Dear Colleague: January 3, 2007

As the new Administrator for the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), it is my pleasure to announce initiatives underway for the Model Transit Bus Safety and Security Program. In partnership with the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO), the American Public Transportation Association (APTA), and the Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA), FTA has developed a fresh approach to deliver its voluntary program to all bus transit agencies across this Nation.

The new program direction continues along the path of the valuable progress and exceptional work over the last few years by our bus safety and security partners. Whether through the development and dissemination of standards, recommended practices and web-based resources by State Departments of Transportation (DOT), the delivery of training programs by CTAA and the National Rural Transit Assistance Program, the conduct of bus safety and security reviews by APTA, or the implementation of safety and security program elements at bus transit agencies around the Nation, our industry partners have been working to enhance the safety and security of our bus transit passengers and employees.

In conjunction with AAHSTO, APTA and CTAA, FTA is now ready to move forward with significant changes that will enhance the effectiveness of the program for all bus transit agencies regardless of size and resources. FTA has designated a new Program Manager for the Bus Safety and Security Program, and also selected a new contractor to support the next phase of program development. In addition, recent steps have been taken to ensure increased coordination with the bus transit industry and a closer working relationship with its bus safety and security partners.

On July 18, 2006, FTA conducted a meeting with AASHTO, APTA and CTAA to kick-off the next phase of the program. This meeting provided an opportunity to discuss needs and requirements, and to clarify priorities for the program. Above all, FTA and its partners identified strategies for moving ahead to enhance the effectiveness of the program and its utility to the bus transit industry. These new strategies are detailed in the enclosed document.

Efforts are underway to establish a working group of 15-20 representative stakeholders from the bus transit community, as well as Federal representatives from the Transportation Security Administration (TSA). The purpose of the working group is to improve program coordination and feedback on developed technical assistance materials before they are sent to a wide-scale audience. I believe effective communication in any program is essential to success. The working group will provide the forum through which FTA can sustain ongoing communication with Bus Safety and Security Program stakeholders and ensure the usefulness of program activities.

The objective is to ensure an effective program that provides useful information and practical assistance in the development and implementation of safety and security activities. Feedback and research indicates that the greatest need for support and guidance is currently with the small and rural bus transit agencies. It is critical that this new effort satisfies those needs. As such, FTA and its partners recognize the importance of State DOT's and their current working relationship with small and rural bus transit agencies. The goal is to provide useful information in a targeted and very practical manner that builds on the successes State DOT's have achieved thus far.

To conclude, FTA and its bus safety and security partners are hopeful that you will continue in your support of the program. We all share a common goal and your ideas, comments and suggestions are encouraged and will receive consideration. We understand that additional questions may be raised to FTA and its bus safety and security partners as a result of this letter and the enclosed Model Transit Bus Safety and Security Program Strategies, and we want to assure you that answers will be forthcoming in additional outreach efforts.

Sincerely,

James S. Simpson, Administrator
Federal Transit Administration

John Horsley, Executive Director
American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials

William W. Millar, President
American Public Transportation Association

Dale J. Marsico, Executive Director
Community Transportation Association of America

Enclosure