

Surface Transportation Security Advisory Committee (STSAC)



Meeting Minutes

July 11, 2019



On July 11, 2019, TSA hosted the first Surface Transportation Security Advisory Committee (STSAC) meeting, a forum established pursuant to the TSA Modernization Act of 2018. The STSAC is comprised of representatives of surface transportation providers appointed by the Administrator to advise on priorities and recommended actions to enhance surface transportation security. Officials with federal departments and agencies that have surface transportation oversight work with the STSAC for this purpose.

As established, the STSAC has 37 voting members and 14 nonvoting members. Voting members are individuals representing each mode of surface transportation. Nonvoting members serve on the committee in an advisory capacity and include representatives from the Department of Defense, Department of Energy, Department of Homeland Security, Department of Transportation, Federal Bureau of Investigation, and National Transportation Safety Board.

The committee will meet at least twice a year and provide periodic reports on progress in implementing defined priorities. Additionally, the STSAC will produce an annual report addressing the activities, findings, and recommendations from the preceding year.

Meeting Comes to Order

Henry Budhram Jr., STSAC Designated Federal Officer (DFO) called to order the inaugural meeting of the STSAC at 8 a.m. EDT on July 11, 2019, at TSA Headquarters.

Welcome and Safety Briefing

Jonathan Lamb, the Freight Rail Team Lead, provided a safety briefing.

TSA Leadership Remarks

TSA Executive Sponsor Victoria Newhouse, Acting Deputy Administrator Patricia Cogswell, and Administrator David Pekoske each made brief opening remarks and welcomed members.

Deputy Assistant Administrator Newhouse, Policy, Plans and Engagement (PPE), explained how the formal advisory committee presents an exciting opportunity to advise the Administrator and senior leaders to help determine how security efforts can improve and provide recommendations on topics such as cybersecurity and vetting. She explained how the TSA organizational structure is evolving to better prepare and deliver resources to surface transportation stakeholders.

Acting Deputy Administrator Cogswell recognized STSAC members for their contributions in helping to advance surface transportation security. The diversity of the committee demonstrates dedication to a nationwide effort to secure surface transportation systems. The committee paused to reflect on the important work that has been undertaken and to appreciate how far our accomplishments have come. Thirteen years ago, on July 11, 2006, in Mumbai, India, a series of bombs detonated on commuter trains causing 209 deaths and more than 700 injuries. The STSAC

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inaugural meeting, taking place on this anniversary, serves as a poignant reminder of the important contribution the group can make in helping to secure our Nation's surface transportation systems. A special thanks was provided to the committee for their time and commitment and to the TSA staff who put the committee together.

Administrator Pekoske thanked the members for volunteering to serve on the committee and recognized the diversity of the group and their wide range of experience and expertise. The Administrator asked the members for their unvarnished inputs. He recognized Steve Alterman, the Aviation Security Advisory Committee (ASAC) Chairperson and noted the similarities in the structure of the two committees. He provided an overview of his Congressional confirmation process and stressed his commitment to enhancing surface transportation security while in office. He cited the 5-year extension of the Administrator's term period allowing for consistency in TSA leadership. His strategy for leading TSA involves first identifying the issues and receiving input from his executives, the men and women providing security on the frontline, stakeholders, and Congress. 2019 is an important year because TSA now has an executable strategy, intent, and structure to ensure greater transportation security. Once the STSAC addresses organizational matters, including the selection of a Chairperson and Vice Chairperson, the committee can begin looking at key issues and priorities of importance to the Administrator and provide recommendations as to how these can be best addressed in the surface modes of transportation.

The floor was opened to the group, providing an opportunity for the newly established members to voice their initial impressions and concerns.

Tom Farmer, American Association of Railroads (AAR), stressed the importance of the STSAC's role to influence changes to the organization and the conflicting requirements in federal agencies that often lead to frustration. The Administrator noted that the STSAC will have the ability to make changes in the same way the ASAC helps develop priorities for TSA. He recognized that TSA does not directly provide the security for surface transportation—rather, TSA relies on guidelines, national policies, and regulations to ensure security through industry partners.

Ed Bruce, New Jersey Transit (NJT), raised his concern that federal agencies differ on some matters and it would be great to have consistency across the board. The Administrator noted the benefits of partnering with industry to accomplish important tasks. Although TSA interests align with industry 95% of the time, we need to look at how to take it all the way.

Kimberly Denbow, American Gas Association (AGA), raised concerns regarding cybersecurity and the fact that TSA does not receive the necessary appropriations to truly partner with the pipeline industry. Another concern was the emphasis on airport security screening rather than surface transportation. The Administrator hopes the committee can help formulate new messaging about TSA surface responsibilities.

Col. (Ret.) Mike Licata, Academy Bus, described his personal experience while traveling and the value of the "If You See Something, Say Something®" Campaign. Col. Licata emphasized the importance of an initiative to clarify ways the public can notify the appropriate response officials when they do "see something," so they can "say something." The Administrator recognized that threat information may not always come from intelligence officials and emphasized the value of public reporting. TSA wants to leverage all available resources to ensure effective and sustained capabilities for collecting and sharing information.

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The Honorable Dave McCurdy, a senior expert for pipeline security and regulatory issues, recognized that TSA—while working with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission—has been very vocal on some of the cybersecurity issues. He commended Assistant Administrator Sonya Proctor for her dedicated work with the pipeline industry and Deputy Assistant Administrator Newhouse for her role in the issuance of security policies—particularly, the 2018 Pipeline Security Guidelines. However, he sees challenges in resources and federal partnerships. The Administrator acknowledged the resource challenge and spoke about leveraging capabilities with other agencies such as DHS’s Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA). The Administrator recognized the critical need for more cybersecurity experts and wants to expand capabilities.

Deputy Assistant Administrator Newhouse addressed the committee and stressed the Administrator and Deputy Administrator’s desire for the members to share their honest insights and recommendations. She asked the committee to look at their STSAC responsibilities as supporting the common good for surface transportation generally, rather than focusing on concerns specific to their businesses and organizations. She added that TSA will be cognizant of sensitive issues and will approach them in a meaningful way. The committee must provide an annual report to Congress highlighting the results of the committee and describing how the committee formulated recommendations. Committee membership is for two years. In the future, the group can look at staggering or changing the length of the term.

Introductions

STSAC members introduced themselves with their name, organization, professional experience, and a brief description of their surface mode or constituency. Committee members unable to attend in person introduced themselves via a phone/web conferencing connection.

Unclassified Threat Briefing

Jay Carrigan, TSA Intelligence and Analysis, provided an overview of activity in the homeland and insight into emerging threats. Even though TSA Intelligence and Analysis is not a part of the Intelligence Community—in fact, it does have full access to Intelligence Community information-sharing resources.

Surface Transportation Security Updates

Traci Klemm, Chief Counsel, TSA Regulations, provided an overview of current rulemaking and policy initiatives including Security Training Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM), the prospective Security Vetting NPRM, Vulnerability Assessment and Security Planning (VASP) Advanced NPRM, and guidelines for vulnerability assessments and security planning. Committee members can find the current status of TSA rulemakings by visiting the TSA.gov website and searching for “rulemaking.” The information is available to the public under a requirement of the TSA Modernization Act of 2018.

Questions and comments focused on the lack of necessity for a regulation on security training and vetting and on the drastic reduction in Transit Security Grant Program (TSGP) funding for security enhancements in mass transit agencies and commuter railroads. Discussion addressed the STSAC potential role, as a body created by Congressional mandate, in advocating for an increase in TSGP funding that aligns with assessments of threats to crowded public venues.

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Dianna Davis-Small, Strategy Plans & Innovation (SP&I), provided an overview of the National Strategy for Transportation Security (NSTS). TSA is currently working on the eighth iteration of the NSTS, as required by the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act (IRTPA) of 2004. The NSTS has a risk-based foundational strategy that puts forth the mission and priorities for national transportation security. Industry stakeholder input is valuable to the development of the NSTS. She noted that earlier comments from the committee about challenges will be a consideration for the NSTS. She explained that cybersecurity and unmanned aircraft systems (UAS) are emerging threats now included in the NSTS, providing a practical demonstration of how the strategy evolves to meet new challenges to security and infrastructure protection. She highlighted the diversity of the committee and the value that this diversity brings to filling security gaps and taking on issues that need to be addressed at the national level. It is anticipated that the draft 2020 NSTS will be distributed for stakeholder review in the near future.

Jerry Booker, Director for Enterprise Performance and Risk, SP&I, provided an overview of a requirement of the TSA Modernization Act of 2018 to develop a Surface Transportation Security Assessment and a Crosscutting Risk-Based Surface Transportation Strategy document in consultation with industry representatives. Mr. Booker and his team are conducting research and collecting current data within TSA. A draft will be provided for private sector review and input in the near future. The risk assessment is due to be completed by October 2019. The strategy is due to Congress in 2020.

Scott Gorton, Acting Executive Director, Surface Policy, PPE, recognized the professional commitment of many of the committee members who have been working in surface transportation for years and the tremendous efforts they have made to help advance surface transportation security. The committee will have an opportunity in this unique venue to work on some of the issues they have discussed in the past. Mr. Gorton looks forward to working with the STSAC committee and subcommittees. He emphasized that TSA Industry Engagement Managers and Policy Managers will support the committee.

Steve Alterman, ASAC Chairperson, and Christopher Bidwell, ASAC Vice Chairperson, provided insight and observations based on their experiences and lessons learned in the ASAC. They have worked with all aviation and air cargo sectors as well as airlines and airports. The ASAC was formed after the 1988 Pan Am Flight 103 bombing. The STSAC structure will be similar to that of the ASAC. Mr. Alterman emphasized that these committees are not “discretionary”; TSA has to “put up with us.” He addressed an earlier comment by Ms. Newhouse on “staggering” terms of committee members and described the challenges that resulted from the constant turnover of a significant portion of the membership from year-to-year. The effect is to needlessly hamper the ability to make progress on accomplishing priorities – especially if meetings occur only four times, or less, per year. Mr. Alterman added that subcommittees comprised of subject-matter experts accomplish much of the work. Subcommittees are not limited to STSAC voting and nonvoting committee members. Once a subcommittee stands up, it has to be determined who else may join. The real work happens between committee meetings.

Administrative Discussion

Renae Brosam and Kilian Thorin, Homeland Security Information Network (HSIN) representatives, provided a presentation highlighting the shared HSIN online portal created for the STSAC. HSIN serves as the primary information-sharing mechanism for TSA. Committee members will be invited

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to join the STSAC HSIN site. The site will allow members to post documents, review information about the STSAC, and access other reference documents such as the STSAC Charter and Bylaws. The site features capabilities for capturing and sharing ideas, controls for document check-in and check-out, and tools for providing feedback and rating documents. A webinar will be conducted in the near future to help the STSAC become familiar with the HSIN site.

Nominations for Chairperson and Vice Chairperson

The voting members of the Committee took a few minutes to ask for volunteers and voice nominations for positions of Chairperson and Vice Chairperson. Two options were provided: (1) either provide written nominations to DFO Budhram, Jr. at the conclusion of the meeting or (2) email nominations to the STSAC@tsa.dhs.gov mailbox. An electronic ballot will then be created as a result of nominations received for members to cast their votes. The Committee will be informed of the selections after the results are shared with the Administrator for approval.

Open Discussion and Potential Topics for Future Subcommittees

Committee members proposed priorities for action—to provide the basis for establishing the initial subcommittees. The areas of emphasis are:

- Intelligence and Information Sharing—for security risk analysis and mitigation
- Cybersecurity
- Insider Threat
- Weapons of Mass Destruction
- Security Technologies
- Aligning Capabilities—by drawing upon advances made in each mode and government capabilities to elevate capabilities and performance collectively

Funding for the TSGP was raised in this discussion—and could fall within a number of these areas as a means of attaining sustained security enhancement.

Closing Remarks

Executive Assistant Administrator Stacey Fitzmaurice, TSA Operations Support, thanked the committee members for their participation and commitment formally solidifying the establishment of the STSAC. Executive Assistant Administrator Fitzmaurice commended the robust dialogue and shared ideas and expects the group will be engaged and vocal. She expressed excitement about the future and appreciates all the work that has gone into establishing the STSAC and setting up the inaugural meeting.

Adjournment

DFO Budhram, Jr. noted that October 10, 2019, is the proposed date for the next STSAC meeting. It is important to have 100% in-person participation. He adjourned the meeting at 12:14 PM EDT.

For more information or questions about the meeting, please contact DFO: Henry Budhram, Jr.
Email: Henry.Budhram@tsa.dhs.gov Phone: 571.227.4268

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