



One Hundred Tenth Congress
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20515

January 17, 2008

The Honorable Edmund S. Hawley
Assistant Secretary
Transportation Security Administration
601 South 12th Street
Arlington, VA 22202-4220

Dear Assistant Secretary Hawley:

We are writing to inquire about the status of the School Bus Risk Assessment mandated by the Implementing Recommendations of the 9/11 Commission Act of 2007. As you know, the House Committee on Homeland Security has oversight responsibility for the Department of Homeland Security, and we have been particularly interested in activity concerning preparedness, assessment, and mitigation related to our nation's schools and the safety of school children.

It is our understanding that TSA's Office of Transportation Sector Network Management has been tasked with leading the School Bus Risk Assessment required by Section 1538 of Public Law 110-53. Section 1538 requires a report on this assessment be submitted to Congress no later than a year after enactment, which leaves little more than six months to complete this assessment. We are concerned that there is little evidence that the Department will meet this deadline.

On January 14, 2008, TSA staff met with staff from our Committee to discuss the status of the risk assessment. Unfortunately, during the meeting, TSA staff failed to provide answers to several critical questions. This failure was particularly disconcerting because the questions had been submitted well in advance of the meeting. Because this Committee's informal attempt to obtain this information has not been productive, we are seeking the information through more formal means. Therefore, pursuant to Rule X (3)(g) and Rule XI of the Rules of the House of Representatives, please respond in writing to the questions or provide the information requested below no later than January 30, 2008.

1. Provide a timeline outlining the technical development of the report mandated in Section 1538 of the Implementing Recommendations of the 9/11 Commission Act of 2007, and a schedule for future work on the report.
2. Provide a list of all the tools that will be used to complete the School Bus Security Risk Assessment.
 - a. In particular, please outline the type of data – whether qualitative or quantitative – resulting from each tool utilized in this risk assessment.
 - b. Describe the methodology that will be used in collecting the data and indicate whether you are working with any outside parties, including but not limited to trade associations, contractors or private individuals, to gather the data. If so, have you selected a third party who can verify the data collected by this outside party?
3. Provide a list of all public and private partnerships, if any, that will be consulted to complete the comprehensive assessment mandated in Section 1538 (PL 110-53).
4. Provide a comprehensive list of all the monetary and human resources tasked to the required risk assessment.

Additionally, please respond to the following questions which were raised in the January 14th meeting.

5. Please describe the methodology that will be used in creating the assessment. Are you working with the Department of Homeland Security's Risk Management Analysis Office? If not, why not?
6. It is our understanding that major school transportation organizations stand ready to contribute and participate, but await a framework and metrics so that the resultant product is more than an industry self-assessment. What do you envision as the ideal interaction between your office, any contractor you may hire, the school transportation organizations, and the individual operators in creating this assessment? Have you created the framework and metrics necessary? If not, why not?
7. What budgetary constraints are hindering the ability of TSA to complete this assessment? While only \$500,000 has been requested by your office to complete the study in FY08, some estimate that a complete risk analysis may cost as much as \$4 million. Please explain why more funding was not requested.
8. When funding is identified, do you plan to issue an RFP for the risk assessment? If so, when will the RFP be made public? Will there be any restrictions on such a competition?

9. How do you expect the results of this assessment will impact future budget allocations?

Should you have any questions on this request, please do not hesitate to contact Ms. Cherri Branson, Chief Oversight Counsel at 202.226.2616. Thank you for your time and attention on this matter.

Sincerely,



Bennie G. Thompson
Chairman
Committee on Homeland Security



Bob Etheridge
Member of Congress
Committee on Homeland Security