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**Research and Innovative Technology Administration (RITA) - News**

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## **DOT to Study Safer Seats, Tables for Commuter Trains**

The U.S. Department of Transportation's (DOT) Research and Innovative Technology Administration (RITA) today launched a new project to make seats and tables on commuter trains safer.

Working with the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), RITA's Volpe National Transportation Systems Center has awarded two contracts worth \$850,000 to a Massachusetts-based technology firm, TIAX ([www.tiaxllc.com](http://www.tiaxllc.com)), to develop a safer passenger seat and worktable that will reduce injuries and improve the ability of passengers to safely exit a train following a collision.

The project supports several other rail safety initiatives being conducted jointly by the FRA and RITA's Volpe Center, including ongoing research in the areas of crashworthiness, emergency evacuation, grade crossing and safety decision-making.

To make passenger trains safer, TIAX will design a worktable that will absorb energy upon impact and reduce the risk of head, chest, abdomen and leg injuries. The table also will be designed to allow passengers to evacuate more easily following a collision. In addition, improved three-person seats will be developed to reduce the risk of head, chest, and leg injuries by safely compartmentalizing passengers and ensuring that the seat remains attached to the floor upon impact.

Since 1992, Volpe Center and FRA have focused on both passenger and freight structural crashworthiness and occupant protection. The research has found that it is possible to make passenger train travel safer using a combination of these two elements.

"We want to do everything we can to make commuter trains safe," said RITA Administrator Dr. Ashok G. Kaveeshwar. "If there is a way to make seats and tables safer, we will find it," he said.

RITA's Volpe Center is a non-profit, fee-for-service organization that conducts more than \$300 million annually in cutting-edge transportation research and technology development for federal, state and local agencies, as well as for private organizations. For more information about RITA, go to [www.rita.dot.gov](http://www.rita.dot.gov)

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