



by **Debbie L. Feldman**

**D**riving your bus through intersections can be tricky. You have people, cars and bicycles coming at you from all directions, and you need to think fast. But if you remember the following tips, you'll make your trip a safe one for the passengers and pedestrians along your route.

#### **Look before you move**

When you stop at an intersection to let off school children, you need to know where every child is before you move your bus. "Look high, look low, look all around the bus," says Carlisle Beasley, director of school transportation for Metro Nashville Public

Schools, whose system operates 503 buses daily.

Don't move the bus until you count the number of children outside the bus to verify that it matches the number who got off. "If you unload five kids, don't move until you know where they all are," says Beasley. One may be crossing the road and another may be bending down to pick up a backpack, out of your line of sight. A child may have even gone under the bus to retrieve a ball or toy.



#### **Expect the unexpected**

At intersections, the rule is "anticipate the unexpected." For example, when you approach an intersection, look for cars coming through from the right and left, even when you have the green light and the right of way.

Be on the lookout for cars speeding through the intersection or running red or yellow lights. Look for bicycle riders who are not obeying traffic signals. They may pass your bus and not be visible in your mirrors.

#### **Check those mirrors**

Remember, your bus is between 35 feet and 60 feet long and you have limited sight distance, advises Robert Cox, risk manager with the Phoenix Transit System. So use your mirrors and use them wisely. Know what each mirror is for.



When you approach an intersection, check your left and right-hand mirrors. Then while you're passing through the intersection, check the mirrors again. Scan the intersection the same way you scan the mirrors — look left, right, then left again.

On a passenger bus, use your interior mirror to see if any passengers are standing in the rear door step area, ready to exit. Once a passenger exits the bus, be aware of where that passenger moves. She may be crossing against the light or walking in front of your bus. Make sure all passengers are a few steps away from the bus before you move.

### **Pedestrians count**

Even when the light is green and you are approaching the intersection, glance at the "Don't Walk" device. If it's flashing, but you don't know how long it's been flashing, use extra caution because a pedestrian may not be through the intersection.

When you pull up to a bus stop at an intersection, be careful of people on the curb. Although your outside right mirror is high, it could hit a tall pedestrian or passenger.

### **Don't get your signals crossed**

When you pull up to a bus stop at an intersection, use your turn signals. Only use your red flashing lights when you're loading and

unloading passengers. Don't use these lights when you aren't loading or unloading, or you'll confuse other drivers. "Tell the truth with your signals," says Beasley. Use your hazard lights only in an emergency or when boarding a disabled passenger.



When you approach an intersection, take your foot off the gas to slow the bus down and hold it over the brake in case you need to press it. Louis G. Maiello, superintendent of transportation training for New York City Transit, calls this "covering the pedal." This way, you're prepared to stop if something or someone unexpected comes through the intersection.

When you stop at a red light, don't bring the bus all the way up to the crosswalk line. Stay back, and stop right before the first crosswalk line. Make sure you can see both crosswalk lines. Be on the lookout for pedestrians walking outside of the crosswalk when they cross the intersection.

When you stop just short of the crosswalk, you delay your entrance into the intersection when the light turns green. This way, it's easier to make sure that the intersection is clear of cross traffic, drivers running red lights and pedestrians before you proceed through the intersection.

Remember, when you drive through an intersection, always expect the unexpected. ●