

ANDHRA PRADESH STATE ROAD TRANSPORT CORPORATION

No.R3/287(62)/2000-OPD-T

Office of the VC & MD,  
Mushirabad, Hyderabad.

CIRCULAR NO.24/2001-OPD-T, DATED: 28-05-2001.

SUB:-OPERATIONS: Operational Strategies to be adopted for improving performance - Reg.

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In view of the fall in occupancy ratio for the last five years, the following Operational Strategies are communicated for information and implementation, wherever required and feasible.

SHORT DISTANCE ROUTES

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The reasons identified for erosion of clientele on short distance routes are:

1. Immediate non-availability of bus services to the passengers as against abundant availability of alternate modes.
2. Rigidity of fixed stages vis-a-vis picking up and disembarking passengers as intended and as per their need.
3. Fixed fares Vs.flexy-fare offered by competitors.
4. Lesser journey time; non-charging of luggage charges; free/concessional travel for children etc., by the competitor.

STRATEGIES RECOMMENDED FOR SHORT DISTANCE SERVICES

I. OPERATION OF SHUTTLE / GRAAMANI SERVICES:

1. Adequate number of shuttle services are to be operated within a radius of about 50 kms., from traffic generating points to provide the much sought after frequency and high visibility to the customers.
2. Graamani services have to be introduced/increased to built up areas around cities / towns to pass on the following benefits to the passengers.
  - a. Easy entry / exit advantage due to provision of two doors to the buses.
  - b. Two kilometres fare stage structure offering increased boarding and alighting points.
  - c. Fare advantage in a competitive scenario.

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- d. Easily identifiable and discerning colour pattern.
  - e. Pre-empting demand for town services.
3. Introduction of such services should be coupled with offering "Hail & Board" and also "Request & Alight" facility.
  4. Preferably there shall be no speed restriction. Alternatively, the minimum speed of district ordinary buses shall be maintained at 60 KMPH.

Running time/Journey time should be fixed in tune with the enhanced speed of buses and actual route length.

The route lengths have to be verified and correctly fixed to charge the passenger justifiably.

#### II. CREW AWARENESS CAMPAIGN:

Crew, the sales force of the Organisation, require to be educated on the present competitive scenario and the need to improve customer service by way of stopping buses wherever passengers hail their hands/stop on their request to disembark, demonstrate courteous behaviour, provide punctual service, arrange to reach destination on stipulated time etc.,

The following three pronged strategies are suggested:

1. Mass gate meetings are to be organised periodically at reporting/change over time.
2. Small group (not more than 15 to 20 members) interactive sessions are to be conducted.
3. Customer orientation sessions for crew at Regional Headquarters (a day in a week) for interactive exposure on passenger related issues.

#### III. HARNESSING CREW CREATIVITY:

1. Suggestions/ ideas / recommendations of crew have to be solicited and a mechanism is to be institutionalised to collect, collate, evaluate and experiment with them. A suggestion book can be designed and maintained to capture and record suggestions for evaluation.
2. The Managers have to breath life into the Joint Advisory Councils at the depot level to make them vibrant institutions to respond to the challenges thrown by the present day market.

#### IV. CUSTOMISED SCHEDULING:

1. Customer Meets shall be organised atleast twice in an year to obtain feed-back on our operations and to customise our schedules.

2. The crew and vehicles can be fixed to the route to build rapport with customers and to bring punctuality and regularity of operations, particularly on low paying services/routes.
3. For improving low occupancy services/routes meeting with sarpanches/opinion leaders/regular passengers of the villages covered by that service/route is recommended for participatory programming of crew and bus on that route.
4. From henceforth, drawing a schedule will be a joint venture between operator and the user.
5. TWO PRONGED APPROACH FOR PUNCTUAL OPERATION OF SERVICE:

1. AT DEPOT:

Depot Manager and all front line supervisors in the depot, with a fixed weekly rotation programme, have to ensure supervision of early morning and second shift operations. They shall record the late departures and reasons in the proforma designed for this purpose and submit to the Depot Manager for review and follow-up action.

2. AT ENROUTE POINTS/BUS STATIONS:

A minimum Quality Assurance programme in the areas of punctuality, cleanliness, regularity, closing of SRs and conducting alighting checks of buses be assigned to the Controllers at enroute/pick up points/Bus Stations in addition to regular/routine duties. They shall record late arrivals in a proforma duly quantifying the numbers and percentage(%) and submit to Depot Manager on a day to day basis for taking appropriate action.

- VI. PUBLICITY AND PUBLIC AWARENESS PROGRAMMES:

It has been identified that Public at large are not aware of the strengths of the organisation and the contribution it made for the welfare of the society. Hence the imperative need of the following:

1. Massive publicity campaign even by using electronic media is required to enlighten the masses on the concessions extended to under privileged; facilities / amenities provided; marketing schemes/ programmes undertaken etc.
2. The Traditional folk media can be utilised for educating people on the advantages of travelling in APSRTC buses.
3. Street plays can also be organised at places and days when/where large congregation assembles.

For this purpose the available creative talent in the staff/employees should be put to use.

- VII. PERIPHERALS IN OPERATIONS:

1. Instructions on maintaining Operational Discipline as detailed below have to be revered and adhered scrupulously:

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- a. Avoiding internecine competition amongst depot operations.
  - b. Desist operating services on unnatural routes; introduction of services without approval of competent authority.
  - c. Restrain from assigning timing to new services which clash with the timings of existing / established services.
2. Streamline and strengthen the "Schedule Cells" at different levels.

VIII. TACTIC AT REGIONAL LEVEL

Under the strategic umbrella designed and enunciated as above at Corporate level, each Regional Manager has to have a tactical plan of action (operational planner) for the Region valid for the next one or two years to:

- a. contain competitors from growing;
- b. establish credibility on our operations to gain customer confidence and enhance customer satisfaction;
- c. increase market share and reverse the trend of market base erosion.

The plan shall invariably identify routes/areas where the Region would like to:

- i. Strengthen/reinforce its presence with an aim to eliminate or marginalise operation of competing modes.
- ii. Strategic withdrawal/retreat to induce competitor to step in or take over (such as branch routes) where RTC can not provide adequate frequency etc.

WHILE DRAWING THE PLAN IT SHALL BE NOTED THAT:

- A. the entire district be taken as a unit,
- B. the operational Managers be involved,
- C. that the competitor is formidable, real and came to stay,
- D. that the competitor is vulnerable as the passengers are not all that happy with their service. Our approach is to reinforce our strengths, improve upon our weaknesses and hit the competitor at his weak point with all our might untill he gives way and to stunt their further growth.

CAUTION:

- A. The traditional path of reducing trips/cancellation of services should be tread cautiously. This conventional approach and wisdom was valid during those olden days when there was monopoly. It is not to be automatically applied under the present market driven era.

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- B. No service shall be cancelled unless a fair trial of atleast six (6) months is made and all options to nurse and improve the service/route are exhausted.
- C. The punctuality profile and legacy has to be thoroughly looked into before a drastic decision to cancel a service is taken. It is advisable if such decision making with regard to cancellation of service is vested with the Regional Manager.

LONG DISTANCE SERVICES

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REASONS FOR EROSION IN MARKET BASE ARE:

- 1. WITH REGARD TO ALL INDIA TOURIST COACHES:
  - a. Convenient and accessible (nearer the door step) ticket booking, boarding and alighting facilities offered by the competitor.
  - b. Lesser journey time / speedier travel.
  - c. Reaching destination on time.
- 2. WITH REGARD TO INDIAN RAILWAYS:
  - a. Speedier travel/less journey time.
  - b. Competitive fare.
  - c. Throw away seasonal pass tariff for commuters.

STRATEGIES RECOMMENDED:

- 1. Ensure upkeep of vehicles.
- 2. Emphasis has to be laid to maintain regularity and punctuality of services. Periodical checks have to be exercised to ensure punctuality, prescribed speed etc., and a record of observations kept.
- 3. Speed has to be totally relaxed or atleast the prescribed speed shall have to be maintained for Hi-tech, Luxury and Express services to offer what the passenger is seeking apart from competing with private coaches.
- 4. Pick-up / alighting points to be increased keeping catchment area concept in view even within the town/city.
- 5. TVs and VCPs provided in Hitech buses shall be kept in working condition. Video has to be stopped between 23.00 Hrs., to 06.00 Hrs., to give uninterrupted rest to night journey maker. Periodical inspections and systematic recording of observations has to be resorted.
- 6. Attendants neatly dressed and presentable shall be ensured on board.
- 7. Polite behaviour with passengers in buses by the crew and the attendant shall be ensured.

8. The competitors (whether Indian Railways or private coaches), their strengths and weaknesses have to be identified, if required by conducting a market survey. Areas where we are strong have to be projected powerfully and areas of weaknesses have to be improved. We should hit hard at the vulnerable points of competitors.
9. Upgradation/down-gradation of type of services has to be done wherever necessary after a thorough survey to ascertain passenger preferences.
10. The strong network developed in the recent past by Indian Railways coupled with penetrating pricing policy is a major intervention in the external environment. Features which cannot be offered by the competitor but required by the passenger have to be identified and incorporated in our service.

For example: The train cannot go beyond the earmarked (railway) station whereas the bus station need not necessarily be the originating/terminating point for the bus. The bus can reach nearer to the door step of the customer.

11. Innovation and creative ideas occurring and generated which do not fit into the present scheme of things of the Corporation shall be passed on to the Corporate Office for their evaluation.
12. Passenger friendly measures such as the following have to be taken up in a big way:-
  - a. Telephone reservation (about 10 District headquarters are yet to have this facility).
  - b. Home Delivery of tickets has to be arranged (about fifteen district headquarters are yet to have this facility).
  - c. Return Journey Ticket facility has to be provided on all long distance services.
13. Marketing schemes have to be given all out push and drive duly highlighting the benefit they pass on to the customer.
  - a. Jubilee Express/Hitech Ticket - a State-wide travel as you like scheme.
  - b. Concessional Annual Travel (CAT) Card - a one year shower of 10% concession travel.
  - c. Free travel in city buses to reach bus station and make onward journey in a mofussil bus.
14. A thorough objective review of requirement of long distance services presently under operation has to be undertaken in the light of increasing competition and serious onslaught of Indian Railways. Accordingly the schedules have to be revamped; boarding, alighting and enroute pick up points

have to be relooked/enhanced; real demand assessed and sizing up of operation worked out on actual need and requirement of travelling public.

URBAN OPERATIONS

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REASONS FOR STEEP DROP IN OCCUPANCY RATIO ARE:

1. Immediate non-availability/inadequacy of buses.
2. Lack of accessibility of public transport at any point.
3. Rigid pickup and dropping places / points.
4. No flexibility in charging (competitive/economic) fare.
5. Lackadaisical attitude of crew towards passengers.
6. Ten-fold increase of two-wheeler population in a period of ten years.
7. Increase in 3-Wheeler population.
8. Introduction of new product popularly called as 7-Seater / Steering autos.
9. Unaffordable level of fare for daily / frequent travel by public transport vehicle.

The following strategies are recommended to regain the lost market and also to retain the existing clientele.

STRATEGIES:

1. Short distance high density corridors, where the menace of autos/steering autos is high, have to be identified.
2. High frequency shuttle services by making structural changes of long distance routes have to be planned and operated in these corridors.
3. Operation of these services punctually and regularly without cancelling any trips to create confidence amongst the commuters has to be ensured.
4. Adequate bus services have to be ensured during active hours, say 08.00 hours to 21.00 hours by way of strengthening mid-shift operation. Necessary changes have to be made in designing of schedules to stretch the timings to meet requirement in early and late hours as per the need and demand of passengers.
5. It is observed that the operations in second shift/ compare poorly with the operations in first shift in the urban scenario. Therefore, adequate and relatively more concentration has to be bestowed on second shift operations.

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6. The crew shall be educated by organising gate meetings and counsel personally to stop the buses at all stages to pick up passengers including request stops and exhibit customer oriented attitude.
7. Depot Manager and Supervisors shall move on line during peak hours both in the morning & evening to ensure stopping of buses at all stages by the crew and to demonstrate the presence of rowing and responsive administration.
8. Effective Controllers be posted at major bus stands to regulate operation of buses as per schedule timings and avoid bunching of buses.
9. Effective, sincere and committed Traffic Guides to be identified for posting along with Home Guards at important control points to drive away the Autos from these points and ensure stopping of buses at stages. They shall be periodically rotated to ensure that they do not develop any vested interest at a given point.
10. Plan for provision of more changeover points so that buses will be available on routes during the afternoon hours and reduce non-revenue kilometres.
11. Identify places to provide more service centres to issue and review bus passes, Travel as you Like tickets, Monthly Season Tickets, CAT Cards, JET tickets etc.
12. All Conductors shall be preferably provided with "Travel as you like tickets" in their trays.
13. Commuter Meets need to be organised at Depot level to enlighten the public on the need to travel in RTC buses.
14. The fare ought to be competitive in the vastly changed scenario.

GENERAL  
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1. Every Manager shall be a trainer and developer and an agent of change. He shall endeavour to build a new culture of competitiveness in the industry and accordingly take measures to bring customer-orientation in the staff at his command.
2. Required inputs and skills have to be imparted in Managers and Supervisors by the organisation in a systematic way within shortest span of time.
3. Congenial environment to encourage innovation and generate new ideas has to be deliberately nursed.
4. Carrot and Stick policy has to be scrupulously followed to usher a neo-culture which is customer-centered. To drive this point and make it sink in

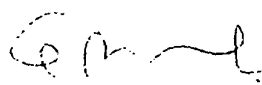
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the minds of the masses, performance-based rewards and awards have to be constituted in a big way. Certain punitive measures may have to be resorted such as changing place of work of workers not responding to the call of the day such as punctual reporting / operation of service etc.,

5. Instructions on long standing transfers have to be uniformly and widely implemented to break the nexus between strongly entrenched employees and powerful local lobbies.
6. Resistance to steps taken in the direction of improving productivity has to be dealt with firm resolution to reach desired results.
7. Publicity and Promotion of our brand, its utility and advantages/benefits it passes on to the society has to be taken up with a quantum leap to make our presence and indispensability felt by a commoner. Required delegation and decentralisation to the level of a district has to be taken-up on war-footing.
8. A systematic and well thought-over approach has to be adopted to lobby our cause with the powers that be and the Opinion Leaders / Influence Groups.
9. A rigorous review and close monitoring at highest level has to be undertaken with religious fervour and zeal in the areas of erosion in market share, revenue generation etc.
10. The entire management team should talk with one voice on grey areas like speedier travel, lesser journey time even with higher operational cost; pruning unproductive activities etc.

It is requested to take action to implement the above Operational Strategies for improvement in overall performance of the Corporation.

  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
(OPERATIONS).

To

- All Executive Directors of Zones.
- All Regional Managers.
- All Divisional Managers.
- All Depot Managers.
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Copy to: All Dy.CTMs (M&C) in Zones for infmn. & n/a.