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April 5, 2016

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Michael P. Melaniphy

Docket Operations Facility,
U.S. Department of Transportation,
1200 New Jersey Avenue S.E., W12-140
Washington, DC 20590

RE: Docket No. FTA-2015-0017

Dear Docket Clerk:

On behalf of the more than 1,500 member organizations of the American Public Transportation Association (APTA), I write to provide comments on the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) request for comments on the National Public Transportation Safety Plan, published on February 5, 2016 at 80 FR 6372.

About APTA

APTA is a non-profit international trade association of more than 1,500 public and private member organizations, including public transit systems; high-speed intercity passenger rail agencies; planning, design, construction and finance firms; product and service providers; academic institutions; and state associations and departments of transportation. More than ninety percent of Americans who use public transportation are served by APTA member transit systems.

General Comments

We have reviewed the draft national plan. While it appears largely aspirational, we have identified significant issues in the draft.

Page 14 of the draft encourages agencies to compare their safety data to other agencies to compare and contrast results. We believe this runs contrary to the premise of Safety Management Systems (SMS). The correct approach is found on page 47 where the differences among agencies are noted and grantees encouraged to improve their individual performance without regard to others. The former should be clarified to match the latter.

Chapter 2 of the draft endorses a three phase approach to SMS implementation. FTA should acknowledge that some agencies will not require such an approach, given the nature of their current safety practices.

FTA should fully define and differentiate among the phrases safety performance criteria, safety performance measures, and safety performance indicator as the draft suggests interchangeable use of the three.

The draft suggest targets be established for, inter alia, fatalities and injuries. We believe these are inappropriate categories and commend FTA to the recommendations of its TRACS committee for more appropriate indicators of performance.

Inconsistency between this proposal and FTA's Transit Asset Management (TAM) proposed rule must be eliminated. Here reliability is proposed to be measured based on mean distance between failures. The TAM proposal would rely on useful life benchmarks.

Public safety is not adequately addressed in the draft. Customer safety and that of the general public with which we share roads and communities should be accounted for. Neither transit policing nor customer expectations of safety while using transit is addressed in the draft.

We appreciate the opportunity to assist FTA in this important endeavor. For additional information, please contact James LaRusch, APTA's chief counsel and vice president corporate affairs, at (202) 496-4808 or jlarsch@apta.com.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael P. Melaniphy".

Michael P. Melaniphy
President & CEO

MPM/jpl:jr