

# Mass Transit: Information on Septa Commuter Rail Operations: Rced-86-46



**Mass Transit: Information on  
SEPTA Commuter Rail  
Operations: RCED-86-46**

**U.S. Government  
Accountability Office (GAO)**

Pursuant to a congressional request, GAO reviewed the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority's (SEPTA) commuter rail operations, specifically to: (1) compare its safety record with other commuter rail systems; (2) identify actions SEPTA has taken to ensure the safe operation of its commuter rail service; and (3) review efforts to integrate commuter rail operations with overall transit operations.

GAO noted that: (1) during 1984, six train accidents involving passenger injuries occurred on SEPTA commuter rail lines; and (2) although SEPTA carried fewer passengers than three of the four other commuter rail systems in the Northeast, it experienced more accidents during adverse weather conditions due to human error. GAO found that: (1) SEPTA has taken various actions to improve its commuter rail operations, including increased employee training, improved plant and equipment conditions, and increased monitoring of train operations to ensure compliance with federal safety requirements; (2) SEPTA has reported more non-train injuries than the other four commuter rail systems; and (3) SEPTA provided 25 percent of its capital spending to rehabilitate commuter rail facilities and equipment during 1983 and 1984. GAO also found that: (1) because SEPTA lost 37 percent of its commuter rail operators in its first year of operations, it had to establish a training program for newly hired train engineers and conductors in April 1984; (2) SEPTA also increased training for first-level supervisors to ensure that they effectively oversee operators compliance with operating requirements; (3) capital improvement needs are competing with other transit needs for funding; and (4) although a 1985 Federal Railroad Administration assessment of commuter rail operations found that serious safety problems existed, SEPTA has established a

separate unit to manage the commuter rail system and is making capital improvements at a rate that exceeds system revenue.

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