

Operating Rules on Shoulder

1. Driving on the shoulder is only allowed in areas where signs are placed in the field. Drivers may use the shoulder shortly before the BEGIN sign if it would be advantageous to merge from an auxiliary lane. Drivers should start merging back into traffic in the area of the END sign. Warning arrow signs are placed at locations where the shoulder is less than 10 feet and merging back into traffic is required.
2. Bus-only shoulders are continuous through right-turn lanes, intersections and entrance and exit ramps. However, bus drivers are required by law to use caution and yield to other vehicles in these areas. Bus drivers must yield to any vehicle merging or exiting at an interchange ramp or intersection.
3. Whenever shoulders are used, bus drivers must exercise their best judgement in considering the safety of other motorists, as well as that of bus passengers. During the winter months, shoulders may be blocked temporarily by snow, especially on bridges and in areas adjacent to guardrail. In such cases where the bus will not fit on the shoulder, that shoulder should not be used. Buses should not use the bus only shoulder to pass a snow plow.
4. Always yield to cars entering the bus-only shoulder. Bus drivers are in the best position to avoid an accident.
5. If the shoulder is obstructed in any way, the bus driver must merge back into regular traffic to avoid the obstruction.
6. When driving on the shoulder, bus drivers shall turn on your four-way flashers so that other motorists will see you more easily. The bus driver shall use their horn to alert motorists if necessary.
7. The maximum speed of buses driving on the shoulder is 35 mph. While using the designated shoulders, the bus shall not exceed the speed of regular traffic by more than 15 mph. Bus speed on shoulders, and especially on bridge decks, should be reduced if water, snow or ice is present.
8. Buses may use the shoulder while “dead-heading” or when returning with an empty bus to the beginning of a new route.

Penalties for Violating the Rules

Law Enforcement may give bus drivers a ticket for careless or reckless driving if they are observed violating these operating rules or driving on a non-designated shoulder.

The law that governs bus only shoulder use is as follows:

169.306 USE OF SHOULDERS BY BUSES.

(a) A road authority, as defined in section [160.02, subdivision 25](#), is authorized to permit transit buses and Metro Mobility buses use of a shoulder, as designated by the road authority, of a freeway or expressway, as defined in section [160.02](#), in Minnesota.

(b) If a road authority permits the use of a freeway or expressway shoulder by transit buses, the road authority shall permit the use on that shoulder of a bus (1) with a seating capacity of 40 passengers or more operated by a motor carrier of passengers, as defined in section [221.012, subdivision 26](#), while operating in intrastate commerce or (2) providing regular route transit service, as defined in section [174.22, subdivision 8](#), or Metro Mobility services, and operated by or under contract with the Metropolitan Council, a local transit authority, or a transit authority created by the legislature. Drivers of these buses must have adequate training in the requirements of paragraph (c), as determined by the commissioner.

(c) Buses authorized to use the shoulder under this section may be operated on the shoulder only when main-line traffic speeds are less than 35 miles per hour, except as provided for in paragraph (f). Drivers of buses being operated on the shoulder may not exceed the speed of main-line traffic by more than 15 miles per hour and may never exceed 35 miles per hour, except as provided for in paragraph (f). Drivers of buses being operated on the shoulder must yield to merging, entering, and exiting traffic and must yield to other vehicles on the shoulder. Buses operated on the shoulder must be registered with the Department of Transportation.

(d) For the purposes of this section, the term "Metro Mobility bus" means a motor vehicle of not less than 20 feet in length engaged in providing special transportation services under section [473.386](#) that is:

(1) operated by or under contract with a public or private entity receiving financial assistance to provide transit services from the Metropolitan Council or the commissioner of transportation; and

(2) authorized by a road authority to use freeway or expressway shoulders.

(e) This section does not apply to the operation of buses on dynamic shoulder lanes.

(f) The commissioner may authorize different operating conditions and maximum speeds, not to exceed the posted speed limit, based upon an engineering study and recommendation by the road authority. The engineering study must be conducted by the road authority and must conform with the manual and specifications adopted under section [169.06, subdivision 1](#), and applicable state and federal standards. The road authority shall consult the public transit operator before recommending operating conditions different from those authorized by law.