GAO

Highlights

TRANSPORTATION SECURITY INFORMATION SHARING

Stakeholder Satisfaction Varies; TSA Could Take Additional Actions to Strengthen Efforts

Why GAO Did This Study

The U.S. transportation system—composed of multiple interconnected modes, including aviation, freight and passenger rail, highway, public transit, and pipelines—moves billions of passengers and tons of goods yearly. The system's size and importance to the country's safety, security, and economic well-being make it an attractive target for terrorists. The Implementing Recommendations of the 9/11 Commission Act of 2007 mandated GAO to conduct a biennial survey of satisfaction of recipients of transportation security–related information. GAO last conducted this survey in 2011.

This report addresses the extent to which (1) stakeholders report they are satisfied with TSA's security-related products and mechanisms used to disseminate them and TSA has used GAO's prior survey information to identify any areas for improvement, and (2) TSA obtains, documents, and incorporates stakeholder feedback. To do this, GAO conducted a survey of 481 stakeholders from November 2013 through January 2014 and received a 70 percent response rate. While the responses cannot be generalized, they provide insight. GAO also analyzed 2013 TSA survey data and conducted interviews with agency officials. An electronic supplement—GAO-14-488SP—provides survey results.

What GAO Recommends

Among other things, GAO recommends that TSA assess GAO's survey results to identify causes of information-sharing gaps and actions to address them, and systematically document and incorporate stakeholder feedback. DHS concurred.

View GAO-14-506. For more information, contact Jennifer Grover at (202) 512-7141 or groverj@gao.gov.

What GAO Found

Satisfaction with the Transportation Security Administration's (TSA) security-related products and the mechanisms used to disseminate them varied by transportation mode, and TSA has not used the results of GAO's 2011 survey of stakeholders to identify the causes of information-sharing gaps or actions to address them. For example, in the survey conducted for this report, 59 percent of stakeholders (196 of 335) indicated they were satisfied with the products they received from TSA, but less than half of aviation stakeholders (71 of 149) reported being satisfied. Similarly, 59 percent of stakeholders (195 of 331) indicated that they were satisfied with the mechanisms TSA uses to disseminate transportation security–related information, while 39 percent of highway (9 of 23) and 46 percent of rail (40 of 87) stakeholders reported they were satisfied. Further, both GAO's 2011 and 2013 survey found stakeholders from certain modes were more likely to report that they received each of TSA's product types, and not all stakeholders reported that they were familiar with TSA's mechanisms. Assessing the results of GAO's current survey could better position TSA to look for causes of such gaps and identify solutions to improve its information-sharing efforts.

Percentage of Stakeholders Who Reported Being Satisfied with TSA Products and Mechanisms, by Mode, 2013
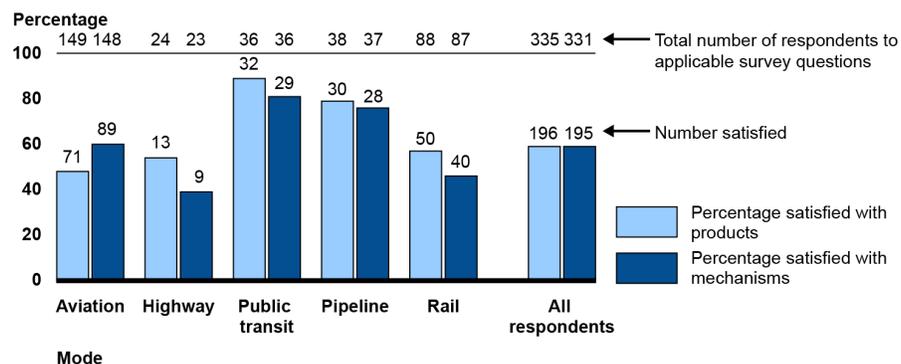
Source: GAO analysis of survey responses. | GAO-14-506

TSA has some mechanisms in place to collect stakeholder feedback, such as surveys attached to its products and informal feedback collected at meetings with stakeholders, but TSA has not systematically obtained, documented, and incorporated stakeholder feedback to improve information sharing. TSA is beginning to take steps to systematically obtain stakeholder satisfaction survey data. However, TSA is in the initial planning stages of this effort and has not determined whether or how it plans to document informal feedback—used by the majority of stakeholders GAO surveyed—or identified how it plans to incorporate all of the feedback collected. Consistent with customer service best practices, TSA could better ensure it is meeting stakeholder needs by including in its planned framework a systematic process to document informal feedback, and how it plans to incorporate all of the feedback it receives, both formal and informal.

_____ **United States Government Accountability Office**