

**FTA Acting Administrator’s Tasking to TRACS 16-01**

**Transit Advisory Committee for Safety Task Statement**: The safety of public transportation under the Safety Management System (SMS) model is largely dependent on a strong safety culture. Research and studies identify components necessary to build a culture that advances and prioritizes safety,[[1]](#footnote-1) but organizational structures that have departments with competing priorities may impede the establishment of an effective safety culture. A transit system built around the principles of SMS is most effective when the entire organization prioritizes safety above all else, and works together in designing, implementing and evaluating the system, investigating incidents and close calls. A successful SMS and a strong safety culture depend on the existence of the free flow of communication across all levels of an organization without the fear of reprisal.

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) recognizes that strengthening a safety culture can take years and is ultimately a continuous process. FTA wants to encourage implementation of measures that will strengthen safety culture at every level within the transit industry. Therefore, FTA is tasking TRACS to develop practical recommendations detailing how processes, practices, tasks, and individual employee responsibilities can support a strong safety culture.

**Task No.:** 16-01

**Date initially presented to the TRACS:** March 29, 2016

**Work Groups will be established to address the various components of this tasking.**

**Issues to be considered include but are not limited to the following:**

1. To what extent does organizational structure, such as reporting relationships and authority, affect safety culture?
2. What can inhibit the promotion of a strong safety culture? What can weaken a safety culture?
3. A description of the ideal organizational structure. How do the various components of the organization interact with each other, including the safety office and senior management, including reporting relationships, relative authority, resources, and other aspects?
4. A discussion about how required training, grant requirements, and other interventions might promote the strengthening of safety culture.
5. An evaluation of how labor/management communication and committees may or may not promote a strong safety culture. What problems exist? How do the provisions of labor/management agreements affect safety culture, particularly as they pertain to the reporting of accidents, incidents and close call investigations, or other interests such as wage and working-condition negotiations? How might the labor/management communication and committees differ in a unionized vs. non-unionized transit property, and how can those differences affect safety culture?

**Refer to/establish working groups**: Yes

**Target Dates**:

* **October 30, 2016**: Submit draft letter report with recommendations to the full TRACS committee
* **February 28, 2017**: Submit final report with recommendations to theFTA Designated Federal Official (DFO)**.**

**Disposition:** Accepted **Date:** March 29, 2016

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1. For example, see the Transit Cooperative Research Program’s 2015 report, *Improving Safety Culture in Public Transportation, Report 174* and TRACS’s report, *Implementing Safety Management System Principles in Rail Transit Agencies,* May 20, 2011 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)