

**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
FEDERAL TRANSIT ADMINISTRATION (FTA)**

Proposed General Directive 17-1 to Mitigate Stop Signal Overruns

**Frequently Asked Questions
January 17, 2017**

Question 1: Why is FTA issuing this proposed general directive?

Answer: FTA is proposing this general directive to address unsafe conditions and practices that lead to stop signal overruns and the risks of death, injury and property damage. We are encouraging rail transit agencies and the State Safety Oversight Agencies (SSOA) that oversee them to provide comments on the proposed general directive. Comments must be received by **March 20, 2017**. Following a summary and analysis of the public comments, FTA will issue a final General Directive to the transit industry.

Question 2: What is a stop signal overrun?

Answer: A stop signal overrun occurs when a rail transit vehicle fails to stop as required in advance of a stop signal, flag, or other indicator, as specified in a rail transit agency's operating rules and procedures. The FTA considers a stop signal overrun to be a significant safety event, with the potential to result in the derailment or collision of passenger trains and the striking of workers, passengers or equipment on the rail transit right-of-way.

Question 3: Is FTA issuing this proposed directive because of its oversight of WMATA Metrorail?

Answer: No. While FTA is aware of stop signal overrun incidents at WMATA Metrorail, FTA's decision to issue this proposed directive is a direct result of inconsistent definitions, reporting thresholds and data analysis across the industry. FTA's review of this information following the issuance of [Safety Advisory 16-1](#) indicated the need to develop a proposed General Directive for Stop Signal Overruns industry-wide.

Question 4: Does FTA plan to issue standards or regulations on stop signal overruns?

Answer: In the near term, safety risks associated with stop signals need to be evaluated and acted upon at the local level by each rail transit agency and the SSOA that oversees it. With assistance and input from the industry, FTA is developing a Safety Standards Strategic Plan that will help guide FTA's safety standards program. This plan is intended to address key aspects, such as a data-driven approach to identifying the highest priority areas for developing and adopting transit safety standards.

Question 5: Does this proposed General Directive apply to all rail transit agencies and modes of rail transit?

Answer: Yes – Proposed General Directive 17-1 applies to all rail transit systems fixed guideway public transportation systems and all State Safety Oversight Agencies that are included in the FTA’s State Safety Oversight Program (49 CFR 659 and 49 CFR 674)

Question 6: How common are stop signal overruns in the rail transit industry?

Answer: Until a common industry definition for stop signal overruns is established and additional data is collected, it’s difficult to accurately determine their frequency. However, FTA’s review of the data and information submitted by industry in regard to Safety Advisory 16-1 indicate that rail transit agencies experience stop signal overruns with varying frequencies and that most State Safety Oversight Agencies do not actively investigate these events.

Also, the submittals indicate a lack of standard practices, definitions, and requirements to protect against stop signal overruns. For example, some rail transit agencies use a broad based definition for stop signal overruns that includes minor, non-consequential overruns. Other rail transit agencies report only the most significant stop signal overruns that exceed casualty or damage thresholds.

Question 7: As proposed in General Directive 17-1, what are the required activities and how will the process work?

Answer:

For rail transit agencies, General Directive 17-1 would require to:

- complete a safety risk evaluation of the potential consequences of hazards related to stop signal overruns within 90 days of the issuance of a final General Directive 17-1;
- evaluate the current safety performance monitoring activities in place to assess the effectiveness of stop signal overrun mitigations within 90 days of the issuance of a final General Directive 17-1; and
- develop and submit a corrective action plan, as necessary to its State Safety Oversight Agency within 150 days of the issuance of a final General Directive 17-1.

For State Safety Oversight Agencies, General Directive 17-1 would require:

- participating in the safety risk evaluation conducted by the rail transit agency;
- reviewing and approving the evaluation within 60 days after its completion;
- reviewing and approving any needed corrective action plan within 60 days of its receipt; and
- reporting the status of the corrective action plan to FTA, as part of the SSO Program Annual Report to FTA (per 49 CFR 674.39).