

Why GAO Did This Study

The Transportation Security Administration (TSA), in the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), is committed to sharing information with public transit agencies. The Implementing Recommendations of the 9/11 Commission Act directed GAO to report on public transit information sharing. This report describes (1) the primary mechanisms used to share security information with public transit agencies; and evaluates (2) public transit agencies' satisfaction with federal efforts to share security-related information (e.g., security threats) and opportunities to improve these efforts; and (3) the extent to which DHS has identified goals and measures for sharing information. GAO surveyed 96 of the 694 U.S. public transit agencies based on 2008 ridership and received 80 responses. The 96 public transit agencies surveyed represent about 91 percent of total 2008 ridership. GAO also reviewed documents, such as DHS's *Information Sharing Strategy*, and interviewed agency officials.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that DHS, among other things, (1) establish time frames for its working group to develop options for improving information sharing, including assessing opportunities to streamline mechanisms and conducting targeted outreach; and (2) establish time frames for developing goals and outcome-oriented measures of results. DHS concurred. GAO is issuing an electronic supplement with this report—[GAO-10-896SP](#)—which provides survey results.

View [GAO-10-895](#) or [key components](#).
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PUBLIC TRANSIT SECURITY INFORMATION SHARING

DHS Could Improve Information Sharing through Streamlining and Increased Outreach

What GAO Found

According to the American Public Transportation Association (APTA)—which represents the public transit industry—and TSA officials, the Public Transportation Information Sharing and Analysis Center (PT-ISAC) and the public transit subportal on DHS's Homeland Security Information Network (HSIN-PT) were established as primary mechanisms for sharing security-related information with public transit agencies. The public transit agencies GAO surveyed also cited additional mechanisms for obtaining such information, including other public transit agencies. Further, in March 2010 TSA introduced the Transportation Security Information Sharing and Analysis Center (TS-ISAC), which is a subportal on HSIN focused on sharing security-related information with transportation stakeholders.

Seventy-five percent of the public transit agencies GAO surveyed reported being generally satisfied with the security-related information they received; however, federal efforts to share security-related information could be improved. Specifically, three-fourths of public transit agencies reported being either very satisfied or somewhat satisfied with the information they received. Public transit agencies also reported that among the 12 most frequently cited mechanisms, they were the least satisfied with HSIN in terms of general satisfaction (19 of 33) and for each of six dimensions of quality—relevance, validity, timeliness, completeness, actionability, and ease of use. Twenty-four survey respondents also cited the need to streamline the information they received. GAO identified the potential for overlap between the PT-ISAC, the HSIN-PT, and the TS-ISAC, which all communicate similar unclassified and security-related information to public transit agencies. Federal and transit industry officials that GAO interviewed reported the need to streamline information sharing. Moreover, a greater proportion of survey respondents who were unaware of the PT-ISAC or HSIN were from midsize agencies, nonrail agencies, and those without their own police department. Federal and industry officials formed a working group to assess the effectiveness of information-sharing mechanisms, including developing options for streamlining these mechanisms. TSA officials stated that these options will also impact future outreach activities; however, no time frame has been established for completing this effort. Establishing such a time frame could help to ensure that this effort is completed.

DHS and TSA have established goals and performance measures for some of their information-sharing activities to help gauge the effectiveness of their overall information-sharing efforts; however, they have not developed goals and outcome-oriented measures of results of activities for the mechanisms established as primary information sources for the public transit industry. TSA officials acknowledged the importance of establishing such goals and measures, but were unable to provide time frames for doing so. Establishing time frames for developing goals and outcome measures, once the working group effort is complete, could assist TSA in gauging the effectiveness of its efforts to share information with public transit agencies.