

SAMTRANS
CORRESPONDENCE
as of 10-6-2020

From: [Rios, Rona](mailto:Rios.Rona)
To: resilient.db@gmail.com
Cc: [Board. \(@samtrans.com\)](mailto:Board.(@samtrans.com))
Subject: Rogue bus driver
Date: Tuesday, October 06, 2020 12:06:18 PM

Dear Mr. Boyce,

Thank you for contacting SamTrans. We are sorry to hear, however, that it was due to an incident with one of our operators last week. We sincerely apologize for the poor experience. We at SamTrans are well aware of the responsibility we have as a public transit agency, and we hold safety in the highest regard. We expect our drivers to be professional at all times—and not just when it comes to the operation of their vehicle and obeying the rules of the road, but in how they conduct themselves when working with the public.

The details you provided us pertaining to this incident were immediately forwarded to the proper parties for further handling; Bus Operations takes incidents like this quite seriously, and they do take appropriate action once they finish investigating such reports. Operations verified that the Operator of bus 843 did straddle the southbound traffic lane but had adhered to the speed limit. We also identified that when you approached the operator, the Operator's response was not appropriate and there was no effort to de-escalate the exchange. This is being handled by Operations Management.

We recognize this follow up response is only a reactionary measure; it does not change what happened. Once more, we apologize, and we thank you for taking the time to bring this incident to our attention. We at SamTrans aim to provide our community with a high-quality transit system, and we will continue our efforts to maintain that ideal. We hope your future encounters with us—whether as a passenger onboard or a fellow vehicle on the road—will reflect this resolve and prove a more pleasant, positive experience.

Best Regards,

Rona Rios
Director, Customer Experience
SamTrans

From: Dave Boyce <resilient.db@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, October 1, 2020 6:35 PM
To: Public Comment <PublicComment@samtrans.com>
Subject: Rogue bus driver

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the San Mateo County Transit District. Unless you recognize the sender's email address and know the content is safe, do not click links, open attachments or reply.

Your buses have numbers and schedules, all transparent, which is helpful when describing circumstances like the one I'm writing about here:

The key numbers in this situation are 843 and 5:45 and 9/28/2020 and 2. Two other numbers are also relevant: 27,500 and 30.

Bus 843 (weight 27,500 lbs.) came barreling into the Palo Alto train station depot at 5:45 p.m. on Monday, Sept. 28, 2020, heading north into the parking lot but taking up the entire southbound traffic lane of the two-lane entry road. That is, this bus was not using the northbound lane AT ALL. (I think it was an ECR bus, but I'm not sure. It was articulated.)

I witnessed this on my bike (weight 30 lbs.) as I was about to enter my lane of this two-lane road from the parking lot behind the MacArthur Park restaurant. I had stopped on the apron of one of the two driveways into and out of that lot. I actually backed away as the bus passed me.

Lucky for me, I looked first for illegal driving behavior, which is common here. I can't say that the bad apples are few among bus drivers visiting this station; the center line on this stretch of road is widely ignored, as is any speed

limit. I will say that the good apples are notable for their decency toward the rest of us. (If it's any comfort, VTA drivers are indistinguishable in their violations.)

How does that sound as a comment on your drivers out there in the wide world? Does it resonate as something for your public agency to be proud of? Does it confirm for you that you're doing a bang-up job managing this group?

It seems lawless, doesn't it? Let me assure you, this dim forgotten pathway traversed by San Mateo and Santa Clara bus drivers is all but lawless when it comes to cyclist safety. Where are the sharrows? Or the Botts Dots? Or the caution lights and signs to drivers, including bus drivers, to share the road with bikes? Who has jurisdiction here? Has any driver ever been cited, say for reckless endangerment? It happens every day. Every damn day!

When I walked over to tell the driver that her outrageous behavior warranted my reporting her, guess what she said. She said *she* was thinking of reporting *me* for somehow misusing the crosswalk. (How do you misuse a crosswalk by waiting to the side of it while looking down the street to see if it's safe?) Cyclists aren't supposed to use crosswalks; *We're legitimate vehicles*. Does your driver know this? Did she give me my space??? No, she damn well did not! In any case, I wasn't at the crosswalk, which is several yards south of this driveway.

Your driver was argumentative from the get-go and she never let up. She refused to acknowledge that she had been in my lane, or that I even had a lane. I had to actually remind her of the presence of a centerline! How is this possible?

When I told her I'd be writing a letter, she waved her hand at me in dismissal, intensifying it when I objected. Fine behavior for someone ostensibly serving the public in what I have always considered a noble occupation. I enjoy riding a public bus. It's an instant sense of egalitarian community at a time and in a place that sorely needs it.

For perspective, this same kind of thing happened a few weeks ago with a VTA driver, though less egregious — he only straddled the centerline. It was still egregious, though. When I pointed it out to him, he thanked me and apologized. And I walked away feeling great.

Walking away from the incident with your driver, I felt abused, disregarded, metaphorically spat upon. She needs to be reminded of her civic duty.

I understand that driving a bus is stressful, probably particularly during this time when drivers are being considered "essential" while also being taken for granted. I sympathize. But that's no excuse for the unrelenting scorn your driver displayed toward me in my entirely justified complaint. Unbelievable.

Dave Boyce
1020 Cambridge Ave.
Menlo Park, CA 94025

PS: I sent this message to your Contact address and have heard nothing. If I hear nothing in response to this message, I will escalate with messages to other county officials, including mail via USPS. I spoke with a Palo Alto police officer who advised me to persevere ... and I will.

Sent from my tablet