

Bus Transit Safety

Quarterly Newsletter

FTA Transit Bus Safety and Security Program Program Overview

As FTA Administrator James S. Simpson stated in his 2006 Dear Colleague letter, FTA has taken a “fresh approach” to developing its Transit Bus Safety and Security Program. The new program direction builds off of the valuable progress and exceptional work that has been completed over the last few years by FTA and its partners – the American Public Transit Association (APTA), the Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA), and the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO).

In cooperation with these partners, FTA has been working to enhance safety and security for bus transit passengers and employees across the nation. Through training programs offered by CTAA, the National Rural Transit

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Federal Transit Administration
Office of Program Management
Office of Safety and Security

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Assistance Program, the National Transit Institute (NTI), the Transportation Safety Institute (TSI), and safety and security program reviews conducted by APTA and CTAA, FTA has continued to gain insight into the needs of the industry and is shaping its programs to meet these needs.

Part of this process has included the formation of a Working Group to support ongoing collaboration and communication among industry stakeholders. The Working Group consists of representatives from FTA and its partners as well as State DOTs, transit bus agencies, private industry, and other interested parties. Through the Working Group, FTA believes it can improve program coordination and is receiving feedback on technical assistance materials that will be shared with the national transit bus audience. The Working Group also provides a forum through which FTA can facilitate ongoing communication with bus safety and security program stakeholders and ensure the usefulness of program activities.

Earlier this year, FTA kicked-off a voluntary bus agency onsite safety and security review program focused on identifying industry best practices and safety and security needs. Whenever feasible, FTA provides the transit agencies with available technical assistance documentation to help the agency make improvements to its safety and security programs. The information gathered during on-site reviews will be used to develop guidance documents and resources, and to provide technical assistance that is useful across the industry regardless of agency size or location.

Program Components

Guidelines for Excellence

A set of comprehensive and flexible guidelines that assist individual transit agencies in developing their safety, security and emergency preparedness programs.

Voluntary Agency Onsite Reviews

Voluntary onsite reviews that identify the best practices of and the gaps in transit agency safety, security and emergency preparedness programs.

Agency Self-Assessment

An assessment instrument accessed on-line by individual transit agencies that allows them to identify their safety, security and emergency preparedness best practices, gaps and needs.

Web Site Resource Library

An FTA web site library that allows access to transit industry safety and security best practices that includes policies, procedures, forms, handbooks, lesson plans and other technical assistance materials that can be used to meet an agency's identified needs.

Workshops, Training and Outreach

National, regional and state orientation and training workshops on the FTA Bus Safety & Security Program and on high priority specialized topics in safety, security and emergency preparedness.

Transit Bus Safety and Security Program

Individual Transit Agencies

The Program provides a mechanism to evaluate current safety, security and emergency preparedness activities, identify gaps and needs, and access technical assistance to meet those gaps and needs in order to improve mission accomplishment.

Transit Employees

The Program provides resources to assist in the enhancement of individual technical skill sets and safety, security and emergency preparedness professionalism.

Transit Passengers

The Program assists in decreasing operational safety risks to passengers while enhancing their security when using transit.

Communities Transit Serves

The Program emphasizes the importance of transportation readiness to respond to community emergencies and provides tools for carrying out that response.

FTA and State DOTs

The Program supports the FTA and State DOT missions in assisting to elevate the level of safety, security and emergency preparedness of bus transit agencies throughout the nation.

State Department of Transportation Transit Bus Safety & Security Invitational Workshop

On March 3 through 5, 2008, FTA held its first ever State DOT Transit Bus Safety and Security Invitational Workshop. The Workshop was co-hosted by the Texas DOT at the Adam's Mark Hotel in Dallas, Texas and was attended by approximately 70 participants including representatives from 31 State DOTs, industry representatives from FTA's Transit Bus Safety and Security Working Group, and representatives from transit agencies and transit associations.

The workshop successfully accomplished its two main objectives of: (1) providing an overview of FTA's Transit Bus Safety and Security Program,

describing and demonstrating the various program components, and (2) providing a forum for feedback from State DOT representatives on the program design and on critical issues that the program needs to address.

FTA explained the new approach it has taken with the Transit Bus Safety and Security Program and emphasized the voluntary nature of the Program and its continuing focus on providing the industry with technical assistance, training programs, and guidance resources and materials. This approach initially focuses on Section 5311 and small urban Section 5307 providers and will later address the

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needs of large urban transit agencies. The program is designed to support state DOTs by providing flexible guidelines that they can use to assist their subgrantees in continuously improving safety, security and emergency preparedness excellence. The new program direction also takes advantage of web-based technology to support self-assessment and continuous improvement, as well as progress already made by state DOTs and industry associations in implementing the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).

FTA provided a real-time demonstration of the newly developed web-based resource system,

which will contain a library of easily searchable resource documents and technical assistance materials organized by program element, topic, regulations, and/or agency and state. In this manner, the on-line system has been designed with the end user in mind. In the spirit of collaboration, communication, and coordination, the system also provides a forum for industry representatives to ask questions and receive guidance, not only from FTA and its MOU partners, but also from sister transit agencies and industry experts. The system is currently under-going beta testing, but FTA plans to deploy the system for full industry use within the coming months.

Transit Bus Safety

New Bus Safety Training Initiative

Safety has always been the transit industry's top priority. Transit success will always be measured in terms of providing a safe environment for our customers and our employees. A critical element of creating this safe environment is the training of our frontline employees. FTA and its industry partners have long believed that comprehensive and effective training of transit operators/drivers, mechanics, dispatchers and supervisors is essential to creating a foundation of safety for the nation's transit bus industry. The industry's transit bus agencies share this belief and have requested that FTA develop and offer new training programs for bus operators/drivers, mechanics and other frontline transit agency staff to fill existing industry gaps.

Onboard Vehicle Safety Equipment

Having the proper on-board vehicle safety equipment is critical to creating a safe environment for transit employees and passengers. Ensuring that bus operators/drivers are capable of responding to emergencies that may occur while in service starts with proper on-board safety equipment. FTA recommends that all transit vehicles be equipped with the following basic on-board safety equipment:

Seat belt/web cutters	First aid kit
Biohazard kit	Triangles
Fire extinguisher	Flashlight

If your agency equips its vehicles with these and/or other pieces of safety equipment, it is important that all operators be trained on their proper use and storage. Pre- and post-trip inspections should include verification that safety equipment is on board and available. First aid and biohazard kits must be kept fully stocked.

Accident Handling Procedures

No matter how effective the accident and incident prevention process of a transit agency is, some accidents cannot be avoided. Extreme weather conditions, the actions of other motorists, and other events cannot be controlled. Transit agencies must therefore do all they can to prepare for such inevitable events.

It is important that transit agencies continually train bus operators/drivers as well as dispatchers and supervisors to take the following actions if an accident occurs:

- Check the vehicle location. DO NOT move the vehicle unless instructed to do so by law enforcement or when leaving the vehicle where it exposes the passengers to greater danger, such as in a busy traffic lane, on a blind curve, near the top of a hill, or because of weather.
- Secure the vehicle, set the brakes, turn off the engine and turn on hazard flashers.
- Make a decision to evacuate or not to evacuate the vehicle. EVACUATE IF NECESSARY.
- Assess the condition of passengers and contact dispatch.
- Respond to passenger needs and assist any injured passengers consistent with agency policy.
- Inform all passengers of the situation, what actions are being taken and how they will be affected.
- Request that all passengers and witnesses complete courtesy cards including their names, phone numbers and any other information they can provide. Collect the cards and return them to management.
- Get all necessary information from other drivers, law enforcement and emergency medical personnel.
- Cooperate with law enforcement officials, insurance representatives and system management.
- DO NOT assign blame or take responsibility for the accident.
- DO NOT talk to the media, but instead refer the media to system management.
- Complete all required accident report documentation as soon as possible.

Industry Accident and Incident Trends

The use of qualitative and quantitative performance measures provides FTA with a clearer understanding of the transit bus industry's greatest needs. FTA is therefore able to better design, prioritize, and direct its technical assistance programs towards those in most need of improvement.

In addition to FTA's many activities aimed at collecting qualitative data pertaining to industry's

safety, security and emergency preparedness programs, FTA also performs detailed quantitative data analysis of industry accident/incident trends. This analysis is performed using the National Transit Database (NTD).

All recipients of Section 5307 and 5311 formula program funds are required to submit data to NTD, and although NTD reports do not clearly distinguish

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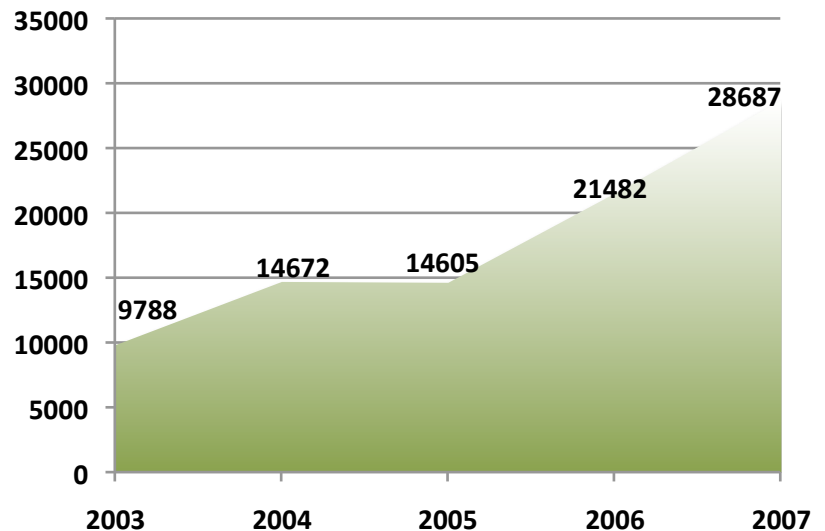
between the two types of systems, it is the most comprehensive data available at this time. Accidents reported to NTD include:

- Collisions
- Evacuations
- Fires
- Security related incidents
- Suicides
- Vehicle Leaving the Roadway
- Not Otherwise Classified (NOC)

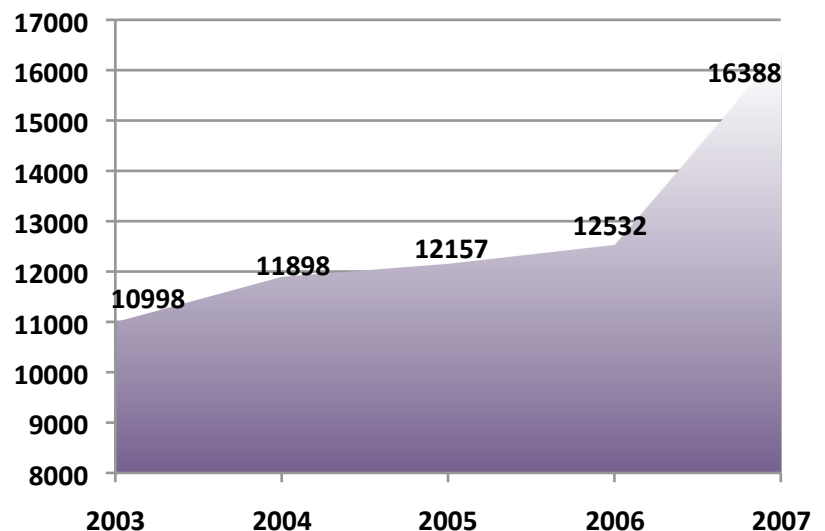
NOC accidents include incidents other than those listed such as slips/falls, or entries within the NTD reports that have no description given. Based on these classifications, FTA has determined that since 2003, transit bus industry accident and injury rates have steadily increased as shown in the two graphs on the right.

As can be easily seen through the analysis of this data, industry accident/incident rates are steadily increasing, further substantiating the need for industry improvement. FTA and its MOU partners are committed to helping the industry improve its accident/incident rates and FTA will continue to monitor industry trends as more data becomes available.

Total Accidents Reported



Total Injuries Reported



Security and Emergency Preparedness

Threat and Vulnerability Assessments

Much has been written about the extraordinary importance of performing threat and vulnerability assessments (TVAs) of transit systems. TVAs form the basis of effective system security programs and, when done correctly, enable transit agencies to identify and prioritize system risks and the countermeasures that can be taken to reduce control these risks.

The FTA and the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) have published a number of excellent studies, guidelines, and other resource documents that can be used by larger transit agencies to perform TVAs of their own systems. FTA has also recognized that smaller transit bus agencies may find these technical assistance documents overly complex for their needs. Toward meeting the end of addressing smaller transit system threat and vulnerability concerns, FTA and the National Rural Transit Assistance Program (NRTAP) recently released its “Threat, Vulnerability & Emergency Preparedness Toolbox”. This Toolbox is an excellent resource for smaller transit agencies and is available through the RTAP distribution network that exists in each state or can be found at www.nationalrtap.org/vulnerability.asp.

FTA encourages every transit agency to first identify and recognize the unique characteristics of their systems before beginning the TVA process. Consideration should first be given to the agency’s size, location, operating environment and conditions, types of equipment used and service provided, passenger characteristics, existing

operating and maintenance practices and procedures, emergency plans and procedures, and relationships with sister agencies and local emergency responders.

As a result of these considerations, transit agencies should be able to determine the extent to which a TVA should be performed. Large metropolitan agencies may place a greater emphasis on terrorist threats, while small rural agencies may place a greater emphasis on severe weather or hazardous material spills occurring in their areas of operation. The important issue is that regardless of the specific hazards and threats an agency may face, it must take the time to identify those hazards and threats, evaluate agency and community vulnerability to them, and create an action plan to reduce vulnerabilities as much as is realistically possible.

Responding to a Suspicious Object on a Bus

Suspicious objects are items, devices, or substances that are abnormal or out-of-the-ordinary for the surrounding environment. Suspicious items on a vehicle are any bag, container or package that may exhibit one or more of the following characteristics:

- An attempt appears to have been made to hide the item
- No one claims ownership of the item
- The item was abandoned by someone quickly leaving the area

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Of particular concern are objects that:

- Are placed in out-of-the way locations where they are not easily seen
- Are accompanied by threatening message
- Appear that they could have the potential to be a bomb of some type
- Have visible wires, batteries or timers attached are abandoned by someone who quickly leaves the scene
- Have tanks, bottles or bags visible
- Are accompanied by a suspicious cloud, mist, gas or vapor

If a suspicious object is discovered on a transit vehicle, a determination must be made as to whether it is a lost and found item or a potentially dangerous object. If the determination is made that the object is suspicious and potentially dangerous, it is critical to evacuate the vehicle immediately and notify dispatch and appropriate authorities. If the vehicle is in motion at the time of the discovery, it should be immediately pulled over to a safe

location, preferably in an area that is not crowded with people, and evacuated.

Transit employees need to remain calm throughout this process and never touch, shake or empty the contents of the suspicious object. When requesting assistance, never use the vehicle radio or a cell phone from any closer than three hundred (300) feet from the suspicious object. It may be necessary to use a public phone or a cell phone once proper separation from the vehicle has been achieved. Give dispatch and emergency response the precise location of the vehicle and the reason for the suspicion including a detailed description of the object.

The National Transit Institute (NTI) has developed a number of outstanding security related training modules available to the industry including "Security Awareness for Transit Employees", "Terrorist Activity Recognition and Reaction", and "Securing Community Mobility." More information on NTI programs can be found at www.nitonline.com.

In the Next Issue...

- Overview of the FTA and State DOT co-hosted Orientation Seminar initiative
- Wheelchair lift and securement
- Guidelines for evacuating transit vehicles in a fire related emergency
- Identifying, responding to and reporting suspicious people
- National Incident Management System (NIMS)
- Coordinating with emergency responders

We Want Your Feedback

To provide feedback pertaining to this issue of the FTA Bus Transit Safety Quarterly Newsletter; to obtain additional information pertaining to any of the topics discussed in this issue; or to request that a specific topic of interest to your organization be discussed in upcoming issues, please contact:

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About the Newsletter

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