



# DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

# NEWS

## URBAN MASS TRANSPORTATION ADMINISTRATION

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Standardization of specifications for rail rapid transit cars will be the goal of a coordinated study project involving the U.S. Department of Transportation's Urban Mass Transportation Administration (UMTA), the transit industry and rail car builders. The federal government's "new policy effort" to overcome the growing problems in acquiring reliable railcars and equipment at a reasonable cost was announced today by UMTA Administrator Robert E. Patricelli.

Patricelli said, "We are cooperating with transit operators, equipment suppliers and others concerned to determine whether standardization is appropriate and beneficial." He added, "If standardization is found to be justified, we will seek to develop a standardized family of vehicle specifications applicable to rail rapid transit systems."

"The goals of rail car standardization are to produce lower unit costs, both at first and over the equipment life cycle," the Administrator said. "We are trying to achieve reduced maintenance costs, to reduce the penalties of unreasonable contract terms and conditions, and curb the need for suppliers to design all-new cars for each procurement," he added. "In this way, we can preserve supplier competition and foster the evolutionary development of railcar technology."

To assist in the first 90-day phase of the project, UMTA awarded an \$86,572 contract to International Research and Technology (IR&T) of Arlington, Virginia. The contractor will assess the effect of standardization on car prices, and will determine whether standardization is most beneficially applied

at a total vehicle level or subsystem level. Consideration will be given to possible physical changes to existing transit systems or to specific lines if such changes will contribute toward standardization by enabling one car type to be used on more than one system or line. In addition, IR&T will undertake related cost/benefit studies and will consider the potential of "modular" design.

Another contract will be awarded by UMTA to establish an advisory board of transit agency experts on car design, construction and procurement. The advisory board will perform technical reviews of material developed by the contractor throughout both phases of the 15-month project. In addition, the Railway Progress Institute will serve as the coordinating agency representing the transit carbuilders and suppliers.

The project's second phase includes development of a standardized family of vehicle specifications; acceptable rail procurement contract terms and conditions; and procedures for material selection, reliability and safety.

During the past several years, the rail transit equipment industry has responded to customized specifications developed by individual transit operators to meet site-specific needs. Transit authorities have continued to emphasize new designs and higher performance characteristics while suppliers have had difficulty in meeting these requirements. The result has been lower reliability and excessively high purchase and operating costs.

"The establishment of guideline standards is only the beginning of an ongoing effort to improve rail transit equipment," Patricelli said. "A continuing review to provide the basis for steady improvement of all rail car equipment through modification, design and simplification, is expected to result in reduced production and maintenance costs, improved reliability and better performance."

As part of UMTA's standardization policy effort, Administrator Patricelli also announced a six-month moratorium on the review and approval of applications for newly designed rail rapid transit cars, pending the results of the standardization study contract. "Once we have had a chance to review the analysis and determine the probable forms which standardization may take," Patricelli said, "UMTA will determine future policy with regard to the moratorium."