

Transit Safety and Oversight Spotlight

U.S. Department of Transportation

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Message from the Acting Administrator

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Dear Transit Colleagues

First and foremost, I hope everyone is staying safe and healthy during this difficult time. The coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) has hit our Nation and the transit industry extremely hard, so the partnership between FTA and the transit industry has never been more important than it is right now. FTA continues to work with transit agencies as they deliver critical transit services to Americans who depend on public transit every day.

I am so grateful to our transit partners for all they are doing in their communities during this emergency. We recognize that transit agencies and their workforces are on the front lines, providing essential transit service to ensure workers get to jobs in critical fields, such as healthcare, and passengers to vital medical services, such as dialysis and chemotherapy. On April 14, 2020 FTA [published](#) a new [Safety Advisory](#) requiring immediate action to reduce the risk of COVID-19 among transit employees and passengers.

FTA has made a great deal of progress in implementing the \$25 billion in transit funding under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act. Six days after the [CARES Act](#) was signed, FTA posted the [CARES Act allocation tables](#) and [guidance](#) on how to apply for these funds on our website. This allows agencies to apply for critical resources we know you desperately need to fill the gap left by declining ridership and revenues during this public health emergency. In addition, CARES Act funding can be used to cover 100 percent of the costs of personal protective equipment (PPE) for transit workers and cover the costs of administrative leave for workers in quarantine or furloughed because of the reduction in service.

FTA will continue to provide [resources](#) and guidance, including [Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQs\)](#), to keep the industry informed. If you have additional questions regarding COVID-19, please submit them to FTAResponse@dot.gov.

Thank you for your continued commitment to your communities and for delivering essential transit services during this public health emergency and please continue to stay safe.

Sincerely,

K. Jane Williams



K. Jane Williams, Acting
Administrator, Federal Transit
Administration

Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan Compliance Deadline Information

On April 23, 2020, FTA [issued](#) a [Notice of Enforcement Discretion](#) stating that FTA will refrain from taking enforcement action pursuant to 49 U.S.C. § 5329(g) and the FTA Master Agreement (26) (October 1, 2019) if FTA recipients and sub-recipients are unable to certify that they have established a compliant Agency Safety Plan by July 20, 2020. In effect, this notice gives transit agencies until December 31, 2020 to comply with and certify the requirements in the [Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan \(PTASP\)](#) regulation.

FTA acknowledges that current and anticipated disruptions to transit agencies due to the extraordinary operational challenges presented by the COVID-19 public health emergency are seriously impacting their ability to meet the compliance and certification requirements. During this period, the [PTASP Technical Assistance Center](#) will remain available for states' and transit agencies' PTASP technical assistance needs.

Upcoming Safety Training

All classroom-style [Transportation Safety Institute \(TSI\)](#) courses are postponed through June 30, 2020. TSI still offers the web-based e-learning courses listed below.

E Learning Courses (Web Based)		
Bus Nomenclature	On demand at tsi.dot.gov	Available 24/7
Curbing Transit Employee Distracted Driving	On demand at tsi.dot.gov	Available 24/7
Fatigue and Sleep Apnea Awareness for Transit Employees	On demand at tsi.dot.gov	Available 24/7
Rail Nomenclature	On demand at tsi.dot.gov	Available 24/7
Roadmap to Drafting an Agency Safety Plan for Bus Agencies	On demand at tsi.dot.gov	Available 24/7
Safety Assurance Virtual Course	Virtual-Live Training	Jun. 3 (9:00-11:00AM CST)



COVID-19: Available Guidance and Resources for the Transit Industry

FTA encourages transit agencies to keep informed as new coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) information is released. The following FTA resources are available:

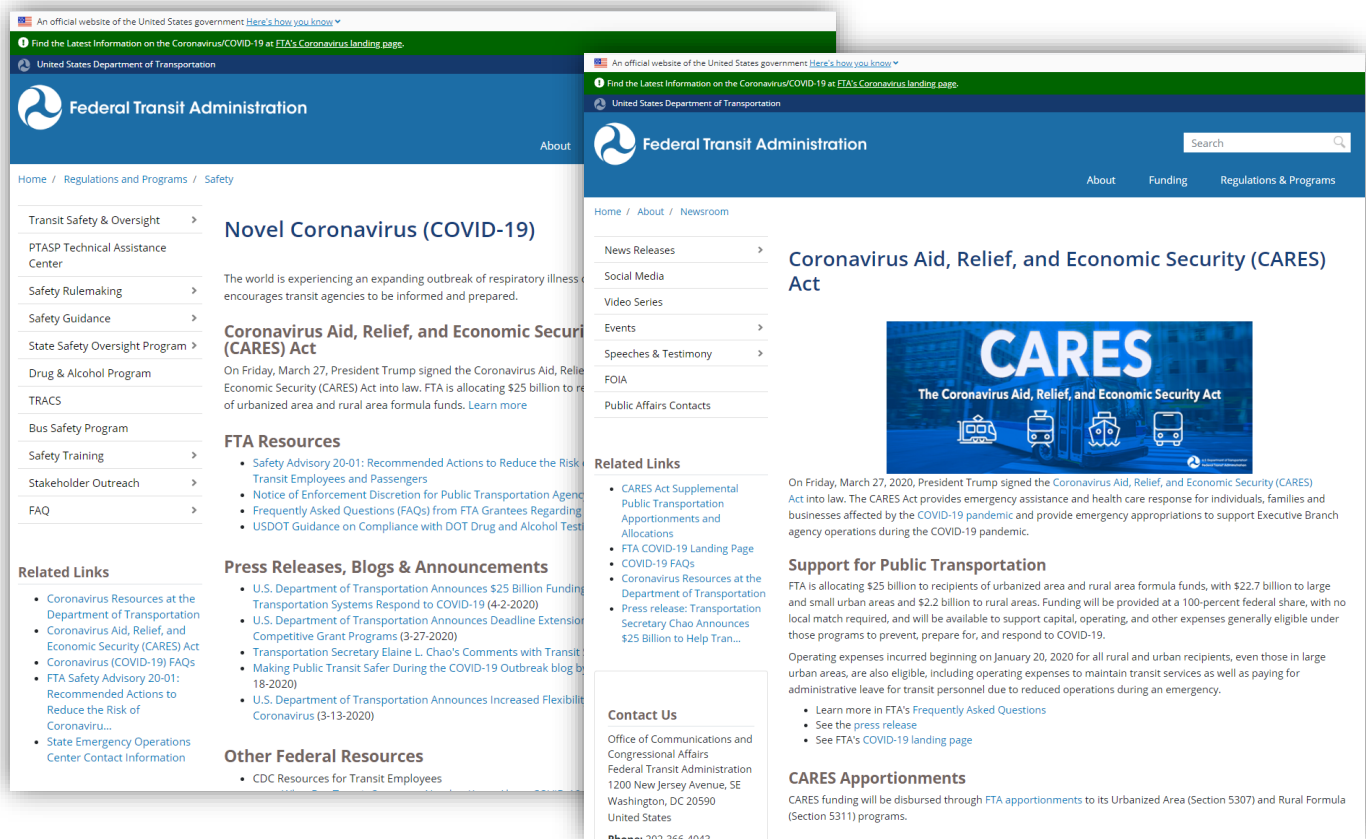
- [FTA COVID-19 website](#)
- [DOT Guidance on Compliance with DOT Drug and Alcohol Testing Regulations](#)
- [Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQs\) from FTA Grantees Regarding Coronavirus Disease 2019](#)
- [FTA Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security \(CARES\) Act information](#)
- [Safety Advisory 20-01: Recommended Actions to Reduce the Risk of Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(Covid-19\) Among Transit Employees and Passengers](#)
- [Sign-up](#) for FTA COVID-19 updates

The following transit-related resources from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) are also available :

- CDC fact sheets for: [Bus Transit Operators](#), [Rail Transit Operators](#), [Transit Maintenance Workers](#), and [Transit Station Workers](#)
- [CDC COVID-19 website](#)
- FEMA: [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Pandemic: Addressing PPE Needs in Non-Healthcare Setting](#)

Questions?

For questions not addressed in FTA's FAQs or on FTA's COVID-19 website, submit COVID-19-related inquiries to FTAResponse@dot.gov.



FTA's COVID-19 and CARES Act information websites

FTA COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions Highlights

FTA continues to publish [Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQs\)](#) to provide the transit industry with guidance on how to prepare and respond during the COVID-19 public health emergency. Below are several FAQ highlights:

Q: Will FTA waive the local match requirement of the [Urbanized Area Formula Grants](#) (Section 5307) and the [Formula Grants for Rural Areas](#) Program (Section 5311) funds under the flexibilities of FTA's Emergency Relief program to be consistent with the CARES Act?

A: Yes, FTA has waived the remaining local share requirement for the Section 5307 and Section 5311 programs used under the provisions of FTA's Emergency Relief program to respond to the COVID-19 public health emergency (49 CFR 602.9(c)). Note, this is only for expenses related to response to COVID-19, and not all uses of previously appropriated 5307/5311 funds.

Q: Does the increased Federal share and expanded eligibilities apply to all available [Urbanized Area Formula Grants](#) (Section 5307) and the [Formula Grants for Rural Areas](#) Program (Section 5311) funds?

A: Yes. Any Section 5307 and Section 5311 funding that has not already been disbursed by the recipient or passed its period of availability may be used for COVID-19 response at the increased Federal share of 100%. Recipients that have open Section 5307 or Section 5311 awards that are within their period of availability, and otherwise would be available to be amended or have the budget revised, may use those funds at the increased federal share for COVID-19 response. Grantees may also apply for new awards using the increased federal share, regardless of the funding account year.

Q: May a recipient modify a third-party contract to require the payment of administrative leave of operations or maintenance personnel or for other operations or maintenance expenses, including expenses to retain readiness for operations and maintenance activities, and fixed expenses, such as rent?

A: Yes. Administrative leave is an eligible expense for operations and maintenance personnel, whether those personnel are in-house or employed by contractors. Recipients may also modify contracts to pay for eligible operating/maintenance expenses required to retain readiness or eligible fixed operations/maintenance expenses such as rent, even if service is reduced.

Q: May a transit agency deny service to a transit rider who is exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19?

A: A transit agency should contact local and State public health officials, which generally coordinate information with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), to determine under what circumstances the agency may deny service to any transit rider.

Q: Transit workers are identified as essential critical infrastructure workers by the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA), and FTA issued Safety Advisory 20-01 recommending that transit agencies develop procedures and implement them consistent with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) guidance to the maximum extent possible. Accordingly, will public transportation systems receive priority or assistance with accessing critical supplies such as cleaning supplies, personal protective equipment (PPE), and face coverings?

A: Requests for assistance with [accessing critical supplies](#) should be routed through [emergency response efforts](#) in local and county governments, which can seek state support if they cannot meet system needs. Any needs that a state cannot meet should then be coordinated with the FEMA regional office.

Transit Agencies Helping Their Communities During COVID-19

Transit agencies across the country are stepping up in their communities and responding not only to the public health emergency, but to community members in need.

San Antonio, TX—To bridge the digital divide in lower income San Antonio communities while schools are closed, VIA Metropolitan Transit, in concert with the City of San Antonio, deployed transit buses to provide free WiFi access to support remote learning. Using 20 parked, WiFi-enabled buses, VIA is bringing internet access to over 3,600 students. Buses that would otherwise remain parked in a lot are now being used to help students do their schoolwork.



Transit buses are bringing critical internet access to students while they finish school remotely in San Antonio, TX.

Jacksonville, FL—Jacksonville Transportation Authority (JTA) partnered with AV manufacturers to use autonomous vehicles to safely transport COVID-19 tests collected at a drive-through testing location in Florida.



Autonomous vehicles are being used to safely transport COVID-19 tests in Jacksonville, FL.

Nashua, NH—The Nashua Transit System teamed up with the local United Way to help deliver more than 19,000 nutritious meals, using food prepared by the Nashua School District.

Denver, CO—Regional Transportation District (RTD) paratransit operators are providing fare-free home delivery of groceries from local stores and county food banks.

Dallas, TX—As fewer riders take trains or buses in and around Dallas, Dallas Area Rapid Transit has branched out into providing delivery services. Drivers have started picking up and delivering groceries to paratransit customers free of charge. They are also partnering with the Dallas school district to deliver 4,500 meals each week to students, as well as distributing care packages to older adults.

These stories, like many others, demonstrate how Americans continue to help one another during some of the most trying times in recent history. FTA appreciates everything transit agencies are doing to support their communities through this public health emergency.



Paratransit operators in Denver, CO are delivering much-needed groceries to members of the community.



TSO Profile

This month's profile includes a Q&A with Kristen Fredrich, Stakeholder Engagement Program Analyst



Kristen Fredrich, Stakeholder Engagement Program Analyst

How would you explain your job to someone you've never met? As a part of TSO's Stakeholder Engagement team, I make sure that our safety and oversight messages are communicated effectively to our stakeholders. In a nutshell, I coordinate a monthly newsletter, write articles for trade press publications, manage web content and email notifications, and prepare messaging for our leadership.

What is your favorite part of your job? I really enjoy seeing communication products come to fruition. For example, FTA recently had an article published in one of our trade press publications and it's always gratifying to see something that you've spent a lot of time on editing and coordinating feedback from different groups as a final product for our stakeholders. I also like coordinating and facilitating TSO events and conferences. I enjoy the logistical and planning aspects to make sure we have a successful event for our stakeholders.

What were you doing prior to this role? Prior to this, I spent seven years in contracting. I worked for the Department of Veterans Affairs on the Office of Information Technology Communications team where I communicated about different technologies and applications used for veterans healthcare and benefits management. Next, I worked at DOT in the Office of the Secretary where I helped deploy the agency's new travel system and spent a couple years at FAA where I helped administer the travel system and provided strategic communications support.

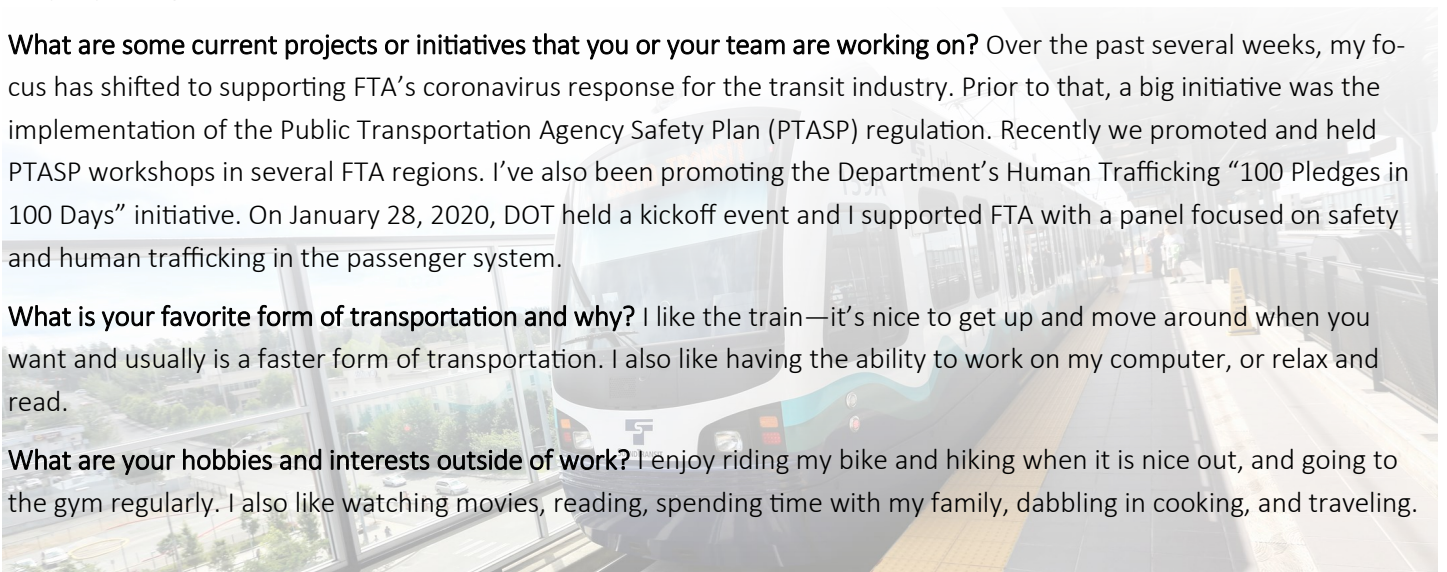
How did your prior experience influence or prepare you for your FTA career? My career has been focused on communicating the right message, to the right people, at the right time. While the subject matter has changed over the years, learning to write very clear and concise messages and develop different communication products prepared me for this role. Also, having experience with a variety of stakeholders and quick turnaround engagements helped me to prepare for my current fast-paced environment requiring good multi-tasking skills and the ability to set priorities.

What led you to work in transit? I had experience within the federal transportation space and when an opportunity opened at FTA, I decided to apply. I am also a big advocate for transit—I take it every day to commute to work and get around on the weekends. I love supporting transit safety to help make public transit an effective, helpful, and safe way for people to get around.

What are some current projects or initiatives that you or your team are working on? Over the past several weeks, my focus has shifted to supporting FTA's coronavirus response for the transit industry. Prior to that, a big initiative was the implementation of the Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan (PTASP) regulation. Recently we promoted and held PTASP workshops in several FTA regions. I've also been promoting the Department's Human Trafficking "100 Pledges in 100 Days" initiative. On January 28, 2020, DOT held a kickoff event and I supported FTA with a panel focused on safety and human trafficking in the passenger system.

What is your favorite form of transportation and why? I like the train—it's nice to get up and move around when you want and usually is a faster form of transportation. I also like having the ability to work on my computer, or relax and read.

What are your hobbies and interests outside of work? I enjoy riding my bike and hiking when it is nice out, and going to the gym regularly. I also like watching movies, reading, spending time with my family, dabbling in cooking, and traveling.



Recent TSO Speaking Engagement: Transit Advisory Committee for Safety Meeting

On February 25 and 26, 2020, FTA Transit Advisory Committee for Safety (TRACS) held a meeting to continue their discussion on emerging technologies and innovations to improve transit safety in the areas of employee safety reporting, roadway worker protections, and suicide and trespass prevention.

TRACS is a Federal advisory committee that provides recommendations to FTA on transit safety. Their final report is due to FTA in September 2020.

TRACS is comprised of a diverse panel of professionals representing a variety of stakeholders and interests that cooperatively address transit safety by recommending solutions based on agreed upon facts. For more information and to sign up for email updates, visit the [TRACS webpage](#).



TRACS welcomed attendees in Arlington, VA and continued discussions on Transit Safety improvements and innovations.



**U.S. Department
of Transportation**

**Federal Transit
Administration**

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<https://www.transit.dot.gov/regulations-and-guidance/safety/transit-safety-oversight-tso>

COVID-19: Resources and Guidance

- ◆ Continue to monitor the [Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQs\) from FTA Grantees](#) for guidance to respond during the COVID-19 public health emergency
- ◆ Visit the [COVID-19 website](#) on the FTA website for the latest public transit information
- ◆ Send CARES Act and COVID-19-related questions to FTAResponse@dot.gov

