



# Improving and Streamlining the Motor Carrier Safety Assistance Program

To strengthen and improve the Motor Carrier Safety Assistance Program (MCSAP), the Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance (CVSA) recommends the following changes to the grant program structure and process:

- Adjusting Federal match requirements to ensure States have adequate funds to carry out their mission.
- Provide the States with additional flexibility in order to fully leverage resources and improve program efficiency.
- Streamline and refine the Commercial Vehicle Safety Plan (CVSP) process to eliminate unnecessary administrative burden on the States while improving the effectiveness of the plans.
- Eliminate the distinction between inter- and intra- state motor carriers.

The Federal government entrusts the States with the responsibility of enforcing the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations (FMCSRs) and the Hazardous Materials Regulations (HMRs). To meet that responsibility, Congress provides funding to the States, through the Motor Carrier Safety Assistance Program and a number of other focused grant programs. The States use these funds to conduct enforcement activities, train enforcement personnel, purchase necessary equipment, update software and other technology, and conduct outreach and education campaigns to raise awareness related to commercial motor vehicle (CMV) safety issues. The funds in part are used to pay the salaries of more than 12,000 full and part time CMV safety professionals. These people conduct more than 3.4 million CMV roadside inspections, 34,000 new entrant safety audits, and 6,000 compliance reviews each year.<sup>1</sup> The goal of these programs, which are administered by the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA), is to reduce CMV-involved crashes, fatalities, and injuries through consistent, uniform, and effective CMV safety programs. The programs seek to identify safety defects, driver deficiencies, and unsafe motor carrier practices and remove them from the nation's roadways. In order to better equip the States to meet this mission, CVSA recommends a series of improvements to the structure and administration of the FMCSA grant programs.

## Basic MCSAP Grant Program

With each new transportation bill, the States are tasked with additional enforcement and oversight responsibilities. At the same time, the motor carrier industry continues to grow. It is imperative that States have the funds necessary to effectively develop and implement their CMV safety programs. Flexibility within grant programs is also a key consideration, allowing States to meet their responsibilities through creative, State-specific solutions. To improve the Basic MCSAP Grant program, CVSA recommends:

- **Increasing the Basic MCSAP Grant program match to 90 percent Federal / 10 percent State, from 80 percent Federal / 20 percent State;**
- **Making no changes to the current maintenance of effort (MOE) requirements; and,**
- **Increasing the funding cap on traffic enforcement activities from 5 percent to 10 percent.**

## Commercial Vehicle Information Systems and Networks Program

Communication and accurate data are critical to an effective nationwide CMV safety program. In order for the States to effectively collect and exchange information, States must achieve a level of parity in the systems they are using to gather and transmit safety data. The Commercial Vehicle Information Systems and Networks (CVISN) Program was established, in part, to provide funds for States to use to update their information technology capabilities, enabling them to effectively exchange and use information electronically. To maximize the effectiveness of the CVISN program, CVSA recommends:

- ***Adjusting the CVISN reimbursement ratio, currently at 50 percent Federal / 50 percent State, in line with the Basic MCSAP Grant reimbursement level; and,***
- ***Expanding and updating the reimbursable expense category in the CVISN Grant program, to ensure that the program keeps pace with constant advancements in technology.***

## New Entrant Safety Assurance Program

The New Entrant Safety Assurance Program is designed to ensure that motor carriers entering the industry understand the regulations and their responsibilities. New motor carriers undergo a comprehensive safety audit soon after initiating operations, to ensure that the motor carrier is knowledgeable and in compliance with the relevant motor carrier safety regulations. However, improvements to the program and an increase in the number of motor carriers entering the industry place additional demands on the States and drive up the cost of administering the program. Meanwhile, the program only addresses a portion of the industry, as only motor carriers who operate in interstate commerce—those under FMCSA's authority—are required to undergo such reviews. In order to provide the safest environment possible on the nation's roadways, the program must be adequately funded and ALL motor carriers should be required to undergo a safety audit, to ensure that they understand and can comply with the requirements. To address this, CVSA recommends:

- ***Ensuring that the funding level for the program is commensurate with the demand; and,***
- ***Investigating the feasibility of expanding the New Entrant Safety Assurance Program to include audits of intrastate motor carriers and making those audits eligible for reimbursement under the program.***

## Commercial Vehicle Safety Plans

As part of the application process for Basic MCSAP Grant funds, States are required to complete an annual Commercial Vehicle Safety Plan. These plans document how the State has met their safety goals for the past year and how Basic MCSAP funds for the coming fiscal year will be spent in order to meet target goals for enhancing safety. However, there are administrative burdens and other issues that impact the effectiveness of the CVSP process and on the timely disbursement of grant funds. While FMCSA has made some strides recently to improve this process and reduce the administrative burden on States, more can be done. To improve this process, CVSA recommends:

- ***Adjusting the period of performance for all grants so that the 'clock' on a grant only begins once the funds have been allocated to the State;***
- ***Adjusting the period of performance for grants and CVSPs, moving to a more long-term, three or five year cycle;***
- ***Setting internal grant application review deadlines for FMCSA;***
- ***Streamlining the CVSP submission process; and,***
- ***Removing non-regulated industry crashes/incidents from the criteria used to determine grant award amounts for incentive and other funds.***

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<sup>1</sup>Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration 2012-2016 Strategic Plan. Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration. May 2012.  
[http://www.fmcsa.dot.gov/documents/STRATEGIC-PLAN/FMCSA\\_StrategicPlan\\_2012-2016.pdf](http://www.fmcsa.dot.gov/documents/STRATEGIC-PLAN/FMCSA_StrategicPlan_2012-2016.pdf)