

Piedmont Authority for Regional Transportation

Fleet Maintenance Audit
Fifteen (15) Fixed Route Buses &
(4) Paratransit Vehicles

Conducted July 18 - 19, 2022



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**PIEDMONT AUTHORITY FOR REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION
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Fifteen (15) Fixed Route Buses & Four (4) Paratransit Vehicles
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**PIEDMONT AUTHORITY FOR REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION
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Fifteen (15) Fixed Route Buses & Four (4) Paratransit Vehicles
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

TRC Engineering Services (TRC) was contracted by Piedmont Authority for Regional Transportation (PART) to conduct a fleet maintenance audit on PART's vehicles to ensure that its contractor, National Express, maintains buses owned by the PART in accordance with its contract provisions. This report presents the findings of the fleet maintenance audit, which was conducted July 18-19, 2022, with focus on documenting the fleet condition and bringing critical safety-related defects to the attention of PART and National Express. The audit consisted of a fleet inspection and maintenance record review of fifteen (15) fixed route buses and four (4) paratransit vehicles. Road tests were also conducted on all nineteen (19) vehicles inspected.

The results of the Fixed Route Audit showed:

- The total number of defects found on the fixed route buses was 42, for an average of 2.80 defects per bus. The Summary of Defects by Category Table can be found on Page 7.
- Twenty-three (23) Class "A" defects were found on the fixed route buses, for an average of 1.53 Class "A" defects per bus. A Class "A" defect is a safety-related defect that requires immediate repair and prevents the bus from returning to revenue service until the defect is corrected. Class "A" defects were found on thirteen (13) of the 15 buses inspected. Class "A" defects were discussed with on-site maintenance personnel during the inspection process. At that time, it was stated that the critical Class "A" defects were to be repaired immediately so the vehicles could be placed back into service.
- The on-time adherence to preventive maintenance inspections (PMIs) was within required guidelines. All inspected mileage accounts showed that PMI work had been done within 10% or 600 miles of the scheduled 6,000-mile interval threshold. TRC also reviewed the oil change intervals on these buses. The results showed that oil changes were also performed on time.
- Positive observations from this audit include the following:
 - National Express management and staff were cooperative and prepared in providing a constant supply of buses for TRC to inspect, thus, ensuring that the audit inspections are efficiently carried out.
 - PMI records continue to be well organized and easy to locate.
 - Work areas were clean and well maintained.

The results of the Paratransit audit showed:

- The total number of defects found on the paratransit vehicles was 11, for an average of 2.75 defects per vehicle. The Summary of Defects by Category Table can be found on Page 10.
- Nine (9) Class "A" defects were found on the paratransit vehicles, for an average of 2.25 Class "A" defects per vehicle. A Class "A" defect is a safety-related defect that requires immediate repair and prevents the vehicle from returning to revenue service until the defect is corrected. Class "A" defects were found on all four paratransit vehicles inspected. Class "A" defects were discussed with on-site maintenance personnel during the inspection process. At that time, it was stated that the critical Class "A" defects were to be repaired immediately so the vehicles could be placed back into service.
- The on-time adherence to preventive maintenance inspections (PMIs) was within required guidelines. All inspected mileage accounts showed that PMI work had been done within 10% or 500 miles of the 5,000-mile interval threshold. TRC also reviewed the oil change intervals on these vehicles. The results showed that oil changes were also performed on time.
- Positive observations from this audit include the following:
 - National Express management and staff were cooperative and prepared in providing a constant supply of vehicles for TRC to inspect, thus, ensuring that the audit inspections are efficiently carried out.
 - PMI records continue to be well organized and easy to locate.
 - Work areas were clean and well maintained.

Additional audit findings are presented in various tables located throughout this report. The tables are based on data contained in Excel spreadsheets included on a separate CD as Appendix A to this report. A summary of recommendations is provided at the end of this report.

Audit Report

BACKGROUND

TRC Engineering Services (TRC) was contracted by Piedmont Authority for Regional Transportation (PART) to conduct a fleet maintenance audit on PART's vehicles to ensure that its contractor, National Express, maintains buses owned by the PART in accordance with its contract provisions. This report presents the findings of fleet maintenance audit, which was conducted July 18-19, 2022, with focus on documenting the fleet condition and bringing critical safety-related defects to the attention of PART and National Express. The audit consisted of a fleet inspection and maintenance record review of fifteen (15) fixed route buses and four (4) paratransit vehicles. Road tests were also conducted on all nineteen (19) vehicles inspected.

VEHICLES INSPECTED

Fixed Route Buses

Fifteen (15) fixed route buses received a physical inspection, records review, and road test during the audit. The 15 buses are listed in Table 1 below.

Table 1		
Fixed Route Buses Inspected		
PHYSICAL INSPECTION	MODEL YEAR	VEHICLE MAKE
1700	2017	New Flyer
1701	2017	New Flyer
1702	2017	New Flyer
1703	2017	New Flyer
1704	2017	New Flyer
1705	2017	New Flyer
1706	2017	New Flyer
1707	2017	New Flyer
2001	2020	New Flyer
2002	2020	New Flyer
2103	2021	New Flyer
2104	2021	New Flyer
2106	2021	New Flyer
2111	2021	New Flyer
2112	2021	New Flyer

Paratransit Vehicles

Four (4) paratransit vehicles received a physical inspection, records review, and road test during the audit. The four vehicles are listed in Table 2 which follows.

PHYSICAL INSPECTION	MODEL YEAR	VEHICLE MAKE
1901	2019	Ford
2022	2020	Ford
2023	2020	Ford
2025	2020	Ford

EVALUATION CRITERIA & METHODOLOGY

TRC assigned a team of three (3) inspectors to perform the maintenance audit and physically inspect the vehicles. The inspection members were Jim Fourcade, Kimberly Fourcade, and David Keyton. Mr. Fourcade served as the on-site supervisor and was responsible for reviewing the defects identified by the inspection team. Mr. Fourcade also served as Project Manager, organized the overall inspection process, performed the records audit, and prepared the final report.

The material which follows describes the evaluation criteria and methodology used by TRC to conduct the fleet inspection.

Fleet Inspection

Specific defects documented during the vehicle inspections were classified under 18 functional categories:

- 1) Accessibility Features
- 2) Air System/Brake System
- 3) Climate Control
- 4) Destination Signs
- 5) Differential
- 6) Driver's Controls
- 7) Electrical System
- 8) Engine Compartment
- 9) Exhaust
- 10) Exterior Body Condition
- 11) Interior Condition
- 12) Lights
- 13) Passenger Controls
- 14) Safety Equipment
- 15) Structure/Chassis/Fuel Tank
- 16) Suspension/Steering
- 17) Tires
- 18) Transmission

An "A/B" designation system was used to denote defects requiring immediate repair from those defects that could be repaired at a later time.

Class "A" – Indicates a safety-related defect that requires immediate repair and prevents the vehicle from returning to revenue service until the defect is corrected.

Class "B" – Indicates a non-safety critical defect that requires attention during the next scheduled preventive maintenance service interval.

Class "A" safety-related defects were discussed and agreed upon between PART and the TRC inspectors. A list of the Class "A" defects regarded as being safety related for this audit is attached as Appendix B to this report. TRC informed PART and National Express of the safety-related defects as soon as they were identified. During the inspection, TRC also shared the list of Class "B" defects with PART and National Express. During the inspection process, TRC inspectors verified operation of certain controls to ensure that defects were legitimate ones and not the result of the inspectors being unfamiliar with specific equipment.

Records Audit

The audit team reviewed the PMI records for all 19 vehicles. The records examination set out to determine if:

- Preventive maintenance (PM) had been performed correctly and at prescribed intervals.
- Repairs had been performed properly and made promptly.

PM Intervals

To determine if preventive maintenance inspections (PMIs) were performed correctly and on time, TRC examined the PMI records of the 19 vehicles. Mileage between the last three scheduled PMIs was calculated to determine if the inspections were performed on time (within 10% or 600 miles of the scheduled 6,000-mile interval for the fixed route buses and within 10% or 500 miles of the scheduled 5,000-mile interval for the paratransit vehicles) or if they were late.

Repairs

To determine if repairs were performed properly and made promptly, two audit procedures were used:

- 1) PMI sheets going back to the previous three PMIs were selected and examined for each of the 19 vehicles to determine if and when defects defined during the PMI process were repaired.
- 2) Defects from the previous three PMIs were then compared to determine if any defects were repeated from one PMI to the next.

From this comparison, TRC can determine if the defects were repaired or if they were simply noted on subsequent inspections.

Specific Defect Summaries

All the defects identified during the inspections were entered in a database which was used to generate a Master Defect Sheet. Data contained in that spreadsheet were then used to produce a series of detailed Excel reports.

The following Excel spreadsheets produced by TRC for PART are included as a CD attachment to this report:

- **Defect Summary – Fixed Route Buses:** includes a summary of fixed route defect totals and a summary of the 18 defect categories
- **Defect Summary – Paratransit Vehicles:** includes a summary of paratransit defect totals and a summary of the 18 defect categories
- **All Defects – Fixed Route Buses (Master Defect Sheet):** identifies all defects for all fixed route buses inspected
- **Defects by Category - Fixed Route Buses -** identifies specific fixed route defects under each of the 18 categories
- **Class "A" Defects – Fixed Route Buses:** identifies all fixed route Class "A" defects
- **Class "A" Defects by Category – Fixed Route Buses:** identifies specific fixed route Class "A" defects under each of the 18 categories
- **Class "B" Defects – Fixed Route Buses:** identifies all fixed route Class "B" defects
- **All Defects – Paratransit Vehicles (Master Defect Sheet):** identifies all defects for all paratransit vehicles inspected
- **Defects by Category – Paratransit Vehicles -** identifies specific paratransit defects under each of the 18 categories
- **Class "A" Defects – Paratransit Vehicles:** identifies all paratransit Class "A" defects
- **Class "A" Defects by Category – Paratransit Vehicles:** identifies specific paratransit Class "A" defects under each of the 18 categories
- **Class "B" Defects – Paratransit Vehicles:** identifies all paratransit Class "B" defects
- **Fixed Route Buses Inspected:** lists all fixed route buses inspected
- **Paratransit Vehicles Inspected:** lists all paratransit vehicles inspected

AUDIT RESULTS – FIXED ROUTE BUSES

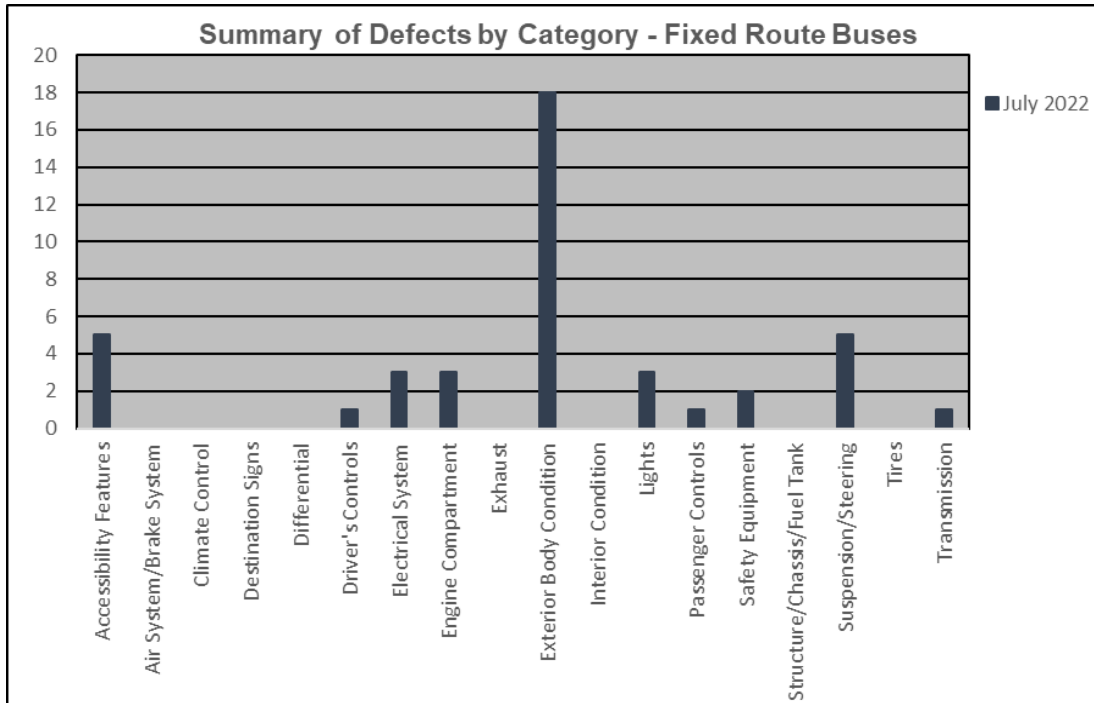
Overall Fleet Condition – Fixed Route Buses

The total number of defects found during this audit for the fixed route buses was 42, for an average of 2.80 defects per bus.

Defects were found in the Accessibility Features, Driver's Controls, Electrical System, Engine Compartment, Exterior Body Condition, Lights, Passenger Controls, Safety Equipment, Suspension/Steering, and Transmission categories. The largest number of defects was found in the Exterior Body Condition category, with a total of 18 defects, followed by the Accessibility Features and the Suspension/Steering categories, which both had a total of five defects.

Table 3 and the chart which follow show the total number of defects by category.

Table 3	
Summary of Defects by Category Fixed Route Buses	July 2022
Accessibility Features	5
Air System/Brake System	0
Climate Control	0
Destination Signs	0
Differential	0
Driver's Controls	1
Electrical System	3
Engine Compartment	3
Exhaust	0
Exterior Body Condition	18
Interior Condition	0
Lights	3
Passenger Controls	1
Safety Equipment	2
Structure/Chassis/Fuel Tank	0
Suspension/Steering	5
Tires	0
Transmission	1
Total Defects:	42
Avg. Defects Per Vehicle:	2.80



As mentioned earlier, each defect was given a severity code:

Class "A"– Indicates a safety-related defect that requires immediate repair and prevents the vehicle from returning to revenue service until the defect is corrected.

Class "B"– Indicates a non-safety critical defect that requires attention during the next scheduled preventive maintenance service interval.

Defect Analysis – Fixed Route Buses

Defects identified by TRC were analyzed to determine the severity or detrimental impact they pose in terms of safety, comfort and convenience, and structural integrity.

Safety

Twenty-three (23) Class "A" defects, for an average of 1.53 Class "A" defects per bus, were identified during this audit. Class "A" defects were found on 13 of the 15 buses vehicles inspected.

The 23 Class "A" defects can be found in Table 4 which follows.

Table 4			
Class "A" Defects / Fixed Route Buses			
Unit #	Model Year	Vehicle Make	Defect
1700	2017	New Flyer	Stop request sign not working properly
1700	2017	New Flyer	Lift alarm not working properly (parts are on order)
1701	2017	New Flyer	No alarm on kneeling or lift gate (parts are on order)
1702	2017	New Flyer	Lift alarm not working properly (parts are on order)

Table 4 Class "A" Defects / Fixed Route Buses			
Unit #	Model Year	Vehicle Make	Defect
1702	2017	New Flyer	Left rear leveling valve strut bent
1703	2017	New Flyer	Rear sticker on bumper peeling off
1703	2017	New Flyer	Battery cables are corroded
1705	2017	New Flyer	Left side seat belt doesn't lock
1705	2017	New Flyer	Bus leans to the left side
1705	2017	New Flyer	Driver's side front clearance light dim
1706	2017	New Flyer	Right side floor wheelchair restraint doesn't operate properly
1706	2017	New Flyer	Crack in windshield, rock chip
1707	2017	New Flyer	Scrape on top right side of windshield
1707	2017	New Flyer	Left rear leveling rod bent
2001	2020	New Flyer	Half of right center front clearance light is out
2002	2020	New Flyer	Left rear leveling rod bent
2002	2020	New Flyer	Left windshield wiper is broken
2104	2021	New Flyer	Battery terminals need to be cleaned
2104	2021	New Flyer	Coolant leak - coolant leak from reservoir
2106	2021	New Flyer	Crack in windshield, rock chip
2111	2021	New Flyer	Check engine light is on
2112	2021	New Flyer	Left side second seat floor wheelchair hold down is broken
2112	2021	New Flyer	Battery cables need to be cleaned

Vehicles are subject to quick service changes and having all safety-related defects repaired immediately helps eliminate potential service issues.

Comfort and Convenience

During this audit, TRC found the interiors and exteriors of the fixed route buses to be clean and well maintained.

Structural Integrity

TRC did not observe any structural defects during this audit.

Road Test Results – Fixed Route Buses

Each of the fifteen (15) fixed route buses inspected was also taken on a road test which included operation on surface streets as well as on-highway operation. During the road test, a vibration was noted on two (2) of the fixed route buses. Upon return to the garage, it was determined the vibration was caused by the A/C compressor belt slap. The mechanics immediately adjusted the belt tension and corrected the issue.

PMI Paperwork Review Findings – Fixed Route Buses

TRC also performed a PMI paperwork review. This audit found the PM work to be performed and documented properly for the fixed route buses inspected during this audit.

PMI Schedule Adherence – Fixed Route Buses

TRC examined the records of the fifteen (15) fixed route buses to determine if the PMIs were being done at scheduled 6,000-mile intervals. PMI intervals were considered "on time" if performed on or before 6,600 miles ("late window" of 10% or 600 miles).

The PMI records were well organized and easy to locate. TRC inspected the PMI paperwork to check on defects found during this audit and the results that followed. A review was made to verify that problems were corrected by either repairs or replacement of components. Jim Fourcade reviewed the PMI paperwork. The review showed that PMI work was done on time and within mileage requirements for all units inspected. The review also showed that repairs were made to correct issues. The review also looked for indications of deferred maintenance by reviewing defects found during PMI inspections and the work performed to correct these issues. TRC did not find indications of work being deferred during this audit.

The records examination also reviewed the oil change intervals. This review also showed on-time oil changes for all 15 buses.

Fluid Sample Analysis – Fixed Route Buses

The fluid analysis results on file were reviewed for the fixed route buses inspected. All indications are the fluids analysis program is being fully utilized by the maintenance staff.

AUDIT RESULTS – PARATRANSIT VEHICLES

Overall Fleet Condition – Paratransit Vehicles

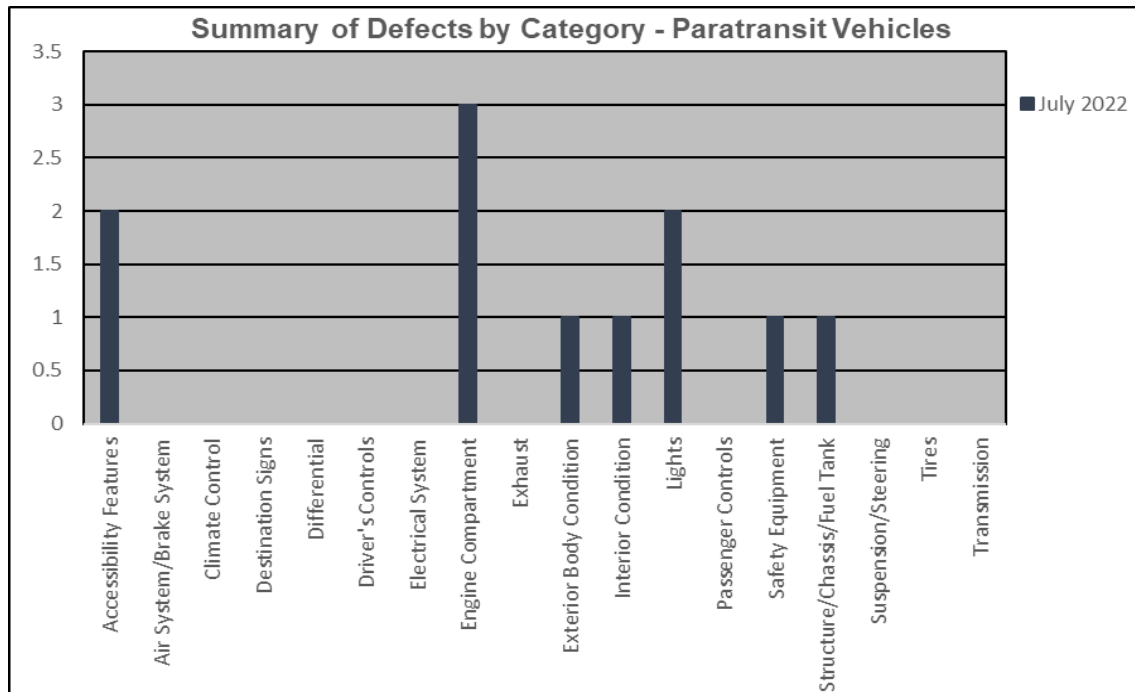
The total number of defects found during this audit was 11, for an average of 2.75 defects per paratransit vehicle.

Defects were found in the Accessibility Features, Engine Compartment, Exterior Body Condition, Interior Condition, Lights, Safety Equipment, and Structure/Chassis/Fuel Tank categories. The largest number of defects was found in the Engine Compartment category, with a total of 3 defects.

Table 5 and the chart which follow show the total number of defects by category.

Summary of Defects by Category Paratransit Vehicles	July 2022
Accessibility Features	2
Air System/Brake System	0
Climate Control	0
Destination Signs	0
Differential	0
Driver's Controls	0

Table 5	
Summary of Defects by Category Paratransit Vehicles	July 2022
Electrical System	0
Engine Compartment	3
Exhaust	0
Exterior Body Condition	1
Interior Condition	1
Lights	2
Passenger Controls	0
Safety Equipment	1
Structure/Chassis/Fuel Tank	1
Suspension/Steering	0
Tires	0
Transmission	0
Total Defects:	11
Avg. Defects Per Vehicle:	2.75



As mentioned earlier, each defect was given a severity code:

Class "A"– Indicates a safety-related defect that requires immediate repair and prevents the vehicle from returning to revenue service until the defect is corrected.

Class "B"– Indicates a non-safety critical defect that requires attention during the next scheduled preventive maintenance service interval.

Defect Analysis – Paratransit Vehicles

Defects identified by TRC were analyzed to determine the severity or detrimental impact they pose in terms of safety, comfort and convenience, and structural integrity.

Safety

Nine (9) Class “A” defects, for an average of 2.25 Class “A” defects per vehicle, were identified during this audit. Class “A” defects were found on all four paratransit vehicles inspected.

The nine Class “A” defects can be found in Table 6 which follows.

Unit #	Model Year	Vehicle Make	Defect
1901	2019	Ford	Front left seat belt is missing female end
1901	2019	Ford	One wheelchair lift light is out
2022	2020	Ford	Decal on rear bumper is peeling off
2022	2020	Ford	Bolt securing A/C line over radiator is loose
2023	2020	Ford	Engine oil dip stick tube is broken
2023	2020	Ford	Rear center clearance light is dim
2023	2020	Ford	Top left stanchion pole behind driver's barrier is broken loose
2025	2020	Ford	Left rear back-up light is holding moisture
2025	2020	Ford	Lift gate is broken and will not work

Vehicles are subject to quick service changes and having all safety-related defects repaired immediately helps eliminate potential service issues.

Comfort and Convenience

During this audit, TRC found the interiors and exteriors of the paratransit vehicles to be clean and well maintained.

Structural Integrity

TRC did not observe any structural defects during this audit.

Road Test Results – Paratransit Vehicles

Each of the four (4) paratransit vehicles inspected was also taken on a road test which included operation on surface streets as well as on-highway operation. No issues were found on any of the vehicles during the road test.

PMI Paperwork Review Findings – Paratransit Vehicles

TRC also performed a PMI paperwork review. This audit found the PM work to be performed and documented properly for the paratransit vehicles inspected during this audit.

PMI Schedule Adherence – Paratransit Vehicles

TRC examined the records of the four (4) paratransit vehicles to determine if the PMIs were being done at scheduled 5,000-mile intervals. PMI intervals were considered "on time" if performed on or before 5,500 miles ("late window" of 10% or 500 miles).

The PMI records were well organized and easy to locate. TRC inspected the PMI paperwork to check on defects found during this audit and the results that followed. A review was made to verify that problems were corrected by either repairs or replacement of components. Jim Fourcade reviewed the PMI paperwork. The review showed that PMI work was done on time and within mileage requirements for all vehicles inspected. The review also showed that repairs were made to correct issues. The review also looked for indications of deferred maintenance by reviewing defects found during PMI inspections and the work performed to correct these issues. TRC did not find indications of work being deferred during this audit.

The records examination also reviewed the oil change intervals. This review also showed on-time oil changes for all four paratransit vehicles.

Fluid Sample Analysis – Paratransit Vehicles

The fluid analysis results on file were reviewed for paratransit vehicles inspected. All indications are the fluids analysis program is being fully utilized by the maintenance staff.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

- **Vehicle Inspection:** PART provided a list of nineteen (19) vehicles for physical inspection and road tests. The results of the inspections are provided in spreadsheet format included on a separate CD as Appendix A to this report.
- **Road Test:** Each of the vehicles inspected was taken on a road test including operation on surface streets as well as on-highway operation. During the road test a vibration was noted on two of the fixed route vehicles. Upon return to the garage, it was determined the vibration was caused by the A/C compressor belt slap. The mechanics immediately adjusted the belt tension and corrected the issue.
- **Tire Management Program:** Tire management was discussed with the shop manager, and during the vehicle inspection there were no issues of tread depth or pressures.
- **Shop Safety:** The shop condition and cleanliness is very good. Mechanics kept any drips or spills from A/C condensate cleaned up immediately. Mop buckets and mops are staged in the shop areas and the observations show the staff cares about the shop condition and cleanliness and has pride in their work.
- **Maintenance Records Review:** PM records were reviewed for the vehicles inspected by the audit team. The PM records provided were complete and thorough. The records showed all work performed, parts used, and defects

deferred. PM records included a review of the driver defects ensuring the issues were resolved.

- **Maintenance Plan Review:** The maintenance plan was reviewed, and fleet and facility condition showed the plan is in use and working. The fleet and facility are clean and appear well maintained.
- **Staffing Review:** The maintenance staff appears adequate to keep the fleet and facility in a state of good repair with a manager, three mechanics, and three utility workers. Mechanics appear to be well trained and knowledgeable of the vehicles and shop equipment use and the utility workers are keeping the vehicles very clean and serviced with all fluids at normal operation.
- **Parts Room and Inventory Review:** The parts room is stocked with the materials necessary to maintain the day-to-day operation of the bus fleets. The parts room doors are not closed, and mechanics have open access to the inventory. There is a process in place on parts use where the mechanic places a stick-on bar code for all parts used on each work order to ensure the part is charged to the bus.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Bus Maintenance Recommendations:** During the vehicle inspections there were two areas where improvements are needed, battery terminal maintenance and floor markings in the area between the front wheel houses. Several of the buses inspected have indications of corrosion and dirty battery terminals. The area between the front wheel houses was marked during Covid as restricted with a decal and tape. The tape has started pulling loose and could cause a trip hazard. Maintenance management advised they were going to begin removal of the tape and decals.

APPENDIX A: Electronic copy of EXCEL spreadsheet reports

APPENDIX B:

Master "A" Defects

- Fire extinguisher
- Headlights
- Wipers
- Washers
- Cracked windshield in driver's view
- Seat belt, driver
- Turn signals
- Horn
- Emergency flashers
- Brake lights
- Brake lining thickness
- Tire tread depth @ 4/32 front 2/32 rear
- Fuel leak
- Exposed wires
- Proximity to exhaust – oil, harness, etc.
- Oil/grease on brakes
- Wheelchair lift/ramp & securement
- Sharp edges – interior
- Tripping hazard – interior
- Critical steering/suspension play, wear
- Tire pressure
- Wheel lug nuts
- Exhaust leaks into bus
- Back-up alarm
- Missing battery label for shutoff
- Missing emergency exit signs
- Emergency window won't open