



U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Transit Administration



Review and Evaluation of Public Transportation Safety Standards

Background

Since the mid-1990s, FTA has actively financed, supported, and participated in the development of voluntary safety and technical standards and recommended practices for the public transportation industry. The FAST Act requires the Secretary of Transportation to review public transportation safety standards and protocols to document existing standards and examine the efficacy of those standards and protocols for all transit systems that receive Federal financial assistance. The review must include minimum safety performance standards developed by the public transportation industry and safety performance standards, practices, or protocols in use by rail fixed guideway public transportation systems as well as rail and bus safety standards, practices, or protocols in use by public transportation systems regarding rail and bus design and the workstation of rail and bus operators, scheduling fixed-route rail and bus service with adequate time and access for operators to use restroom facilities, fatigue management, and crash avoidance and worthiness.

Objectives

This report provides information to the Secretary of Transportation for the required review of public transportation safety standards and protocols to document existing standards and examine the efficacy of those standards and protocols. This effort establishes the adequacy of minimum transit safety standards and identifies subject areas for public transportation systems and operations for which FTA may issue standards and protocols.

Findings and Conclusions

FTA's safety standards evaluation and development projects provide the necessary background information, data, and analysis to support decisions that will aid in setting minimum safety performance standards for the public transportation industry.

This report builds upon existing FTA standards development efforts initiated after the passage of MAP-21. Beginning in 2015, FTA engaged in several safety standards evaluation and development projects that provide the necessary background information, data, and analysis to support minimum safety performance standards for the public transportation industry. For this report, multiple sources were examined to develop an inventory of existing voluntary or regulatory safety standards and protocols that are applicable to or used in all public transit modes referenced in the National Transit Database (NTD). A public evaluation of FTA's review of the inventory of standards was undertaken through a Federal Register request for comments to ensure the completeness of the inventory, obtain statements

related to the efficacy of existing standards, and gain valuable industry observations and insight into areas of risk and standards that could be advanced for rulemaking; comments received from the effort are summarized in this report.

Among the recommendations to support FTA's collection of data and a risk-based analysis of the safety performance of transit modes are the following:

- Continue FTA's efforts to expand safety data collection and request FTA statutory authority for data privacy protections, encouraging more industry data submission from agencies.
- Use experts to conduct a data-driven assessment of the transit industry to determine which risks are best mitigated by federal regulation or other means.
- Request additional resources that will allow FTA to collect, manage, and analyze the safety data required for effective industry safety standards regulation.

Benefits

Information in this report serves to assist with the Secretary of Transportation's review of safety standards and protocols in the development and implementation of a National Public Transportation Safety Plan to improve the safety of all transit systems that receive Federal financial assistance.

Project Information

FTA Report No. 0103

This research project was conducted by Lisa Staes of the Center for Urban Transportation Research at the University of South Florida. For more information, contact FTA Project Manager Raj Wagley at (202) 366-5386 or Raj.Wagley@dot.gov. All research reports can be found at <https://www.transit.dot.gov/about/research-innovation>