

Transit Safety and Oversight Spotlight

U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Transit Administration

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Message from the Associate Administrator

November 2020
Vol. 5 No. 9

Dear Transit Colleagues:

In March, FTA rescheduled all remaining federal Fiscal Year (FY) 2020 oversight review site visits to early FY2021 due to COVID-19. As we plan to resume our oversight program, there are several critical changes that we will implement to ensure that we can safely and effectively deliver on our oversight responsibility that include: (1) All previously scheduled oversight reviews will shift by one year, including previously planned Triennial and State Management reviews for FY2021 and FY2022; (2) FTA will conduct the FY2020 Triennial and State Management Reviews from January through September 2021. The same team that you have been working with since the start of your review process will complete the review; and (3) We will conduct the reviews and site visits virtually. FTA will share additional details about the virtual review process over the coming months. FTA is working to ensure this virtual review process runs smoothly. We stand ready to work with you to provide assistance to efficiently and effectively complete the current Triennial and State Management Review cycle.

FTA continues to foster partnerships and engage stakeholders during COVID-19. Last month, along with other members of FTA's executive team, I had the privilege of participating at [Rail~Volution's Virtual Conference](#) where I discussed FTA's COVID-19 recovery efforts with transit industry stakeholders dedicated to strengthening communities through transit. It was wonderful learning from and connecting with our transit industry partners on diverse approaches to transit, mobility and development.

Transit agencies continue to implement innovative solutions to support their communities during COVID-19. This month, FTA has partnered with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Office of Public and Indian Housing (PIH) to launch an initiative to educate stakeholders on eligible incidental use of FTA-funded vehicles and encourage partnerships to provide targeted populations with access to transportation, education support services (such as Wi-Fi), food, medical appointments and other essential services during recovery from COVID-19. Learn more about this initiative on [page 5](#). FTA also hosted a [COVID-19 Listening Session](#) on this initiative. Access the [presentation and recording](#) on FTA's website.

The deadline to certify compliance with FTA's [Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan \(PTASP\)](#) regulation (49 CFR Part 673) is approaching. Please complete your PTASP certification in the [Transit Award Management System \(TrAMS\)](#). To support the industry, the PTASP Technical Assistance Center (TAC) reviewed and provided feedback on draft Agency Safety Plans (ASPs) through its voluntary review service. I encourage you to take advantage of the resources available on the [PTASP TAC website](#) and contact the [PTASP TAC](#) with questions as you finalize your safety plans.

FTA proudly commends the innovation taking place across the nation from transit agencies who continue to ensure public transportation remains one of the safest modes of transportation. Thank you for your tireless commitment and determination over the past several months.

Sincerely,

Henrika Buchanan



Henrika Buchanan

Associate Administrator for
Transit Safety and Oversight
& Chief Safety Officer

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

FTA continues to provide [updated resources](#) and encourages transit agencies to stay informed as new COVID-19 information is released. The following resources are available:

- [COVID-19 Recovery Listening Session Materials](#) – Provides a schedule of upcoming listening sessions, presentations and recordings.
- [COVID-19 Recovery Discussion Forum](#) – An online platform for peer-to-peer exchange of transit ideas and practices during COVID-19 recovery.
- [APTA and CTAA Public Transportation COVID-19 Recovery Vendor List](#) – Provides links to vendors offering products such as face masks and shields, chemical disinfectants, operator barriers, signs and decals, testing kits and more.
- [COVID-19 Resource Tool](#) – A compilation of Federal COVID-19 guidance and recommendations.
- [Frequently Asked Questions from FTA Grantees Regarding 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.

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 [FY21 training schedule](#) is available on FTA's website.

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.

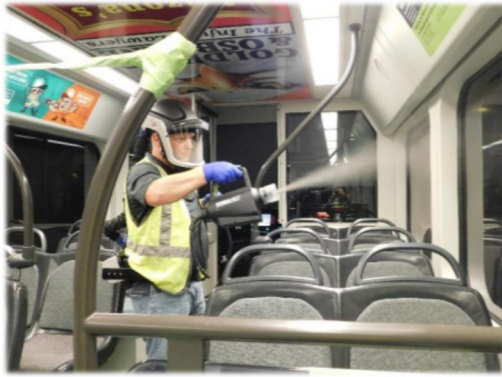
E-Learning Self-Paced Online Courses

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
SMS Awareness	On demand on TSI Website	Available 24/7

Virtual Live Training

SMS Safety Assurance	Virtual Live Training	December 17, 2020
SSOAs Safety Management	Virtual Live Training	January 11-14, 2021
SMS Safety Assurance	Virtual Live Training	January 21, 2021
SSOAs Safety Management	Virtual Live Training	February 8-11, 2021
SMS Safety Assurance	Virtual Live Training	February 18, 2021

Managing Vehicles and Facilities in a New Service Environment



On September 24, 2020, FTA hosted its fourth [COVID-19 Listening Session](#) on Managing Vehicles and Facilities in a New Service Environment attracting nearly 300 participants. Panelists from Athens-Clarke County Transit (ACC Transit) in Athens, GA, Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART) in Dallas, TX, Kansas City Area Transportation Authority (KCATA) in Kansas City, MO and Valley Metro Transit System (Valley Metro) in Phoenix, AZ shared strategies, tools and resources to support the health and safety of employees and the public on vehicles and at facilities.

The solutions included: (1) Cleaning and Disinfection – UV lighting to disinfect facilities and equipment, pressure washing to bus stops daily and vehicles after each trip, fogging of bus fleet done every other day; (2) Social Distancing – reduced facility and vehicle capacity, virtual meetings, employee training on an e-learning platform; and (3) Communications – increased marketing using radio and on-board announcements, digital and direct mail bulletin boards, informational signs and social media promotions to encourage Centers for Disease Control (CDC) guidelines.

These efforts demonstrate the proactive measures that transit agencies have taken to support the safe management of vehicles and facilities. To learn more, [view the presentation slides and recording](#) on FTA’s website and continue the conversation with your peers in FTA’s [COVID-19 Recovery Discussion Forum](#).

Lessons Learned from Voluntary Agency Safety Plan Reviews Part 1

FTA’s Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan (PTASP) Technical Assistance Center (TAC) offers voluntary reviews of draft Agency Safety Plans (ASP). This article is the first in a series that discusses some of the industry’s most common ASP questions, issues and concerns.

ASP Signature, Approval and Certification

As transit agencies approach the compliance deadline, agencies will undertake three key steps – ASP signature, approval and certification:

ASP Signature: The agency’s Accountable Executive must sign the ASP.

Approval: The agency’s Board of Directors or Equivalent Authority must approve the ASP. If the agency is a rail transit agency, the State Safety Oversight Agency (SSOA) must also approve the ASP. FTA recommends that agencies include information such as the name of the approving body and the date and method of approval in their ASPs.

Certification: The recipient must certify their compliance with the PTASP regulation in FTA’s Transit Award Management System (TrAMS). **This is the critical last step – your agency is not “finished” with PTASP regulation requirements until the recipient certifies compliance in TrAMS.** Agencies may choose to note the certification date in their ASPs.

Related Resources

- [Certification Fact Sheet](#)
- [Certifying Compliance with the PTASP Regulation](#)
- [PTASP ASP Review, Approval and Certification Webinar](#)
- [Understanding the ASP Review, Approval and Certification Process](#)

Hazard Management and Safety Risk Management

Since the mid-1980s, transit agencies have used “hazard management,” to address a specific failure or occurrence or to identify and resolve hazards during operations and in capital projects. In a Safety Management System (SMS), Safety Risk Management (SRM) focuses on routine, ongoing safety information capture and the analysis of safety information to help agencies make informed decisions about safety risk. Although agencies may use hazard management principles, this is not a substitute for the required SRM components of safety hazard identification, safety risk assessment and safety risk mitigation.

PTASP TAC reviews found that, in describing the SRM process in the ASP, each transit agency may consider how it will perform the following:

- Define SRM authorities, accountabilities and responsibilities (§673.23(a) and (d)) of relevant parties, such as safety committees, department heads, the Chief Safety Officer, etc.;
- Define and describe how it documents the SRM process (§673.31), including programs, policies and procedures, such as a safety risk register (if used), and activities and results, such as safety risk assessment ratings;
- Describe how the agency communicates about SRM activities and results (§673.23(b) and (c) and §673.29(b)), such as through newsletters, stand-downs and toolbox talks; and
- Document SRM training requirements (§673.29(a)), such as initial and refresher on-the-job training as needed.

Related Resources

- [Guide to Developing the SRM Component of an ASP](#)
- [Hazard Management vs. SRM Guide](#)
- [ASP Lessons Learned](#)

Describing the four topics above for each SMS element can help agencies meet the requirement to “document the processes and activities related to SMS implementation” (§673.11(a)(2)).

For question regarding PTASP requirements and ASPs, contact the PTASP TAC at 1-877-827-7243 or PTASP-TAC@dot.gov. Visit the [TAC Resource Library](#) for guides, fact sheets and webinars on the PTASP regulation. For help with TrAMS, contact the TrAMS Help Desk at 1-877-561-7466 or FTA.TrAMS.help@dot.gov.

Stay tuned for Part 2 in the next FTA *Transit Safety and Oversight Spotlight* Newsletter!



Transit Safety and Oversight Office Spotlights Ray Biggs, II

This month's profile includes a Q&A with Ray Biggs, II, Safety Risk Management and Assurance Division Chief



Ray Biggs, II

Safety Risk Management
and Assurance Division Chief

How would you explain your job to someone you've never met? As the Safety Risk Management and Assurance Division Chief, I lead a team that identifies, assesses and mitigates transit safety concerns. I also manage FTA's National Transportation Safety Board Recommendations Response Program and oversee the coordination, identification and management transit safety research and standards development.

What excites your most about your job? I am excited about the opportunity to once again work in the public sector on topics that directly impact communities across the country. I am grateful for the opportunity to help make public transportation safer through safety promotion data collection, risk analysis and information sharing. I look forward to working with the great team members within FTA's Office of Transit Safety and Oversight (TSO) and other FTA offices to improve public transportation for America's communities.

What were you doing prior to this role? Prior to this role, I worked with HNTB as the Risk Manager for the John F. Kennedy Airport Redevelopment Program (JFKR) in New York City. At the time, JFKR was one of the largest infrastructure projects in the United States. As the Risk Manager, I developed the Risk Management Plan and executed risk workshops to assess the cost and schedule of each of the projects identified in the overall program.

What are three positive words that people often use to describe you? Dependable. Thoughtful. Professional.

What is your favorite travel memory? My favorite travel memory is traveling to China as part of my study abroad program at the George Washington University. I rode the high-speed train between Shanghai to Beijing and visited the Great Wall of China, all in one day.

What is your favorite form of transportation and why? Rapid transit is my favorite form of transportation because when properly designed, it provides the most convenient and quickest way of travel, especially in urban areas.

What is the best piece of advice you have been given? The 5Ps: Prior Preparation Prevents Poor Performance.

What movie can you watch over, and over again? The Harry Potter Series!

DOT/FTA, HUD/PIH Partnership for COVID-19 Recovery

Traditionally, low-income individuals and families, people with disabilities and older adults are disproportionately affected by gaps in access to essential services. The COVID-19 public health emergency has exacerbated these gaps in many communities and further highlighted inequalities in internet access, particularly for school children and food availability.

Transit vehicles present a unique opportunity to address gaps in access to Wi-Fi, food and other essential services. Nationally, transit ridership is down approximately 63 percent over last year which means that there are transit vehicles that currently are not being used to provide public transportation.

Many transit buses and vans are equipped with Wi-Fi access for passengers and can be parked in locations within communities where Wi-Fi access is most needed. This option can be more attractive to local governments than school buses, which can cost hundreds of thousands of dollars to equip with Wi-Fi.



FTA has partnered with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Office of Public and Indian Housing (PIH) to educate stakeholders on eligible incidental use of FTA-funded vehicles and encourage partnerships for the use of those vehicles to provide targeted populations with access to transportation, education support services (such as Wi-Fi), food, medical appointments and other essential services during recovery from COVID-19. FTA permits the incidental use of FTA-funded assets if the use does not conflict with the approved and intended use of the asset. For example, in cases where a recipient has reduced service levels in response to COVID-19, the recipient may use FTA funded assets to provide essential services, including providing Wi-Fi hotspot access, as long as such use does not interfere with existing service.

FTA funds may be used for the operating costs of essential services, such as mobile hotspots and meal delivery. Provided the service constitutes an incidental use, recipients may use the [Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security \(CARES\) Act](#) funds or [Urbanized Area Formula Grants](#) and the [Formula Grants for Rural Areas Program](#) funds administered under the provisions of the [Emergency Relief Program](#) to pay for the operational costs through 2022 .

FTA and HUD strongly encourage transit agencies to:

- Partner locally to create strategies to provide critical and essential transportation and non-traditional services such as meal and grocery delivery; and
- Work to identify opportunities to align public transportation funded assets (e.g., Wi-Fi enabled vehicles, routes, bus stops, etc.) with community needs during the COVID-19 and in the future.

Examples of transit agencies that have engaged in incidental use of transit vehicles to support school children's access to Wi-Fi include: ABQ Ride in Albuquerque, NM; Capital Metro, Austin, TX; Central Ohio Transit Authority (COTA) in Columbus, OH; Greensboro Transit Agency in Greensboro, NC; Pierce Transit in Lakewood, WA; Sacramento Regional Transit in Sacramento, CA and VIA Metropolitan Transit (VIA) in San Antonio, TX. To learn more about these opportunities, view the [fact sheet](#) on [FTA's website](#).

FTA's Technical Assistance Center (TAC) Customer Satisfaction Surveys



FTA is thankful to all who completed their TAC customer satisfaction surveys. The current response rate is 40 percent. TAC survey respondents provide valuable feedback and help FTA measure, monitor and improve the quality of the TAC's services. When individuals contact the TAC for assistance, they receive a brief customer satisfaction survey. Several improvements have been made to the TAC's internal quality controls as a direct result of surveys.

One improvement example is a modification to TAC's communication process. A survey respondent submitted a concern, which prompted the development of a tracking system to ensure anyone who is waiting for a TAC response will receive an email with a follow-up status or an estimated response time, if additional research is needed.

[TAC's website](#) has also improved with the help of suggestions received from surveys. Guidance documents were clarified, instructions were modified and the website presentation was enhanced. Here are some interesting facts obtained from the surveys: (1) TAC Call Center representatives receive high satisfaction ratings for their courteous and professional manner; (2) Transit industry partners prefer contacting the TAC by email and (3) the Online Forum is currently the least used of the TAC's services.

Continued from Page 6

One significant survey response has remained consistent since the launch of the TAC in October 2019. **Almost every survey respondent who received an ASP review from the TAC would recommend the service to their peers.**

Other TAC services will continue to be available through the end of 2020. Requests for assistance will be available to the broad range of individuals who contact the TAC—small bus agencies, large bus agencies, rail agencies, multi-modal agencies, State Departments of Transportation (DOTs), State Safety Oversight Agencies (SSOAs), consultants, Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs), rural transit providers, tribal transit providers, universities and sometimes vendors.

Every individual who requests assistance is encouraged to complete the brief TAC customer satisfaction survey when it is emailed to them. Questions about the TAC customer satisfaction survey? Please contact FTA's [Marjorie Collins](#).



U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Transit Administration

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[Access FTA Transit Safety and Oversight Spotlight Newsletters](#) on FTA's Website

Upcoming Speaking Events and Webinars

[PTASP: Agency Safety Plan Development Lessons Learned Part 2 Webinar](#)

November 19, 2020 | 2:00 pm EST

[PTASP: Transitioning to Agency Safety Plan Implementation Webinar](#)

December 17, 2020 | 2:00 pm EST

