

WASHINGTON UTILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

**NOTICE OF PENALTIES INCURRED AND DUE
FOR VIOLATIONS OF LAWS AND RULES**

PENALTY ASSESSMENT: TE-170752

PENALTY AMOUNT: \$300

AAA Party Bus LLC
4752 Delridge Way SW
Seattle, WA 98106

The Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission (Commission) believes that AAA Party Bus has committed violations of Washington Administrative Code (WAC) 480-30-221 Vehicle and Driver Safety Requirements which requires charter and excursion carriers to comply with Title 49 CFR Part 393, Parts and Accessories Necessary for Safe Operation.

RCW 81.04.405 allows penalties of one hundred dollars for each violation of Title 49 CFR Part 393. In the case of an ongoing violation, every day's continuance is considered a separate and distinct violation.

In May 2017, Commission Motor Carrier Investigator Wayne Gilbert conducted a compliance review of AAA Party Bus and documented the following federal out-of-service violations on the company's 1997 Ford bus:

- **One violation of Title 49 CFR Part 393.9 – Inoperable required lamp.** Both rear turn signals and emergency 4-way flashers were inoperative.
- **One violation of Title 49 CFR Part 393.62(a) – No or defective bus emergency exits.** Rear emergency exit window was covered by a blanket.
- **One violation of Title 49 CFR Part 393.83(c) – Improper exhaust – bus (gasoline).** The exhaust was leaking rear of the muffler, in front of the rear axle. This is more than six inches forward of the rear-most part of the vehicle body as required by this regulation.

The Commission considered the following factors in determining the appropriate penalties for these violations:

1. **How serious or harmful the violation is to the public.** The equipment violations noted are serious and potentially harmful to the public. Companies that operate vehicles with defective rear turn signals and warning lights, with obscured emergency exits or leaking exhaust systems put both passengers and the traveling public at risk. These defects present serious safety concerns.
2. **Whether the violation is intentional.** Considerations include:

- Whether the company ignored Commission staff's previous technical assistance; and
- Whether there is clear evidence through documentation or other means that shows the company knew of and failed to correct the violation.

AAA Party Bus began operations in 2010. Staff conducted compliance reviews and provided technical assistance in 2011 and 2016. Staff noted no similar defects or violations. The company knew, or should have known about these requirements.

3. **Whether the company self-reported the violation.** The company did not self-report these violations.
4. **Whether the company was cooperative and responsive.** AAA Party Bus was cooperative and responsive throughout the investigation.
5. **Whether the company promptly corrected the violations and remedied the impacts.** The company was receptive to staff's technical assistance, however staff is not aware if the company has corrected any of these violations.
6. **The number of violations.** For a company the size of AAA Party Bus the number of violations is significant.
7. **The number of customers affected.** The company traveled 33,135 miles and reported \$64,499 in gross revenue for 2016. A significant number of customers, as well as the traveling public, were likely affected by these safety violations.
8. **The likelihood of recurrence.** The Commission does not know if it is likely to repeat these violations, but the company was cooperative and receptive of staff's assistance, and indicated it wished to avoid future violations.
9. **The company's past performance regarding compliance, violations, and penalties.** The company has no history of violations or penalties. This is the company's third compliance review investigation. Staff noted unrelated violations in 2011 and 2016, and the Commission assessed penalties in 2016.
10. **The company's existing compliance program.** AAA Party Bus has no formal compliance program.
11. **The size of the company.** AAA Party Bus operates one commercial vehicle and has one driver. The company reported 33,135 miles traveled and \$64,499 in gross revenue for 2016.

The Commission's Enforcement Policy provides that some Commission requirements are so fundamental to safe operations that the Commission will issue mandatory penalties for each

occurrence of a first-time violation.¹ The Commission generally will assess penalties per type of violation, rather than per occurrence, for other first-time violations of critical regulations that do not meet the criteria for mandatory penalties. The Commission will assess penalties for any equipment violation meeting the FMCSA “out-of-service” criteria and for repeat violations of critical regulations found in future compliance investigations, including each occurrence of a repeat violation.

The Commission has considered these factors and determined that it should penalize AAA Party Bus \$300 for violations of WAC 480-30-221 Vehicle and Driver Safety Requirements, which adopts Title 49 CFR Part 393 calculated as follows:

- One violation of Title 49 CFR Part 393.9 – Inoperable required lamp. The Commission assesses a penalty of \$100 for this violation.
- One violation of Title 49 CFR Part 393.62(a) – No or defective bus emergency exits. The Commission assesses a penalty of \$100 for this violation.
- One violation of Title 49 CFR Part 393.83(c) – Improper exhaust – bus (gasoline). The Commission assesses a penalty of \$100 for this violation.

This information, if proven at a hearing and not rebutted or explained, is sufficient to support the penalty assessment.

Your penalty is due and payable now. If you believe any or all of the violations did not occur, you may deny committing the violation(s) and contest the penalty assessment through evidence presented at a hearing or in writing. The Commission will grant a request for hearing only if material issues of law or fact concerning the violation(s) require consideration of evidence and resolution in a hearing. Any contest of the penalty assessment must include a written statement of the reasons supporting that contest. Failure to provide such a statement will result in denial of the contest.

If there is a reason for any or all of the violations that you believe should excuse you from the penalty, you may ask for mitigation (reduction) of this penalty through evidence presented at a hearing or in writing. The Commission will grant a request for hearing only if material issues of law or fact require consideration of evidence and resolution in a hearing. Any request for mitigation must include a written statement of the reasons supporting that request. Failure to provide such a statement will result in denial of the request. See RCW 81.04.405.

If you properly present your request for a hearing and the Commission grants that request, the Commission will review the evidence supporting your dispute of the violation(s) or application for mitigation in a Brief Adjudicative Proceeding before an administrative law judge. The administrative law judge will consider the evidence and will notify you of his or her decision.

¹ Docket A-120061 – Enforcement Policy of the Washington Utilities & Transportation Commission – Section V.

You must act within 15 days after receiving this notice to do one of the following:

- Pay the amount due.
- Contest the occurrence of the violations.
- Request mitigation to contest the amount of the penalty.

Please indicate your selection on the enclosed form and send it to the Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission, Post Office Box 47250, Olympia, Washington 98504-7250, **within FIFTEEN (15) days** after you receive this notice.

If you do not act within 15 days, the Commission may take additional enforcement action, including but not necessarily limited to suspending or revoking your certificate to provide regulated service, assessing additional penalties, or referring this matter to the Office of the Attorney General for collection.

DATED at Olympia, Washington, and effective July 17, 2017.

GREGORY J. KOPTA
Administrative Law Judge

WASHINGTON UTILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION
PENALTY ASSESSMENT TE-170752

PLEASE NOTE: You must complete and sign this document, and send it to the Commission within 15 days after you receive the penalty assessment. Use additional paper if needed. I have read and understand RCW 9A.72.020 (printed below), which states that making false statements under oath is a class B felony. I am over the age of 18, am competent to testify to the matters set forth below and I have personal knowledge of those matters. I hereby make, under oath, the following statements.

[] 1. **Payment of penalty.** I admit that the violation occurred and enclose \$_____ in payment of the penalty.

[] 2. **Contest the violation.** I believe that the alleged violation did not occur for the reasons I describe below (**if you do not include reasons supporting your contest here, your request will be denied**):

[] a) I ask for a hearing to present evidence on the information I provide above to an administrative law judge for a decision

OR [] b) I ask for a Commission decision based solely on the information I provide above.

[] 3. **Application for mitigation.** I admit the violation, but I believe that the penalty should be reduced for the reasons set out below (**if you do not include reasons supporting your application here, your request will be denied**):

[] a) I ask for a hearing to present evidence on the information I provide above to an administrative law judge for a decision

OR [] b) I ask for a Commission decision based solely on the information I provide above.

I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the State of Washington that the foregoing, including information I have presented on any attachments, is true and correct.

Dated: _____ [month/day/year], at _____ [city, state]

Name of Respondent (company) – please print

Signature of Applicant

RCW 9A.72.020:

“Perjury in the first degree. (1) A person is guilty of perjury in the first degree if in any official proceeding he makes a materially false statement which he knows to be false under an oath required or authorized by law. (2) Knowledge of the materiality of the statement is not an element of this crime, and the actor’s mistaken belief that his statement was not material is not a defense to a prosecution under this section. (3) Perjury in the first degree is a class B felony.”