

STATE BUS TRANSIT SAFETY GUIDE

PROBLEM STATEMENT

In July, 2001, the Federal Transit Authority (FTA) developed a draft document entitled “Model Transit Bus Safety Program.” This document defines a model transit bus safety program, inclusive of safety oversight functions, to complement the implementation of a transit safety program. The Program was initiated by the FTA in response to a 1998 National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) special investigation report entitled “Transit Bus Safety Oversight” (PB98-917006, NTSB/SIR-98/03). That report was the result of findings from investigations and a subsequent public hearing in March 1998 concerning high-profile bus accidents in the United States. The NTSB report observed that there is a lack of consistency among the states regarding oversight of transit bus safety and that there is currently no overall Federal regulatory structure guiding the oversight of transit bus safety. Consequently, NTSB recommended that the U.S. DOT, the American Public Transit Association (APTA), the Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA) and the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) develop “a model comprehensive safety program(s) and provide it to all transit agencies.” The goal of the recommendations was to encourage the development of transit bus safety standards and practices that large bus agencies, as well as small transit bus operations, could practicably implement.

In December 2003, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed by FTA, AASHTO, APTA, and CTAA to promote voluntary development and implementation of bus safety and security plans at the state and transit system levels. The Model Transit Bus Safety and Security Program contains two general categories: Core Safety Program Elements and Enhanced Safety Program Elements.

Core Safety Elements are the safety program elements that all transit providers should implement. Core Elements apply to all Section 5307 and 5311 transit providers. In cases where service is contracted with 5307 and 5311 funds, the grantee shall ensure the contractor would implement the core and enhanced safety program elements as applicable. Section 5310 provider participation in a safety program is subject to state discretion, however participation is encouraged.

The Core Safety Program Elements include:

- Driver /Employee Selection
- Driver/Employee Training
- Vehicle Maintenance
- Drug and Alcohol Abuse Programs
- Safety Data Acquisition and Analysis
- Security

Under the voluntary approach, there is no single safety model within the industry that must be adopted by transit systems or state overseeing such systems.

OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this project was to gather industry “Best Practices” for developing model state safety programs, for the development of improved bus transit safety and security standards and practices. The Bus Transit Safety Resource Guide web site serves to aid states and transit agencies in the development of system safety and security programs, and related implementation procedures that address the voluntary requirements established by the FTA and its partners

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

The Bus Transit System Safety Resource Guide is available online (<http://www.cutr.usf.edu/bussafety/>). The materials provided on the web site are scalable for systems of any size, but they are particularly suitable for small urban and rural systems and are intended to be used as outline models and templates for state and transit agencies in developing their safety and security programs. The site contains best practices related to Core Safety Elements defined in the FTA Model Transit Bus Safety and Security Program, state and transit agency safety plans, bus operator applications and selection forms, pre-trip procedures, transit safety review forms, procurement procedures, drug & alcohol requirements and policies, training program, transit insurance pools, and state legislation on public transit safety and security.

BENEFITS

A benefit of the Bus Transit Safety Resource Guide is that it provides information and resources for the voluntary development and implementation of bus safety and security at the state and transit system levels. The Bus Transit Safety Resource Guide Website is being used as a tool by AASHTO, the SCOPT Safety and Security Task Force, State Departments of Transportation and Transit Agencies developing Bus Safety and Security Plans, and the Transportation Safety Institute (TSI) as a resource in its Bus System Safety Course.

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