



U.S. Department
of Transportation
**Federal Transit
Administration**

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Honorable Kasim Reed
Mayor of Atlanta
Atlanta City Hall
55 Trinity Avenue, SW, Suite 2400
Atlanta, Ga 30303

NOV 07 2014

Re: Follow-up on Safety Issues Related to Atlanta Streetcar Project

Dear Mayor Reed:

The Federal Transit Administration appreciated the opportunity to meet with you and MARTA representatives on October 28, 2014 to discuss challenges and concerns related to the Atlanta Streetcar project. I am writing to you now to highlight our serious ongoing concerns about the need to resolve *all* outstanding safety and hazard mitigation issues, and complete the safety certification process, before streetcar revenue service may begin. Until such time as these requirements are addressed to satisfy the FTA and the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT), we will not allow the opening of the service for revenue operations.

Both FTA and GDOT continue to be greatly concerned with the City's and MARTA's compressed schedule for the project, which includes, in our view, a very aggressive targeted revenue service date for the streetcar, which is less than 10 days away. We noted back in early October that the mid-November service date proposed by the partners was unrealistic, given the amount of work yet to be completed. Our concerns were justified by the City of Atlanta's Preliminary and Operating Hazards Analysis reports which revealed over 80 safety hazards, including the need to evaluate, design, and install additional signage, traffic signals, traffic management devices, such as pavement markings and others, to separate vehicular traffic from streetcar traffic and prevent potentially dangerous lane turns.

The City informed FTA that identified hazards such as these would be mitigated prior to opening the system. However, FTA has not been provided the final list of identified hazards, mitigations or safety analysis to ensure that any mitigating actions would adequately address the safety risks. This final list is essential to track whether outstanding safety risks are being addressed comprehensively in advance of any decisions by the City to begin revenue service, and we urge that such a list be provided at the earliest possible date.

We are also deeply concerned about the compressed schedule for other critical activities, including simulated service (pre-revenue operations) and safety certification work. One of the most critical times during the pre-revenue operations period is demonstrating and testing all system functions and procedures to ensure their effectiveness under simulated normal and emergency conditions. Compressed time frames to complete safety-related activities could result in insufficient reviews and compromise the overall safety of the system. The FTA formally identified safety concerns as far back as July 1, 2014, in a letter to the project partners in the Safety and Security Readiness Review (SSRR) Part I report and during the weekly coordination meetings.

We are particularly concerned that the abbreviated timeline allows only one week to conduct simulated service, emergency drills, and to finalize staff training. Training front-line personnel, in particular, to ensure they are capable of providing safe service to the riding public, is enormously important and cannot be compromised. Also, several operational procedures are still being developed, and must be approved by the Safety Certification and Security Committee (SCSC).


Additionally, the Atlanta Streetcar Safety and Security Certification Plan, along with other plans and standard operating procedures, have not been approved. Safety certification must be completed for design, construction, testing, training, emergency preparedness, simulated service, etc., prior to revenue service. The FTA has not been presented with comprehensive and approved set of design certifications, or any other certifications. While the FTA and GDOT have previously agreed to expedite the review of these plans, some of the important documents are still missing (or in draft form), including the System Safety Program Plan, Security and Emergency Preparedness Plan, Threat and Vulnerability Assessments, and a Hazard Management Plan. Final, not interim, plans will need to be reviewed and approved by the project's SCSC, GDOT (which functions as the State Safety Oversight agency), and the FTA's Office of Transit Safety and Oversight. Reasonable time must be allotted for the FTA and GDOT to review and comment on this significant volume of documentation.

Safety is the highest priority at FTA and at the U.S. Department of Transportation. We must be sure that safety is at the top of the agenda for the City of Atlanta and MARTA, as well, when it comes to the operation of the streetcar. We look forward to the day when thousands of riders benefit from this new transit service as a way to safely access jobs, education, and other opportunities throughout Atlanta.

The bottom line is that the Atlanta Streetcar cannot open to serve the public until the system's safe operation is assured. The project partners must take all necessary steps to complete every aspect of the necessary safety reviews, safety training, and safety certification.

Please do not hesitate to contact me directly at (404) 865-5600 with questions or concerns about this matter.

Best regards,



Yvette G. Taylor, Ph.D.
Regional Administrator

Cc:

Ms. Therese W. McMillan, Acting FTA Administrator

Mr. Keith Parker, Executive Director, MARTA

Mr. Keith Golden, Commissioner Georgia Department of Transportation