

# United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE,  
AND TRANSPORTATION

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6125

March 15, 2011

The Honorable Raymond H. LaHood  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Avenue, S.E.  
Washington, D.C. 20590

Dear Secretary LaHood:

In the past week, there have been two deadly bus crashes in New Jersey and New York. These two crashes are reminders that we must never be complacent in safeguarding the public and promoting the highest level of safety in the commercial motorcoach industry. As a result, I write to respectfully urge the Department of Transportation to make swift progress on motorcoach safety.

Just yesterday, a Super Luxury Tours bus crashed on the New Jersey Turnpike, killing one passenger and the driver. Preliminary information from the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration indicates that this motor carrier has been involved in four other crashes in the last two years and that it was slated for a Compliance Review last month.

Last Saturday morning, a bus operated by World Wide Tours crashed on the New England Thruway in the Bronx, killing 15 and injuring 17 more. The bus carrying largely senior citizens was returning to New York City from the Mohegan Sun casino in Connecticut. While the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) is continuing its investigation into the crash, preliminary reports indicate that the motor carrier has been involved in four other crashes in the past four years that have resulted in injuries to passengers and that the driver has a history of serious, unsafe driving violations.

In 2009, the Department of Transportation (DOT) developed the Motorcoach Safety Action Plan, which laid out specific action items for improving motorcoach safety and set timelines for implementing those actions. I am concerned that DOT is lagging behind in its progress on the Motorcoach Safety Action Plan. In addition, even where DOT has met certain target dates for some action items, such as initiating a rulemaking to require electronic on-board recorders on motorcoaches, it still has not completed these rulemakings, which further delays the implementation of important safety efforts.

There are more than 3,150 motorcoach companies operating more than 29,300 motorcoaches providing service to nearly 750 million passengers each year. While travel by motorcoach is generally safe, an average of 19 motorcoach occupants are killed in crashes each year in the United States. From its investigations into such crashes, the NTSB maintains five

items dedicated to improving motorcoach safety on its “Most Wanted List,” including requiring electronic on-board recorders on all motorcoaches.

We owe it to these passengers to make sure only the safest motorcoach companies and drivers have authority to be in business, and that they are operating the safest motorcoaches. While I appreciate your efforts to make our highways safer, I urge you to aggressively complete the rulemakings and evaluations in the Motorcoach Safety Action Plan and request that you continue to update me and my staff on your progress. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Frank R. Lautenberg  
Chairman,  
Subcommittee on Surface Transportation  
and Merchant Marine Infrastructure,  
Safety, and Security