

# **Model Bus Transit Safety and Security Program**

## **Program Strategies**



U.S. Department  
of Transportation  
**Federal Transit  
Administration**

In 2000, the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) began work on its Model Transit Bus Safety and Security Program (Bus Safety and Security Program). Over the next few years, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was developed and signed by FTA, the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO), the American Public Transportation Association (APTA), and the Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA).

In signing the MOU, each partner organization agreed to promote Bus Safety and Security Program elements, assess the activities and performance of program implementation, and incorporate all reasonable actions necessary to ensure the effective implementation of safety and security programs at bus transit agencies, thereby maintaining the voluntary nature of the Bus Safety and Security Program. Since the signing of the MOU, there have been many advances in bus transit safety and security by AASHTO, APTA, CTAA and the bus transit agencies, themselves.

FTA recommitted itself to the success of the Bus Safety and Security Program and has taken steps to ensure increased coordination with the transit bus industry and a closer working relationship with its MOU partners. To commemorate the next phase of the Bus Safety and Security Program, FTA invited its MOU partners to participate in a Kick-off Meeting, held on July 18, 2006. This meeting was essential to reestablish our working relationship, to address the challenges of the past few years, and to identify a way to move the Bus Safety and Security Program forward. The meeting provided FTA an opportunity to:

- Acknowledge progress that has been made in safety and security in the bus transit industry and by the State Departments of Transportation (DOT's);
- Listen to MOU partner presentations of bus transit industry achievements, concerns and suggestions;
- Discuss FTA's intent for the program; and
- Solicit feedback on future program direction.

A summary of Bus Safety and Security Program objectives and proposed strategies discussed during that meeting are presented below.

**Overview** – The Kick-off Meeting was held to reestablish lines of communication between the FTA and its partners to the MOU and discuss Bus Safety and Security Program objectives. The meeting began with a discussion of the history of the program including accomplishments made by the MOU partners and other stakeholders. Examples of these achievements include:

- AASHTO's ongoing commitment to the Multi-State Technical Assistance Program and the Standing Committee on Public Transportation's (SCOPT) Safety and Security Task Force;
- Coordination between AASHTO's SCOPT and the Florida Department of Transportation's Transit Bus Safety Resource Website;

- Promotion of bus transit agency technical assistance through the National Cooperative Highway Research Program (NCHRP) and the Transit Cooperative Research Program (TCRP);
- APTA's Bus Safety Management Program;
- CTAA's Training and Safety Review Program; and
- National Rural Transit Assistance Program's (NRTAP) Threat, Vulnerability and Emergency Preparedness Toolbox.

The group next discussed FTA's recent drafting of the Bus Safety and Security Program Implementation Guidelines. FTA drafted these guidelines to support industry implementation of the core and enhanced bus safety and security elements specified in the MOU.

FTA received many comments on these guidelines from its MOU partners, State DOT's, bus transit agency representatives, and other program stakeholders. The general consensus during the kick-off meeting was that while the guidelines do contain worthwhile information, they do not adequately address the needs of smaller agencies, nor do they lend themselves to easy implementation by bus transit agency personnel. Therefore, FTA indicated that it wishes to remove the draft guidelines from circulation.

In addition, FTA described its new approach to developing and providing technical assistance for the Bus Safety and Security Program. This approach includes development and distribution of a CD-ROM containing a compendium of effective practices, and creation of a website, accessible to all members of the bus community, for sharing effective practices, managing contact information, and helping users locate specific materials, checklists, and templates that they may need to address core and enhanced elements.

FTA next solicited feedback from the MOU partners with regard to challenges and shortcomings in the Bus Safety and Security Program over the past few years. The MOU partners identified the following needs to be addressed by FTA:

- maintain ongoing discussion with Bus Safety and Security Program stakeholders, including State DOT's;
- provide clear direction with regard to short, mid and long-term objectives;
- promote increased program awareness among bus transit agency top management;
- move technical assistance from "theoretical" information to "practical" guidance;
- reemphasize the voluntary nature of the program through recommended technical assistance;
- reduce "information overload" through assistance in the evaluation and organization of current industry materials to compile useful practices;
- identify the assessment mechanism to ensure program implementation while maintaining the voluntary nature of the program<sup>1</sup>; and
- investigate FTA grant funding provisions to support the new Bus Safety and Security Program development efforts.

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<sup>1</sup> The assessment mechanism has yet to be determined.

The following strategies for the Bus Safety and Security Program were discussed during the meeting:

**Establish Working Group** – It is the desire of each of the MOU partners to establish a working group of 15-20 representative stakeholders in the bus transit community. It is anticipated that the smaller size of the working group will better facilitate discussion and consensus on important issues. At a minimum, the working group will contain at least one representative from each MOU partner, additional members from MOU partner sub-committees, bus transit agency representatives and State DOT representatives, as well as representatives from Federal partners, including the National Rural Transit Assistance Program (NRTAP) and the Transportation Security Administration (TSA).

FTA is proposing quarterly teleconference calls with the working group, supplemented by in-person meetings; however, this is subject to change based on received comments and recommendations from the MOU partners. Email communication would also be used to share information and practices. The working group will provide the forum through which FTA can sustain ongoing communication with Bus Safety and Security Program stakeholders and ensure the usefulness of technical assistance deliverables.

FTA is extremely sensitive to the fact that State DOT's are taking actions to improve the safety and security standing of their grant recipients. As such, through the MOU partners – specifically AASHTO, FTA would like to ensure that it has a liaison with each State DOT for the Bus Safety and Security Program.

Additionally, there have been many questions regarding the role of TSA in the Bus Program. While FTA cannot speak for TSA, it has assured the MOU partners that as of the date of this letter, TSA wishes to participate in the review of technical assistance materials and be provided an opportunity for input. This is in keeping with the Annex to the DHS/FTA “Memorandum of Understanding on Roles and Responsibilities Concerning Public Transportation Security.”

**Resource CD-ROM – Compendium of Practices** – FTA presented its intent to develop and distribute a resource CD-ROM to all bus transit agencies and State DOT's in an effort to capture “effective” practices that are currently available to bus agencies. The MOU partners agreed with the idea to distill information and concurred with the need to distribute to a wide-scale audience, but cautioned FTA with regard to “information overload” concerns and the delivery mechanism to be used. FTA welcomed MOU partner suggestions and has modified its original approach to 1) solicit effective practices from the bus industry through the MOU partners, 2) ensure working group review of the CD-ROM user interface and organization, as well as content, and 3) develop a process to ensure updating and access to new practices as the Bus Safety and Security Program evolves.

Through the process of developing the CD-ROM and coordinating with the working group, FTA will also conduct a “gap analysis” to identify areas where effective practices have not yet been developed, or where differences in the size and service characteristics of bus agencies limit the applicability of available practices. Based on results from the gap analysis

and comments on existing materials, FTA, in coordination with the working group, will begin to develop practical technical assistance for subsequent distribution.

**Web-based Information Sharing** – To address the MOU partner concerns with regard to the need for ongoing assessment and updating of technical assistance materials, as well as a mechanism to promote more effective dissemination of technical assistance materials, FTA will develop a web-based Content Management System (CMS). The CMS will provide an easy to navigate tool for bus transit agencies to download and utilize practical technical assistance materials developed for the program. The CMS will also provide contact information and message boards to further enhance information sharing. Finally, the CMS will provide FTA, in coordination with the working group, an opportunity to provide updated program materials on a regular basis.

**Voluntary Assessments** – FTA understands the desire to keep the Bus Safety and Security Program voluntary. FTA is charged with reporting to Congress on how well the program is being implemented and measures of the program's success. As such, FTA, in coordination with the working group, will solicit bus transit agencies for participation in a voluntary assessment program. The purpose of each onsite assessment is twofold: 1) evaluate the bus transit agency's implementation of bus program safety and security elements as they relate to the agency's operations and 2) provide onsite technical assistance and collect additional effective practices. The MOU partners recommended that FTA report back to the working group on assessment activities to ensure that results from the initial pilot program can be evaluated and effective practices can be shared through the CMS. FTA anticipates conducting 10 pilot assessments over the next 15 months.

### Current Activities

In keeping with program objectives and recommendations from FTA's MOU partners, the activities listed below are being undertaken to address Bus Safety and Security Program strategies:

1. Working group membership recommendations are underway; MOU partners have been asked to provide their recommendations to FTA.
2. FTA is currently constructing a contact database to support outreach and the development of agency profiles that will support the categorization of future technical assistance.
3. MOU partners are collaborating to develop a request to Bus Safety and Security Program stakeholders for practical bus transit safety and security materials to support the compendium of practices for the resource CD-ROM.
4. FTA's Bus Safety and Security Program team is developing a functional breakdown of bus operations to support the identification of areas for which practical templates and checklists can be developed and reviewed by the working group for eventual distribution and feedback from the bus transit industry.

Contact Information

If you have any questions regarding the above information, please do not hesitate to contact any of the following individuals:

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