

# FTA Oversight Of WMATA

## Joseph Leader

*Chief Operating Officer,  
Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority*



# Metro System Facts

- Created in 1967 by Interstate Compact; Rail Service began 1976. Metro serves District of Columbia, and areas of Maryland and Virginia (DMV)-unique as it serves three jurisdictions
- 2<sup>nd</sup> largest Rail System in U.S. with over 13,000 employees. Metro delivers 1.1 million passenger trips per day (Bus, Rail & Metro Access service)
- The Board of Directors is composed of eight voting and eight alternate directors. DMV and the federal government each appoint two voting and two alternate directors
- The Board of Directors determines agency policy and provides oversight for the safety, funding, operation, and expansion of transit facilities



# Oversight Background

- In 1997, the Tri-State Oversight Committee (TOC) started performing safety oversight functions at Metro
- Historically, Metro experienced serious rail incidents. The NTSB's investigation of Metro's accidents identified TOC's inadequate safety oversight and the lack of regulatory authority as a persistent contributing factor in these events.
- The perception of WMATA's operational problems are somewhat magnified due to being located in the Nation's Capital and therefore, often subjected to greater scrutiny than other transit agencies
- In 2013, the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) notified TOC that it did not meet MAP-21 SSO certification requirements. DMV notified U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) of a proposal to stand up the Metro Safety Commission (MSC), which is intended to eventually replace the TOC



## Oversight Background (cont.)

- In January 2015, Metro experiences a smoke and arcing incident at L'Enfant Plaza that resulted in a fatality, and multiple injuries.
- In September 2015, NTSB issues urgent request to DOT to place WMATA under Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) oversight
- In October 2015, DOT responds with alternate solution and FTA assumes oversight functions of WMATA
- FTA's oversight role of WMATA will continue until DMV replaces TOC with a fully functioning MSC
- In February 2016, the DMV entered a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) restating their commitment to establishing MSC. Implementation is pending

# FTA Transition

- In October 2015, FTA arrives on Metro property and performs an initial Safety Management Inspection (SMI) of WMATA. The SMI contained 54 findings, with a total of 732 individual required actions
- FTA has issued a total of 995 actionable items to Metro during its fifteen months of performing agency oversight
- FTA utilizes their internal employees (FWSO), External (Consultants) Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) and other DOT personnel (typically FRA personnel on loan to FTA) to perform oversight functions
- Transition was difficult for both Metro and FTA as this was uncharted territory for both entities. Required relationship building by both parties.

# Agency Challenges to Support FTA Oversight

- Requires increased FTEs to perform administrative functions, i.e. tracking almost one thousand individual required actions to closure and handling inter-agency correspondence
- Requires agency to provide simultaneous multi-disciplinary (Track, RTRA, Traction Power, ATC, etc.) SME support, as well as roadway escorts (watchman/flaggers) for FTA Inspectors
- Agency was already in a fire-fighting mode, now tasked with a multitude of administrative, support & escort functions, which diverts resources from essential functions

# Agency Challenges to Support FTA Oversight (cont.)

- Agency often must incur the expense of external consultants to evaluate/implement a number of FTA recommendations
- FTA recommendations are sometimes made without a full hazard analysis being performed-which can lead to disagreements
- FTA recommendations can be overly prescriptive to a point where they dictate the sequence, geographic area, and nature of work to be performed

# Added Value of FTA Oversight

- FTA independently identifies and surfaces systemic problems
- Provides Corrective Action Plans (CAPS)
- Provides additional SME resources to agency
- FTA CAPS provide justification for additional resources (funding)
- Improves organizational safety & operational performance
- Improves internal document management controls and compliance



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# Lessons Learned

- Establish Regular Senior Level FTA/Transit Management Meetings to address both parties concerns-resolve disputes
- Establish MOUs for Access to general system, off-site facilities and Right of Way
- Establish a means for agency to be immediately alerted to any imminent threat to safety found by FTA inspectors



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## Lessons Learned (cont.)

- Track expenses for FTA support at inception
- Establish mutually beneficial efficiencies:
  - imbed FTA inspectors with track walking teams rather than utilizing dedicated escorts,
  - provide advanced notice of track closures to cut down on the number of escorts,
  - determine if opportunities exist where other external parties are being escorted on system and piggyback, etc.

# Questions

