

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 14, 2011

The Hon. Deborah P. Hersman
Chair National Transportation Safety Board
490 L'Enfant Plaza S.W
Washington, D.C. 20590

Dear Chairwoman Hersman:

We write to you regarding the recent fatal accident involving a low-cost curbside bus carrier to respectfully request the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) expand its investigation of the incident to review the possible safety risks that curbside bus carriers pose, the efficacy of current regulations for these carriers, and whether or not new regulations or better enforcement are needed. As you know, a bus operated by World Wide Tours was involved in a horrific crash in the early morning hours of March 12th that left 14 individuals dead and countless other injured. We are concerned that World Wide Tours and many other carriers are engaging in ongoing practices that may place riders in New York City and throughout the country at risk.

New York City is the primary transportation hub of the Northeast Corridor of the United States. Millions of vacationers and commuters travel into and out of New York every day via bus, rail, and car. In the last decade, intercity bus service has seen a significant increase in ridership across the Northeast Corridor, and New York City in particular, due to public demand for affordable travel.

The rising popularity of intercity bus travel is largely due to low-cost "curbside" carriers, which do not operate out of terminals like traditional bus services, but instead use city streets and sidewalks to drop off and pick up passengers. According to a recent New York City Department of City Planning study, curbside bus travel in the Chinatown area of Manhattan has increased significantly, producing more than 2000 arrival and departures weekly. This has led to numerous community groups expressing legitimate concerns regarding the safety and soundness of the curbside operators.

As you know, DOT regulations require bus operators to ensure passenger safety, adequately maintain buses and place strict requirements on driver qualifications. Unfortunately, the events of March 12th demonstrate a clear failure of the system which put the public in harm's way. For this reason, we believe that you should also examine the efficacy of current regulations governing low-cost curbside carriers and if further regulations or greater enforcement measures are needed to avoid future accidents that could needlessly place individuals in harm's way.

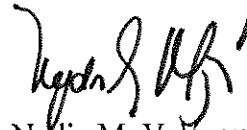
There is ample evidence that the incident involving World Wide Tours is not an isolated incident but rather just one example of an industry that, in many cases, is operating outside the bounds of city, state and federal transportation safety guidelines. As NTSB is aware, the company in question had two previous accidents that injured two individuals, and had a poor ranking for both vehicle maintenance and limiting drivers' hours.

The growth of curbside busing has placed unsustainable pressure on New York City's infrastructure and places New Yorkers at risk. As such, these violations create unsafe conditions not only in New York City and other cities in which these carriers operate, but also on the nation's highways. This is why we are requesting that the National Transportation Safety Board broaden its investigation to fully examine the current oversight system for low-cost curb side carriers and make recommendations to promote public safety.

Sincerely,



Charles E. Schumer
U.S. Senate



Nydia M. Velázquez
U.S. House of Representatives