



July 2, 2010

## MAGAZINE FEATURES

# Staying Right in a Non-Political Way

The right side of the bus does not provide the same visibility to the bus operator as the left side; therefore, 'Protecting the Right' will eliminate the possibility of being involved in a right-side preventable collision. When the right side is not covered, bus operators should not be surprised when a vehicle overtakes them along the right side. The word 'surprised' should not exist in a bus operator's vocabulary if they are aware of their surroundings and performing timely mirror scans every three to five seconds.

Making a constant effort to cover the right by keeping vehicle activity on your strong side, the left side will improve an operator's defensive driving skills.

When a vehicle overtakes a bus on the right side, either between the bus and an unobstructed curb or between the bus and a parked vehicle, the operator has failed to cover his or her right. In most cases this is considered a preventable collision. The operator failed to do everything within reason to prevent the collision by failing to cover the right.

Unfortunately, bicyclists are a different story. With bicycle lanes, you cannot prevent a bicyclist from overtaking the bus on the right side. In areas where bicycle lanes do not exist, cyclists will find a way to get by along the right side of the bus. In these situations, the bus operator must remain aware of the activity along the right and ensure proper mirror setup is in place and utilized correctly. Do not play leapfrog with the bicyclist. Once they overtake the bus, keep them in front of you — as you should with most potential moving hazards. Put up the white flag. You lose — they win. Lose the battle, but win the war by having a non-collision day.

There will be instances when vehicles overtake the bus on the right, but they should only occur when the bus operator vacates the right lane and moves to the left lane to set up a left turn. This is called 'willfully surrendering your right.' Unlike being surprised by this right-side activity, the operator should be aware that once they move from right to left and surrender the right lane, an invitation has been extended to the following vehicles, which will begin to appear along the right side. At this time, the operator should be monitoring the unprotected right side using a combination of the right-side flat/convex and interior-center mirrors. Tilting the interior center-mirror downward pays dividends by revealing the top of a vehicle or, even, a pedestrian on your right side that may not yet have entered into the right-side exterior mirrors.

Maintaining proper clearance along the right side of the bus is critical. When there is nothing between the right side of the bus and the curb, the operator should maintain a 'minimum' of four feet from the curb line. This may extend the left side of your bus beyond the left-side lane marker, so pay particular attention to the left-side squeeze. A 'take what you need and need what you take' policy does not mean using the size of your bus to bully your intentions, as this action is unsafe and non-professional.

This four-foot minimum should also be maintained as your setup approach to conduct a right turn. Maintaining this distance in addition to the 'push-pull' method of steering, will eliminate the possibility of any contact of the right rear tires striking/mounting a curb, a fixed object or a pedestrian. Maintaining a four-foot minimum cushion along the right side will prevent a vehicle from overtaking the bus on the right.

When dealing with pedestrians on cell phones and other devices that take their focus off of their surroundings, maintaining this minimum of a four-foot cushion will leave an 'out' for the operator and pedestrian, should they step into the roadway not realizing that they just stepped into the path of the bus. When approaching parked vehicles, maintaining four feet of cushion will also reduce the risk of contact between the bus and open vehicle doors.

Eliminate right-side collisions by those vehicles attempting to overtake on the right and let any activity that develops on the right be the exception rather than the rule.

Keep vehicles to the left, and 'Cover the Right.'

Copyright © 2010 Metro Magazine. All Rights Reserved.