

# **UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION**

## **FEDERAL TRANSIT ADMINISTRATION (FTA)**

### **Frequently Asked Questions on FTA's Proposed National Public Transportation Safety Plan**

February 16, 2016

**Question 1: What is the purpose of the proposed National Public Transportation Safety Plan (NSP)?**

**Answer:** The purpose of the proposed National Safety Plan is to guide the national effort in managing the safety risks and safety hazards within our Nation's public transportation systems. It addresses the federal statutory requirements and communicates FTA's approach to improving the safety of the public transportation industry.

**Question 2: Would the proposed National Safety Plan impose any mandatory requirements?**

**Answer:** No. The proposed National Safety Plan does not include any mandatory requirements. However, the proposed rule for Public Transportation Agency Safety Plans would require transit agencies to set performance targets based on the safety performance criteria proposed in the National Safety Plan.

**Question 3: What is the relationship between the National Safety Plan and a Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan?**

**Answer:** The relationship between the two is rooted in the requirement that operators of public transportation systems establish safety performance targets based on safety performance criteria set by FTA. Pursuant to 49 U.S.C. § 5329(b)(2)(A), FTA's National Safety Plan must include

“safety performance criteria for all modes of public transportation,” and in accordance with 49 U.S.C. § 5329(d)(1)(E), transit agencies must include “performance targets based on the safety performance criteria” in their Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan.

#### **Question 4: What is the Safety Management Systems (SMS) Framework?**

**Answer:** SMS is a top-down, organization-wide approach to managing safety risks and assuring the effectiveness of safety risk mitigations. SMS can also be adapted to the mode, size, and complexity of any transit agency in any environment. FTA’s SMS Framework provides the building blocks of SMS and some of the major milestones for its implementation. FTA developed the SMS Framework to guide public transportation and oversight agencies by:

- Providing a brief overview of key SMS concepts;
- Describing attributes of an effective SMS;
- Presenting FTA’s adopted SMS components and sub-components; and
- Presenting SMS development phases and sample tasks.

#### **Question 5: What is performance management?**

**Answer:** Performance management is a management process that requires the establishment of meaningful performance measures to link policies, goals and objectives, planning and programming, and project delivery to stated outcomes. The Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21) Act , ushered in a new era of performance management for surface transportation. The performance management requirements are intended to facilitate more effective investment of Federal transportation funds by refocusing attention on national, regional, and local transportation goals, increasing the accountability and transparency of the Federal transit and Federal aid highway programs, and improving project decision-making through performance-based planning and programming. FHWA and FTA are undertaking a number of separate, but related, rulemakings to implement the performance management framework and establish national performance measures. FTA must establish performance measures and performance criteria for transit asset management and safety, respectively. 49 U.S.C. 5326(c), 49 U.S.C. 5329(b)(2).

**Question 6: Can transit agencies use other safety performance measures in lieu of the proposed categories in the National Safety Plan?**

**Answer:** No. The safety performance criteria selected by FTA (fatalities, injuries, safety events and system reliability), while broad in order to be relevant to all public transportation modes, are intended to provide a “state of the industry” high-level measurement, and also help focus individual agencies on the development of specific and measurable targets relevant to their operations. The proposed safety performance criteria are based on data collected from the National Transit Database and are criteria that are predictive “leading” indicators. An agency would be required to set targets based on the proposed safety performance criteria, and would be able, to establish its own performance measures in addition to those measures proposed in the NSP.

**Question 7: Will FTA provide additional funding for proposed National Safety Plan implementation?**

**Answer:** No. Congress did not provide specific funding for implementation of the National Safety Plan.

**Question 8: Is a transit agency required to adopt the standards proposed in the National Safety Plan?**

**Answer:** No. Pursuant to 49 U.S.C. 5329(b)(2)(C) and (D), the National Safety Plan must include minimum vehicle performance standards and minimum standards for transit operations. In response to the statutory requirements for standards, FTA is proposing a number of minimum voluntary standards for vehicles in revenue service and safety of operations. Many public transportation agencies already follow voluntary consensus-based standards developed by the American Public Transportation Association (APTA) and other organizations. While compliance with the proposed standards is not mandatory, FTA strongly encourages all public transportation agencies to consider adopting the voluntary, consensus-based standards.

**Question 9: Does FTA expect the National Safety Plan to transition from a policy document into a regulation?**

**Answer:** Not at this time. The proposed National Safety Plan is a tool to support transit providers with guidance and technical assistance to improve their safety performance through a phased-in approach. However, specific components may be implemented via regulation (e.g. the Safety Certification Training Program and standards).