

# TRANSIT SAFETY

*TTI researchers and TxDOT work with industry representatives to improve Texas transit system safety programs*

Texas Transportation Institute (TTI) researchers and the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) share the common goal of making travel in the state safer for all, regardless of travel mode. The two agencies are collaborating with transit safety professionals from across the state to advance safety principles at small urban and rural public transit systems.

In a TxDOT-sponsored project, TTI researchers led by Cinde Weatherby Gilliland are developing a guidebook for public transit systems to use to promote safety in their operations. Researchers are working closely with a newly formed organization of public transit safety professionals to develop the guidebook. The Texas Transit Safety Professionals Association (TTSPA) was founded last year by Mark Ostertag, safety coordinator for Austin's Capital Metropolitan Transportation Authority. He serves the organization as its first president.

TTSPA membership includes individuals who spend the majority of their time working in safety or risk management positions in metropolitan transit authorities in the state. The



*(l - r): Robert Davaila, VIA Metropolitan Transit Authority (San Antonio) speaking to Mark Ostertag, Capital Metropolitan Transportation Authority, Janine Sanders, Lubbock CitiBus, and Marie Nichols, First Transit, Inc., Corpus Christi at a meeting of the Texas Transportation Safety Professionals Association.*

organization's mission and the objective of the TxDOT project are nearly identical — to promote the advancement of public transit safety in the state and provide a forum for the exchange of experiences, comparative study and innovative solutions in the transit safety field.

According to Ostertag, "If there is a better way out there to increase passenger safety, reduce accidents or lower costs, members of the TTSPA want to find it. Each member brings a unique set of qualifications and skills to the discussions and allows us to develop better answers than any of us could devise on our own."

In addition to the involvement of the TTSPA, industry representatives from small urban and rural transit providers are involved in the guidebook development: Janine Sanders, safety specialist for CitiBus in Lubbock; and Rene Guajardo, safety and training professional for the Capital Area Rural Transportation System (CARTS) headquartered in Austin.

TxDOT's Public Transportation Division places an emphasis on safety programs. Susan Hausmann, the division's transit system safety manager, is the TxDOT liaison for this project. The division is responsible for the federally mandated safety oversight of the urban passenger rail service in the state and also provides support to transit systems for safety-related issues such as development of drug and alcohol prevention programs.

"We look forward to making the guidebook available to transit systems throughout the state," said Hausmann. "This project illustrates the importance of the TxDOT research program and its ability to address practical problems and issues."



*Rene Guajardo, the director of safety and service quality for Capital Area Rural Transportation System (CARTS), shows Linda Mainor how to perform a pre-trip inspection before she begins her bus route. CARTS drivers perform a daily inspection of their buses, including a check of various items in the engine compartment, the driver's area, operational lights, brakes and suspension, passenger area, wheel chair lift and then a general walkaround.*

The guidebook is scheduled for fall completion. It will include sections on accidents and incidents; alternative fuel safety; customer relations; performance and audits; facility safety; emergency response; employee safety; hazardous materials; and human resource safety and training issues. A feature of the guidebook that will also be of utility to metropolitan transit agencies, as well as the small urban and rural systems, is the availability of examples of existing policies and programs and information on safety training programs and other resources.

The guidebook is being designed for dissemination in both hard copy and electronic format (via CD-ROM and a web site). Forms will be included that can be tailored to agencies for their own use, such as pre-trip inspection forms or accident report forms.



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