

Ahead of the Curve: CTAA's Safety Training Programs

By Scott Bogren

For community and public transportation operators — regardless the mode or the service area — safety has always been the priority. Recent action by the United States Congress to include new transit safety requirements in the latest surface transportation law only reinforces this industry-wide commitment. With the passage of MAP-21 over the summer, the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) now has the authority to establish and enforce what it calls, “a new comprehensive framework to oversee the safety of public transportation.”

The rise of transit safety in the new surface transportation law catches no one by surprise. In the wake of several rail transit-related accidents involving passenger fatalities in Boston and Washington, D.C., congressional intent to provide safety oversight authority to FTA was well documented in the lead-up to MAP-21's eventual passage. The only question was to what extent smaller city and rural transit bus operators would be impacted.

“We knew this was coming as part of the bill,” says CTAA's Training Program Director Charles Dickson. “And we've already responded by tailoring the Association's popular and successful safety-related training pro-

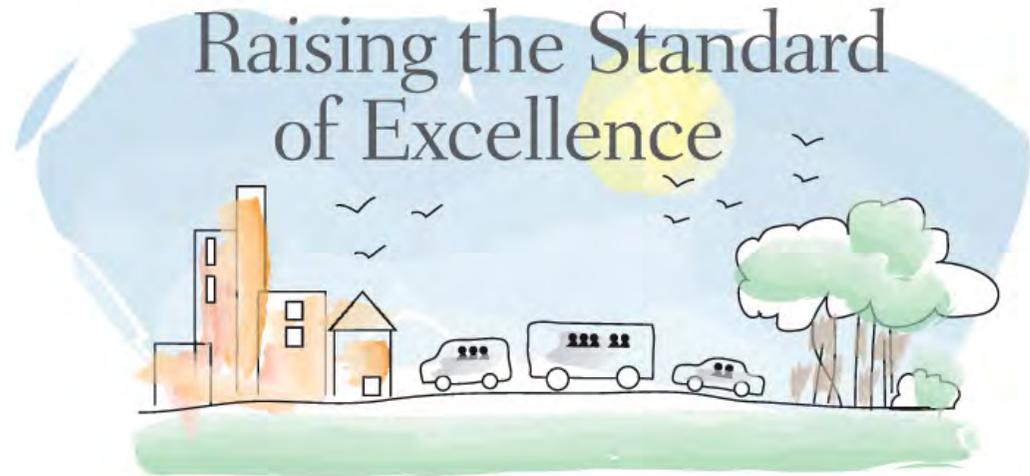
grams to the new requirements. We wanted to get ahead of these new requirements and help our members do the same.”

What's more, the CTAA Board of Directors — at its fall meeting — formed a Safety Council to help guide the Association's efforts in this vital arena.

“The Board's new Safety Council will help guide the Association's efforts in safety train-



PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SERVICES



 Training

 Accreditation

 Certification

ing, certification and accreditation,” says CTAA Board President Ann Gilbert. “Providing the safest possible transportation has always been a priority for those of us in the community transit industry, and this new council emphasizes this priority.”

Section 5329: Public Transportation Safety Program

With President Obama signing MAP-21

into law on July 6, the FTA entered uncharted territory with its new safety authority. Section 5329 is clear in that it covers all states and designated recipients — basically any operator that receives federal investment. The Secretary of Transportation is imbued with the authority to inspect and audit all public transit systems with respect to safety; to make reports and issue directives; to investigate accidents and incidents; and, among others, to issue regulations to carry out transit safety provisions.

For CTAA members, each will now be required to have a public transportation agency safety plan in place in order to draw down federal transit dollars, though the actual specifics of what these plans must contain has not yet been revealed. MAP-21 describes the contents of a plan thusly:

- The board of directors (or equivalent entity) must approve the agency safety plan;
- The plan must include methods for identifying and evaluating safety risks throughout all elements of the agency;
- The plan must cover strategies to minimize the exposure of the public, agency personnel and property to hazards and unsafe conditions;
- A process and timeline for reviewing and updating the safety plan annually must be in place;
- Safety performance targets — as will be



established by the FTA, in consultation with the transit community — must be part of the plan;

- Each agency must have an adequately trained safety officer who reports to the general manager; and,
- The plan must include a comprehensive staff training program for operations personnel and personnel directly responsible for safety.

On October 12, FTA issued preliminary guidance on the new program, which covered its intention to develop an interim safety certification program by January 1, 2013, which will be in effect until the agency promulgates its final rule.

CTAA Swings Into Action

Almost immediately after MAP-21 passed into law, CTAA met with its key safety training partners around the nation to develop a response.

“Much of what the law prescribes matches up with what we’ve been offering in terms of

transit safety for years,” says Lazaro & Noel’s Ream Lazaro, a primary Association training partner. “It was clear that in the case of transit agencies that had already undergone training and developed processes and individuals tuned to safety, that the transition under MAP-21 would be smooth.”

The Association’s Insurance Store partners — Arthur J. Gallagher & Company — also believe that community and public transportation systems that engage in the entirety of the CTAA safety training, certification and accreditation continuum are likely to see reduced insurance premiums.

A prime element in MAP-21’s new transit safety rules is the establishment of a safety officer at each transit system. CTAA’s Certified Safety and Security Officer (CSSO) certification program is an ideal program to train and develop this important position.

The mission of this Certified Safety and Security Officer Program is to assist in improving the professional preparedness of public and community transportation officers, and to maximize their ability to provide safe and secure transit service.

This mission is undertaken through preparing officers to:

- Perform an assessment of existing operations
- Identify system strengths
- Identify areas for improvement, and

- Develop safety, security and emergency preparedness programs.

The program is designed to help officers build the transportation organization, enhance the professionalism of its internal team, safely serve its customers, fulfill its responsibilities in assisting in community emergency preparedness, identify internal safety and security strength and weaknesses, and reduce system exposure to liability. The certification is valid for three years and can be renewed online at www.ctaa.org/recertification.

To help transit agencies further meet their system safety goals and come into compliance with the forthcoming federal transit guidelines, CTAA has launched the Community Transportation Safety and Security Accreditation (CTSSA) program, which is designed to promote the safety and security of the customers of community and public transportation systems and also to promote the safety and security of the women and men who deliver these services and provide mobility for the riding public every day. CTAA is accomplishing this goal by working with member agencies, our board of directors, and experts in the field to determine standards for safety and security and by developing a program to assess an organization's achievement in meeting those standards.

Keeping employees, customers, and communities safe and secure is a top priority for all community transportation agencies.

There are at least three reasons why this is true:

- Establishing this priority is clearly consistent with the voluntary guidance and regulatory requirements of the U.S. Department of Transportation, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, the Federal Transit Administration, and individual state departments of transportation.
- Building transit system safety and security infrastructure historically has proven to be an extremely positive step in reducing agency liability and the cost of insurance.
- Most importantly, it is a moral responsibility of a transit system and its leadership to do everything it can to protect the lives of people it employs and serves, and to respond effectively to community-wide emergencies as may be required.

CTAA offers the Certified Safety and Security Officer (CSSO) and the Community Transportation Safety and Security Accreditation (CTSSA) programs to provide transit systems with the comprehensive set of tools necessary to meet this critical safety, security, and emergency preparedness responsibility and to recognize individual and agency mission accomplishments.

As a partner to the Federal Transit Administration's Bus Safety and Security Memorandum of Understanding, CTAA has developed



the CSSO and CTSSA programs as a two-part process to provide education, support, and recognition to individuals and transit organizations in the critical areas of safety and security.

MAP-21's new public transportation safety program represents a significant administrative challenge to the FTA, as well as an important opportunity for community and public transit agencies to do what they have always done: provide their services in the most safe manner possible. The Association's training, certification and accreditation programs can help you not only meet these new regulations, but also to hone your agency's safety environment, and save on your next insurance premium.

"We're confident that our members have long provided safe transportation for their communities and passengers," says CTAA's Dickson. "Our safety training programs will allow them to get ahead of the rules in terms of compliance, and to be sure they're doing all they can in the name of safety." **CT**