



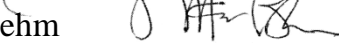
# Memorandum

U.S. Department of  
Transportation

Office of the Secretary  
of Transportation  
Office of Inspector General

Subject: **INFORMATION**: Audit Announcement –  
FRA’s Collection and Management of Railroad  
Safety Data  
Project No. 16S3003S000

Date: February 2, 2016

From: Mitchell Behm   
Assistant Inspector General  
for the Office of Surface Transportation Audits

Reply to  
Attn. of: JA-30

To: Federal Railroad Administrator

The successful development and implementation of a data-driven, risk-based approach to safety oversight depend on quality data. As part of this effort, the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) compiles the safety record of the rail industry in its public databases of accident and incident data. For example, in 2014, there were a total of 12,007 reported accidents and incidents and 781 fatalities involving our Nation’s railways.

According to FRA, the Agency uses this accident and incident data to target inspection resources, monitor how regions are meeting their inspection goals, and support its safety program budget requests to Congress. However, much of FRA’s safety data are self-reported by railway operators, which raises particular challenges in ensuring data quality. For example, our previous work<sup>1</sup> has shown that FRA has had problems with the timely and complete submission of rail safety data for accidents at grade crossings.

Given the significant role that self-reported accident and incident data plays in FRA’s safety programs, we are initiating an audit of these issues. Our objective is to assess FRA’s collection and management of railroad safety data.

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<sup>1</sup> *Audit of Oversight of Highway-Rail Grade Crossing Accident Reporting, Investigations, and Safety Regulations* (OIG Report No. MH-2006-016), November 28, 2005. OIG reports are available on our Web site at <https://www.oig.dot.gov/>.

We plan to begin the audit this month and will coordinate with your audit liaison to schedule an entrance conference. We will conduct our work at FRA Headquarters and other sites as needed. If you have any questions, please contact me at 202-366-5630 or Wendy Harris, Program Director, at 202-366-2794.

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cc: DOT Audit Liaison, M-1  
FRA Audit Liaison, ROA-03