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RAIL TRANSIT

**Observations on FTA's State
Safety Oversight Program**

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Highlights of [GAO-06-997T](#), a report to Subcommittee on Highways, Transit and Pipelines, Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, House of Representatives

Why GAO Did This Study

The U.S. rail transit system is a vital component of the nation's transportation infrastructure, carrying millions of people daily. Unlike most transportation modes, safety and security oversight of rail transit is the responsibility of state-designated oversight agencies following Federal Transit Administration (FTA) requirements. In addition, in 2001, Congress passed the Aviation and Transportation Security Act, giving the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) authority for security over all transportation modes, including rail transit.

This testimony is based on ongoing work for this subcommittee's committee—the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure. I describe (1) how the State Safety Oversight program is designed; (2) what is known about the impact of the program on rail safety and security; and (3) challenges facing the program. I also provide information about oversight of transit systems that cross state boundaries. To address these issues, we reviewed program documents and interviewed stakeholders including officials from FTA, TSA, the National Transportation Safety Board, and the American Public Transportation Association. We also surveyed state oversight and transit agencies covered by FTA's program, interviewing 24 of the 25 oversight agencies and 37 of 42 transit agencies across the country.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-06-997T.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Katherine Siggerud on (202) 512-2834 or siggerudk@gao.gov.

RAIL TRANSIT

Observations on FTA's State Safety Oversight Program

What GAO Found

FTA designed the State Safety Oversight program as one in which FTA, other federal agencies, states, and rail transit agencies collaborate to ensure the safety and security of rail transit systems. FTA requires states to designate an agency to oversee the safety and security of rail transit agencies that receive federal funding. Oversight agencies are responsible for overseeing transit agencies, including reviewing transit agencies' safety and security plans. While oversight agencies are to include security reviews as part of their responsibilities, the TSA also has security oversight authority over transit agencies.

Officials from 23 of the 24 oversight agencies and 35 of the 37 transit agencies with whom we spoke found the program worthwhile. Several transit agencies cited improvements through the oversight program, such as reductions in derailments, fires, and collisions. While there is ample anecdotal evidence suggesting the benefits of the program, FTA has not definitively shown the program's benefits and has not developed performance goals for the program, to be able to track performance as required by Congress. Also, because FTA was reevaluating the program after the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, FTA did not keep to its stated 3-year schedule for auditing state oversight agencies, resulting in a lack of information to track the program's trends. FTA officials recognize it will be difficult to develop performance measures and goals to help determine the program's impact, especially since fatalities and incidents involving rail transit are already low. However, FTA has assigned this task to a contractor and has stated that the program's new leadership will make auditing oversight agencies a top priority.

FTA faces some challenges in managing and implementing the program. First, expertise varies across oversight agencies. Specifically, officials from 16 of 24 oversight agencies raised concerns about not having enough qualified staff. Officials from transit and oversight agencies with whom we spoke stated that oversight and technical training would help address this variation. Second, transit and oversight agencies are confused about what role oversight agencies are to play in overseeing rail security, since TSA has hired rail inspectors to perform a potentially similar function, which could result in duplication of effort.

Examples of Rail Transit Systems Subject to FTA State Safety Oversight Program



Source: Pennsylvania DOT; Seattle Center Monorail; San Francisco Municipal Railway; GAO.

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee:

We appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony on the mechanisms in place to oversee the safety and security of the nation's rail transit system. This system moves more than 7 million daily passengers, and, according to Federal Transit Administration (FTA) statistics, accounts for less than 6 percent of all public transportation accidents while providing almost 32 percent of all passenger trips, making it one of the safest forms of public transportation. However, safety and security are still concerns. Although safe, the number of fatalities and accidents has varied over the past few years. For example, between 1999 and 2005, fatalities have ranged from 26 to 57 per year, with an approximate average of 40 per year. In addition, recent acts of terrorism on European and Indian transit systems illustrate the need to maintain high levels of safety and security for transit.

The focus of my testimony today is FTA's State Safety Oversight program. In 1991, Congress required FTA to (1) issue regulations requiring states to designate an oversight agency to oversee the safety and security of rail transit agencies, and (2) withhold federal funds if a state did not comply with the regulations. Through the resulting State Safety Oversight program, FTA requires states to designate an oversight agency to implement FTA safety and security oversight over rail transit agencies.

My testimony today (1) describes how the State Safety Oversight program is designed, (2) identifies what is known about the impact of the program on rail transit safety and security, and (3) identifies any challenges to the State Safety Oversight program. It also provides information on how the State Safety Oversight program functions in areas where transit systems cross state lines (see app. I). My comments are based on our ongoing work for this subcommittee's committee—the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure. We plan to release this work soon. To obtain information on how the program is designed and identify what is known about the impact of the program, we reviewed program guidance and interviewed a wide range of stakeholders including FTA, the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB), the Transportation Security Administration (TSA), and the American Public Transportation Association (APTA), an industry group. To identify challenges facing the program, we conducted interviews with 24 of the 25 state safety oversight agencies across the country and 37 of the 42 operating rail transit agencies.¹ We also visited 8 oversight agencies and 17 transit agencies—of

¹One oversight agency and five transit agencies declined to participate in our review.

these 17 transit agencies, 2 will soon begin operations and 3 cross state boundaries. We conducted our work from August 2005 through June 2006 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards.

In summary:

- FTA designed the State Safety Oversight program as one in which FTA, other federal agencies, states, and rail transit agencies collaborate to ensure the safety and security of rail transit systems. FTA requires states to designate a state safety oversight agency and develops and oversees the implementation of rules and guidance on safety and security that the designated agencies are to use to oversee transit operations; however, it does not fund state agencies' ongoing oversight. The designated state oversight agencies directly oversee transit agencies' activities including their safety and security plans. Most commonly, these oversight agencies are state transportation departments, but public utility commissions and regional transportation authorities also serve in this role. Transit agencies develop and implement safety and security plans, assess hazardous conditions, report certain incidents to the oversight agency, conduct self audits, and keep the state oversight agency apprised of corrective actions. Finally, federal agencies including the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) also have a role in transit security.
- Almost all oversight and transit agencies report that the State Safety Oversight program is worthwhile in terms of promoting and improving the safety and security of rail transit systems; however, there is limited information showing its impact on safety and security. For example, transit agency officials cite the importance of having state oversight agency staff help them identify larger, systemic issues. Although many officials support the program, FTA's methods for obtaining information on transit safety and security (i.e., transit and oversight agency data and FTA audits of the oversight agencies) do not include performance measures and related program goals. FTA issued annual reports from 1999 through 2003 that track transit accident, crash, fatality, and other safety data, but FTA officials have found it difficult to identify performance measures for the program and set performance goals, because of the relatively low number of fatalities and incidents and the varying design of rail transit systems. Furthermore, in the past 8 years, FTA has audited all oversight agencies in operation before 2004 at least once; however, FTA has not conducted audits as often as it envisioned when it started the program (i.e., once every 3 years). This reduced schedule limits FTA's ability to conduct oversight, including collecting information on the safety oversight agencies and making informed and timely revisions to the program.

According to FTA officials, they did not keep to their stated audit schedule because they were reassessing the priorities for the program after the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. They also noted that they continued conducting “safety and security readiness reviews” to ensure that new transit systems would be able to safely and securely begin passenger operations. Recent changes in FTA’s program regulations and leadership provide an opportunity to address this lack of information, performance measures, and program goals, and to resume its stated audit schedule.

- FTA faces challenges in managing and implementing the program. First, the level of state oversight-staff expertise and number of oversight staff (and thus their potential ability to oversee transit agencies), varies widely across the country. For example, one oversight agency requires its staff have at least 5 years of rail transit experience while another oversight agency assigned a state department of transportation planner to work on safety and security oversight as a collateral duty. Although no officials identified a safety or security problem resulting from lack of staff expertise, most transit and oversight agency officials with whom we spoke believe that federal funding for training and an FTA-developed curriculum—including training on how to oversee safety and security—would improve the qualifications and effectiveness of state oversight agency personnel. Furthermore, FTA’s approach contrasts with the approach other Department of Transportation (DOT) agencies, such as FRA and the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) take, which is to provide free training or use agency funds to pay for state agency personnel’s attendance at training sessions, in some instances.² A second challenge to implementing the program, according to officials from 20 of 24 state oversight agencies and 14 of 37 transit agencies, is the uncertainty about the role of TSA in FTA’s program since Congress designated TSA the lead agency on security matters in 2001. Although TSA has regulatory authority over security activities in transportation, its rail program is still developing, and several oversight and transit agency officials with whom we spoke were concerned about the potential for duplication of effort given that state safety oversight agencies and TSA both review and comment on transit systems’ security plans. TSA and FTA recognize this concern and have begun discussions on how to coordinate their oversight efforts.

²PHMSA requires new inspectors to complete applicable Transportation Safety Institute (TSI) training courses in a 3-year period.

Background

In 1991, Congress passed the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA),³ which added Section 28 to the Federal Transit Act.⁴ ISTEA required FTA to establish a state-managed safety and security oversight program for rail transit agencies. As a result, on December 27, 1995,⁵ FTA published a set of regulations, called Rail Fixed Guideway Systems; State Safety Oversight (subsequently referred to as FTA’s rule), to improve the safety and security of rail transit agencies. FTA’s rule required state oversight agencies to have approved transit agencies’ safety plans by January 1, 1997, and security plans by January 1, 1998. At the time of the FTA rule’s publication, 5 of 19 states affected by the FTA rule had oversight programs in place for rail transit safety and security, and no oversight agency met all the requirements in FTA’s rule. During the first few years of implementation, FTA worked with states to develop compliant programs that addressed FTA’s requirements. Ten years after FTA promulgated the initial rule, FTA published a revision to it in the Federal Register on April 29, 2005, which required that oversight agencies had to comply with the revised FTA rule by May 1, 2006.

FTA relies on staff in its Office of Safety and Security to lead the State Safety Oversight program—and hired the current Program Manager in March 2006. This manager is also responsible for other safety duties in addition to the State Safety Oversight program. Additional FTA staff within the Office of Safety and Security assist with outreach to transit and oversight agencies and additional tasks. FTA regional personnel are not formally involved with the program’s day-to-day activities, though officials from FTA Regional Offices help address specific compliance issues that occasionally arise and help states with new transit agencies establish new oversight agencies. FTA also relies on contractors to do many of the day-to-day activities, ranging from developing and implementing FTA’s audit program of state oversight agencies to developing and providing training classes on system safety.

The revised FTA rule applies to all states with rail fixed guideway systems operating in their jurisdictions. As specified in the FTA rule, a rail fixed guideway system is defined as: “any light, heavy, or rapid rail system;

³P.L. 102-240.

⁴Codified at 49 U.S.C. Section 5330.

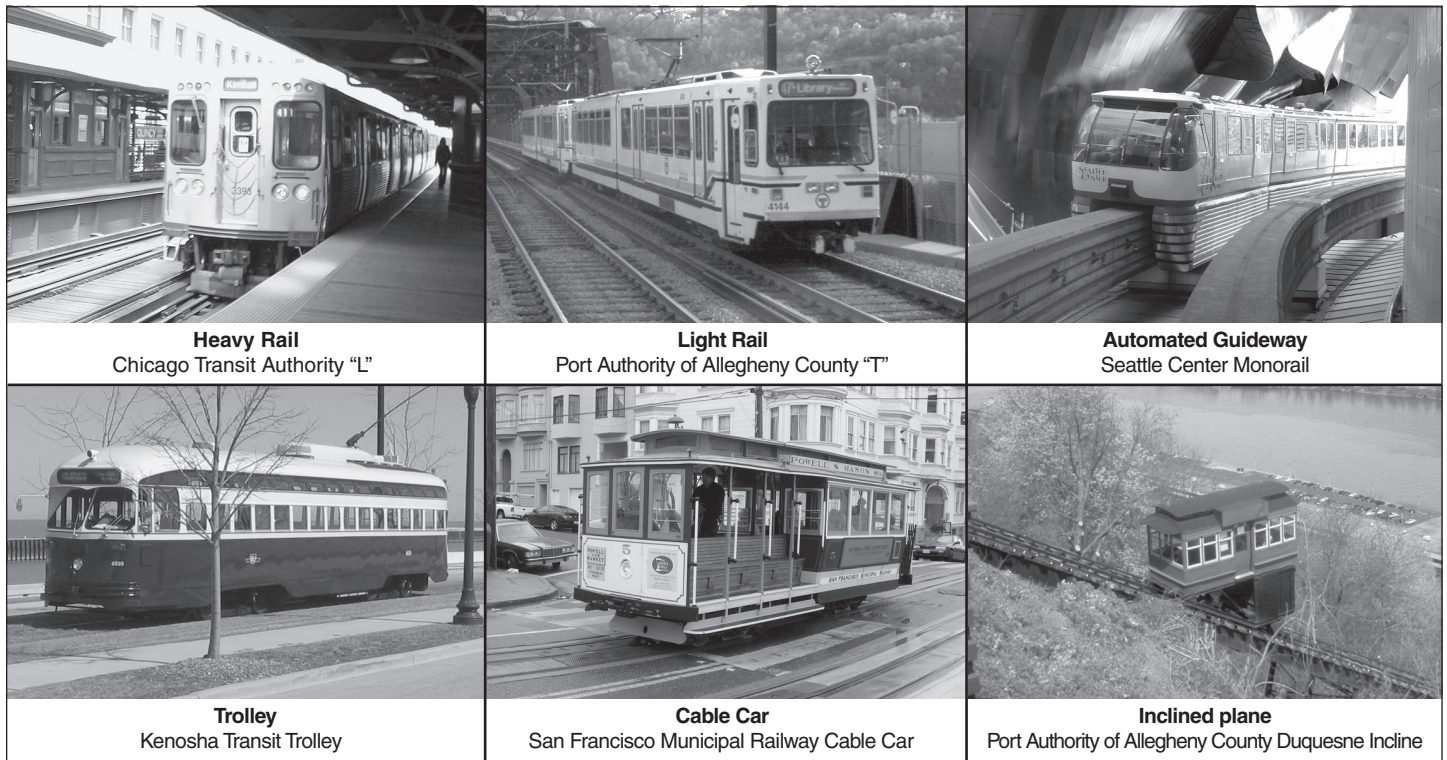
⁵Codified at 49 CFR Part 659.

monorail, inclined plane, funicular, trolley, or automated guideway that is not regulated by FRA and

- is included in FTA's calculation of fixed guideway route miles or receives funding under FTA's formula program for urbanized areas (49 U.S.C. 5336); or
- has submitted documentation to FTA indicating its intent to be included in FTA's calculation of fixed guideway route miles to receive funding under FTA's formula program for urbanized areas (49 U.S.C. 5336)."

Figure 1 shows examples of the types of rail systems that are included in the State Safety Oversight program.

Figure 1: Examples of Rail Systems Included in the State Safety Oversight Program



Source: Pennsylvania DOT; Seattle Center Monorail; San Francisco Municipal Railway; GAO.

FTA's program generally differs from other agencies within DOT, such as the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), FRA, and PHMSA. These agencies promulgate their own technical standards that govern how vehicles or facilities must be operated or constructed, while FTA does not prescribe technical standards, though the state oversight agencies can develop technical standards.

Many Agencies Are Involved in the State Safety Oversight Program

FTA designed the State Safety Oversight program as one in which FTA, other federal agencies, states, and rail transit agencies collaborate to ensure the safety and security of rail transit systems. Under the program, FTA is responsible for developing the regulations and guidance governing the program, auditing state safety oversight agencies to ensure the regulations are enforced, and providing technical assistance and other information; FTA provides funding to oversight agencies in only limited instances under the program. State oversight agencies directly oversee the safety and security of rail transit systems by reviewing safety and security

plans, performing audits, and investigating accidents. Rail transit agencies are responsible for developing safety and security plans, reporting incidents to the oversight agencies, and following all other regulations state oversight agencies set for them. In addition to FTA, federal agencies such as FRA, DHS's Office of Grants and Training, and TSA also have regulatory or funding roles related to rail transit safety and security.

FTA Oversees and Administers the State Safety Oversight Program

FTA officials stated that they used a multi-agency system-safety approach in developing the State Safety Oversight program.⁶ Federal and state agencies and rail transit agencies collaborate to ensure the rail transit system is operated safely and each of these agencies has some monitoring responsibility, either of themselves or another entity. FTA oversees and administers the program. As the program administrator, FTA is responsible for developing the rules and guidance that state oversight agencies are to use to perform their oversight of rail transit agencies. FTA also is responsible for informing oversight and transit agencies of new program developments, facilitating and informing the transit and oversight agencies of training available through FTA or other organizations, facilitating information sharing among program participants, and providing technical assistance.

FTA officials stated they emphasize that components of a risk-management approach to safety and security, such as hazard analysis and risk-mitigation procedures, are included in the program standard that each state oversight agency issues to the transit agencies they oversee. This is consistent with our position that agencies make risk-based decisions on where their assets can best be used, both in transportation security and safety. However, FTA recognizes that some parts of the State Safety Oversight program are not risk-based, including requiring minimum standards for all transit agencies in the program, no matter their size or ridership.⁷

While FTA officials stated that FTA does not inspect transit agencies with regard to safety, it is responsible for ensuring that, through reviews of

⁶A system-safety approach involves the application of technical and managerial skills to identify, analyze, assess, and control hazards and risks.

⁷FTA states that to ensure a minimum standard is met, a focus on universally applied rules is necessary. Therefore, FTA officials stated that they felt it was inappropriate to use a risk-based approach in this area of the program.

oversight agency reports and audits, state oversight agencies comply with the program requirements. For example, according to the FTA rule, when a state proposes to designate an oversight agency, FTA may review the proposal to ensure the designated agency has the authority to perform the required duties without any apparent conflicts. FTA has recommended in two instances that a state choose a different agency because the oversight agency that the state proposed appeared to be too closely affiliated with the transit agency and did not appear to be independent. In addition, FTA is responsible for reviewing the annual reports oversight agencies submit. FTA officials ensure they include all the required information—such as descriptions of program resources, and causes of accidents and collisions; they then compile this information for a program annual report, and look for industry-wide safety and security trends or problems. Furthermore, FTA is responsible for performing audits of oversight agencies to ensure they are complying with program requirements and guidance. FTA audits evaluate how well an oversight agency is meeting the requirements of the FTA rule, including whether or not the oversight agency is investigating accidents properly, if it is conducting its safety and security reviews properly, and if it is reporting to FTA all the information that is required.

Finally, FTA does not provide funding to states for the operation of their oversight programs. However, states may use FTA Section 5309 (New Starts program) funds—normally used to pay for transit-related capital expenses—to defray the cost of setting up their oversight agency before a transit agency begins operations. Also, FTA officials stated this year that FTA used a portion of the funding originally designated for FTA audits to pay for one person from each oversight agency to attend training on the revisions to FTA’s rule, which oversight agencies had to comply with by May 1, 2006.

State Oversight Agencies Conduct Direct Oversight of Rail Transit Agencies

In the State Safety Oversight program, state oversight agencies are responsible for directly overseeing rail transit agencies. According to the FTA rule, states must designate an agency to perform this oversight function at the time FTA enters into a grant agreement for any “New Starts” project involving a new rail transit system, or before the transit agency applies for FTA formula funding. States have designated several different types of agencies to serve as oversight agencies. Most frequently—in 17 cases—states have designated their departments of transportation to serve in this role. In three instances—California, Colorado, and Massachusetts—states have designated utilities commissions or regulators to oversee rail transit safety and security. According to state officials, since these bodies already had regulatory and

oversight authority, it was a natural extension of their powers to add rail transit oversight to their responsibilities. Two states have designated emergency management or public safety departments to oversee their rail transit agencies. Officials in one state, Illinois, have designated two separate oversight agencies, both local transportation funding authorities, to oversee the two rail transit agencies operating in the state. In the Washington, D.C. (District of Columbia), region, the rail transit system runs between two states and the District of Columbia. These states and the District of Columbia established the Tri-State Oversight Committee as the designated oversight agency.⁸ Finally, one state, New York, has given its oversight authority to its Public Transportation Safety Board (PTSB). PTSB officials said they have authority similar to the public utilities commissions discussed above, but have no other mission than ensuring and overseeing transit safety in New York. See appendix II for a table showing each oversight agency and the rail transit agencies they oversee.

The individual authority each state oversight agency has over transit agencies varies widely. While FTA's rule gives state oversight agencies authority to mandate certain rail safety and security practices as the oversight agencies see fit, it does not give the oversight agencies authority to take enforcement actions, such as fining rail transit agencies or shutting down their operations. However, we found five states where the states granted their oversight agencies some punitive authority over the rail transit agencies they oversee. Officials from oversight agencies that have the authority to fine or otherwise punish rail transit agencies all stated that they rarely, if ever, use that authority, but each stated that they believed it gives their actions extra weight and forced transit agencies to acquiesce to the oversight agency more readily than they otherwise might. The majority of oversight agencies, 19 of the 24 with which we spoke, have no such punitive authority, though officials from some oversight agencies stated they may be able to withhold grants their oversight agencies provide to the transit agencies they oversee.⁹ Although officials from several of these agencies stated that they believe they would be more effective if they did

⁸The Tri-State Oversight Committee has six representatives—two each from Maryland, Virginia, and the District of Columbia.

⁹Officials from 16 oversight agencies stated that they provide some form of grant funding to transit agencies they oversee and that they could, potentially, withhold those grants to force a transit agency to take a particular safety action. However, no oversight agency officials stated that they had taken this step.

have enforcement authority, under the current program this authority would be granted by individual states.

While the states have designated a number of different types of agencies with varying authority to oversee transit agencies, FTA has a basic set of rules it requires each oversight agency to follow. In the program, oversight agencies are responsible for the following:

- Developing a program standard that outlines oversight and rail transit agency responsibilities, providing “guidance to the regulated rail transit properties concerning processes and procedures they must have in place to be in compliance with the State Safety Oversight program.”
- Reviewing transit agencies’ safety and security plans and annual reports.
- Conducting safety and security audits of rail transit agencies on at least a triennial basis.
- Tracking findings from these audits to ensure they are addressed, and tracking and eliminating hazardous conditions that the transit agency reports to the oversight agency outside the audit process.
- Investigating accidents that meet a certain damage or severity threshold and developing a corrective action plan for the causes leading to the accident.
- Submitting an annual report to FTA detailing their oversight activities, including results of accident investigations and the status of ongoing corrective actions.

FTA’s rule also lays out several specific requirements that oversight agencies must require transit agencies to follow, such as developing separate system safety and security plans, performing internal safety and security audits over a 3-year cycle, developing a hazard management process, and reporting certain accidents to oversight agencies within 2 hours. The locations and types of transit agencies participating in the program are shown in figure 2.

Figure 2: Locations and Types of Rail Transit Agencies Participating in State Safety Oversight Program



Source: FTA's National Transit Database.

Other Federal Agencies Play a Role in Ensuring Rail Transit Safety and Security, but Often Their Roles Are Outside the State Safety Oversight Program

In addition to FTA, the state oversight agencies, and the rail transit agencies, two entities within DHS are involved in transit safety security. The Aviation and Transportation Security Act (ATSA),¹⁰ passed by Congress in response to the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, gave TSA authority for security over all transportation modes, including authority to issue security regulations.¹¹ While TSA's most public transportation security duties are its airport screening activities, TSA has taken steps to enhance all rail security, including rail transit. For example, in May 2004, TSA issued security directives to rail transit agencies to ensure all agencies were implementing a consistent baseline of security. Also, TSA has hired 100 rail security inspectors, as authorized by Congress.¹² While the exact responsibilities of the inspectors are still being determined, a TSA official stated that they will monitor and enforce compliance with the security directives by passenger rail agencies, as well as increase security awareness among rail transit agencies, riders, and others.

In contrast to the enforcement role of TSA, another DHS agency, the Office of Grants and Training plays a role in ensuring rail transit security through supporting security initiatives. The Office of Grants and Training (formerly known as the Office of Domestic Preparedness) is the primary federal source of security funding for rail transit systems, as well as for state and local jurisdictions; this security funding goes toward the purchase of equipment, support planning and the execution of exercises, and the provision of technical assistance to prevent, prepare for, and respond to acts of terrorism. The Office of Grants and Training has provided over \$320 million to rail transit providers through the Urban Area Security Initiative and Transit Security Grant Program.

FRA, within DOT, also plays a role in ensuring transit agencies operate safely. In general, FRA exercises its jurisdiction over parts of a rail transit system that share track with the general railroad system, or places where a rail transit system and the general railroad system share a connection (e.g.,

¹⁰Pub. L. No. 107-71, 115 Stat. 597 (2001).

¹¹ATSA initially created TSA within DOT. The Homeland Security Act of 2002, Pub. L. No. 107-296, 116 Stat. 2135 (2002), transferred TSA to DHS.

¹²These positions were funded through the DHS Appropriations Act of 2005 and its accompanying conference report, which provided TSA with \$12 million in funding for rail security activities.

a grade crossing).¹³ According to FRA, if a rail transit vehicle were to operate on the same tracks and at the same time as general railroads, this would make the rail transit agency operating the vehicle use much sturdier (and more expensive) vehicles. Therefore, 11 rail transit agencies have requested waivers from FRA and, according to an FRA official, as of June 2006, FRA granted waivers to 10 of the 11 rail transit agencies that applied for them.¹⁴

Finally, NTSB also plays a role in enhancing and ensuring rail transit safety, though it has no formal role in FTA's oversight program. NTSB has authority to investigate accidents involving passenger railroads, including rail transit agencies. NTSB officials stated they generally will investigate only the more serious accidents, such as those involving fatalities or injuries, or those involving recurring safety issues. Often, NTSB accident investigations of rail transit accidents will result in recommendations to federal agencies or rail transit agencies to eliminate the condition that led to the accident.

Transit and Oversight Agencies Perceive the Program as Worthwhile; However, FTA Does Not Have Goals or Performance Measures to Document the Impact of the State Safety Oversight Program on Safety and Security

The majority of officials from transit and oversight agencies with whom we spoke agreed that the State Safety Oversight program improves safety and security in their organizations. These officials provided illustrations about how the program enhanced safety or security; however, they have limited statistical evidence that the oversight program improved safety or security. FTA has obtained a variety of information on the program from sources such as national transit data, annual reports from oversight agencies, and its own audits of the oversight agencies. However, these data are not linked to any program goals or performance measures. FTA officials recognize the need for performance measures for its safety and security programs and are taking steps in 2006 to begin to address this need. Finally, although FTA expected to audit the oversight agencies every 3 years, it has not conducted these audits as frequently as it had planned (it has conducted eight audits since September 2001). However, program officials stated they are committed to getting "back on track" to meet the planned schedule.

¹³FRA clarified its position on safety jurisdiction over shared-track situations. See 65 Fed. Reg. 42529 (Jul. 10, 2000).

¹⁴FTA provided documentation showing that FRA told the one rail transit agency that did not receive its waiver that its application was unnecessary—what the agency proposed was already allowed under FRA regulations.

Transit and Oversight Agencies Describe the Oversight Program as Worthwhile and Valuable

Both transit agency and oversight agency officials state that FTA's State Safety Oversight program is worthwhile and valuable because it helps them maintain and improve safety and security. Of the 37 transit officials with whom we spoke, 35 believe the program that oversees their safety and security is worthwhile. One transit agency official explained that the oversight agency helps them identify larger, systemic issues. In addition, the program provides support to exert extra influence on a transit agency's board of directors or senior management to get safety or security improvements implemented faster and improve the safety and security of their equipment. For example, one oversight agency helped its transit agency's safety department address problems with train operators running red light signals by helping convince the transit agency's senior management to replace all signals with light-emitting diode (LED) signals that were brighter and more visible. Finally, transit agency officials believe that FTA's program is an effective method for overseeing safety and security. Several officials said that they felt having a state or local (rather than national) oversight agency facilitated ongoing safety and security improvements and consistent working relationships with the oversight staff.

In addition to transit agency officials, officials from 23 of the 24 state safety oversight agencies with whom we spoke believed that the State Safety Oversight program is valuable or very valuable for improving transit systems' safety and security. Several officials commented that the program provides an incentive to examine safety and security issues and avoid complacency. Furthermore, several officials commented that they believed the current system worked well and that the program provides consistency, endowing the state safety oversight agencies with enough authority to accomplish their tasks. Also, officials said that having the states carry out the program provides on-going oversight in addition to formal audits, which helps maintain a constant oversight of safety and security issues.

Finally, several transit and oversight agency officials stated that, because they were subject to oversight, they believed they saw improved safety in their rail system, but it was difficult to show statistics proving this. For example, the California oversight agency found an 87 percent drop in rail transit collisions at the San Francisco transit agency (MUNI) from 1997,

when the oversight agency began oversight, to 2005.¹⁵ Although FTA changed its definition of a reportable accident during this time period—making it impossible to determine exactly what impact external oversight had on MUNI safety—both MUNI and the oversight agency staff stated they were confident the oversight efforts had been a major factor in reducing accidents.

APTA officials with whom we spoke were concerned that, although the State Safety Oversight program contains minimum requirements for safety and security, the previous industry-regulated approach encouraged industry officials to surpass minimum standards and continue striving for improved safety and security.¹⁶ However, transit officials with whom we spoke often discussed the benefits of a federal program. In addition, officials from 17 transit agencies reported that their respective state safety oversight agencies imposed requirements above those required in FTA's requirement.

FTA Gathers Various Types of Safety Information, but Does Not Have the Data to Document the Impact of the Oversight Program on Safety and Security

One potential source of information about the State Safety Oversight program's impact on safety and security are data that FTA collects through the annual reports it requires state oversight agencies to submit. The reports include information on many different issues including program resources, accidents, fatalities, injuries, hazardous conditions, and any corrective actions taken resulting from audits or accident investigations. FTA officials stated they have used the oversight agencies' reports to publish their own annual reports on transit safety; however, the information was not tied to any program goals or performance measures. In addition, the 2003 report is the most recent one FTA has issued.

¹⁵Prior to the existence of the FTA State Safety Oversight program, California law dictated that the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) had oversight authority over rail transit agencies, but exempted municipally operated systems. Since the City of San Francisco operates MUNI, it was not subject to CPUC oversight. However, since 49 CFR Part 659 required that California designate an agency to oversee all rail transit systems receiving federal funds, the governor of California designated CPUC to oversee MUNI in 1997.

¹⁶Prior the implementation of the State Safety Oversight program, according to APTA, most transit agencies were self-regulated and submitted to occasional APTA-sponsored safety audits as a way of obtaining outside feedback about their safety practices and areas for potential improvement. APTA charged transit agencies for their participation in these audits.

According to program officials, FTA has recognized the need for better information and performance measures for its safety and security programs and has not published a report since the 2003 report because it has been looking into improving the type of safety and security data it can collect, and how it can use the information to track program performance and progress toward yet to be defined goals. FTA's 2006 business plan for its Safety and Security Division includes a goal to continue developing and implementing a data-driven performance analysis and tracking system to help ensure management decisions are informed by data and focus on performance and accountability. As part of these efforts, FTA officials explained they are working with a contractor who is working with oversight and transit agencies to identify measures that they can use to develop performance measures for the State Safety Oversight program.

Another source of information is the audits of the oversight agencies that FTA had planned to conduct every 3 years. However, the agency has not met this schedule. Although the audits provide detailed information on specific oversight agencies, FTA has not brought together information from these audits to provide information on the safety and security of transit systems across the country. FTA tracks the deficiencies and areas of concern and follows up with oversight agency staff to assure that each state safety oversight agency resolves the suggested corrective actions. Given this lack of consistent audits, we are unsure if FTA has obtained enough information to provide a current picture of transit system safety and security, or a framework to identify potential challenges that oversight and transit agency officials may face in implementing the program. FTA has audited each state oversight agency that existed prior to 2004 at least one time since the program began; two agencies were audited twice. However, FTA largely discontinued the audit program after the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks and acknowledged that the agency's priorities shifted in the wake of the terrorist attacks. However, officials indicated they continued to evaluate the readiness of rail transit projects to safely and securely enter operations. In addition, according to FTA officials, FTA is not conducting audits in fiscal year 2006 so it can use the money and time to help states comply with the revised FTA rule, and has planned a detailed outreach effort—including a workshop for oversight agency officials—to help ensure compliance. FTA plans to return to its triennial audit schedule in fiscal year 2007, with 10 audits scheduled for the first year to get back on the triennial schedule.

FTA Faces Challenges in Managing and Implementing the State Safety Oversight Program

Despite the program's popularity with participants, FTA faces challenges in implementing the program's revised rule and continuing to manage the program. First, several oversight agency officials stated they are not confident they have adequate numbers of staff to effectively oversee rail transit system safety and security, and they are unsure the current training available to them is sufficient. Also, we found the level of staffing and expertise of oversight agency staff varies widely across the country. A second challenge FTA faces in implementing the program is that many transit and oversight agency personnel are confused about how security issues in the program will be handled, and what agencies will be responsible for what actions, as TSA takes on a greater role in rail transit security.

Many Oversight Agency Officials Are Unsure That Their Staff Are Adequately Trained and That They Have Adequate Numbers of Staff

While a majority of both oversight and transit agency officials with whom we spoke endorsed the usefulness of the State Safety Oversight program, many of these same officials stated that they were unsure that they were adequately trained for their duties. Specifically, officials from 18 of 24 oversight agencies with which we spoke stated they believed additional training would help them provide more efficient and effective safety and security oversight. We found that the level of expertise of oversight agency staff varied widely across the country. For example, 11 of the 24 oversight agencies with which we spoke had oversight staff that had no career or educational background in transit safety or security. Conversely, another 11 oversight agencies required their staff to have certain levels of experience or education. For example, New York's Public Transportation Safety Board requires its staff to have 5 years of experience in transit safety. According to some oversight agency officials who had no previous transit safety or security background, they had to rely on the transit agency staff they were overseeing to teach them about transit operations, safety, and security. These officials stated that if they left their positions, any new staff taking over for them would face a similar challenge.

Therefore, several oversight agency staff cite the lack of a training curriculum for oversight staff as a challenge to their effectiveness. For example, officials from eight oversight agencies stated that the training they had received in transit operations, accident investigations, and other areas was beneficial, but they had not received any training on how to perform oversight functions. Although many oversight agency officials acknowledged that they felt the training that had been made available to

them either by FTA, the Transportation Safety Institute (TSI), or the National Transit Institute (NTI) had been adequate,¹⁷ officials from 17 of 24 oversight agencies with whom we spoke stated that they were somewhat unsure of which courses they should take to be effective in their oversight role.

Furthermore, although FTA provides training to state oversight agency staff (either on their own or through TSI), and encourages state oversight agencies to seek training opportunities, FTA does not pay staff to travel to these courses. Also, oversight agencies must pay their own tuition and travel expenses for courses not provided by FTA or TSI.¹⁸ Officials from 10 of the 24 oversight agencies with whom we spoke cited a lack of funds as one reason why they could not attend training they had hoped to attend. Also, officials from all 24 oversight agencies stated that, if FTA provided some funding for them to travel to training or paid tuition for training they wanted to attend, it would allow the oversight agencies to spend their limited resources on direct oversight activities, such as staff overtime, travel expenses to visit transit agencies, or hiring contractors. Several oversight agency officials also cited the example of other DOT agencies that provide free training or pay for state staff to travel to attend training. For example, 30 states participate in FRA's State Rail Safety Participation Program. These states have inspectors who FRA has certified to enforce FRA safety regulations. FRA pays for their initial and ongoing classroom training and state staff's travel to this training. In addition, the federal agency regulating pipelines, PHMSA, authorizes state-employed inspectors to inspect pipelines in many states. PHMSA also recently paid for two inspectors from each state to attend training when it instituted a new inspection approach. Officials from both FRA and PHMSA stated that providing funding to states to train their employees helps the federal agencies more effectively carry out their enforcement activities, easing the states' burden of paying to enforce federal regulations. For the first time, FTA paid for oversight agencies' personnel to travel to attend a special meeting in June 2006 in St. Louis, where FTA provided technical assistance and shared best practices in meeting the requirements of the

¹⁷TSI is a part of DOT's Research and Innovative Technology Administration. NTI, which FTA funds, is affiliated with Rutgers University and dedicated to training employees of the public transportation industry.

¹⁸FTA and TSI provide their courses free of charge to transit and oversight agencies but do charge a nominal fee for course books and materials. FTA and TSI also respond to requests to teach courses in field locations, potentially reducing travel costs for participants.

revised FTA rule. FTA officials agree that they have not provided training specifically pertaining to oversight activities or provided a recommended training curriculum to oversight agencies, but stated that it would not be difficult to take these steps.

FTA officials told us that they considered addressing the lack of consistency in oversight agency staff qualifications when they were revising FTA's rule in 2005; however, they stated they did not have the legal authority to direct states to require certain education, experience, or certifications for oversight agency staff. Furthermore, these officials noted that, despite the lack of formal requirements, FTA checks to ensure oversight agency personnel are adequately trained during its audits, and have recommended in five instances that oversight agency staff take additional training. They also stated that FTA could issue guidance or recommendations to oversight agencies about the level of training their oversight staff should have.

In addition to concerns about training, oversight agencies were unsure they had sufficient numbers of staff to adequately oversee a transit agency's operations. Officials at 14 of 24 oversight agencies with whom we spoke stated that more staff would help them do their job more effectively. Officials from 11 oversight agencies told us they devoted the equivalent of less than one person working half-time on oversight, and, in some cases, described oversight as a "collateral duty." See table 1 for the amount of personnel oversight agency representatives estimated their agencies dedicate to oversight responsibilities. While in some of these instances, the transit agencies overseen are small, some of the transit agencies with the highest ridership levels have similar levels of oversight. For example, one state that estimated it devotes 0.1 full-time equivalent (FTE) to oversight program functions is responsible for overseeing a major transit agency that averages nearly 200,000 daily passenger trips. This state supplements its staff time with the services of a contractor, mainly to perform the triennial audits of the transit agency. Also, one state that estimated devoting 0.5 FTE to oversight functions is responsible for overseeing five transit agencies (including two systems not yet in operation) in different cities, making it difficult to maintain active oversight when their responsibilities are so spread out. As FTA resumes its audit schedule, it would be practical for FTA to focus on this issue. (See app. II for information on estimated FTE and transit system information for each state safety oversight agency and related transit agency).

Transit and Oversight Agency Staff Are Uncertain How TSA's Emerging Role in Transit Security Will Affect the Program

Table 1: Estimated FTEs Used by Oversight Agencies to Oversee Transit Agency Safety and Security

Estimated FTEs	0.5 or less	0.6–1	1.1–3	3.1–5	Over 5	Total
Number of oversight agencies	11	5	6	1	1	24

Source: GAO analysis of oversight agency interview responses.

Another challenge facing the program is how TSA and its rail inspectors might affect oversight of transit security. As I mentioned earlier, TSA has regulatory authority over transportation security, and, according to TSA officials, has hired 100 rail inspectors, who are to monitor and enforce compliance with rail security directives TSA issued in May 2004. However, of the officials at 24 oversight agencies with whom we spoke, officials at 20 agencies stated they did not have a clear picture of who was responsible for overseeing transit security issues. Similarly, officials at 14 of 37 transit agencies were also unsure of lines of responsibility regarding transit security oversight. Several state oversight agencies were particularly concerned that TSA's rail inspectors would be duplicating their role in overseeing transit security. One oversight agency official stated it would be more efficient if TSA and oversight agency staff audited transit agencies' security practices at the same time.

TSA staff reported hearing similar comments from oversight agencies; FTA program staff and TSA rail inspector staff both indicate that they are committed to avoiding duplication in the program and communicating their respective roles to transit and oversight agency officials as soon as possible. However, as TSA is still developing its program, currently there is no formally defined role for TSA in the State Safety Oversight program, and TSA has not determined the roles and responsibilities for its rail inspectors. While FTA's rule discusses requirements for a transit agency's security plan, it does not discuss TSA's specific role in the program, and both TSA and FTA officials state that exactly how TSA would participate in the program was still to be determined. However, the officials added that they are working together to ensure inspection activities are coordinated, thereby fostering consistency and minimizing disruption to rail transit agency operations. For example, in May 2006, TSA's director of the rail inspector program reported that it had designated 26 rail inspectors as liaisons to state oversight agencies. Also, these TSA rail inspectors attended a training session where FTA presented information on the State Safety Oversight program, and they have contacted 13 oversight agencies to begin discussions on how they can coordinate activities.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my statement. I plan to include recommendations to address these challenges in the report we plan to issue next week. I would be pleased to answer any questions that you or other Members of the Subcommittee may have at this time.

Contact Information

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Appendix I: Case Studies of Multi-State Transit Systems

Three rail fixed guideway transit systems in the United States—the Port Authority Transit Corporation (PATCO) in Philadelphia, MetroLink in St. Louis, and the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) in Washington, D.C. (District of Columbia)—cross state lines and require the collaboration of multiple oversight agencies to run the State Safety Oversight program; alternatively, states can agree that one state will be responsible for oversight of the transit system. Each of these multi-state transit systems has a different structure to handle oversight responsibilities. The oversight programs in Philadelphia and St. Louis have both developed strategies to centralize decision making, streamline collaboration, and respond promptly to safety and security audit findings. In contrast, the Tri-State Oversight Committee (TOC), which serves as the oversight agency in the District of Columbia area, requires majority decision making by the six committee members of the agency, including at least one member from each jurisdiction. However, WMATA has experienced difficulty obtaining funding, responding to FTA information requests, and ensuring audit findings are addressed.

Multi-State State Safety Oversight Agencies Have Varied Structures and Handle Oversight Responsibilities Differently

Each multi-state oversight program varies in structure and each performs oversight responsibilities differently. In Philadelphia, authority to serve as the oversight agency was delegated to one of the two state agencies—namely, the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) agreed to allow the New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT) to serve as the sole oversight agency for the PATCO heavy rail transit line. MetroLink in St. Louis is subject to oversight from both Illinois (through the St. Clair County Transit District) and Missouri (through the Missouri Department of Transportation); the two organizations share oversight duties. Finally, TOC, which is composed of multiple representatives from each jurisdiction (including Virginia, Maryland, and the District of Columbia), provides oversight for WMATA.

The PATCO Speedline is a heavy rail line serving about 38,000 riders daily and links Philadelphia to Lindenwold, New Jersey. Most of PATCO's track is in New Jersey, and 9 of the 13 stations are in New Jersey. Until early 2001, safety and security oversight functions were shared by Pennsylvania and New Jersey through the Delaware River Port Authority (DRPA), a regional transportation and economic development agency serving both Southeastern Pennsylvania and southern New Jersey. When DRPA implemented organizational and functional changes, DRPA leadership no longer believed that DRPA could perform its role as the designated oversight agency without facing conflicting interests. As a result, Pennsylvania and New Jersey agreed to have NJDOT replace DRPA as the

oversight agency. This arrangement allows the oversight agency to take corrective action without seeking additional levels of approval from Pennsylvania, although the oversight agency does keep Pennsylvania informed of its activities. Also, Pennsylvania provides some support to NJDOT by having PennDOT perform oversight functions for the stations, passageways, and concourses located in Pennsylvania. PennDOT reports any deficiencies or hazardous conditions that may be noted during the performance of oversight directly to New Jersey. Through meetings or other means of communication, the follow-up actions may be performed by the Pennsylvania oversight agency in a supporting role or directly by New Jersey. New Jersey currently devotes two full-time staff members and one part-time staff member to its oversight program, and while these staff members must oversee several transit systems, including PATCO, their sole responsibilities are for safety and oversight functions.

The St. Louis MetroLink is a light rail line between Lambert–St. Louis International Airport in St. Louis and Scott Air Force Base outside Shiloh, Illinois. Service was initiated in 1993, at which time the system included about 16 miles of track in Missouri and about 1.5 miles of track in Illinois. Because so little track was in Illinois, Illinois officials agreed to allow the Missouri Department of Transportation to provide safety and security oversight for the entire system. However, in 2001, MetroLink opened a 17.4-mile extension in Illinois, which roughly equalized the amount of track in both states. Because of this, the states agreed that it was appropriate for Illinois to play a greater role in safety and security oversight, and Illinois designated the St. Clair County Transit District as its oversight agency. St. Clair is one of the few non-state-level agencies to be an oversight agency. The involvement of two separate oversight agencies could create challenges to effective implementation, but the agencies have taken steps to ensure close coordination. First, the Illinois and Missouri oversight agencies have agreed to use only one uniform safety and security standard across the entire MetroLink system.¹ According to area officials, this arrangement creates consistency throughout the system and allows both agencies to perform their oversight functions in a consistent manner. In addition, the agencies use a single contractor who is responsible for the triennial audit. All other work is performed by the Illinois and Missouri

¹In the most recent revision to 49 CFR Part 659, the Rail Fixed Guideway Systems; State Safety Oversight rule, governing the State Safety Oversight program, FTA mandated that in areas where transit agencies ran through multiple states, the states coordinate to ensure they use the same program standard for the transit agency to meet. This way one transit agency does not have to meet two separate standards in different parts of their system.

oversight agencies. Finally, staff from the two oversight agencies coordinate very closely and each have centralized leadership. Specifically, there is one full-time employee in Missouri who devotes 90 percent of his time to safety and security oversight activities. Illinois has several employees who devote smaller percentages of their individual time to the program, but the Managing Director is primarily responsible for coordinating with Missouri. MetroLink, in turn, indicated that responding to state safety oversight directives is a priority, and the agency works quickly to implement changes.

WMATA operates a heavy rail system within the District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia. The states and the District of Columbia decided to carry out their oversight responsibilities through a collaborative organization managed by TOC. TOC is composed of six representatives—two each from Maryland, Virginia, and the District of Columbia. All of the representatives have other primary duties, and their activities on TOC are collateral to these other daily duties, as is the case with staff at several other oversight agencies. TOC does not have any dedicated staff, and TOC members have limited rail operational experience. To gain access to additional experience and expertise in rail oversight, TOC contracts with a consultant to provide technical knowledge, perform required audits of WMATA, and ensure that audit recommendations are completed. In addition, TOC funding comes from, and must be approved by, each of the jurisdictions every year. The Washington Council of Governments processes TOC funds and handles their contracting procedures. These issues result in a lengthy process for TOC to receive its yearly funding and process its expenses.

Multi-State Oversight Programs Have Addressed Their Administrative Challenges in Different Ways

The State Safety Oversight programs in Philadelphia and St. Louis have attempted to streamline their decision making, while TOC has a more collaborative process. Philadelphia and St. Louis have both developed strategies to centralize decision making and streamline collaboration, albeit through different structures. Because Pennsylvania granted New Jersey the authority to act as the oversight agency for all of PATCO's territory, PATCO only has to interact with one oversight agency's staff. New Jersey also has in-house staff dedicated to the State Safety Oversight program, which helps to ensure continuity, facilitates communication, and provides PATCO with one set of contacts to work with on the implementation of any new safety or security processes. Although St. Louis has two agencies providing safety oversight, both oversight agencies have made it a priority to ensure that they are providing consistent information to the transit agency, and they are coordinating their activities

so MetroLink is not burdened by multiple contacts about the same issue. To do this, the Missouri and Illinois representatives stay in close contact with each other. Both oversight agencies stated they have in-house staff dedicated to safety and security oversight, and the agencies have very good working relationships. Oversight agency staff admitted that St. Louis could face challenges in the future if staff turned over in either agency and new employees did not establish a similar working relationship. In addition, officials indicated that, if oversight agency staff had disagreements over safety or security standards, or how to enforce the existing standards, it would be highly problematic. However, officials in the Illinois and Missouri oversight agencies, as well as at MetroLink, thought that the current arrangements have produced one set of standards, good communication, and effective coordination. Both MetroLink and oversight agency staff in St. Louis credited each other with creating an environment where this system of having multiple oversight agencies could work well.

In contrast, TOC has implemented a less streamlined process for making decisions, which, according to FTA and TOC officials, may have contributed to the difficulties it has had in responding to FTA information requests. On June 15, 2005, FTA notified TOC that it would perform TOC's audit in late July 2005. FTA requested information prior to the audit to facilitate the time it spent on-site. TOC did not submit the requested State Safety Oversight program materials despite several FTA requests and an extension by FTA to move the audit to a later date. At the end of August, FTA initiated its audit even though it had not received requested information, but was not able to complete the audit until the end of September, when it received all requested materials. FTA's Final Audit Report to TOC cited 10 areas for improvement and provided TOC 60 days to resolve these issues. According to FTA, TOC resolved one issue within the time period. FTA held a follow-up review with TOC in mid-March to check on the status of the remaining areas for improvement. As of June 2006, FTA was evaluating how many of the remaining audit findings remained open, although FTA stated that TOC had created a detailed set of internal operating procedures to address many of FTA's findings and concerns. In addition, TOC representatives stated that some of the areas for improvement FTA found were complicated issues, such as reviewing WMATA's accident investigation procedures and approving modifications, and could not be addressed within the 60 days FTA initially allowed. TOC staff emphasized that, although WMATA was sometimes slow to respond to TOC audit recommendations or information requests, they were pleased with their relationship with WMATA and that WMATA was responsive to

TOC. Similarly, FTA officials stressed that they recognized and appreciated the effort TOC had undertaken in addressing FTA's findings.

TOC staff credited WMATA with helping TOC develop a matrix to track outstanding recommendations and agreeing to meet via conference call on at least a bi-weekly basis to ensure the issues are addressed. Also, TOC members stated that part of the reason they were slow to respond to FTA's initial requests was that TOC had spent all its allocated funds for the year and, consequently, they had to temporarily stop working with the consultant who had conducted its audits of WMATA and maintained their files. According to TOC officials, since the process for acquiring additional funding would require approval from all three jurisdictions represented on TOC, it was not feasible to obtain additional funding quickly. In addition, TOC cannot take any action without a majority of its members, and at least one member from each jurisdiction, approving the action. Reaching such majority agreements can be time consuming since all members of TOC have other primary responsibilities. This is especially a concern when quick decisions are necessary, such as responding to FTA's audit recommendations.

TOC officials cited several challenges in accomplishing their mission, including lack of a dedicated and permanent funding source, the lengthy process required to obtain approval on planning and implementation of corrective actions, and limited staff time. They also stated that they believed TOC and WMATA receive more scrutiny than other transit and oversight agencies, due to their location in the District of Columbia, and their proximity to FTA's headquarters staff. To address these challenges, the chair of TOC stated that she planned to spend additional time overseeing WMATA and was hoping to work to find ways to streamline the administrative and funding processes that TOC must navigate. Hiring a full-time administrator, or designating a TOC member to serve in a full-time capacity, could help solve some of these issues. However, funding this position could be a challenge, and the administrator would need to have decision-making authority to be effective and act quickly.

Appendix II: List of State Oversight Agencies and Transit Agencies They Oversee

State	State safety oversight agency (estimated FTE)	Rail transit agency (estimated FTE)	City center served	Type of system	Annual ridership and directional route miles
Single state systems					
Arkansas	Arkansas State Highway and Transportation Department (0.5)	Central Arkansas Transit Authority (0.08)	Little Rock, AR	Trolley	159,458 2.8
California	California Public Utilities Commission (9.6)	Bay Area Rapid Transit (7)	San Francisco, CA	Heavy rail	99,296,028 209
		Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (1.5)	Los Angeles, CA	Heavy rail and light rail	74,242,912 141.6
		San Francisco Municipal Railway (7)	San Francisco, CA	Light rail, trolley, and cable car	53,768,895 81.7
		San Diego Trolley, Inc. (0.9)	San Diego, CA	Light rail	29,334,362 96.6
		Sacramento Regional Transit District (N/A)	Sacramento, CA	Light rail	12,008,620 58.4
		Santa Clara Valley Transit Authority (N/A)	San Jose, CA	Light rail	6,780,431 58.4
Colorado	Colorado Public Utilities Commission (1.2)	Denver Regional Transit District (1.25)	Denver, CO	Light rail	11,142,220 31.6
Florida	Florida Department of Transportation (1)	Metro-Dade Transit Authority (N/A)	Miami, FL	Heavy rail and automated guideway	26,479,423 53.5
		Jacksonville Transportation Authority (N/A)	Jacksonville, FL	Automated guideway	736,510 5.4
		Hillsborough Area Regional Transit (0.85)	Tampa, FL	Trolley	565,002 4.8
Georgia	Georgia Department of Transportation (0.1)	Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (6)	Atlanta, GA	Heavy rail	70,984,053 96.1
Illinois	Regional Transportation Authority (1)	Chicago Transit Authority (11)	Chicago, IL	Heavy rail	186,759,524 206.3
Louisiana	Louisiana Department of Transportation (0.1) ^a	New Orleans Regional Transit Authority (N/A)	New Orleans, LA	Trolley	5,667,952 25.3

State	State safety oversight agency (estimated FTE)	Rail transit agency (estimated FTE)	City center served	Type of system	Annual ridership and directional route miles
Maryland	Maryland Department of Transportation (1.3)	Maryland Transit Administration (5)	Baltimore, MD	Heavy rail and light rail	18,059,117 87
Massachusetts	Massachusetts Department of Telecommunication and Energy (2.67)	Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (5.1)	Boston, MA	Heavy rail, light rail, and trolley	215,787,440 127.3
Michigan	Michigan Department of Transportation (0.5)	Detroit Transit Corporation (1.1)	Detroit, MI	Automated guideway	1,340,646 2.9
Minnesota	Minnesota Department of Public Safety (0.1)	Hiawatha Metro Transit (1-1.5)	Minneapolis, MN	Light rail	7,901,668 24.4
New Jersey	NJDOT (2-3)	New Jersey Transit Newark City Subway (0.5)	Newark, NJ	Light rail	14,312,676 99.9 ^b
		New Jersey Transit Hudson-Bergen Light Rail (N/A)	Jersey City, NJ	Light rail	
		New Jersey Transit River Line (2)	Trenton, NJ	Light rail	
New York	New York Public Transportation Safety Board (3.5)	New York City Transit (15)	New York City, NY	Heavy rail	1,803,536,486 493.8
		Niagara Frontier Transit Authority (0.5)	Buffalo, NY	Light rail	5,373,321 12.4
Ohio	Ohio Department of Transportation (1)	Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority (1.2)	Cleveland, OH	Heavy rail and light rail	8,236,840 68.5
Oregon	Oregon Department of Transportation (1.2)	Portland Tri-Met (10)	Portland, OR	Light rail	34,755,147 92.9 ^b
		Portland Streetcar (0.5)	Portland, OR	Light rail	
Pennsylvania	PennDOT (0.5)	Southeastern Pennsylvania Transit Authority (2)	Philadelphia, PA	Heavy rail, light rail, and trolley	113,252,100 141.1
		Port Authority of Allegheny County (0.3)	Pittsburgh, PA	Light rail and inclined plane	8,072,099 45.8
		Cambria County Transit Authority (1)	Johnstown, PA	Inclined plane	86,031 0.3

State	State safety oversight agency (estimated FTE)	Rail transit agency (estimated FTE)	City center served	Type of system	Annual ridership and directional route miles
Puerto Rico	Puerto Rico State Emergency and Disaster Management Agency (3)	Puerto Rico Highway and Transportation Authority Tren Urbano (1.6)	San Juan, Puerto Rico	Heavy rail	2,182,668 (N/A)
Tennessee	Tennessee Department of Transportation (0.25)	Chattanooga Area Rapid Transit Authority (N/A)	Chattanooga, TN	Inclined plane	435,780 2
		Memphis Area Transit Authority (0.3)	Memphis, TN	Trolley	1,015,448 10
Texas	Texas Department of Transportation (0.4)	Galveston Island Transit (0.25)	Galveston, TX	Light rail	47,706 4
		Dallas Area Rapid Transit (0.75)	Dallas, TX	Light rail and trolley	17,487,057 87.7
		Metropolitan Transit Authority of Harris County (2)	Houston, TX	Light rail	10,233,638 14.8
Utah	Utah Department of Transportation (0.8)	Utah Transit Authority (1.5)	Salt Lake City, UT	Light rail	13,101,791 37.3
Washington	Washington State Department of Transportation (0.35)	Sound Transit Tacoma Link (N/A)	Tacoma, WA	Light rail	884,895 3.6
		Seattle Center Monorail (0.02)	Seattle, WA	Automated guideway	1,506,240 ^e 1.8
Wisconsin	Wisconsin Department of Transportation (0.3)	Kenosha Transit (0.85)	Kenosha, WI	Trolley	68,209 1.9
Multi-state systems					
Illinois and Missouri	St. Clair County Transit District (0.25-0.5) and Missouri Department of Transportation (0.9)	Bi-State Development Agency - St. Louis Metro (2)	St. Louis, MO	Light rail	15,648,233 75.8
New Jersey and Pennsylvania	NJDOT (2-3)	Port Authority Transit Corporation (1)	Philadelphia, PA	Heavy rail	9,362,839 31.5
Maryland, Virginia, and Washington, DC	PennDOT (0.2)	Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (1)	Washington, DC	Heavy rail	259,430,055 206.6

Sources: GAO interviews and National Transit Database.

Notes: Full-time equivalent (FTE) data comes from our interviews with oversight agencies and transit agencies. The data do not include contractor staff that assist transit or oversight agencies, though several agencies reported using contractors. Data on ridership is current as of 2005, and includes the total number of passengers boarding the rail system annually (also known as “unlinked passenger trips”) as provided by FTA. Directional route miles—the miles of track in each direction over which transportation vehicles travel while carrying passengers—are current as of 2004, and were obtained from data published by FTA in the National Transit Database. The data in this table are presented for background purposes and were not verified. FTA defines trolley operations as “light rail” for statistical purposes. However, to differentiate between vintage trolley operations and modern light rail operations, we have created separate categories for them in this chart.

N/A = Not available

^aBecause we were not able to speak with the oversight agency, FTE data was provided by FTA.

^bAnnual unlinked passenger trips and directional route miles represent the total for all systems within a transit agency.

^cAccording to agency officials, the ridership data presented in this table represents a year when the monorail was out of service for an extended period and does not reflect the normal use of the system. In prior years the number of annual unlinked passenger trips exceeded about 2 million.

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