



December 13, 2013

U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Docket Operations, M-30
West Building Ground Floor
Room W12-140
Washington, DC 20590-0001

RE: Docket No. FTA-2013-0030

Dear Docket Clerk:

On behalf of the more than 1,500 member organizations of the American Public Transportation Association (APTA), I write to seek extension of the comment period for FTA's Advance Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (ANPRM) concerning safety plans, safety certification training, and transit asset management, which was published on October 3, 2013, at 78 FR 61251.

About APTA

APTA is a non-profit international trade association of more than 1,500 public and private member organizations, including public transit systems; high-speed intercity passenger rail agencies; planning, design, construction and finance firms; product and service providers; academic institutions; and state associations and departments of transportation. More than ninety percent of Americans who use public transportation are served by APTA member transit systems.

APTA speaks for its members. Its Board of Directors reiterated that fact on March 9, 2013, when it adopted the following statement: "While APTA encourages its members to provide specific examples or impacts in support of the association's positions, APTA crafts its comments to represent those of all APTA members. The association goes to great lengths to ensure its regulatory comments represent the consensus views of our members. Every APTA member has the opportunity to review drafts, participate in discussions, and assist in crafting those consensus comments. In short, we speak with a single voice and, when the rare instance occurs that we cannot reach consensus, we do not speak at all. APTA's comments are those of our more than 1,500 members. This consensus-based method of crafting regulatory comments is a factor underlying APTA's selection as one of Washington's most trusted brands in a broad survey conducted by the National Journal and we encourage all federal agencies to recognize the representative nature of the association's regulatory comments."

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APTA and its members have historically worked on a host of complex regulatory issues, but given the global and far-reaching matters involved in this ANPRM, we went to the extraordinary effort of conducting a series of five webinars to allow as many of our members as possible to discuss, analyze, and craft initial comments. These webinars have totaled more than 15 hours and involved over 600 participants. What we discovered from this unprecedented effort was that issues that initially seemed relatively simple at first, were, in fact, far more complicated and far-reaching than we could have anticipated.

As a result, the ANPRM has become a major topic at committee meetings throughout the comment period and our executive committee discussed these matters at length at its recent strategic retreat. Individual members have parsed the issues out across their staffs to ensure subject matter experts are fully engaged across the many disciplines involved, and continue to compile voluminous responses to help ensure the success of these programs.

Despite these extraordinary efforts, or perhaps because of them, we are concerned that neither we nor our individual members can provide as thoughtful and informed input as the FTA requires by the January 2, 2014 deadline. These comments are unique, requiring a blending of disciplines across agencies, integration of information from these many sources, and careful review by agency executives. In addition, while a 90 day comment period may well be sufficient at a different time of year, the fact that the crucial closing weeks of the comment period has been diminished by a series of major holidays (Thanksgiving, Hanukah, Christmas and New Years), complicates our ability to provide the type of comprehensive comments such significant changes in policy warrant. Moreover, FTA's own series of outreach webinars concluded just days ago and have provided additional insight that must be considered by the industry.

Given the breadth and importance of this process and the calendar implications, we believe an additional 2 to 4 weeks is necessary and eminently justifiable to ensure both the APTA comments and those of individual industry members are fully vetted, complete, and helpful as FTA crafts proposed rules for these programs. With Transportation Research Board meetings scheduled for January 12-16, extension until January 30 would ensure not only completion of agency vetting processes but allow discussion at the many relevant committee meetings at TRB, further adding to the quality of comments submitted.

We appreciate the opportunity to assist in this important rulemaking. For additional information, please contact James LaRusch, APTA's chief counsel and vice president corporate affairs, at (202) 496-4808 or jlarsuch@apta.com.

Sincerely yours,



Michael P. Melaniphy
President & CEO

MPM/jpl