Operators may receive incoming calls as well as place calls. Any other time the cell phone must be turned off. In regards to discipline, I know that we have disciplined for violation of this policy. We have a progressive discipline process.