



AB 25 MODIFIED TOUR BUSES
ASSEMBLYMEMBER ADRIN NAZARIAN

Background:

Existing law requires that charter-party carriers of passengers obtain a permit from the Public Utilities Commission (PUC) and register all individual buses with the PUC. Additionally, the California Highway Patrol (CHP) is required to annually inspect the carrier's fleet to verify that the buses are being properly maintained.

Some businesses, particularly in Los Angeles, are operating vehicles that have undergone significant structural modifications. For example, buses with the roofs completely chopped off transporting tourists are commonplace throughout the city. Often times, these modifications to the roof have meant adjustments or removal to other vital components as well: the anchorages of seat belts, frame rails, etc.

Unfortunately, the CHP is unable to determine engineered structural integrity of these vehicles, despite the concern for which comes from removing the original roof.

This bill:

1) AB 25 includes in the definition of a 'tour bus,' as either a bus operated by a charter party carrier (PUC § 5360) or a passenger stage corporation (PUC § 226) that has had its roof modified or removed, or has had other major structural modifications not performed by the manufacturer.

The bill requires the CHP, no later than July 1, 2018, to develop and implement an inspection and certification program for tour buses.

Beginning July 1, 2018, a modified tour bus shall not operate without undergoing inspection and certification by the CHP. Any modified tour bus without inspection by the CHP and not certified as safe shall be prohibited from operating and removed from the highway.

2) The bill also authorizes local jurisdictions to restrict the routes or streets upon which modified tour buses may be operated if the jurisdiction determines that it is unsafe to operate on those routes.

3) This bill would extend to the Attorney General, district attorney, and city attorney, as applicable, the same ability granted to CHP to recommend to the PUC that a carrier's operating authority be suspended, denied, or revoked for consistent noncompliance with vehicle codes and regulations.

Purpose:

After a three-part investigation by a local news station in Los Angeles late last year, a host of concerns with these businesses came to light. From blatant misinformation about the addresses of celebrities to the removal of seatbelts altogether, the investigation revealed how little the public knows about these buses.

In fact, as a result of the investigation, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) submitted letters to operators of these modified tour buses stating, "[NHTSA is] concerned that you are putting the safety of your passengers and employees at risk and urge you to discontinue use of these vehicles."

This bill would develop an inspection program consisting of standards that ensure the safe operation of these vehicles while allowing the tourism industry to continue to thrive.

Support:

None on file

Opposition:

None on file.

Staff Contact:

Juan Reyes

Juan.Reyes@asm.ca.gov; 916-319-2046