

## Department of Transportation



Highlights of [GAO-03-108](#), a report to Congress included as part of GAO's Performance and Accountability Series

## Why GAO Did This Report

In its 2001 performance and accountability report on the Department of Transportation (the department), GAO identified important safety, security, acquisition, financial management, and other issues facing the department.

The information GAO presents in this report is intended to help sustain congressional attention and a departmental focus on continuing to make progress in addressing these challenges—and others that have arisen since 2001—and ultimately overcoming them. This report is part of a special series of reports on governmentwide and agency-specific issues.

## What Remains to Be Done

GAO believes the department should

- work with Congress and other transportation stakeholders to develop approaches that improve transportation safety, mobility through intermodal and modal planning and investment approaches, and human capital strategies;
- pursue strategies to address long-term security challenges and ensure a smooth transition to Department of Homeland Security responsibility;
- continue to improve its acquisition and financial management by addressing root causes of problems.

[www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-03-108](http://www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-03-108).

To view the full report, click on the link above. For more information, contact John H. Anderson, Jr. at (202) 512-2834 or [andersonj@gao.gov](mailto:andersonj@gao.gov).

## What GAO Found

The Department of Transportation has implemented a number of actions to improve its mission and management performance. Future improvements will increasingly demand effective partnerships and consensus-building with state, local, and private stakeholders.

- **Improving transportation safety.** Efforts to further reduce 44,000 annual transportation fatalities have reached a plateau. Since the highest pay-off actions have occurred, future improvements will be difficult because they depend on influencing individuals' behaviors and state and local governments' implementation of safety laws.
- **Transforming transportation security.** Security is a crucial and growing responsibility. The department needed to design and implement effective security approaches that did not unduly hinder passenger and freight mobility. It created the Transportation Security Administration and staffed a federalized aviation screening workforce of more than 60,000 people within just a few months. Despite an impressive start, extraordinary challenges remain. It now must accomplish a smooth transfer of security functions to the new Department of Homeland Security and work closely with the new agency on transportation security.
- **Improving mobility and economic growth through intermodal and modal approaches.** As transportation needs change, mobility and economic growth are affected. More travel crosses transportation modes and increasing congestion—particularly for freight—affects productivity. New strategies and policy decisions—especially about Amtrak's role—are required to meet these challenges.
- **Enhancing management of aviation and Coast Guard acquisitions.** The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and the Coast Guard face major acquisition issues. Both agencies have improved acquisition management, but multibillion-dollar modernization projects pose risks of significant delays and cost increases. Specifically, FAA's Air Traffic Control modernization efforts continue to be at high risk.
- **Building human capital strategies.** The department faces human capital problems that are mirrored in the nation's transportation sector. A shortfall of people and skills could compromise the transportation workforce and affect the economy, safety, and mobility of our nation.
- **Fostering improved financial management.** The department and FAA have made significant progress in improving the underlying causes of weaknesses in their financial management systems. Until new systems that will soon be deployed are proven in full operation, FAA's financial management systems remain at high risk.