

Transit Safety and Oversight Spotlight

U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Transit Administration

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Message from the Associate Administrator

August 2020
Vol. 5 No. 6

Dear Transit Colleagues:

Transit continues to perform a critical role in America's communities as transit systems ramp up service nationwide and ridership continues to increase. FTA estimates that transit ridership is now down approximately 63 percent nationally from the levels seen before the COVID-19 public health emergency, which is an improvement from the lowest point of 85 percent, and represents current service levels of nearly 12 million trips per weekday. We are very encouraged to see many transit agencies distributing over 14 million face coverings provided by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to their employees and passengers to support safe operations.

To ensure that transit agencies could continue to provide essential services safely, on March 27, 2020, President Trump signed the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act into law, providing \$25 billion to recipients of urbanized area and rural area formula funds. As of August 18, 2020, FTA has awarded a total of 641 grants totaling \$22 billion to transit agencies across the country. FTA has obligated 88 percent of the CARES Act funds including: 90 percent of the urban funds, 75 percent of the rural funds and 51 percent of the tribal funds, and transit agencies have already spent over \$8.9 billion.

The transit industry has proved itself to be adaptive and resilient throughout the COVID-19 public health emergency. Last month, FTA began a series of monthly [COVID-19 Recovery Listening Sessions](#) to foster peer exchange of ideas and practices during recovery from COVID-19. This month's topic focuses on maintaining healthy operations and keeping transit workers safe. There is still time to [register](#) for the session on Thursday, August 20, and the recording and materials will be available on FTA's website shortly after the session. The next listening session will be held in September and will be announced soon.

I am pleased to announce that FTA's [2020 State Safety Oversight \(SSO\) and Rail Transit Agency \(RTA\) Virtual Workshop](#) will be held Tuesday, October 6, 2020, through Thursday, October 8, 2020. The workshop will be entirely virtual this year. FTA will discuss program updates and other timely topics, along with our Federal partners. For additional information, see [page 3](#).

FTA is continuing our outreach and activities to help applicable transit operators comply with the [Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan \(PTASP\) regulation](#). This month, FTA hosted two virtual PTASP workshops, with 45 participants attending last week's session and 89 registered for this week's session, to learn more about strategies for completing their Agency Safety Plans by the December 31, 2020 deadline. Session recordings and materials will be shared soon. I encourage you to contact the [PTASP Technical Assistance Center](#) for questions and support with your Agency Safety Plans.

We greatly appreciate everything that you have done to provide safe public transportation to America's communities. FTA will continue to support our transit partners during these unprecedented times.

Sincerely,
Henrika Buchanan



Henrika Buchanan,
Associate Administrator,
Transit Safety and Oversight

FTA Hosts COVID-19 Recovery Listening Session: Supporting the Health, Safety, and Confidence of Transit Riders



K. Jane Williams, FTA Deputy Administrator (center); Henrika Buchanan, FTA Associate Administrator for Transit Safety and Oversight (left) and Matt Welbes, FTA Executive Director (right) host FTA's July 31, 2020 COVID-19 Recovery listening session.

On Friday, July 31, 2020 the FTA hosted a listening session focused on how transit agencies support the health, safety and confidence of transit riders during their COVID-19 recovery efforts.

Panelists from the transit industry discussed strategies, service planning, tools, and resources they use to protect passengers and welcome them back to transit.

The [presentation slides](#) and [recording](#) are available on FTA's website.

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 offering Safety Management Systems (SMS) Principles for Transit as a virtual course.

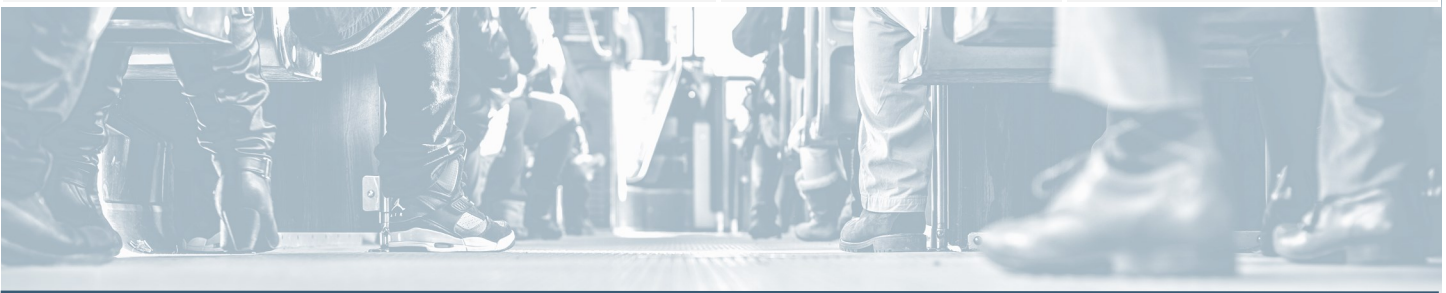
The status of in-person TSI courses depends upon each host's local guidance. Please contact TSI at transit@dot.gov or (405) 954-3682. TSI can verify the status of all scheduled courses and assist with any other course-related questions.

E-Learning Self-Paced Online Courses

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 Principles for Transit (Virtual Live Training)	Virtual Live Training	August 24
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COVID-19: Available Guidance and Resources for the Transit Industry

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

- **NEW:** [COVID-19 Recovery Vendor List for Public Transportation](#) – Provides links to vendors offering products such as face masks and shields, chemical disinfectants, operator barriers, signs and decals, testing kits and more.
- [FTA COVID-19 Resource Tool](#) – Provides a one-stop-shop for Federal COVID-19 guidance and recommendations.
- [CDC Public Health Considerations for Reopening Mass Transit During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)
- [DOT Guidance on Compliance with DOT Drug and Alcohol Testing Regulations](#)
- [Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQs\) from FTA Grantees Regarding Coronavirus Disease 2019](#)
- [Safety Advisory 20-01: Recommended Actions to Reduce the Risk of Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#)

Sign Up for Updates

[Click here](#) to sign-up for FTA COVID-19 updates.

Questions?

Contact your [FTA Regional POC](#) for COVID-19 related questions.

Register Now for the 2020 SSO and RTA Virtual Workshop

FTA is hosting the [2020 State Safety Oversight \(SSO\) and Rail Transit Agency \(RTA\) Virtual Workshop](#) on October 6-8, 2020. This year's workshop will be 100 percent virtual. The workshop will focus on State Safety Oversight best practices, audit outcomes, COVID-19 impacts on State Safety Oversight, Safety Management System implementation lessons learned and will provide a Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan (PTASP) implementation overview. FTA's Transit Safety Oversight office, headquarters, and regional offices, as well as other Federal agencies, will provide program updates and discuss requirements to strengthen rail transit safety oversight.

The workshop is open to SSO and RTA staff. SSO Program Managers, their supervisors, and any support and contract staff with an active contract are encouraged to attend. RTA Chief Safety Officers, Safety Directors, and other program offices that collaborate with the safety office are also encouraged to attend.

[Register now](#) and submit any questions to FTASafetyStakeholder@dot.gov.



Certifying Compliance with the Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan Regulation

The [Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan \(PTASP\)](#) regulation (49 CFR Part 673) requires applicable recipients or States to develop Agency Safety Plans that include the processes and procedures to implement Safety Management Systems (SMS). In light of the extraordinary operational challenges presented by the COVID-19 public health emergency, FTA issued a [Notice of Enforcement Discretion](#), effectively extending the PTASP compliance deadline from July 20, 2020, to December 31, 2020. After initial certification, applicable recipients must certify compliance with the regulation annually.

Who must certify compliance?

The recipients, States, or agencies that are required to certify compliance with the PTASP regulation include:

- Recipients of [Urbanized Area Formula Grants Program](#) (49 U.S.C. Section 5307).
- States with small public transportation providers that must meet PTASP regulation requirements. Small public transportation providers are providers who do not operate rail transit and have 100 or fewer vehicles in revenue service during peak regular service across all fixed route modes or in any one non-fixed route mode.
- Rail transit agencies in the State Safety Oversight program.

Recipients and States certify compliance with the PTASP regulation through FTA's [Transit Award Management System \(TrAMS\)](#) and the annual Certifications and Assurances process after they have met the applicable PTASP regulation requirements. Recipients and States that are not required to comply with the PTASP regulation should not certify to the PTASP item in TrAMS.

Section 5307 recipients that pass on funds to an applicable transit provider will make this certification on behalf of the subrecipient provider. In some cases, the recipient may be the State.

When does initial certification occur?

Applicable recipients and States must certify compliance with PTASP regulation requirements on or before December 31, 2020.

- Recipients and States who are required to complete other Certifications and Assurances may do so before they meet PTASP requirements. These recipients and States **should not** complete the PTASP certification until they meet all applicable PTASP regulation requirements.
- Recipients and States to whom the PTASP regulation **does not apply** should not complete the PTASP certification at any time.

Continued on page 5



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What does certification mean?

When the recipient or State certifies, they are confirming that:

- They, as the recipient or State, fulfilled all applicable PTASP regulation requirements. For example, the State developed Agency Safety Plans for all small public transportation providers in its jurisdiction that did not opt to develop their own plans and notified the State.
- Where applicable, all subrecipients fulfilled all applicable PTASP regulation requirements.

Examples of Initial Certification	
<i>I am a...</i>	<i>On or before December 31, 2020...</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bus transit provider. • Recipient of Section 5307 funding. 	I must certify that my agency meets all applicable PTASP regulation requirements.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bus transit provider. • Subrecipient of Section 5307 funding. 	The recipient of my Section 5307 funds must certify that the agency meets all applicable PTASP regulation requirements.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rail transit agency in the State Safety Oversight program. 	I must certify that my agency meets all applicable PTASP regulation requirements.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State with small public transportation providers under my jurisdiction that did not develop their own Agency Safety Plan. 	I must certify that the State has met all applicable PTASP regulation requirements (I developed Agency Safety Plans for all small public transportation providers in my State that did not opt to develop their own Plan and notified the State).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recipient (including States) of Section 5307 funding that I pass on to a subrecipient transit provider(s). 	I must certify that my subrecipient(s) and I meet applicable PTASP regulation requirements.

The [PTASP Technical Assistance Center \(TAC\)](#) is here to support you. To request an Agency Safety Plan review or other PTASP-related assistance, contact the TAC, at PTASP-TAC@dot.gov, or call 1-87-PTASP-AID (1-877-827-7243). Note, draft Agency Safety Plans must be submitted by **November 13, 2020** in order to complete reviews.

For more resources, including a fact sheet on [Understanding the Agency Safety Plan Review, Approval, and Certification Process](#), visit the [TAC Resource Library](#). You can also ask questions and exchange information with your peers in the PTASP [Community of Practice](#) forums.



FTA Publishes Research on Using Buses as Mobile Generators

In November 2019, FTA published a [research report](#) exploring Bus Exportable Power Supply (BEPS) systems as a part of [FTA's Innovative Safety, Resiliency, and All-Hazards Emergency Response and Recovery Demonstrations program](#). BEPS systems would allow existing hybrid transit buses to export power and act as emergency electrical-power generators during emergencies and natural disasters.

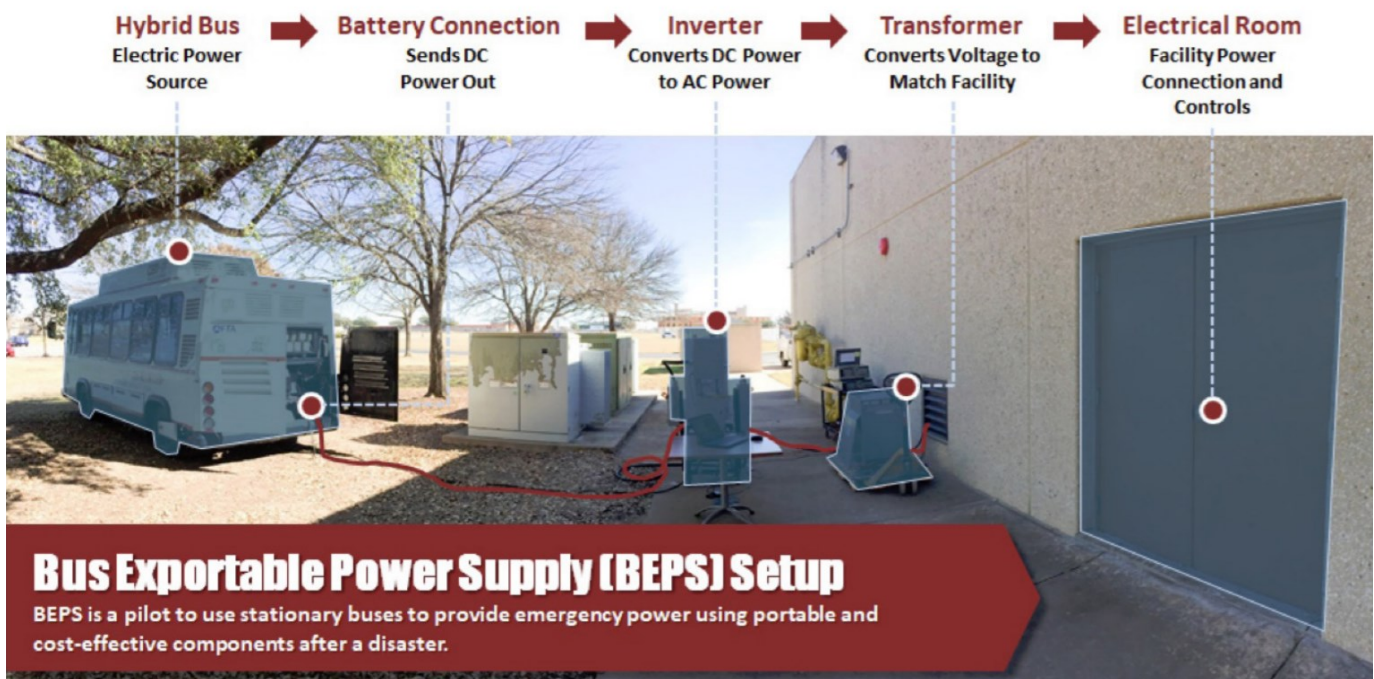
The Center for Transportation and the Environment (CTE) partnered with the University of Texas Center for Electromechanics and Hagerty Consulting to develop a BEPS system that would give hybrid buses the capability to act as on-demand, mobile emergency generators. This project looked to address the shortage of electrical generators during natural disasters with hybrid-electric transit buses, which contain the key elements for mobile power generation. The project assessed the demand, feasibility, challenges, and recommendations for BEPS use.

The researchers tested the efficacy of the BEPS system prototype in January 2018. During these tests, the BEPS system powered up and followed the facility electric loads and provided backup power needs for the test facility that serves as an emergency shelter. This demonstration proved that exportable power from a bus could be used to power a facility in the event of a power outage.

BEPS systems can help local agencies expedite the deployment of backup power generators in response to natural disasters. Rather than having to procure a separate generator, buses equipped with exportable power systems can be leveraged as a mobile generator when necessary, making communities more resilient to emergency events and local municipalities less dependent on state and Federal resources.

For these mobile generators to become a reality, transit agencies need to work with their emergency management agencies to determine who should take on the role of providing back-up power during emergencies. Additionally, bus manufacturers and state and Federal agencies would need to commit resources to design and develop the system, and transit agencies must have an interest in adding the technology to its fleet.

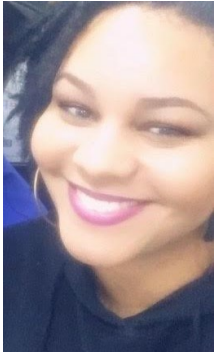
For questions regarding this project, please contact Sam Yimer, General Engineer, at Samuel.Yimer@dot.gov.



Setup for a BEPS system and how the bus connects and provides emergency power to the facility.

TSO Profile

This month's profile includes a Q&A with Sharece Tyer, Senior Program Analyst (Policy)



Sharece Tyer,
Senior Program
Analyst (Policy)

How would you explain your job to someone you've never met? As a Senior Program Analyst (Policy), I am responsible for leading the design and development of national policy supporting the National Public Transportation Safety Program and providing support in the development of policy regarding transit Safety Management Systems and strategies for implementation. I also communicate national policy and ensure that it is continuously maintained.

What aspect of your role are you most excited about? I have always been passionate about policy and doing work that will allow me to make a difference. I support COVID-19 response activities within FTA's Office of System Safety, which allows me to apply my policy experience and aid in the transit industry's recovery from COVID-19. I am thankful to be part of a great team who has provided valuable input and support. I am excited and confident that we will make a direct difference in improving policies and safety measures for America's communities.

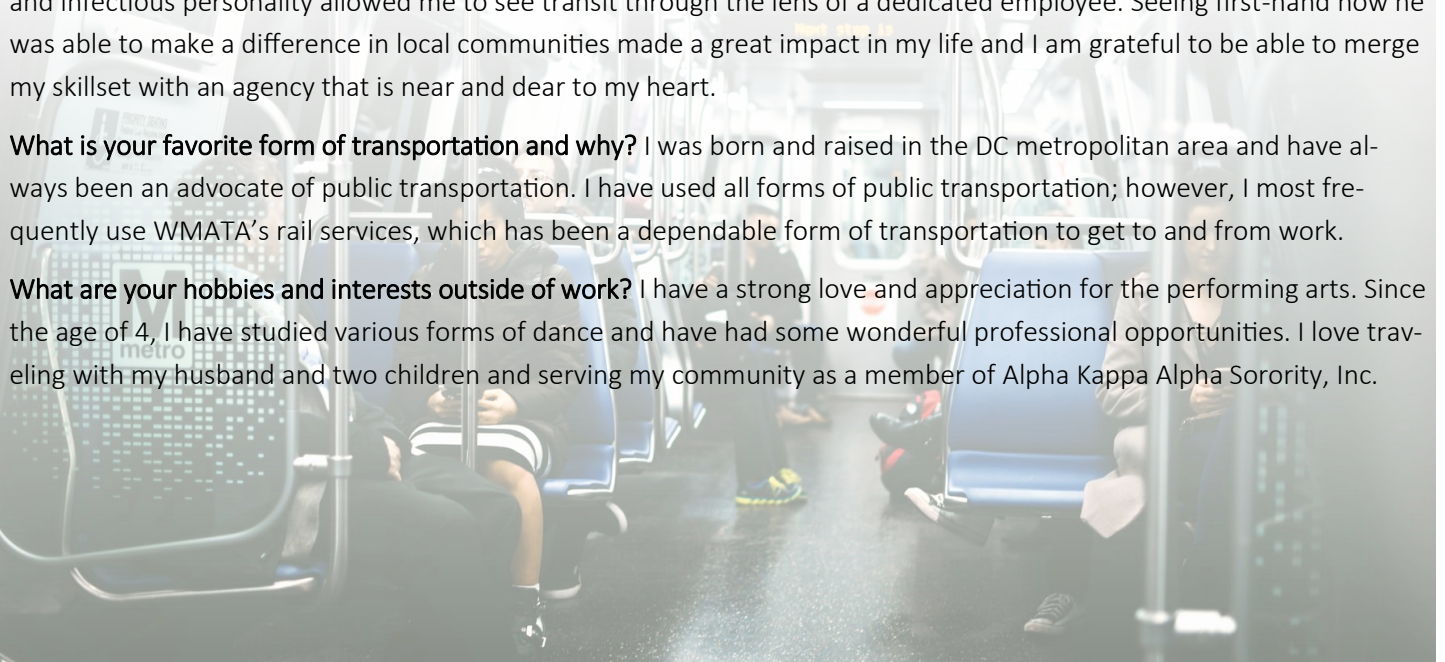
What were you doing prior to this role? Prior to joining FTA, I served as a primary advisor to the Director of the Office of Tribal Affairs and Policy at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). I was responsible for providing strategic advice on SAMHSA's efforts to improve the behavioral health of American Indian and Alaska Native communities. I worked closely with senior leadership on developing, planning, and implementing strategic policy initiatives, legislation, regulations, and coordinating efforts for SAMHSA's Tribal Advisory Committee.

How do you think your prior experience prepared you for your FTA career? I have always worked in a public service setting where the mission and goals for the agency were aligned around the health and safety of the nation. I feel my past experiences in policy has prepared me to take on a new and exciting challenge where I can directly influence and help shape the future of transit safety.

What led you to work in transit? My father is a retired bus operator and station manager for the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) with over 40 years of service. His commitment, incredible work ethic, knowledge, and infectious personality allowed me to see transit through the lens of a dedicated employee. Seeing first-hand how he was able to make a difference in local communities made a great impact in my life and I am grateful to be able to merge my skillset with an agency that is near and dear to my heart.

What is your favorite form of transportation and why? I was born and raised in the DC metropolitan area and have always been an advocate of public transportation. I have used all forms of public transportation; however, I most frequently use WMATA's rail services, which has been a dependable form of transportation to get to and from work.

What are your hobbies and interests outside of work? I have a strong love and appreciation for the performing arts. Since the age of 4, I have studied various forms of dance and have had some wonderful professional opportunities. I love traveling with my husband and two children and serving my community as a member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc.



FTA's OTrak Modernization Project Updates and New FAQs

FTA's Oversight Tracking System, or OTrak, Modernization Project led by FTA's Office of Program Oversight has entered a new phase in its development. OTrak is FTA's official system of record for program oversight data. Once completed, FTA recipients will have new access to the system to view reports and submit information directly to FTA.

At the end of last year, FTA focused on the critical modules and elements needed to launch the new system. With this focused effort, the timeline for the project has changed, including recipient access and use for the new system. For recipients, we have targeted the Fiscal Year 2022 review cycle, which starts in October 2021. Recipient training is anticipated for summer 2021. Throughout the Fiscal Year 2021 review cycle, we will update you on the available training schedule and resources.

We appreciate the robust participation received during the November and December 2019 Virtual OTrak Recipient Focus Groups. With nearly 200 attendees from over 35 states, FTA received helpful insight and feedback for the design of the system, making the focus groups a huge success. As a result of the focus groups, we have developed and posted Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) to the [OTrak website](#). The FAQs will be updated as needed as the project moves closer to completion.

If you have any questions on FTA's OTrak Modernization Project, contact David.Schilling@dot.gov.



U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Transit Administration

Federal Transit Administration
Office of Transit Safety and Oversight
1200 New Jersey Avenue SE
Washington, DC 20590

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

Upcoming Speaking Events and Webinars

[PTASP Webinar: Safety Assurance Compliance Monitoring](#)

September 24, 2020 | 2:00 PM EDT

[Joint State Safety Oversight \(SSO\) and Rail Transit Agency \(RTA\) Virtual Workshop](#)

October 6-8, 2020

