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## U.S. Needs Stronger Transit-Rail Cars After Crashes, Board Says

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By John Hughes

Feb. 18 (Bloomberg) -- U.S. regulators should require transit-rail operators to meet safety standards that would prevent cars from crumpling in crashes, after fatal accidents in Washington and near Boston, a safety board said today.

The National Transportation Safety Board added the recommendation to its "most wanted" list of federal safety improvements. Regulators should also require that cars be designed to be more accessible to first responders, and that equipment failing to meet standards be removed, the NTSB said.

"There are no standards" for crashworthiness of transit rail cars, NTSB Chairman Deborah Hersman said at a hearing in Washington. "That doesn't make any sense."

The board's action may boost Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood's effort, announced last year, to get Congress to enact legislation that would require state transit operators to meet federal safety standards for equipment, facility and operations.

Jim Southworth, the NTSB's rail chief, cited three accidents in calling for the recommendation, including two in Washington and one outside Boston.

In one of the crashes, in June 2009, a Washington rail car smashed into a stopped train in front of it, killing nine. In Newton, Massachusetts, a transit rail car ran into the back of another in May 2008, killing the operator of one of the trains.

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