



June 2014

TRANSPORTATION SECURITY INFORMATION SHARING

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

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-14-506](#), a report to congressional committees

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.

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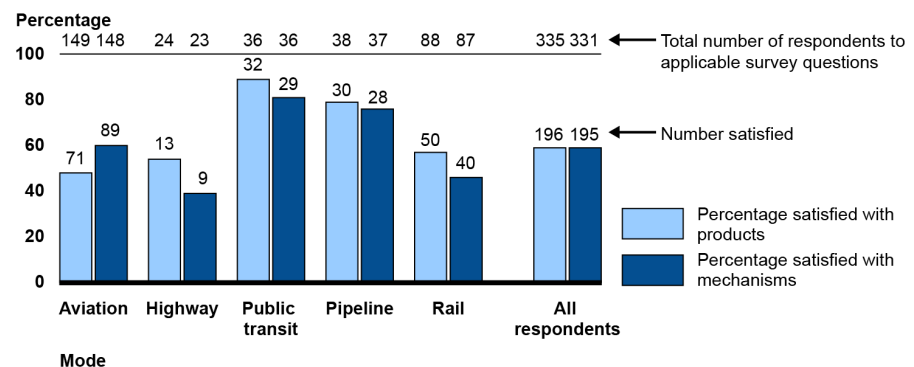
TRANSPORTATION SECURITY INFORMATION SHARING

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

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.

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Abbreviations

APTA	American Public Transportation Association
DHS	Department of Homeland Security
HSIN	Homeland Security Information Network
IPT	Information Sharing Integrated Project Team
OIA	Office of Intelligence and Analysis
OSPIE	Office of Security Policy and Industry Engagement
SBU	sensitive but unclassified
TSA	Transportation Security Administration
TSISE	Transportation Security Information Sharing Environment
TSISP	Transportation Security Information Sharing Plan

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June 24, 2014

Congressional Committees

The U.S. transportation system—which is composed of multiple interconnected modes of transportation, including aviation, freight and passenger rail, highway, public transit, and pipelines—is an open, accessible, and complex system that moves billions of passengers and millions of tons of goods each year. According to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) *Transportation Systems Sector-Specific Plan*, the system's size and importance to the country's safety, security, and economic well-being make it an attractive target for terrorists.¹ Disrupted terrorist attacks in recent years demonstrate the importance of effective information sharing with public and private transportation security stakeholders. For example, the disruption of a planned attack on a passenger train operating between Toronto and New York City in April 2013, and February 2014 intelligence that warned of possible attempts to attack passenger jets using explosives concealed in shoes, both illustrate the important role information sharing plays in transportation security.

The Homeland Security Act of 2002 assigned DHS responsibility for sharing information with its federal, state, local, and private sector homeland security partners to assist in the prevention of and response to terrorist attacks.² The Implementing Recommendations of the 9/11 Commission Act of 2007 (9/11 Commission Act) directed DHS to create a plan—now called the Transportation Security Information Sharing Environment (TSISE)—that was first issued in July 2008 and most recently updated in October 2012.³ The TSISE is designed to establish a foundation for sharing transportation security–related information among public and private entities that have a stake in protecting the nation's transportation system. While multiple DHS components are responsible

¹DHS, *Transportation Systems Sector-Specific Plan: An Annex to the National Infrastructure Protection Plan* (Washington, D.C.: 2010).

²Pub. L. No. 107-296, § 201(d)(9), 116 Stat. 2135, 2147 (2002).

³Pub. L. No. 110-53, § 1203(a), 121 Stat. 266, 383-85 (2007) (codified at 49 U.S.C. § 114(u)(2)). The TSISE was formerly called the Transportation Security Information Sharing Plan (TSISP). In fiscal year 2013, TSA renamed the plan the TSISE to reflect that the TSISE is not a part of a plan, but rather a series of processes.

for information sharing, the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) is the department lead on providing transportation security-related information to other DHS components and public and private stakeholders, including owners and operators of critical transportation infrastructure.

Our prior work on information sharing with private and public security stakeholders has shown that information sharing continues to be a challenge for the federal government.⁴ In January 2005, we designated the sharing of terrorism-related information as a high-risk area because the government faced significant challenges in analyzing and disseminating this information in a timely, accurate, and useful manner.⁵ We reported that information is a crucial tool in fighting terrorism and that its timely dissemination is critical to maintaining the security of our nation. This area remains on our high-risk list.⁶ As a result of this designation, we monitor federal efforts to remove barriers to and better achieve information sharing. In addition, we have made a number of recommendations to DHS to strengthen this area and the agency has taken steps in response, such as expanding its efforts to share terrorism-related information with private sector entities and identifying state and local partners' information needs. The *National Strategy for Information Sharing* also discusses the need to improve information sharing, including enhancing the quantity and quality of specific, timely, and actionable information provided by the federal government to critical infrastructure sectors.⁷ DHS's continued progress in enhancing the sharing of terrorism-related information and responding to our findings and recommendations

⁴See, for example, GAO, *Information Sharing: DHS Has Demonstrated Leadership and Progress, but Additional Actions Could Help Sustain and Strengthen Efforts*, [GAO-12-809](#) (Washington D.C.: Sept. 18, 2012), and *Public Transit Security Information Sharing: DHS Could Improve Information Sharing through Streamlining and Increased Outreach*, [GAO-10-895](#) (Washington, D.C.: Sept. 22, 2010).

⁵GAO, *High-Risk Series: An Update*, [GAO-05-207](#) (Washington, D.C.: January 2005).

⁶Every 2 years, we provide Congress with an update on our High-Risk Program, which identifies and helps resolve serious weaknesses in areas that involve substantial resources and provide critical services to the public. There are 30 areas on GAO's high-risk list. GAO, *High-Risk Series: An Update*, [GAO-13-283](#) (Washington, D.C.: Feb. 14, 2013).

⁷The White House, *National Strategy for Information Sharing* (Washington, D.C.: October 2007).

will be critical to supporting government-wide sharing and related efforts to secure the homeland.

Section 1203 of the 9/11 Commission Act mandated us to conduct a biennial survey of the satisfaction of recipients of transportation security–related information distributed under the TSISE.⁸ In response to this mandate, in 2011, we assessed the satisfaction of recipients of transportation security–related information within the aviation, passenger and freight rail, and highway modes.⁹ We found that the transportation stakeholders we surveyed were generally satisfied with TSA’s security-related information products, but we identified opportunities to improve the quality and availability of the disseminated information.¹⁰ We recommended that TSA (1) address stakeholder needs regarding the quality of analysis in its products, (2) conduct targeted outreach efforts to stakeholders to increase the number of stakeholders receiving security-related products, (3) establish outcome-oriented performance measures to assess the results of efforts to provide information through a key TSA information-sharing mechanism, (4) increase the functionality of its information-sharing mechanisms, and (5) define and document TSA’s information-sharing roles and responsibilities. DHS concurred with our recommendations and, in coordination with TSA, implemented two of these recommendations by improving the quality of analysis in its products and developing a more user-friendly information-sharing mechanism. TSA has taken steps to implement the other recommendations but has not fully addressed our concerns, as discussed later in this report. This report addresses the following questions:

- To what extent do stakeholders report they are satisfied with TSA’s security-related products and the mechanisms used to disseminate them, and to what extent has TSA used GAO’s prior survey information to identify any areas for improvement?

⁸Pub. L. No. 110-53, § 1203(a), 121 Stat. at 383-85 (2007) (codified at 49 U.S.C. § 114(u)(7)).

⁹GAO, *Transportation Security Information Sharing: Stakeholders Generally Satisfied but TSA Could Improve Analysis, Awareness, and Accountability*, [GAO-12-44](#) (Washington, D.C.: Nov. 21, 2011).

¹⁰[GAO-12-44](#).

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- To what extent does TSA obtain, document, and incorporate stakeholder feedback on its information-sharing efforts?

To answer the first question, we surveyed transportation stakeholders from the aviation, freight and passenger rail, highway, public transit, and pipeline modes.¹¹ We conducted the survey from November 2013 through January 2014 and included 481 stakeholders; we received responses from 337 stakeholders (70 percent of those surveyed). We sent the survey to security officials at commercial passenger air carriers, Category X and I commercial airports, air cargo carriers, Amtrak, Class I freight rail carriers, short line and regional railroads that carry toxic inhalation hazards or operate in high-threat urban areas, public transit agencies, pipeline companies, and members of two groups that are composed of key highway stakeholders—the Highway and Motor Carrier Sector Coordinating Council and the Peer Advisory Group.¹² We sent the survey to the entire known population of these aviation and rail organizations, as well as all members of highway groups; no sampling was conducted. We surveyed 46 of the 896 U.S. public transit agencies, which represent

¹¹For the purposes of this report, we defined TSA stakeholders to be owners and operators of critical transportation infrastructure. We did not include maritime stakeholders in our review because the U.S. Coast Guard is the lead agency for maritime information sharing.

¹²For purposes of this report, “commercial airport” refers to an airport within the United States operating in accordance with a TSA-approved security program and at which TSA performs, or oversees the performance of, passenger and baggage screening activities. Category X airports represent the nation’s largest and busiest airports as measured by the volume of passenger traffic and are potentially attractive targets for criminal and terrorist activity. TSA classifies the nation’s airports into one of five categories (X, I, II, III, and IV) based on various factors such as the number of takeoffs and landings annually, the extent of passenger screening at the airport, and other security considerations. In general, Category X airports have the largest number of passenger boardings and Category IV airports have the smallest. As defined by revenue, for 2009, Class I railroads are freight rail carriers having an operating revenue of \$379 million or more. The Highway and Motor Carrier Sector Coordinating Council is an industry advisory body that, as appropriate, coordinates the private industry perspective on highway and motor carrier security policy, practices, and standards that affect the transportation sector. According to TSA officials, the Peer Advisory Group includes 12 to 15 representatives from motorcoach companies that coordinate with TSA to, among other things, share security-related information. Our survey responses represent each of the stakeholder groups described but are not generalizable to entire modes of transportation such as aviation, rail, and highways. Because we surveyed different stakeholders and stakeholder groups in 2013 than for our 2011 review, current survey results cannot be directly compared with the 2011 survey results.

about 84 percent of total 2011 ridership.¹³ We also surveyed the 52 energy companies that operate the 100 most critical pipeline systems.¹⁴ While the survey responses cannot be used to represent the opinions and satisfaction of all transportation stakeholders as a whole, the responses provide data for the population we surveyed. Because we surveyed different stakeholders and stakeholder groups in 2013 than in 2011, survey results cannot be directly compared with the 2011 survey results.¹⁵ The survey document and percentages of responses received for each question are reproduced in an electronic supplement we are issuing concurrent with this report—[GAO-14-488SP](#). To obtain additional narrative and supporting context from stakeholders, survey respondents were given multiple opportunities to provide additional open-ended comments throughout our survey. We also interviewed officials from 16 transportation industry associations, selected to achieve a variation across transportation modes and sectors; TSA officials responsible for developing security-related information products and coordinating with industry stakeholders; DHS officials responsible for the department's primary information-sharing mechanism; and six individual survey

¹³The total number of public transit agencies reflects those agencies that reported data to the National Transit Database in fiscal year 2011, the most recent year for which data were available when we initiated our survey. The National Transit Database is the nation's primary source for information and statistics on the transit systems of the United States. We surveyed 46 of the top 50 agencies as measured by fiscal year 2011 ridership. We omitted 4 agencies after learning that the security points of contact at 5 agencies were the same.

¹⁴A pipeline system is considered critical if it is so vital to the United States that its incapacitation or destruction would have a debilitating effect on security, national economic security, public health or safety, or any combination thereof. TSA determined the most critical pipeline systems based on the amount of energy they carry.

¹⁵In two instances, the modes selected for our survey differed from those in the satisfaction survey results we reported on in November 2011. Specifically, we conducted reviews of pipeline security and public transit information sharing in 2010 and therefore did not assess the satisfaction of pipeline or public transit stakeholders in our November 2011 TSA information-sharing review. See GAO, *Pipeline Security: TSA Has Taken Actions to Help Strengthen Security, but Could Improve Priority-Setting and Assessment Processes*, [GAO-10-867](#) (Washington D.C.: Aug. 4, 2010), and [GAO-10-895](#). In addition, we did not always survey the same population for a particular mode or transportation sector across both surveys. For example, for our November 2011 report, we surveyed state departments of transportation or emergency management to collect highway stakeholders' views. However, in coordination with TSA, we decided a more appropriate population to include in our current survey was members of the Highway and Motor Carrier Sector Coordinating Council and the Peer Advisory Group. Further, TSA officials provided us with a more comprehensive and inclusive list of short line and regional railroads than we reported on in November 2011, which more than doubled the number of stakeholders in this sector.

respondents, selected to achieve a variation across modes, to obtain additional context about their responses. While the opinions expressed in the interviews cannot be generalized to all stakeholders or modes of transportation, they provided important perspective to our analysis. We also reviewed documents and plans that describe recommended practices for effective information sharing, such as the 2012 TSISE. Finally, we compared TSA's efforts to identify and take appropriate actions based on stakeholders' responses to our surveys with best practices in performance management.¹⁶

To answer the second question, we obtained 2012 and 2013 customer satisfaction survey data—the most recent data available—from surveys TSA distributes with its information-sharing products, and public transit customer satisfaction survey data collected through surveys administered by the American Public Transportation Association (APTA) in August 2011, January 2012, December 2012, and October 2013—all of the surveys administered as of April 2014. We questioned knowledgeable TSA and APTA officials regarding completeness, accuracy, and management of the data. Limitations with these data are discussed later in this report. In addition, we asked questions about the type of feedback stakeholders provide TSA in our customer satisfaction survey described above. We also analyzed fiscal year 2014 through 2016 TSA strategic plans and planning efforts to develop a systematic process to collect and analyze customer feedback. We compared this information against customer service best practices and best practices for customer satisfaction¹⁷ as well as *Standards for Internal Control in the Federal*

¹⁶See, for example, GAO, *Executive Guide: Effectively Implementing the Government Performance and Results Act*, GGD-96-118 (Washington, D.C.: June 1, 1996), and *Managing for Results: Enhancing Agency Use of Performance Information for Management Decision Making*, [GAO-05-927](#) (Washington, D.C.: Sept. 9, 2005). This report identified (1) how federal agencies can use performance information to make management decisions and (2) practices that can facilitate the use of performance information. To determine the best practices for performance measurement, we reviewed relevant literature, including previous GAO reports, spoke to experts in using performance information, and held group discussions with federal program managers.

¹⁷See GAO, *Defense Logistics: Improving Customer Feedback Program Could Enhance DLA's Delivery of Services*, [GAO-02-776](#) (Washington, D.C.: Sept. 9, 2002). We conducted an extensive literature search of best practice organizations to determine popular techniques for collecting customer feedback that we used to evaluate activities related to defense logistics. In addition, see [GAO-10-895](#), in which we applied these best practices to public transit.

*Government.*¹⁸ In addition, as noted above, we interviewed officials from 16 industry associations, 6 stakeholders, and TSA officials responsible for coordinating with stakeholders and collecting stakeholder feedback to determine what other mechanisms TSA uses to obtain and incorporate stakeholder feedback. Appendix I provides more details about our objectives, scope, and methodology.

We conducted this performance audit from June 2013 to June 2014 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

Background

The Aviation and Transportation Security Act, enacted in November 2001, assigned TSA responsibility for security in all modes of transportation, which includes aviation, maritime, public transit, highway and motor carrier, freight rail, and pipeline.¹⁹ The act included requirements for deploying a federal screening workforce at airports that is responsible for screening all passengers and property transported from or within the United States on commercial aircraft.²⁰ TSA has a direct role in ensuring the security of the aviation mode through its management of a passenger and baggage screener workforce that inspects individuals and their property to deter and prevent an act of violence or air piracy. However, TSA has a less direct role in securing other modes—such as freight rail and highway and motor carrier—in that it generally establishes voluntary standards, conducts inspections, and provides recommendations and advice to owners and operators within those modes. Responsibility for securing these modes is shared with other federal agencies, state and

¹⁸GAO, *Internal Control: Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government*, [GAO/AIMD-00-21.3.1](#) (Washington, D.C.: November 1999).

¹⁹Pub. L. No. 107-71, § 101(a), 115 Stat. 597 (2001) (codified as amended at 49 U.S.C. § 114(d)). The U.S. Coast Guard is the lead agency for maritime information sharing.

²⁰For purposes of this report, “commercial aircraft” refers to a U.S.- or foreign-based air carrier operating under TSA-approved security programs with regularly scheduled passenger operations to or from a U.S. airport. At airports in the United States participating in TSA’s Screening Partnership Program, screening activities are carried out by private, rather than federal, screening workforce employed by companies under contract to TSA. See 49 U.S.C. § 44920.

local governments, and the private sector. However, TSA has responsibility for receiving, assessing, and distributing intelligence information related to transportation security in all modes and assessing threats to the transportation system.

Within TSA, the Office of Security Policy and Industry Engagement (OSPIE) is responsible for setting policy for all modes of transportation and is the primary point of contact for sharing information with private sector stakeholders. TSA's Office of Intelligence and Analysis (OIA) receives intelligence information regarding threats to transportation and designs intelligence products intended for officials in TSA, other parts of the federal government, state and local officials, and industry officials with transportation responsibilities that include airline, rail, and pipeline security coordinators; airport and public transit law enforcement officials; and transportation associations, among others.²¹ OIA receives and assesses intelligence from within and outside of the intelligence community to determine its relevance to transportation security.²² OIA also has deployed field intelligence officers throughout the United States, who, among other duties, serve as liaisons with state and local law enforcement officials as well as with fusion centers.²³ Sources of information outside the intelligence community include other DHS

²¹OSPIE was formerly known as the Office of Transportation Sector Network Management, and OIA was formerly known as the Office of Intelligence. TSA changed the names of these offices in September 2011 as part of a realignment.

²²The U.S. intelligence community is a coalition of 17 agencies and organizations within the executive branch that work both independently and collaboratively to gather the intelligence necessary to conduct foreign relations and national security activities. Its primary mission is to collect and convey the essential information the President and members of the policymaking, law enforcement, and military communities require to execute their appointed duties. The 17 member agencies are: U.S. Air Force, Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance; U.S. Army, Army Military Intelligence; the Central Intelligence Agency; U.S. Coast Guard, Coast Guard Intelligence; Defense Intelligence Agency; Office of Intelligence and Counter Intelligence, the Department of Energy; Office of Intelligence and Analysis, the Department of Homeland Security; the Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Department of State; Office of Intelligence and Analysis, the Department of the Treasury; the Drug Enforcement Administration; Federal Bureau of Investigation; U.S. Marine Corps, Marine Corps Intelligence Activity; the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency; the National Reconnaissance Office; National Security Agency; U.S. Navy, Naval Intelligence, and the Office of the Director of National Intelligence.

²³A fusion center is generally a collaborative effort of two or more agencies that provide resources, expertise, and information to the center with the goal of maximizing their ability to detect, prevent, investigate, and respond to criminal and terrorist activity.

components, law enforcement agencies, and owners and operators of transportation system. OIA disseminates security information to stakeholders representing the various transportation modes through several security-related information products, as shown in table 1.

Table 1: Primary TSA Information-Sharing Products

Product	Description
Reports	Provide information or analysis on specific issues, topics, or suspicious activities, or provide situational awareness of an ongoing or recent event.
Assessments	Typically include analysis of the threat and a discussion of potential actors, targets, and tactics, and may include an outlook or review of potential countermeasures or vulnerabilities. TSA produces various assessments, including modal threat assessments (multimodal, aviation, freight rail, pipeline, highway, public transit); special events threat assessments; and tactics, techniques, and procedures assessments.
Briefings	Security-related information, including details on threats, vulnerabilities, and suspicious activities is shared with transportation stakeholders during unclassified or classified briefings. These briefings may be provided on an as-needed basis or more regularly to entire industries at forums such as trainings, workshops, and conferences.
Posters	One-page unclassified graphical products focusing on a single topic or issue. Posters are developed primarily for transportation security officers and can cover a variety of topics, including concealment techniques, and tactics, techniques, and procedures that may be encountered on the front lines of transportation security. ^a
Encounter Reviews	Intelligence-based, analytical products related to select terrorist watch list encounters or events of particular concern or focus regarding air travel of known or suspected terrorists that are distributed to passenger air carriers. ^b

Source: GAO analysis of information provided by the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) | GAO-14-506.

Notes: This list does not include all of TSA's information-sharing products, but rather those identified by TSA officials and transportation stakeholders as the primary products produced by TSA.

^aIn general, transportation security officers conduct the screening of passengers, baggage, and cargo at airports.

^bThe federal government's consolidated terrorist watch list contains records with identifying biographical information—such as name and date of birth—of foreign and U.S. citizens with known or appropriately suspected links to terrorism. As used in this report, the term “encounter” refers to any incident where a screening or law enforcement entity has contact with a person who is positively matched to a record in the terrorist watch list.

TSA is one of several sources of security-related information for transportation stakeholders. These stakeholders may also receive information from other federal agencies such as the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Department of Defense, and the Department of Transportation, as well as, among others, state and local fusion centers and industry associations.

TSA uses multiple mechanisms to distribute these products, some of which are described in table 2. Other mechanisms that transportation stakeholders may use to obtain security-related information include those

operated by regional, state, and local entities such as law enforcement agencies and emergency operations centers, as well as industry-sponsored mechanisms such as the Association of American Railroads' Railway Alert Network, among others.

Table 2: TSA Information-Sharing Mechanisms

Mechanism	Description
Homeland Security Information Network (HSIN)	Web-based platform operated by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to facilitate sensitive but unclassified information sharing and collaboration among federal, state, local, tribal, and private sector entities. DHS describes HSIN as its primary information-sharing mechanism. HSIN is made up of a network of communities, called communities of interest. These communities are organized by state organizations, federal organizations, or mission areas such as emergency management and critical infrastructure.
Transportation Security Administration's (TSA) Aviation Web Boards	Websites devoted to aviation security-related information. In addition to regulatory and policy documents, TSA posts security-related information on the Web Boards. There are designated Web Boards for divisions of aviation operators including airports, passenger air carriers, and air cargo carriers.
E-mail alerts	As a part of its information-sharing efforts, TSA's Office of Security Policy and Industry Engagement occasionally disseminates e-mails to transportation organizations that include unclassified and sensitive but unclassified security-related information. This TSA mechanism is intended to provide transportation stakeholders with information such as suspicious incident and situational awareness reports.

Source: GAO analysis of information provided by DHS. GAO-14-506.

Stakeholder Satisfaction Varied by Mode, and TSA Has Not Used Our Survey Results to Identify Causes of Information-Sharing Gaps or Actions to Address Them

Stakeholder Satisfaction and Familiarity with TSA's Products and Mechanisms Varied by Mode

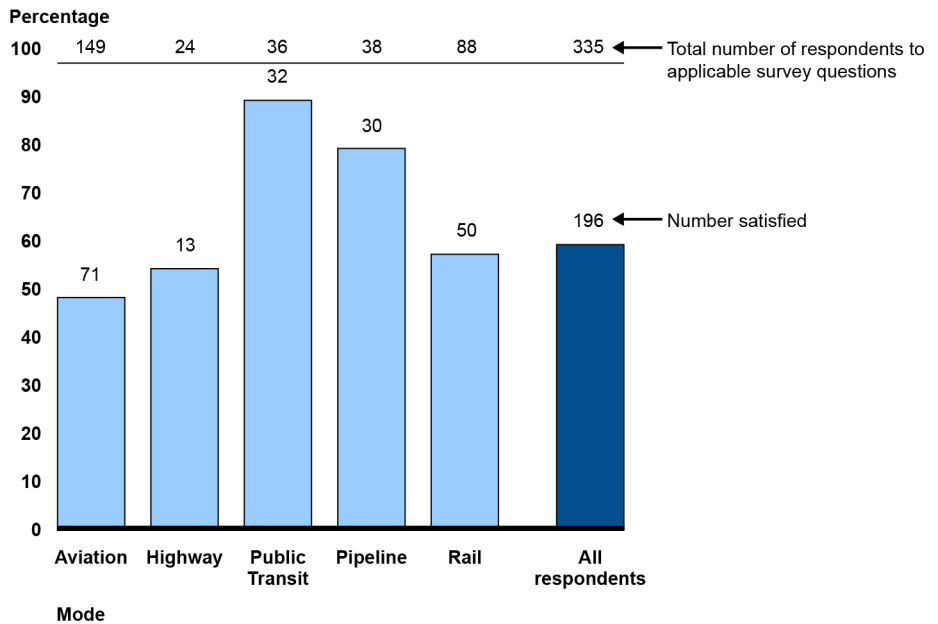
Our survey results indicate that the extent to which stakeholders reported that they are satisfied with TSA's security-related products and the mechanisms used to disseminate them varied by mode, with satisfaction ranging from 48 percent (aviation) to 89 percent (public transit) for products and 39 percent (highway) to 81 percent (public transit) for information-sharing mechanisms.²⁴ Specifically, in terms of stakeholders' satisfaction with TSA's security-related products, 59 percent (196 of 335) of stakeholders who responded to our survey question concerning overall satisfaction with TSA's products reported that they were satisfied with the

²⁴Survey respondents were asked to rate their organization's satisfaction using the following terms: "very satisfied," "somewhat satisfied," "neither satisfied nor dissatisfied," "somewhat dissatisfied," "very dissatisfied," and "don't know." We use the term "satisfied" to describe organizations that indicated they were either "very satisfied" or "somewhat satisfied." Similarly, we use the term "dissatisfied" to describe organizations that indicated they were either "very dissatisfied" or "somewhat dissatisfied" with the information they received. Because satisfaction and dissatisfaction were not the only possible responses, when we report that 59 percent of respondents reported being satisfied, for example, that does not necessarily mean that 41 percent were dissatisfied.

products they received in 2013.²⁵ However, aviation stakeholders were less likely to report being satisfied with the TSA products they received than stakeholders from the other four modes we surveyed. As shown in figure 1, the majority of highway, public transit, pipeline, and rail stakeholders, but less than half (48 percent) of aviation stakeholders, reported being satisfied.

²⁵We describe results for five different modes: aviation (including commercial passenger air carriers, commercial airports, and air cargo carriers), rail (including Class I freight rail carriers, short line and regional railroads, and Amtrak), highway, public transit, and pipeline. We report overall satisfaction as the total number of stakeholders who responded that they were “very satisfied” or “satisfied” divided by the total number of stakeholders who responded to the relevant survey question. The overall satisfaction numbers and associated percentages are influenced by the size of the modes we surveyed. That is, modes with more survey respondents, such as aviation, will have a greater effect on the overall satisfaction numbers than modes with fewer survey respondents, such as highway. Although 337 transportation stakeholders responded to our survey, not all respondents provided answers to every question. The survey instrument and complete percentages of responses received for each question can be found in an electronic supplement we are issuing concurrently with this report—[GAO-14-488SP](#). Our survey also measured stakeholder satisfaction with TSA products across five dimensions of quality—accuracy, actionability, completeness, relevance, and timeliness. See App. I for a description of each dimension of quality. The majority of stakeholders reported that they were satisfied with each dimension of quality. Satisfaction ranged from 51 percent of stakeholders satisfied with actionability of TSA’s products to 58 percent satisfied with timeliness, relevance, and completeness. Fifty-six percent of stakeholders reported that they were satisfied with the accuracy of TSA’s products.

Figure 1: Percentage of Stakeholders Who Reported Being Satisfied with TSA's Products, by Mode



Source: GAO analysis of survey responses.

Note: Survey respondents were asked to rate their organization's satisfaction using the following terms: "very satisfied," "somewhat satisfied," "neither satisfied nor dissatisfied," "somewhat dissatisfied," "very dissatisfied," and "don't know." We use the term "satisfied" to describe organizations that indicated they were either "very satisfied" or "somewhat satisfied" and "dissatisfied" to describe organizations that indicated they were either "somewhat dissatisfied" or "very dissatisfied." Thirteen percent of aviation respondents (20 of 149), 21 percent of highway respondents (5 of 24), 5 percent of pipeline respondents (2 of 38), and 16 percent of rail respondents (14 of 88) were dissatisfied. No public transit stakeholders responded that they were dissatisfied. Since satisfaction and dissatisfaction were not the only possible responses, it does not necessarily mean that all respondents who were not satisfied were dissatisfied.

Further, satisfaction with TSA's products varied by sector within the aviation mode. Specifically, 70 percent of passenger air carrier stakeholders (30 of 43) reported that they were satisfied, while 42 percent of airport stakeholders (27 of 64) and 33 percent of air cargo stakeholders (14 of 42) reported being satisfied with the TSA products they received. Eight of the 42 air cargo stakeholders who responded to our survey provided open-ended comments that the information TSA provides is not relevant or targeted to air cargo operations. In addition, security coordinators we met with from three separate air cargo operators stated that the security-related information TSA provides is sometimes dated. Further, representatives at two airport associations we met with expressed similar concerns with TSA products, including comments that the products do not contain new information and the information is not

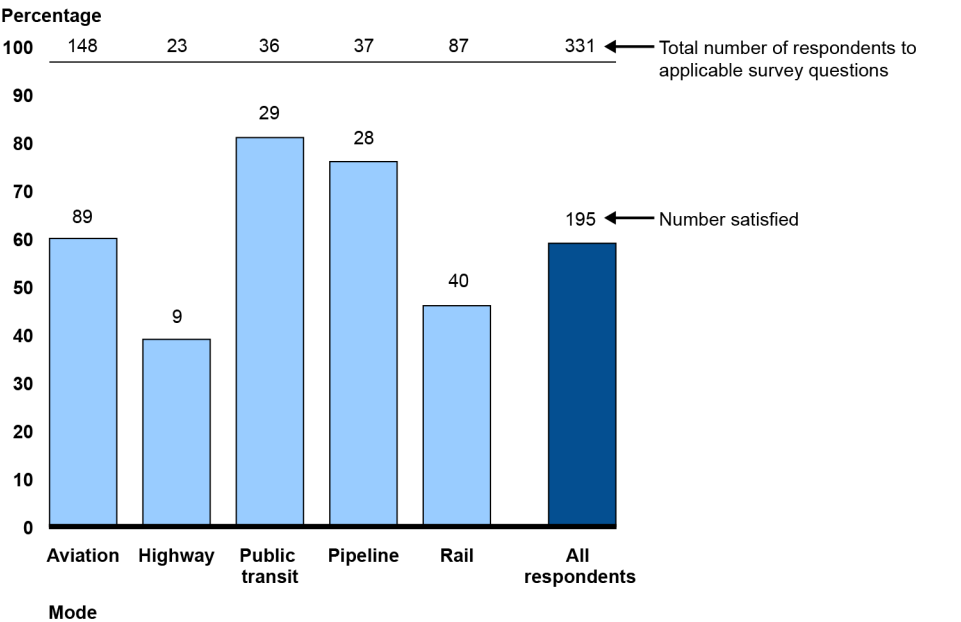
always timely. Airport and air cargo stakeholders may receive information that is not directly relevant or targeted to their operations because, according to TSA officials, TSA makes an effort to share information on general and specific threats to all transportation modes with all stakeholders, regardless of mode or sector, because some stakeholders find this information useful. Further, according to TSA officials, TSA shares new information with stakeholders as soon as possible after ensuring its accuracy, but TSA must declassify certain products before distributing them, which can be a lengthy process. Further, if no new information is available, TSA may continue to include information it has shared previously in its products if the information remains accurate.

As with stakeholder satisfaction with TSA's products, the majority of stakeholders reported that they were satisfied with the mechanisms TSA uses to disseminate security-related information, but satisfaction with these mechanisms also varied by mode. Specifically, 59 percent of stakeholders (195 of 331) who responded to our survey question regarding overall satisfaction with TSA's mechanisms reported that they were satisfied. In addition, our survey asked stakeholders about their satisfaction with each of TSA's information-sharing mechanisms separately, and we found that stakeholders were generally satisfied with the individual mechanisms they accessed to receive security-related information in 2013.²⁶ Specifically, the majority of stakeholders who logged on to Web Boards (107 of 142, or 75 percent) and HSIN (74 of 110, or 67 percent) responded that they were satisfied with their ability to locate information on the site, and 79 percent of stakeholders who received a TSA e-mail alert (151 of 192) responded that they were

²⁶Almost all aviation stakeholders (144 of 149 who provided responses to applicable survey questions) reported that they logged on to at least one part of TSA's Aviation Web Boards during 2013, about one-third of all stakeholders (110 of 334) reported that they logged on to at least one part of HSIN during 2013, and 58 percent of stakeholders (195 of 335) reported that they received a TSA e-mail alert during 2013. Not all stakeholders who responded that they accessed Web Boards or received a TSA e-mail alert during 2013 responded to questions about their satisfaction with that mechanism.

satisfied with the timeliness of the e-mail.²⁷ However, highway and rail stakeholders were less likely to report being satisfied with the mechanisms TSA uses to disseminate its security-related products than with the other modes we surveyed. As shown in figure 2, the majority of aviation, public transit, and pipeline stakeholders responded that they were satisfied with TSA’s mechanisms, while 39 percent of highway respondents and 46 percent of rail respondents reported that they were satisfied.

Figure 2: Percentage of Stakeholders Who Reported Being Satisfied with TSA’s Information-Sharing Mechanisms, by Mode



Source: GAO analysis of survey responses. | GAO-14-506

Note: Survey respondents were asked to rate their organization's satisfaction using the following terms: "very satisfied," "somewhat satisfied," "neither satisfied nor dissatisfied," "somewhat dissatisfied," "very dissatisfied," and "don't know." We use the term "satisfied" to describe

²⁷Our survey measured stakeholder satisfaction with the quality of information available through TSA’s mechanisms across four dimensions—relevance, completeness, actionability, and accuracy. In general, for each of TSA’s three primary information-sharing mechanisms, about two-thirds of stakeholders who had accessed information through the mechanism reported that they were satisfied with the information across these quality dimensions. Stakeholders reported less than two-thirds satisfaction for one quality dimension of HSIN—56 percent of stakeholders reported that they were satisfied with the actionability of information available through this mechanism.

organizations that indicated they were either “very satisfied” or “somewhat satisfied” and “dissatisfied” to describe organizations that indicated they were either “somewhat dissatisfied” or “very dissatisfied.” Twelve percent of aviation respondents (18 of 148), 26 percent of highway respondents (6 of 23), 8 percent of public transit respondents (3 of 36), 8 percent of pipeline respondents (3 of 37), and 9 percent of rail respondents (8 of 87) were dissatisfied. Since satisfaction and dissatisfaction were not the only possible responses, it does not necessarily mean that all respondents who were not satisfied were dissatisfied.

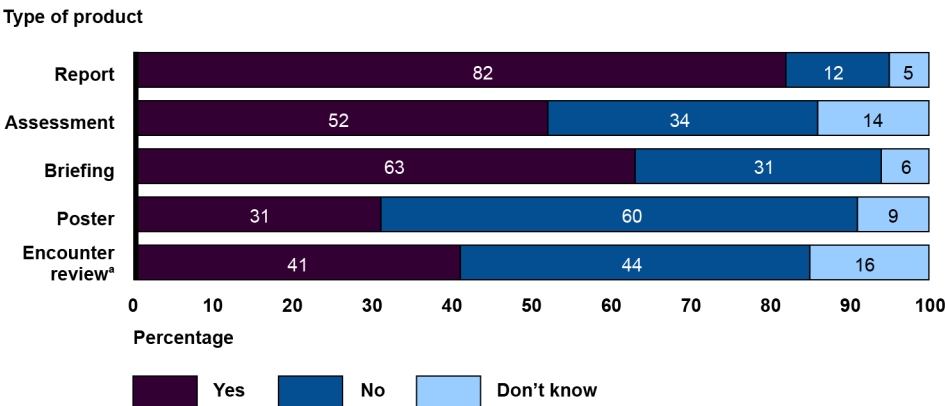
Officials at four of the five highway associations we met with and seven highway stakeholders who responded to our survey, in open-ended comments, described difficulties accessing and navigating HSIN as a concern. Five rail respondents also provided open-ended comments that identified concerns with TSA’s information-sharing mechanisms. For example, these respondents identified issues with the usability of HSIN, including issues logging onto or navigating the system, or stated that HSIN and e-mails provide dated information available from other sources. In an interview with a survey respondent, one short line rail stakeholder stated that TSA’s e-mail alerts would be more useful if TSA streamlined the information and focused on conclusions and recommendations targeted to short line railroads, since they may not have dedicated security staff with the time to read detailed background information. According to TSA officials, TSA does not generally provide specific recommendations to stakeholders in its products, since stakeholders receive information from other sources, such as associations, that summarize TSA products and includes operational guidance and recommendations.

Our current survey results also indicate that, as we reported in November 2011, familiarity with TSA’s security-related products and mechanisms varied by mode. We recommended in November 2011, among other things, that TSA conduct outreach to increase the number of stakeholders receiving transportation security–related information and those who are made aware of security–related information available through HSIN.²⁸ In particular, in our current survey, 82 percent of stakeholders (278 of 337) reported receiving one or more of TSA’s reports in 2013, but fewer

²⁸ [GAO-12-44](#).

stakeholders reported receiving TSA's other product types, as shown in figure 3.²⁹

Figure 3: Stakeholders' Reported Receipt of TSA Security-Related Information Products



Source: GAO analysis of survey responses. | GAO-14-506

Notes: Percentages may not sum to 100 because of rounding.

^aPercent of passenger air carriers that received Encounter Reviews. Encounter Reviews are distributed to passenger air carriers.

In addition, as was the case in the 2011 survey, stakeholders from certain modes were more likely to report that they received each of TSA's product types.³⁰ We surveyed stakeholders whom TSA had identified as points of contact who should receive TSA security-related information products, and TSA officials reported that they provide reports, assessments, briefings, posters, and Encounter Reviews to transportation stakeholders on a routine basis. For example, TSA issued Multi-Modal Transportation Threat Assessments in 2013 that provide threat information for all five of the transportation modes we surveyed. However, our survey results indicate that highway (16 of 24, or 67 percent) and public transit (31 of 36, or 86 percent) respondents received TSA

²⁹We reported in November 2011 that 78 percent of survey respondents received a TSA report, 62 percent received a briefing, and 37 percent received an assessment. Posters and Encounter Reviews were not included in our 2011 survey because TSA did not consider posters a primary information-sharing product at that time and TSA did not begin distributing Encounter Reviews until after we conducted that survey.

³⁰We reported in November 2011 that the number of transportation security stakeholders who received TSA's assessments and briefings varied by mode.

assessments at a higher rate than aviation (71 of 150, or 47 percent), pipeline (15 of 38, or 39 percent), and rail (42 of 89, or 47 percent) respondents. Similarly, public transit stakeholders were more likely to report that they received a poster than stakeholders from all other modes we surveyed. Specifically, over half of public transit stakeholders (19 of 36) reported that they received a poster, but less than one-third of stakeholders in the other modes reported receiving this product.³¹ TSA officials reported that they may target specific modes of transportation for the distribution of awareness materials, such as posters, and variance across modes is to be expected. However, TSA issued at least one poster in 2013 that provided information relevant to security professionals in all transportation modes, and our survey results indicate that stakeholders in some modes were less likely to receive it.

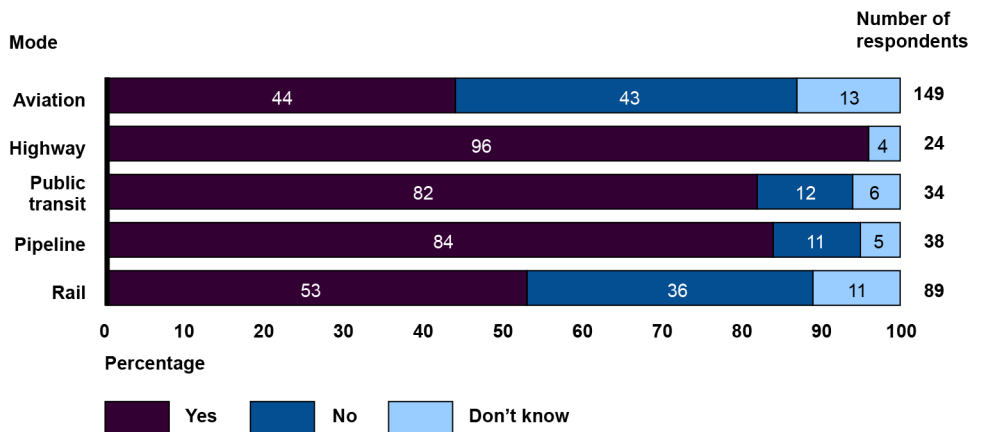
Similarly, our survey results indicate that, as we reported in November 2011, some stakeholders are not aware of HSIN and familiarity with HSIN varied by mode.³² Overall, 58 percent of stakeholders (195 of 334 who responded to our survey question regarding familiarity with HSIN) reported that they had heard of HSIN, 31 percent (104 of 334) reported that they had not heard of HSIN, and 10 percent (35 of 334) reported that they were unsure. As shown in figure 4, more than 80 percent of highway, pipeline, and public transit stakeholders reported that they had heard of HSIN, while 44 percent of aviation stakeholders and 53 percent of rail stakeholders reported that they had heard of HSIN.³³

³¹Thirty-two percent of aviation stakeholders (48 of 150), 29 percent of highway stakeholders (7 of 24), 21 percent of pipeline stakeholders (8 of 38), and 25 percent of rail stakeholders (22 of 89) reported that they received one or more of TSA's security-related posters in 2013.

³²[GAO-12-44](#).

³³Aviation stakeholders can access some TSA information through Web Boards, but TSA officials and one aviation association we met with stated that not all of the information available on HSIN is placed on the Web Boards. In addition, rail and other nonaviation stakeholders who had not heard of HSIN do not have access to the Web Boards.

Figure 4: Percentage of Stakeholders Who Reported Having Heard of the Homeland Security Information Network, by Mode



Source: GAO analysis of survey responses. | GAO-14-506

TSA and DHS officials reported that they have taken or are beginning to take some steps to conduct outreach to stakeholders to increase the number receiving security-related products and to increase awareness of HSIN:

- TSA officials stated that they have conducted targeted outreach to public transit stakeholders. Although we did not include public transit stakeholders in the survey we reported on in November 2011, we conducted a similar review of public transit stakeholders in 2010 and found a lack of awareness of HSIN among the public transit agencies we surveyed.³⁴ We recommended that TSA establish time frames for a working group of federal and industry officials to consider targeted outreach efforts to increase awareness of HSIN among transit agencies that are not currently using or aware of this system. In August 2012, TSA reported that the agency had compiled a “superlist” of more than 1,000 public transit agencies and sent members of this list a HSIN membership campaign letter. In addition, TSA officials stated that OIA provides a monthly threat briefing for public transit stakeholders. These outreach efforts may have increased public transit agencies’ receipt of TSA’s products and familiarity with HSIN, as public transit stakeholders were more likely than stakeholders from

³⁴GAO-10-895.

the other transportation modes in our current survey to respond that they had received each of TSA's products, and over 80 percent of public transit stakeholders who responded to our survey had heard of HSIN.

- TSA officials stated that they have initiated efforts to increase outreach to stakeholders from other transportation modes. For example, in February 2014, TSA reconvened its Information Sharing Integrated Project Team (IPT), a team composed of offices across the agency, to develop a plan to conduct targeted outreach efforts to aviation, rail, and highway stakeholders, among other things.³⁵ TSA officials stated that they have increased the frequency of interactions with stakeholders by, for example, conducting conference calls twice a month with air carriers and monthly conference calls with Class I railroads. However, TSA officials could not provide data demonstrating the extent to which more stakeholders are receiving TSA products based on its expanded outreach channels. According to TSA officials, producing these data would require an extensive effort, but the IPT is examining ways to accurately and efficiently capture this information.
- TSA and DHS officials stated that they have taken other steps to increase stakeholders' awareness of HSIN. For example, according to TSA officials, field intelligence officers provide fliers regarding HSIN to stakeholders. In addition, DHS officials stated that the department is in the beginning phases of conducting stakeholder outreach and implementing its Stakeholder Management Plan, approved in December 2013, which includes, as part of one of its goals, identifying underrepresented users on the network. Further, TSA's IPT intends to develop a plan to increase awareness of the availability of information through HSIN and to measure the effectiveness of this outreach by developing outcome-oriented performance measures to help assess the results of efforts to provide useful and timely transportation security information through HSIN. HSIN usage statistics provided by DHS show an increase in the number of registered users of HSIN's aviation portal from November 2011 through March 2014, but as our survey results demonstrate, stakeholders from the aviation mode were less likely than stakeholders from other modes to report that

³⁵According to TSA officials, TSA formed the IPT in 2009 but planning stopped because of multiple TSA organization realignments.

they had heard of HSIN. In addition, HSIN usage statistics show a decline in the number of registered users of HSIN's public transit and rail portals over the same period, and our survey results show that 53 percent of rail respondents reported in 2013 that they had heard of HSIN.³⁶ The number of registered HSIN accounts decreased after an upgrade of the HSIN system in the summer of 2013 because, among other reasons, DHS removed expired accounts, according to DHS officials. TSA's planned actions, if implemented effectively, should address the intent of our 2011 recommendation.

TSA Has Not Used Our Prior Survey Data to Help Identify Causes of Information-Sharing Gaps and Actions to Address Them

We provided TSA with performance information on its information-sharing efforts, including identifying gaps, such as variation in the receipt and awareness of products and mechanisms by mode, in our November 2011 report. In addition, we issued an electronic supplement concurrently with the report that included aggregate survey data.³⁷ These survey data provide TSA with feedback from stakeholders on its information-sharing efforts, including its products and mechanisms. As discussed previously in this report, TSA has taken some steps to address specific recommendations made in our 2011 report, such as improving the quality of analysis in its products; however, TSA has not systematically reviewed the results of the 2011 stakeholder survey to help identify the causes of the information-sharing gaps and has not sought solutions to address these identified gaps.

Our current survey identified a number of the same gaps we reported in November 2011.³⁸ Specifically, both our current and previous surveys found variations in satisfaction with products and mechanisms. For example, in both surveys, less than half of all air cargo respondents

³⁶From November 2011 through March 2014, the number of registered users of HSIN's aviation portal increased from 143 to 264 and the number of registered users of HSIN's highway portal increased from 205 to 285. Over the same period, the number of registered users of HSIN's public transit and rail portals decreased from 326 to 220 and from 229 to 217, respectively. According to DHS officials, DHS is not able to provide statistics on the number of registered pipeline users of HSIN, since there is not a separate pipeline portal on HSIN. Pipeline stakeholders register for the HSIN Oil and Natural Gas portal, which also includes nonpipeline stakeholders.

³⁷GAO, *Transportation Security Information Sharing: Results of GAO's Survey of Stakeholder Satisfaction with TSA Products and Mechanisms*, an E-Supplement to [GAO-12-44](#), [GAO-12-67SP](#) (Washington D.C.: Nov. 21, 2011).

³⁸[GAO-12-44](#).

reported that they were satisfied with TSA's products. In addition, as discussed above, results from both surveys indicate that the majority of stakeholders received at least one of TSA's reports, but the number of transportation stakeholders who received TSA's other products and who were aware of HSIN varied by mode. Further, about half of stakeholders (49 percent) who responded to our previous survey said that they would prefer that TSA share transportation security-related information more frequently than it did in 2010. Our current survey results continue to show that about half of stakeholders from each mode who responded to our question regarding the frequency of TSA's information sharing would prefer that TSA provide information on a more frequent basis.³⁹ According to TSA officials, TSA coordinates with other producers of transportation security-related information—such as the Federal Bureau of Investigation—to limit duplication, and stakeholders may receive TSA information from these sources in addition to the information they receive directly from TSA. In addition, TSA officials stated that they have taken steps to identify needed corrective actions based on our survey results, such as forming the IPT. However, TSA did not provide documentation showing a systematic review of the survey results to identify causes of information-sharing gaps and solutions to address these gaps. Moreover, our current survey identified some of the same gaps we reported in November 2011. Performance management best practices state that federal managers can use performance information to identify problems, to try to identify their causes, and to look for solutions and approaches that improve results.⁴⁰

Assessing the results of our current survey on transportation stakeholder satisfaction with TSA's security-related products and mechanisms, which contain the most recent information on the gaps we identified, could better position TSA to look for the causes of such gaps and identify solutions to improve its information-sharing efforts. For example, our survey identified that some transportation stakeholders, such as air cargo and airport stakeholders, reported lower levels of satisfaction with TSA's products than other stakeholders. TSA could seek to identify why this is the case and what steps it could take to address this gap. By assessing

³⁹The percentage of stakeholders who responded that they would prefer that TSA share information more frequently than it did in 2013 ranged from 47 percent of rail stakeholders to 54 percent of aviation stakeholders.

⁴⁰[GAO-05-927](#).

the results of our transportation stakeholder satisfaction survey to help identify information-sharing gaps and actions to address them, TSA would be better positioned to reduce or eliminate information-sharing gaps and improve stakeholders' awareness of its information-sharing efforts.

TSA Could Enhance Its Efforts to Systematically Document and Incorporate Feedback to Improve Information-Sharing Efforts

TSA currently has three mechanisms in place to obtain stakeholder feedback, but each has limitations in providing TSA systematic information to improve its information-sharing products and mechanisms, as shown in table 3.

Table 3: TSA’s Feedback Collection Mechanisms

Mechanism	Description	Overview of feedback obtained	Limitations
Customer satisfaction surveys	The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) attaches a survey to the back of its intelligence products that gauges, among other things, customer satisfaction with the usefulness of the information in its products. ^a	TSA’s satisfaction data for fiscal year 2013 indicate that stakeholders who responded to the surveys said that they were generally satisfied with the reports they reviewed during that time frame. ^b	<p>Few responses: TSA received an average of fewer than two surveys per unclassified product distributed through the Homeland Security Information Network (HSIN) in fiscal year 2013. As of April 2014, TSA has not received any surveys on its classified products.^c</p> <p>About 62 percent (204 of 327) of respondents that completed our survey reported that they did not complete the surveys at the back of TSA products.</p> <p>Potential bias: Transportation stakeholders who read the TSA product and choose to provide feedback may not be representative of those stakeholders that decide not to read a product or read the product and choose not to complete the survey.</p> <p>Limited information: The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) publishes aggregate survey results in the department’s <i>Annual Performance Report</i> as performance measures. However, TSA officials stated that the surveys provide limited insight into whether a product actually meets the stakeholder’s needs because the rating system does not provide TSA with information it can use to improve products.</p> <p>Lack of systematic documentation: Although TSA officials told us that they review and consider survey feedback, TSA officials stated they do not have a process for responding to customer satisfaction surveys and do not systematically document how they incorporate survey results to improve information sharing.</p>
American Public Transportation Association (APTA) surveys	TSA coordinates with APTA to administer surveys that gauge how satisfied public transit stakeholders are with, among other issues, the HSIN public transit portal and the Public Transportation Information Sharing and Analysis Center. ^d	APTA survey results from August 2011, January 2012, December 2012, and October 2013 indicate that public transit stakeholders who responded to the surveys were generally satisfied with these information-sharing mechanisms.	<p>Low response rates: Response rates were no higher than 20 percent for all surveys administered.</p> <p>Limited information: APTA surveys do not obtain feedback on all of TSA’s information-sharing products (such as threat assessments and posters) and mechanisms that public transit stakeholders utilize (such as briefings) because APTA surveys are focused on satisfaction with the primary mechanisms for sharing security information with public transit agencies and not intended to capture this information.</p>

Mechanism	Description	Overview of feedback obtained	Limitations
Informally (phone calls, e-mails, and regularly scheduled meetings)	TSA officials brief stakeholders on transportation security–related information during teleconferences, association meetings, and sector coordinating council meetings, or on an as-needed basis through phone calls and e-mails.	According to TSA officials, regular engagement with stakeholders allows TSA to solicit feedback on TSA’s information-sharing efforts, and officials representing all 16 associations we met with told us that they provide informal feedback. Also, in our survey of transportation stakeholders, we found that 53 percent (177 of 332) of survey respondents provide feedback informally.	<p>Potential bias: Informal feedback may not be representative of the entire population of stakeholders because interaction with TSA is voluntary, and TSA does not obtain the views of non-participants.</p> <p>Lack of systematic documentation: TSA does not systematically document how it incorporates the informal feedback to improve information sharing.</p>

Source: GAO analysis of information provided by TSA and APTA. | GAO-14-506.

^aTSA surveys include six questions that ask customers to rate how satisfied they are with the usefulness, relevance, and timeliness of TSA’s products and also ask respondents to provide a narrative response on how the product could be improved.

^bWe also obtained fiscal year 2012 customer satisfaction survey data, but TSA officials stated that the majority of the surveys returned were submitted by TSA officials, not owners and operators of critical transportation infrastructure. In contrast, because of an information system limitation that prevented TSA officials from completing surveys in 2013, the majority of fiscal year 2013 surveys were submitted by external stakeholders.

^cAccording to TSA officials, it is not possible to calculate a response rate because they do not know how many customers have read their products.

^dIn response to a recommendation we made in September 2010, TSA coordinates with APTA to conduct surveys of public transit stakeholders to obtain feedback on its information-sharing efforts. The Public Transportation Information Sharing and Analysis Center, which is implemented by APTA under a cooperative agreement with the Federal Transit Administration, was designed to serve as the one-stop shop for public transit agencies seeking to obtain security-related information. The center collects, analyzes, and distributes security and threat information from the federal government and open sources through daily e-mails.

TSA has taken steps to improve information sharing based on feedback received through the mechanisms discussed in table 3. For example, in December 2012, the rail industry provided TSA with a list of areas for emphasis in intelligence analysis, and TSA initiated a product line focusing on indications and warnings associated with disrupted or successful terrorist attacks. TSA officials stated that they further refined one of the products as a result of a stakeholder requesting information on tactics used in foreign rail attacks. One official representing a railroad association told us that this product was valuable in helping to educate rail stakeholders about indicators of potential terrorist attacks and one survey respondent from the rail industry noted that this product was useful because it contained information that was used to develop suspicious activity training. Similarly, officials at one pipeline association told us that TSA routinely develops intelligence products and conducts monthly meetings based on pipeline operators’ information needs and

informal feedback. For example, TSA developed a product containing pipeline security best practices based on informal feedback from the industry.

Transportation stakeholders we spoke with and surveyed identified additional ways to improve TSA's efforts to obtain feedback. For example, officials representing 6 of the 16 transportation associations we met with offered suggestions on how TSA could improve its efforts to obtain feedback from stakeholders, such as engaging in more of a dialogue and obtaining feedback on a more consistent basis. For example, according to a senior official representing one highway association, TSA officials often do not include feedback the association provides when developing transportation security-related products. In addition, 14 of the 31 survey respondents that provided comments on their experiences in providing TSA with feedback reported that they had negative experiences. The aviation sector had the most negative comments (10 of 14), which centered on the lack of awareness of or consistency in how TSA obtains feedback and lack of responsiveness to the feedback the sector provided. TSA officials told us that beginning in January 2013, TSA increased its efforts to actively engage the aviation sector by increasing the frequency of regular meetings with aircraft operator security representatives.

Customer service best practices emphasize the need for agencies to develop a single, centralized management framework for receiving customer feedback so that all information about the customers can be linked together to facilitate a more complete knowledge of the customer.⁴¹ Further, these best practices suggest that multiple approaches to customer feedback, such as focus groups and customer interviews that provide both qualitative and quantitative data, and the integration of feedback data, are needed to effectively listen to and understand customers' needs and to take appropriate action to meet those needs.⁴² Relying on a single method, such as a customer survey, might be too narrow in scope and limited in its application to fully capture customers' concerns.

⁴¹[GAO-02-776](#).

⁴²Quantitative tools include such methods as customer satisfaction surveys and customer complaints, which can provide measurable data for use in performance scorecards. Qualitative tools include focus groups, personal interviews, and observation and are used by organizations to provide a more in-depth understanding of their customers.

TSA officials stated that the agency does not have a process in place to obtain, document, and incorporate feedback in a systematic manner, but that TSA has initiated an effort to improve how it obtains customer feedback. Specifically, TSA reported that beginning in November 2011, it planned to design a customer management system to document the method and frequency of TSA's interactions with stakeholders, and feedback to improve TSA's intelligence products and mechanisms. TSA officials stated that TSA realigned OIA and OSPIE from September 2011 through September 2013 to improve TSA's security-related products and stakeholder outreach, and that it was necessary to complete the realignment before proceeding with development of the customer management system. According to TSA officials, now that the realignments are complete, TSA has reconvened its IPT to facilitate TSA-wide implementation of information-sharing processes, which, according to the IPT Charter, includes monitoring stakeholders' needs and measuring progress on the development and use of customer satisfaction surveys.⁴³ The IPT Charter also includes milestones and time frames for developing a centralized management framework that is to capture stakeholder satisfaction survey data on all of TSA's security-related products and the systems used to distribute these products, such as HSIN. TSA officials told us that as a first step, they identified a comprehensive list of transportation stakeholders, including documenting how they receive information, and the types of products they receive, and expects to finalize this effort by the end of May 2014. According to an additional milestone in the IPT Charter, as described by a senior IPT official, TSA plans to determine the additional requirements for attaching surveys to specific distribution mechanisms by August 15, 2014 and test all systems and compile stakeholder satisfaction survey results by the end of February 2015. This official stated that the data are to include feedback gathered from surveys attached to TSA products as well as quarterly surveys fielded to stakeholders to help ensure TSA is getting the right information to the right people and responding to stakeholder needs.

While TSA is beginning to take steps to improve how it obtains customer feedback, it is in the initial planning stages of this effort, has not committed to linking a key mechanism—informal feedback—into its

⁴³According to the IPT Charter, IPT members include OIA, OSPIE, and other TSA components, as well as external entities, such as the DHS Office of Intelligence and Analysis, stakeholders and trade associations. One of the primary missions of the IPT is to evaluate TSA's information-sharing services across all modes of transportation.

centralized management framework to capture stakeholder feedback, and has not identified how it plans to incorporate formal survey feedback it plans to collect. For example, TSA completed the IPT Charter in February 2014 and revised the charter in April 2014 to include, among other things, the time frames and milestones discussed above. According to TSA officials, the IPT planning process is ongoing and dynamic, milestones and associated dates are subject to change, and the team plans to continue to assess the steps needed to implement a mechanism to best capture stakeholder feedback on intelligence products. However, the IPT Charter does not specify how TSA plans to systematically collect, document, and incorporate informal feedback—a key feedback mechanism used by the majority of the stakeholders we surveyed, and a mechanism TSA officials told us they utilize to improve information sharing. In 2013, OIA built a system that tracks when OIA officials share information with stakeholders at meetings and conferences, through e-mails, and other means, but TSA officials stated that the data are not used for operational purposes, and TSA has no plans to incorporate this system into its centralized management framework because the IPT decided to focus its initial efforts on developing a survey mechanism. In addition, neither TSA strategic planning documents nor the IPT Charter specifies how TSA plans to systematically document and incorporate the survey feedback it plans to collect.

Because TSA lacks specific plans and documentation of how it plans to improve its efforts to incorporate all of its stakeholder feedback, it is unclear how, or if, TSA will systematically document, and incorporate both survey feedback and informal feedback to improve information sharing. Including in its planned centralized management framework a systematic process to document informal feedback and how it incorporates all of the feedback—both formal and informal—TSA receives could help TSA better ensure it is meeting stakeholder needs by providing the right information to the right people at the right time to enhance security. TSA would also be better positioned to measure the effectiveness of its information-sharing efforts, and target changes to its products and mechanisms, if necessary, or improve information sharing in general.

Further, although TSA is beginning to develop a centralized management framework to capture stakeholder feedback, TSA officials stated that they have not developed any performance measures to assess their efforts to provide stakeholders with useful and timely information. In addition, the IPT Charter does not include time frames or milestones to develop performance measures to assess the results of transportation information sharing because the IPT's first priorities are to finalize a list of

stakeholders and the products they receive as well as develop a more robust stakeholder survey mechanism, as discussed above. Key practices in performance management have shown that successful agencies develop performance measures that tell the organization how well it is achieving its goals.⁴⁴ Further, *Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government* states that managers need to compare actual performance against planned or expected results throughout the organization and analyze significant differences. As TSA progresses in its effort to improve how it obtains customer feedback, establishing performance measures could help assess the results of efforts to provide stakeholders with useful and timely transportation security information and identify where changes may be warranted to better respond to customer needs.

Conclusions

Securing the nation's vast and diverse transportation system is a challenging task that is complicated by the ever-changing and dynamic threat environment. According to DHS, the system is an attractive target for terrorists, and it is critical that TSA provides the transportation industry with the right information at the right time. However, transportation stakeholders can only act on information they receive or can access, and the results of both our 2011 and 2013 surveys of satisfaction of recipients of transportation security-related information revealed gaps in the sharing of products and awareness of a key information-sharing mechanism. Assessing the results of our current survey on transportation stakeholder satisfaction with TSA's products and mechanisms could better position TSA to look for causes of such gaps and identify solutions to improve its information-sharing efforts.

In the longer term, it is important for TSA to further develop its own processes and mechanisms to obtain and document feedback from transportation stakeholders, and incorporate this information in the production and dissemination of security-related information, as a means to improve information sharing. TSA is beginning to take steps to improve how it obtains stakeholder feedback. However, TSA is in the initial planning stages of this effort, and does not have specifics and documentation of how it plans to systematically obtain, document, and incorporate both stakeholder survey and informal feedback to improve information sharing as well as measure results. Including in its planned

⁴⁴ [GAO/GGD-96-118](#).

centralized management framework a systematic process to document informal feedback, and how it incorporates all of the feedback TSA receives could help TSA better ensure it is meeting stakeholder needs and providing the right information to the right people at the right time to enhance security. Further, establishing performance measures would help TSA assess the results of efforts to provide stakeholders with useful and timely transportation security information.

Recommendations for Executive Action

To help strengthen information sharing with transportation stakeholders and ensure that stakeholders receive security-related information in a timely manner, we recommend that the TSA Administrator take the following three actions:

- assess the results of our 2013 transportation stakeholder satisfaction survey to help identify the causes of information-sharing gaps and actions to address them;
- include in its planned customer feedback framework a systematic process to document informal feedback, and how it incorporates all of the feedback TSA receives, both formal and informal; and
- establish performance measures to help assess the results of efforts to provide stakeholders with useful and timely transportation security information.

Agency Comments and Our Evaluation

We provided a draft of this report and a draft copy of the accompanying e-supplement ([GAO-14-488SP](#)) to Amtrak and the Departments of Homeland Security and Transportation for comment. In an e-mail received May 30, 2014, the Amtrak audit liaison stated that Amtrak had no comments on the report. DHS provided written comments on the draft report, which are reproduced in full in appendix II. DHS concurred with the findings and recommendations in the report and described the efforts the department has underway or planned to address our recommendations, as summarized below. The Department of Transportation's Deputy Director of Audit Relations also replied in an e-mail received on June 4, 2014 that the department had no comments on the report. Amtrak and the Departments of Homeland Security and Transportation did not provide comments on the e-supplement.

In its written comments, DHS stated that TSA has implemented improved information sharing processes since 2011 and has additional efforts

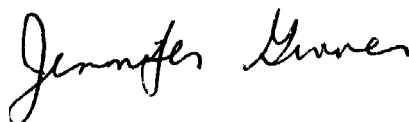
underway that are to address the remaining open information sharing recommendations made in our November 2011 transportation security information sharing report.⁴⁵ DHS stated our survey results provide valuable information but that we did not include comments provided by the survey participants or industry stakeholders we met with, which would have been beneficial to understanding the full context of the draft report. However, we believe that we included comments provided by both survey respondents and industry stakeholders, as appropriate. For example, we provided summary information from highway survey respondents and associations to explain why stakeholders from the highway mode might be less satisfied with TSA's information-sharing mechanisms than stakeholders in other modes. In addition, we described survey respondents' and associations' views on steps TSA has taken to improve information sharing based on feedback they have provided as well as the suggestions these stakeholders provided on how TSA could improve its efforts to obtain feedback. We included these examples, among others, to provide additional context to the report's findings.

DHS also identified the project team that is to implement the three recommendations we made in the report and provided estimated completion dates. Specifically, DHS said that TSA's IPT is currently assessing the results of our 2013 survey and is to develop recommendations to adjust products and information sharing mechanisms by March 2015. In addition, the IPT is to continue to develop processes to document and incorporate all of the feedback TSA receives, both formal and informal, by March 2015. Further, DHS stated that the IPT plans to develop performance measures and customer satisfaction goals for each of TSA's transportation security products by December 2014.

We are sending copies of this report to appropriate congressional committees. We are also sending copies to the Secretaries of Homeland Security and Transportation, and the President and Chief Executive Officer of Amtrak. In addition, the report is available at no charge on the GAO website at <http://www.gao.gov>. If you or your staff have any questions about this report, please contact me at 202-512-7141 or

⁴⁵[GAO-12-44](#).

groverj@gao.gov. Contact points for our Offices of Congressional Relations and Public Affairs may be found on the last page of this report. Key contributors to this report are listed in appendix III.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jennifer Grover". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jennifer Grover
Acting Director, Homeland Security and Justice Issues

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The Honorable Mike Crapo
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Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs
United States Senate

The Honorable John D. Rockefeller IV
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The Honorable Bill Shuster
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The Honorable Nick J. Rahall, II
Ranking Member
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
House of Representatives

Appendix I: Objectives, Scope, and Methodology

This report addresses the following questions: (1) To what extent do stakeholders report that they are satisfied with the Transportation Security Administration's (TSA) security-related products and the mechanisms used to disseminate them, and to what extent has TSA used GAO's prior survey information to identify areas for improvement? (2) To what extent does TSA obtain, document, and incorporate stakeholder feedback on its information-sharing efforts?

To address the first question, we conducted a web-based survey of transportation stakeholders from the aviation, freight and passenger rail, highway, public transit, and pipeline modes.¹ We based our survey on one we previously fielded to transportation stakeholders in 2011, and interviewed TSA officials responsible for developing security-related information products and coordinating with industry stakeholders and Department of Homeland Security (DHS) officials responsible for the Homeland Security Information Network (HSIN)² to identify changes in the primary security-related information-sharing products, mechanisms, and the stakeholders for whom TSA maintains contact information.³ In two instances, the modes selected for our survey differed from the ones surveyed in 2011. Specifically, we conducted reviews of pipeline security and public transit information sharing in 2010 and therefore did not assess the satisfaction of pipeline or public transit stakeholders in our November 2011 TSA information-sharing review.⁴ In addition, we did not

¹For the purposes of this report, we defined TSA stakeholders to be owners and operators of critical transportation infrastructure. We did not include maritime stakeholders in our review because the U.S. Coast Guard is the lead agency for maritime information sharing.

²HSIN is a web-based platform operated by DHS to facilitate sensitive but unclassified (SBU) information sharing and collaboration among federal, state, local, tribal, and private sector entities. DHS describes HSIN as its primary information-sharing mechanism. HSIN is made up of a network of communities, called communities of interest. These communities are organized by state organizations, federal organizations, or mission areas such as emergency management and critical infrastructure.

³We reported the results of the survey in GAO, *Transportation Security Information Sharing: Stakeholders Generally Satisfied but TSA Could Improve Analysis, Awareness, and Accountability*, [GAO-12-44](#) (Washington, D.C.: Nov. 21, 2011), and *Transportation Security Information Sharing: Results of GAO's Survey of Stakeholder Satisfaction with TSA Products and Mechanisms, an E-Supplement to GAO-12-44*, [GAO-12-67SP](#) (Washington D.C.: Nov. 21, 2011).

⁴See GAO, *Pipeline Security: TSA Has Taken Actions to Help Strengthen Security, but Could Improve Priority-Setting and Assessment Processes*, [GAO-10-867](#) (Washington D.C.: Aug. 4, 2010), and [GAO-10-895](#).

always survey the same population for a particular mode or transportation sector across both surveys. For example, for our November 2011 review, we surveyed state departments of transportation or emergency management to collect highway stakeholders' views. However, in coordination with TSA, we decided a more appropriate population to include in our current survey was members of two highway working groups that coordinate with TSA on information sharing—the Highway and Motor Carrier Sector Coordinating Council and the Peer Advisory Group. Further, TSA officials provided us with a more comprehensive and inclusive list of short line and regional railroads than in 2011, which more than doubled the number of stakeholders in this sector. Because we surveyed different stakeholders and stakeholder groups in 2013 than for our 2011 review, survey results cannot be directly compared with the 2011 survey results.

We designed draft questionnaires in close collaboration with our survey specialists. We conducted pretests with six security officials—at least one from each of the modes we surveyed—in person and by telephone.

We identified organizations and security officials at each organization to receive the survey using TSA's security information product distribution lists and, for public transit agencies, the Federal Transit Administration's National Transit Database on public transit ridership.⁵ We sent the survey to one security official at each of the organizations that we identified in our preliminary steps, including commercial passenger air carriers, Category X and I commercial airports, air cargo carriers, Amtrak, Class I freight rail carriers, short line and regional railroads that carry toxic inhalation hazards or operate in high-threat urban areas, public transit agencies, pipeline companies, and members of two groups that are composed of key highway stakeholders—the Highway and Motor Carrier

⁵The Federal Transit Administration is an agency within the U.S. Department of Transportation that provides financial and technical assistance to public transit systems.

Sector Coordinating Council and the Peer Advisory Group.⁶ We sent the survey to the entire known population of these aviation and rail organizations, as well as all members of highway groups; no sampling was conducted. We surveyed 46 of the 896 U.S. public transit agencies, which represent about 84 percent of total 2011 ridership.⁷ We also surveyed the 52 energy companies that operate the 100 most critical pipeline systems.⁸

We included 481 transportation stakeholders in our web-based survey, which we launched on November 7, 2013. Log-in information was e-mailed to all contacts. We contacted by telephone and e-mailed those who had not completed the questionnaire at multiple points during the data collection period, and we closed the survey on January 16, 2014. A total of 337 organizations submitted a completed questionnaire with

⁶For purposes of this report, “commercial airport” refers to an airport within the United States operating in accordance with a TSA-approved security program and at which TSA performs, or oversees the performance of, passenger and baggage-screening activities. Category X airports represent the nation’s largest and busiest airports as measured by the volume of passenger traffic and are potentially attractive targets for criminal and terrorist activity. TSA classifies the nation’s airports into one of five categories (X, I, II, III, and IV) based on various factors such as the number of takeoffs and landings annually, the extent of passenger screening at the airport, and other security considerations. In general, Category X airports have the largest number of passenger boardings and Category IV airports have the smallest. As defined by revenue, for 2009, Class I railroads are freight rail carriers having an operating revenue of \$379 million or more. The Highway and Motor Carrier Sector Coordinating Council is an industry advisory body that, as appropriate, coordinates the private industry perspective on highway and motor carrier security policy, practices, and standards that affect the transportation sector. According to TSA officials, the Peer Advisory Group includes 12 to 15 representatives from motorcoach companies that coordinate with TSA to, among other things, share security-related information. Our survey responses represent each of the stakeholder groups described but are not generalizable to entire modes of transportation such as aviation, rail, and highways.

⁷The total number of public transit agencies reflects those agencies that reported data to the National Transit Database in fiscal year 2011, the most recent year for which data were available when we initiated our survey. The National Transit Database is the nation’s primary source for information and statistics on the transit systems of the United States. We surveyed 46 of the top 50 agencies as measured by fiscal year 2011 ridership. We omitted 4 agencies after learning that the security points of contact at 5 agencies were the same.

⁸A system is considered critical if it is so vital to the United States that its incapacitation or destruction would have a debilitating effect on security, national economic security, public health or safety, or any combination thereof. TSA determined the most critical pipeline systems based on the amount of energy they carry.

usable responses for an overall response rate of 70 percent, as shown in table 4.

Table 4: Stakeholder Groups That Received and Completed the Survey

Stakeholder transportation sector and mode	Number that received the survey	Number that completed the survey	Percentage of recipients that completed the survey
Aviation	206	150	73
Commercial passenger air carrier ^a	57	43	75
Air cargo ^a	67	42	63
Commercial airports ^b	82	65	79
Rail	144	89	62
Class I freight rail	7	7	100
Short line and regional freight rail	136	81	60
Amtrak	1	1	100
Highway	33	24	73
Public transit	46	36	78
Pipeline	52	38	73
Total	481	337	70

Source: GAO survey. | GAO-14-506.

^aWe compared the lists of commercial passenger and air cargo carriers provided by TSA and found that seven airlines were on both lists and had the same security contacts for both sectors. We placed each of the carriers in one sector based on its categorization in prior work we completed under the 9/11 Commission Act to maintain consistency in reporting.

^bThe were 84 airports in our scope, but the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, which operates three airports, submitted a consolidated response. As a result, we ultimately surveyed 82 airport security coordinators.

Since the air cargo and short line and regional freight rail sectors' response rates were lower than those of the other sectors (63 and 60 percent, respectively), we conducted a nonresponse analysis.⁹ We analyzed the extent to which air cargo respondents and nonrespondents differ by geography, TSA program they participate in, and size, and we analyzed short line nonresponse for geography and size. We determined,

⁹Nonresponse analysis is an established practice in survey research that helps determine whether nonresponse bias (i.e., survey results that do not accurately reflect the population) might occur because of under- or overrepresentation of some respondents' views on survey questions

according to our analysis of survey data and discussions with air cargo and short line association officials, there is likely no programmatic or geographic nonresponse bias in the air cargo sector or geographic or size bias in the short line and regional rail sector. However, only one of the four large air cargo carriers responded to the survey, and that carrier's responses were more positive than for the sector as a whole. There may be a size-based response bias, but since there are only 3 nonresponding large carriers out of the population of 67 carriers, their responses would not likely have had an effect on the overall response of air cargo carriers. In addition, we interviewed 2 of the nonresponding large carriers to ensure that we could incorporate their views as appropriate.

Because we did not conduct any sampling for our survey, our data are not subject to sampling errors. However, the practical difficulties of conducting any survey may introduce nonsampling errors. For example, differences in how a particular question is interpreted, the sources of information available to respondents, or the types of people who do not respond to a question can introduce errors into the survey results. We included steps in both the data collection and data analysis stages to minimize such nonsampling errors. As we previously indicated, we collaborated with our survey specialists to design draft questionnaires, and versions of the questionnaire were pretested with six members of the surveyed population. From these pretests, we made revisions as necessary to reduce the likelihood of nonresponse and reporting errors on our questions. Our analysts answered respondent questions and resolved difficulties that respondents had in completing our survey. We examined the survey results and performed computer analyses to identify inconsistencies and other indications of error and addressed such issues, where possible. A second, independent analyst checked the accuracy of all computer analyses to minimize the likelihood of errors in data processing. To obtain additional narrative and supporting context from stakeholders, survey respondents were given multiple opportunities to provide additional open-ended comments throughout our survey. While the survey responses cannot be used to generalize the opinions and satisfaction of transportation stakeholders as a whole, the responses provide data for our defined population.

The final instrument is reproduced in an e-supplement we are issuing concurrently with this report—[GAO-14-488SP](#)—and displays the

percentages of responses received for each question.¹⁰ The questionnaire asked those transportation stakeholders responsible for security operations to identify the modes of transportation they provide, the extent to which they receive and are satisfied or dissatisfied with TSA security-related products and briefings, the mechanisms they use to obtain security information, and their satisfaction with each of these mechanisms.

For the purposes of this survey, we defined the five aspects of security-related information quality as

- timeliness: the degree to which you received the information within the time it was needed;
- relevance: the degree to which the information was applicable to your organization;
- completeness: the degree to which the information contained all the necessary details;
- actionability: the degree to which the information enabled you to make adjustments to your security measures, if such a change was warranted; and
- accuracy: the degree to which the information was correct.¹¹

We reviewed documents and plans that describe recommended practices for effective information sharing, such as the 2012 Transportation Security Information Sharing Environment (TSISE). Finally, we compared TSA's efforts to identify and take appropriate actions based on

¹⁰[GAO-14-488SP](#).

¹¹We developed these aspects of quality in consultation with GAO methodologists as well as public transit agency officials for the public transit stakeholder survey we reported on in September 2010.

stakeholders' responses to our surveys with best practices in performance management.¹²

We also interviewed officials from 16 transportation industry associations, selected to achieve a variation across transportation modes and sectors; TSA officials responsible for developing security-related information products and coordinating with industry stakeholders; DHS officials responsible for the department's primary information-sharing mechanism; and six individual survey respondents, selected to achieve a variation across modes, to obtain additional context about their responses. While the opinions expressed in the interviews cannot be generalized to all stakeholders or modes of transportation, they provided illustrative examples of the perspectives of various stakeholders about TSA's information-sharing products and mechanisms and corroborated information we gathered through other means.

To answer the second question, we obtained 2012 and 2013 customer satisfaction survey data—the most recent data available—from surveys TSA distributes with its information-sharing products, and public transit customer satisfaction survey data collected through surveys administered by the American Public Transportation Association (APTA) in August 2011, January 2012, December 2012, and October 2013—all of the surveys administered, as of April 2014. We questioned knowledgeable TSA and APTA officials regarding completeness, accuracy, and management of the data. Limitations with these data are discussed in this report. In addition, we asked questions about the type of feedback stakeholders provide TSA in our customer satisfaction survey described above. We also analyzed fiscal year 2014 through 2016 TSA strategic plans and planning efforts to develop a systematic process to collect and analyze customer feedback. We compared this information against customer service best practices and best practices for customer

¹²See, for example, GAO, *Executive Guide: Effectively Implementing the Government Performance and Results Act*, GGD-96-118 (Washington, D.C.: June 1, 1996), and *Managing for Results: Enhancing Agency Use of Performance Information for Management Decision Making*, [GAO-05-927](#) (Washington, D.C.: Sept. 9, 2005). This report identified (1) how federal agencies can use performance information to make management decisions and (2) practices that can facilitate the use of performance information. To determine the best practices for performance measurement, we reviewed relevant literature, including previous GAO reports, spoke to experts in using performance information, and held group discussions with federal program managers.

satisfaction¹³ as well as *Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government*.¹⁴ In addition, as noted above, we interviewed officials from 16 industry associations, 6 stakeholders, and TSA officials responsible for coordinating with stakeholders and collecting stakeholder feedback to determine what other mechanisms TSA uses to obtain and incorporate stakeholder feedback.

We conducted this performance audit from June 2013 to June 2014 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

¹³See, for example, GAO, *Defense Logistics: Improving Customer Feedback Program Could Enhance DLA's Delivery of Services*, [GAO-02-776](#) (Washington, D.C.: Sept. 9, 2002). We conducted an extensive literature search of best practice organizations to determine popular techniques for collecting customer feedback that we used to evaluate activities related to defense logistics. In addition, see [GAO-10-895](#), in which we applied these best practices to transit agencies in the past.

¹⁴GAO, *Internal Control, Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government*, [GAO/AIMD-00-21.3.1](#) (Washington, D.C.: November 1999).

Appendix II: Comments from the Department of Homeland Security

U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20528



**Homeland
Security**

June 12, 2014

Ms. Jennifer Grover
Director, Homeland Security & Justice Issues
U.S. Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, NW
Washington, DC 20548

Re: Draft Report GAO-14-506, "TRANSPORTATION SECURITY INFORMATION SHARING: Stakeholder Satisfaction Varies; TSA Could Take Additional Actions to Strengthen Efforts"

Dear Ms. Grover:

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on this draft report. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) appreciates the U.S. Government Accountability Office's (GAO's) work in planning and conducting its review and issuing this report.

The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) stakeholder survey results, and the observations and recommendations presented in GAO's draft report, provide valuable information, which TSA has heavily leveraged in its development of progressive information sharing initiatives. In addition, as highlighted in the draft report, TSA has improved the quality of analysis in its products and its creation of more user-friendly information sharing mechanisms. Additional information sharing improvements at TSA are also underway, including the efforts of the Information Sharing Integrated Project Team (IPT), which includes members from offices across the Agency. These efforts include: (1) working to strengthen TSA's intelligence and information sharing core capabilities and improve its ability to capture stakeholder feedback concerning transportation security information products, and (2) considering options to implement the processes and solutions necessary to address the remaining three open information sharing recommendations made in a previous GAO report.¹

Based upon the survey information provided in the draft report, TSA has implemented improved information sharing processes and achieved incremental improvement in customer satisfaction since 2011. GAO did not, however, include comments provided by the survey participants or made during interviews with industry stakeholders in the draft report. TSA believes that analysis of this additional information would be beneficial to understanding of the full context of the draft report.

The draft contained three recommendations with which the Department concurs. Specifically GAO recommended that the TSA Administrator:

¹ GAO, "TRANSPORTATION SECURITY INFORMATION SHARING: Stakeholders Generally Satisfied but TSA Could Improve Analysis, Awareness, and Accountability," GAO-12-44 (Washington, D.C. Nov. 21, 2011)

Recommendation 1: Assess the results of our 2013 transportation stakeholder satisfaction survey to help identify the causes of information sharing gaps and actions to address them.

Response: Concur. TSA is currently assessing the results of the 2013 survey. As discussed in the draft report, TSA has established an Agency-wide Information Sharing IPT and among the tasks to be performed by the IPT is a detailed analysis of the GAO stakeholder survey results. The IPT is charged with formulating recommendations to adjust current products and information sharing mechanisms based upon survey results, and developing a proposal for an improved organizational structure that will facilitate a more efficient and systematic process for managing the information sharing cycle with stakeholders. Estimated Completion Date (ECD): March 31, 2015.

Recommendation 2: Include in its planned customer feedback framework a systematic process to document informal feedback and how it incorporates all of the feedback TSA receives, both formal and informal.

Response: Concur. Consolidation of TSA information sharing functions and creation of a centralized performance management/customer feedback tracking capability are objectives of the Information Sharing IPT. The IPT will continue to develop a customer management set of processes that ensures proper evaluation and consideration of all the feedback TSA receives, both formal and informal. ECD: March 31, 2015.

Recommendation 3: Establish performance measures to help assess the results of efforts to provide stakeholders with useful and timely transportation security information.

Response: Concur. The TSA Information Sharing IPT is evaluating the GAO survey results to formulate specific performance measures and recommended customer satisfaction goals (satisfaction percentage levels). The appropriate metrics and satisfaction goals will be established by December 2014 for each of TSA's transportation security products. Performance will be measured against the established customer satisfaction goals through a feedback framework approved by the IPT and TSA leadership. ECD: December 31, 2014.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to review and provide comments on this draft report. Technical comments were previously provided under separate cover. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions. We look forward to working with you in the future.

Sincerely,



Jim H. Crumpacker, CIA, CFE
Director
Departmental GAO-OIG Liaison Office

Appendix III: GAO Contacts and Staff Acknowledgments

GAO Contact

Jennifer Grover, 202-512-7141 or groverj@gao.gov

Staff Acknowledgments

In addition to the contact named above, individuals making key contributions to this report include Leyla Kazaz and Jill Verret, Assistant Directors; Joanna Chan; Katherine Davis; Michele Fejfar; Eric Hauswirth; Paul Hobart; Tracey King; Erin McLaughlin; Linda Miller; Lisa S. Moore; and Janay Sam.

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