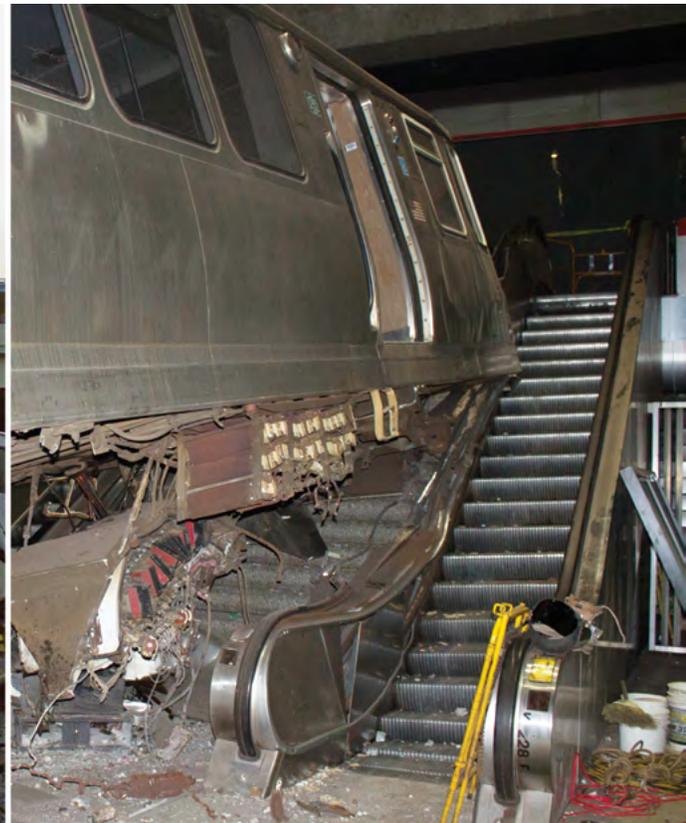




NTSB 2016 MOST WANTED TRANSPORTATION SAFETY IMPROVEMENTS

IMPROVE RAIL TRANSIT SAFETY OVERSIGHT



What is the issue?

Every day, millions of people take rail transit to get to or from work, home, or other destinations. Yet oversight of rail transit is unreliable in some cases, increasing the risk of an accident.

Rail transit accidents continue to cause injuries and deaths. For example, the NTSB saw the devastating results of two Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) accidents it investigated in recent years.

On March 24, 2014, CTA train No. 141 collided with the bumping post near the end of the center pocket track at O'Hare Station. The lead car rode over the bumping post and went up an escalator at the end of the track. Thirty-three injured passengers and the injured train operator were taken to the hospital. On September 30, 2013, a set of unoccupied CTA passenger cars collided with CTA passenger train No. 10 at the Harlem-Congress passenger station in Forest Park, Illinois, at about 24 miles per hour. As in the O'Hare accident, 33 passengers and the train operator were taken to local hospitals and later released.

The NTSB has investigated a number of accidents of the Washington Area Metropolitan Transit Authority (WMATA) Metrorail. For example, on June 22, 2009, in Washington, DC,

two WMATA Metrorail trains collided, killing nine people and injuring 52. In another WMATA accident, on January 12, 2015, a WMATA Metrorail train stopped after encountering heavy smoke originating from electrical arcing near the third rail south of the L'Enfant Plaza Station in Washington, DC. Ninety-two people were injured in the accident, and one passenger died.

Following the L'Enfant Plaza accident, the NTSB urgently recommended that WMATA Metrorail oversight be moved from the Tri-State Oversight Committee (TOC) to direct federal oversight under the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), rather than the Federal Transit Administration (FTA).

The FTA relies on state safety oversight agencies; whereas, the FRA directly oversees safety, with power to inspect and enforce federal rules. In several of its audits of WMATA, the FTA acknowledged (before the L'Enfant Plaza investigation) that the TOC was not capable of exercising oversight over WMATA's Metrorail system, thereby compromising safety. In 2013, the FTA notified the TOC that it did not meet MAP-21 requirements and it did not receive certification as a state safety oversight



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agency. Nevertheless, the U.S. Department of Transportation chose to move direct oversight of Metrorail to the FTA, not the FRA.

What can be done?

According to the American Public Transportation Association, the role of mass transit is growing – faster than population growth and faster than highway travel. Metropolitan areas such as Washington, D.C. and New York City are especially dependent on rail transit. That's why it is critically important that rail transit systems be constantly monitored and improved to maintain and enhance safety, to catch small problems before they become big ones, and to provide extra layers of protection against disasters.

Rail transit must be subject to competent oversight bodies that have standards and rules, and the power to enforce these rules. Although each system has unique equipment, operating environments, and challenges, all need strong safety oversight to continue safe operations.

The Metrorail smoke event put a national spotlight on the TOC's inability to oversee Metrorail safety, and on the fact that corrective action was not taken in time, despite warnings from the FTA. It also brought into question the strength of rail transit oversight nationwide.

The NTSB believes the FRA is best positioned to oversee the WMATA Metrorail, but the DOT is moving forward with its plan for FTA oversight. The NTSB will monitor the efficacy of this decision and continue to champion consistently strong oversight for all rail transit agencies.

Rail transit riders deserve strong safety oversight whether in Washington, Chicago, San Francisco, New York, Atlanta, or in any of the dozens of other American cities with rail transit systems.

Critical changes needed to reduce transportation accidents and save lives



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NTSB on 

The NTSB Most Wanted List highlights safety issues identified from the NTSB's accident investigations to increase awareness about the issues and promote recommended safety solutions.

The National Transportation Safety Board is an independent federal agency charged by Congress with investigating every civil aviation accident in the United States and significant accidents in other modes of transportation - railroad, highway, marine and pipeline. The NTSB determines the probable cause of the accidents and issues safety recommendations aimed at preventing future accidents. In addition, the NTSB carries out special studies concerning transportation safety and coordinates the resources of the federal government and other organizations to provide assistance to victims and their family members impacted by major transportation disasters.



*RELATED ACCIDENTS:

January 11, 2015; Washington, DC; DCA15FR004; 1 dead

June 22, 2009; Washington, DC;
DCA09MR007; 9 dead (pictured left)

September 10, 2013; Forest Park, IL;
DCA13FR014; 33 injured

March 24, 2014; Chicago, IL; DCA14FR007; 34 injured
(pictured right)

**For detailed accident reports, visit www.nts.gov*

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