

2013 Roger W. Jones Award for Executive Leadership
Nomination of Daniel C. Smith
Commitment to Effective Continuity of Government

Mr. Smith's leadership of NHTSA's vehicle safety program demonstrates his sound strategic capabilities and his ability to focus that program on the agency's central mission of safety. Most recently, Mr. Smith demonstrated his strong commitment to effective continuity of government to support the agency mission by implementing a leadership development program specifically for GS 13s and GS 14s within his organization. This program provides training, mentoring, and hands-on experiences to a group of 20 staff selected through a competitive process. Mr. Smith committed his time and resources to establish this unique growth opportunity for in-house staff that can serve in addition as a succession planning tool. In fact, other NHTSA offices are now very much interested in participating in this program after the pilot year is complete.

Another example of his outstanding leadership and skills at encouraging excellence to develop new leaders is what his office did to address unsafe motor vehicle equipment imported into this country. He directed the Office of Vehicle Safety Compliance to ensure that its testing of foreign products kept pace with the increasing tide of imported auto equipment. He directed the Office of Defects Investigation to determine the country of origin of defective components and, when possible, deal directly with the foreign manufacturer in developing remedies. His office ensured the recall of millions of imported tires, child seats, fuses, valve stems, lighting units, and motorcycle helmets. He directed the preparation of Best Practices for Importers to educate foreign manufacturers and domestic importers of their products on how to ensure those products comply with NHTSA's standards and are not defective. These guidelines were among the first issued by federal agencies with import safety responsibilities and have been widely disseminated to their intended audience through trade associations and foreign governments, as well as being available on NHTSA's website. He has visited China to address these issues with Chinese manufacturers and government agencies, and has developed a good working relationship between his office and its counterpart in China. These efforts have helped protect American consumers from unsafe imports.

Mr. Smith stresses to his employees the importance of being aggressive in their enforcement duties on behalf of consumers while being respectful of and retaining solid lines of communication with the regulated industries. He also stresses cooperation beyond office lines within the vehicle safety program and NHTSA. He encourages employees to take an active role in briefing senior officials and to avail themselves of temporary detail opportunities and other growth experiences. Employee surveys indicated that Enforcement employees are among the most highly motivated and satisfied in the agency.

His leadership of the CARS program demonstrated enormous creativity, adaptability, and resilience. Difficult issues arose daily in an atmosphere of intense time pressure, and the newness of the program required frequent course adjustments. The program was not within NHTSA's central safety mission and only somewhat related to the agency's fuel economy mission. Yet Mr. Smith understood that timely implementation was a political imperative important to Congress and the President and potentially of great benefit to the nation. He

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was able to motivate a disparate group of agency employees to take on completely new tasks and to accomplish them in record time by instilling in them the understanding that, for this moment in time, the CARS program was an integral part of the agency's mission. Despite the torrid pace and pressure, he made a special effort to maintain a sense of calmness and an encouraging atmosphere.

Prior to joining NHTSA, Mr. Smith demonstrated similar executive leadership in the FRA's rail safety program. As Associate Administrator for Safety for one particularly critical year, he led a staff of 450 people through several crises and restored the program's credibility, which had been badly damaged prior to his tenure. As mentioned above, Mr. Smith guided the development and implementation of the successful Rail Safety Action Plan in the wake of some horrible accidents. He also ensured that a brake problem on Amtrak's high-speed Acela trains, discovered by his staff, was fully resolved before those trains could operate again. Because the Transportation Security Administration did not yet have an operational railroad unit, his office conducted a nationwide security sweep of passenger railroads the day after the July 2005 terrorist bombing of a train in London. He organized the effort and even prepared the inspection checklist.

When hurricanes Katrina and Rita wreaked havoc later that year, he directed the agency's efforts to ensure proper securement of rail hazardous materials shipments and the coordination of railroad efforts to evacuate residents. He directed the completion of two very important rules: the first- ever standards for positive train control systems (using global positioning and advanced communications technologies to avoid collisions); and the rule requiring trains to use their horns to warn motorists at grade crossings that are not equipped with upgraded protection devices. He also conceived of and outlined a rule, initially drafted under his leadership but issued after he left, to require railroads to choose routes for the most dangerous hazardous materials shipments by using a detailed risk analysis. Through all of this, he maintained strong relationships with the major groups concerned with railroad safety, i.e., railroad labor and management.

While the Assistant Chief Counsel for Safety at FRA for more than a decade, Mr. Smith ran the agency's civil penalty enforcement program and directed all substantive legal affairs affecting the safety program. Having litigated cases at all levels of the federal system (including the successful defense of FRA's alcohol and drug testing regulations), he managed litigation of many cases in which the agency successfully defended challenges to its rules or interpretations. He also managed the agency's preparation of rail safety legislation and the drafting of its safety regulations. He was instrumental in establishing the Railroad Safety Advisory Committee, which advises FRA on regulatory matters, and served as its counsel. He drafted FRA's policy concerning its jurisdiction over light rail systems to ensure that transit-like operations on the general railroad system were fully covered by FRA's safety standards and inspections. He developed FRA's memorandum of agreement with the Transportation Security Administration to ensure that the substantial overlap of railroad safety and security authorities would not create dangerous gaps. Mr. Smith hired an

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extremely diverse staff of attorneys, focused them on the agency's safety mission, and made sure they all had ample development opportunities.