

Transit Safety and Oversight Spotlight

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Message from the Associate Administrator

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Dear Transit Colleagues:

The safety of our public transportation partners and their passengers is FTA's number one priority. We deeply appreciate the work that you are doing to respond to the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) public health emergency. Transit ridership is increasing. FTA estimates that ridership is now down 72 percent nationally due to the public health emergency, compared to that of 85 percent in April.

U.S. DOT, alongside U.S. Department of Homeland Security and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, has been working with states, industries, and stakeholders to ensure that transportation workers and passengers receive the support they need. On May 28, 2020 U.S. DOT [announced](#) that 4.8 million cloth facial coverings, obtained by the Federal Emergency Management Agency, will be sent out over the coming weeks through the U.S. Postal Service to approximately 2,200 transit systems across the country. Further, on June 12, 2020, the Trump Administration [announced](#) that nearly 100 million cloth facial coverings will be sent to the aviation, transit, and passenger rail transportation sectors for passenger use. Approximately 9.6 million cloth facial coverings are being distributed to 458 transit agencies and Amtrak for passenger use. This will provide frontline transit workers and passengers with the personal protection equipment that they need.

On April 16, 2020, the President unveiled [Guidelines for Opening Up America Again](#). Public transportation will play a critical role in the reopening effort—up to 30 percent of commuting trips occur on transit in the Nation's major transit markets. On May 15, 2020, FTA held a listening session focused on operational considerations for reopening transit. We heard from eight transit agency CEOs and gathered feedback from 75 other participants. You can access a recording and transcript of the listening session [here](#). FTA will continue to partner with the transit industry through discussions and planning efforts to reopen transit, so stay tuned for more updates.

Lastly, on May 20, 2020, FTA launched the State Safety Oversight Agencies (SSOAs) Collaboration Forum. This forum serves as a collaboration website between agencies. FTA encourages SSOAs to take advantage of this valuable resource.

We are facing one of the biggest challenges of our lifetime, but I know we will get through it. FTA would like to thank our transit industry partners for their continued commitment to their communities during this public health emergency.

Sincerely,

Henrika Buchanan



Henrika Buchanan,
Associate Administrator,
Transit Safety and Oversight

FTA Safety Advisory 20-01: Recommended Actions to Reduce the Risk of COVID-19 Among Transit Employees and Passengers

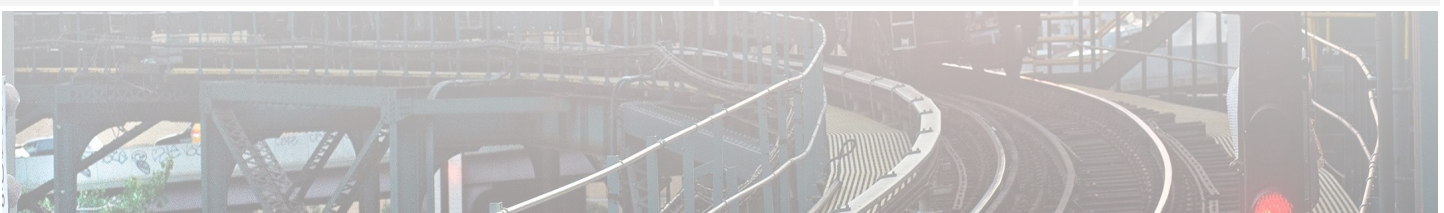
On April 14, 2020, FTA [published](#) a [Safety Advisory](#) which recommends that transit agencies develop and implement procedures and practices consistent with all applicable guidance and information provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) to ensure the continued safety of transit passengers and employees during this public health emergency.

Upcoming Safety Training

U.S. DOT's [Transportation Safety Institute \(TSI\)](#) is increasing its delivery of virtual classes by adding more course delivery dates and converting the Safety Management Systems (SMS) Principles course from a classroom to a virtual course. The converted course schedule will be delivered to the industry on June 22, 2020. Additional deliveries will be offered in July, August, and October. Since March 1, 2020, over 1,325 individuals have completed online training and another 241 have registered for online training through June 30, 2020.

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 on TSI Website	Available 24/7
Curbing Transit Employee Distracted Driving	On demand on TSI Website	Available 24/7
Fatigue and Sleep Apnea Awareness for Transit Employees	On demand on TSI Website	Available 24/7
Rail Nomenclature	On demand on TSI Website	Available 24/7
Roadmap to Drafting an Agency Safety Plan for Bus Agencies	On demand on TSI Website	Available 24/7
Virtual Live Training		
SMS Safety Assurance	Virtual Live Training	Jul. 15 Aug. 19
SMS Principles for Transit	Virtual Live Training	Jul. 21 Aug 24.



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

On June 15, 2020, FTA posted a [video](#) to thank the transit industry, particularly frontline workers, for their service during the COVID-19 public health emergency. In the two-minute video message, FTA Acting Administrator K. Jane Williams thanks frontline transit workers for their many sacrifices, highlights the Administration's response – including distributing more than 14 million protective face coverings and obligating over two-thirds of \$25 billion in [CARES Act funds](#) – and looks ahead as the economy continues to re-open.



FTA's Thank-you message to public transportation workers.

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

- [CDC Activities and Initiatives Supporting the COVID-19 Response and the President's Plan for Opening America Up Again](#)
- [CDC Public Health Considerations for Reopening Mass Transit During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)
- [FTA COVID-19 Website](#)
- [FTA CARES Act 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

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.

CARES Act Grants Updates

On March 27, 2020, President Trump signed the [Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security \(CARES\) Act](#) into law providing \$25 billion in funding for recipients of urbanized area and rural area formula funds. FTA continues to process hundreds of grants to provide critical funding as quickly as possible. FTA has made a great deal of progress in implementing the \$25 billion in transit funding under the CARES Act. Six days after the CARES Act was signed, a day in advance of the statutory requirement, FTA posted the CARES Act allocation tables and guidance on how to apply for these funds.



As of June 18, 2020, FTA has awarded 416 grants, totaling \$17.4 billion. FTA has obligated 70 percent of the CARES Act funds including: 66 percent of the rural funds, 30 percent of the tribal funds, and 70 percent of the urban funds. There are currently 234 grants in process, requesting \$4.4 billion.

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 coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) public health emergency. Below are several new FAQ highlights:

Q: Can CARES Act funds be used to match other federal funds?

A: It depends. CARES Act funds generally may not be used to meet the local match requirement for other FTA or DOT grants (49 U.S.C. § 5307(d)(3)). However, if a federal program explicitly allows other federal funds to be used as match and the project meets all requirements of the participating federal agencies, then CARES Act funds may be eligible as match for such a program.

Q: May agencies pay a temporary bonus to operators who continue to work?

A: It depends. Under the [Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards](#), a federal award may be used for bonus or incentive compensation when the overall compensation is reasonable and paid or accrued based on an agreement entered into before the services were rendered (2 CFR § 200.430(f)). If a grant recipient does not have such an agreement in place, it may create one that would allow payment of bonus or incentive pay from that point forward, but it would not be able to pay a bonus for work performed prior to the agreement.

Q: What supporting documentation does FTA need from operators to support a reimbursement request under the CARES Act?

A: No special documentation is required for CARES Act funding apart from the documentation that is normally required for expenses under the [Urbanized Area Formula Grants](#) (49 U.S.C. § 5307) and [Formula Grants for Rural Areas](#) (49 U.S.C. § 5311) programs. Grant recipients who have not been eligible for operating assistance in the past may ask their [FTA Regional Office](#) about required documentation, or refer to FTA Circular 9030.1E ([Urbanized Area Formula Program: Program Guidance and Application Instructions](#)) Appendix C (Operating Assistance) for information about calculating and documenting operating costs.

Q: Will FTA waive [National Environmental Policy Act](#) (NEPA) requirements for projects implemented in response to the COVID-19 public health emergency?

A: NEPA continues to apply during the COVID-19 public health emergency. FTA anticipates that most projects completed in response to the COVID-19 public health emergency, such as operations and purchasing personal protective equipment, would fall within FTA's [C-list NEPA categorical exclusions](#) (CE), found at 23 CFR § 771.118(c). C-list CEs require the lowest level of NEPA review and typically can be approved by FTA within the Transit Management Awards System (TrAMS), FTA's grant management system. If a project does not fall under a C-list CE, FTA recommends the grant recipient contact their [FTA Regional Office](#) to discuss NEPA compliance further.

Q: Do transit agencies have an extension to submit their [Disadvantaged Business Enterprise \(DBE\)](#) triennial goals, due August 1, 2020, to FTA because of the COVID-19 public health emergency?

A: Yes. For those recipients with DBE goals due August 1, 2020, FTA is extending the due date to October 1, 2020, and will update TrAMS to reflect the extension. This extension is consistent with a DOT guidance memorandum issued April 1, 2020.

Transit Agencies Help Their Communities During COVID-19

Around the country, transit agencies are stepping up in their communities to respond to the health crisis and help their neighbors in need. Below are some examples.

Springfield, MO — To protect bus operators, City Utilities of Springfield partnered with a local upholstery company to fabricate and install clear plastic barriers on 27 buses over the course of a single week. City Utilities of Springfield received funding for this effort through FTA Urbanized Area Formula Funding, eligible under the Emergency Relief Program.



City Utilities of Springfield partnered with a local company to provide their bus operators with more protection.



Boulder County, CO — Via Mobility Services has stepped up to provide more than its HOP bus service and paratransit across Boulder County and Northwest Denver, including using its social networks to promote useful news and positive tidbits. Via is promoting the University of Colorado Police Department's social-distancing video, tips on how to shop safely at the grocery store once Via transports passengers there, and tips designed to help older adults use apps and online platforms.

Rochester, NY — Regional Transit Service deployed its fleet of 53 small buses to shuttle parents and kids under two to free wellness visits. Regional Transit Service and The University of Rochester Medical Center expect over 500 trips each month.

Regional Transit Service is helping hundreds of children access necessary wellness visits in Rochester, NY.

Philadelphia, PA — Employees from the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA) volunteered over 180 hours of their time to sew 600 masks for their colleagues.

St. Louis, Mo — St. Louis Metro team members are producing and installing polycarbonate shields for the MetroBus fleet. Between shifts, MetroBus and Metro Call-A-Ride operators are putting in additional hours make masks for team members.

King County, WA — King County Metro is offering essential workers the opportunity to form temporary vanpools with as few as two riders. Additionally, King County Metro has designated a supply of vans to provide essential workers with a rideshare option where other transit options are unavailable or unfeasible.

Johnson County, IN — In response to a request from their local Chamber of Commerce, Access Johnson County Public Transit donated surplus cases of cleaning supplies and health kits—including in-demand items such as masks, gloves, hand sanitizer, and disposable blankets—to Johnson Memorial Health for use in its new emergency department.

Seattle, WA — Staff at Washington State Ferries (WSF) have implemented a creative, safer way for riders to pay fares during this emergency. In just 24



Access Johnson County Public Transit donated in-demand items to Johnson Memorial Health for use in its new emergency department.

TSO Profile

This month's profile includes a Q&A with Dante Wells, Single Audit Program Manager.



Dante Wells, Single Audit
Program Manager

How would you explain your job to someone you've never met? I manage the Single Audit Program for the Office of Program Oversight (TSO-30). As part of my job, I ensure single audit findings for FTA recipients are properly managed. A single audit is an audit conducted on entities that expend more than \$750,000 in Federal funds. These audits are conducted by an independent auditor selected by the entity. I also handle single audit requests from the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) and process single audit data requests from internal and external stakeholders.

What is your favorite part of your job? My colleagues are always willing to teach, share, and support each other. Our leadership sets high standards and the support from my colleagues helps everyone to collaborate and perform their best. Because of this environment, this has been my favorite place to work.

What were you doing prior to this role? Prior to this role, I supported TSO-30 as a contractor processing single audit requests. Prior to FTA, I worked at the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), as a program analyst in the Scientific Research Office. For over 10 years, I managed scientific merit review boards, which receive, process, and award science merit grants for VA researchers.

How did your prior experience influence or prepare you for your FTA career? As a program analyst at the VA, I was able to develop program and project management skills. I gained a great deal of knowledge and experience as a contractor supporting TSO-30. The experience taught me how single audits are handled within FTA and how to respond to OIG requests. As a contractor, I assisted in the development of FTA's Single Audit Management Standard Operating Procedure (SOP), which provides a uniform process to coordinate and review the processing of single audit reports.

What led you to work in transit? FTA provided me a new professional growth opportunity after 10 years at the VA.

What are some current projects or initiatives that you or your team are working on? Currently, we are implementing the Single Audit Management SOP with regional and other program offices. This has offered me an opportunity to collaborate and build relationships with other FTA staff. I am also looking forward to seeing how the new Oversight Tracking System (OTrak) will operate with a new updated single audit module.

What is your favorite form of transportation and why? My favorite form of transportation is driving. Driving provides me opportunity to think and collect my thoughts after a long day. However, before our current period of telework, I commuted to work by train because it is more convenient and cost-efficient.

What are your hobbies and interests outside of work? I enjoy reading, going to the gym, playing paintball, and spending time with my three kids. I'm a trekkie and a huge fan of anything Star Trek. A portion of my time outside of work is dedicated to a small business that I operate with a few friends.



Close of the “100 Pledges in 100 Days” Human Trafficking Initiative

On May 7, 2020, U.S. DOT [announced](#) that [over 200 industry leaders](#) have answered Transportation Secretary Elaine L. Chao’s call to help fight human trafficking and signed the [Transportation Leaders against Human Trafficking \(TLAHT\)](#) pledge as a part of the “100 Pledges in 100 Days” initiative. These signatories represent leaders across all modes of transportation, in addition to leaders of organizations that intersect with transportation, who have committed to raising public awareness of human trafficking. For transit, FTA secured over 104 commitments from transit agencies to fight human trafficking by training over 110,000 transit employees and through public education. Join in the fight against human trafficking by [signing the pledge](#).



Earlier this year, at South West Transit Association’s 2020 conference, FTA Acting Administrator K. Jane Williams encouraged transit leaders to sign the TLAHT pledge to train employees on how to identify and stop human trafficking.



U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Transit Administration

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

Virtual TRACS Meeting Announced

July 21, 2020

11:00a.m. to 5:30p.m.

July 22, 2020

11:00a.m. to 5:00p.m.

FTA will hold a two-day [virtual public meeting](#) of the Transit Advisory Committee for Safety (TRACS).

Anyone wishing to participate by phone should notify FTA at TRACS@dot.gov.

A conference call number will be available on the [FTA TRACS website](#).