



Transit Safety and Oversight Spotlight

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Message from the Associate Administrator

Dear Transit Colleagues:

As the year concludes, transit agencies across the Nation continue to experience operational and financial challenges due to the COVID-19 public health emergency. This year, FTA focused on providing relief to public transit systems by quickly allocating \$25 billion in CARES Act resources. In addition, FTA prioritized providing COVID-19 technical assistance to the industry, including hosting monthly listening sessions with over 2,000 participants in attendance, posting over 100 FAQs and numerous resources on [FTA's COVID-19 website](#) and distributing more than 14.2 million cloth face coverings to transit systems nationwide. FTA also worked to adjust oversight review schedules and completed preparations to conduct the reviews virtually in 2021.

FTA announced this month that it will provide additional relief for transit agencies to ensure that transit agencies can continue to prioritize their resources towards supporting the safety of their employees and riders during this public health emergency. FTA issued a second [Notice of Enforcement Discretion for the PTASP Regulation](#). Until July 21, 2021, FTA will refrain from taking enforcement action if recipients and subrecipients are unable to certify that they have established a compliant Agency Safety Plan. For more information on how to complete your certification, please contact the [PTASP Technical Assistance Center](#) and review the resources available on [FTA's website](#).

FTA also issued a [Notice of Enforcement Discretion for the Public Transportation Safety Certification Training Program \(PTSCTP\) Regulation](#). FTA will refrain from taking enforcement action until August 21, 2022, against any FTA recipient, subrecipient or designated personnel subject to the PTSCTP regulation unable to certify compliance with initial training and refresher training requirements as required under the regulation. FTA is working to convert the entire PTSCTP curriculum for virtual delivery and anticipates rolling out new virtual courses over the next 12 months.

Public transportation continues to perform a critical role in America's communities. I would personally like to thank our transit industry partners for their steadfast dedication to keep the Nation moving and innovative solutions to support those in need during this public health emergency. Have a safe and happy holiday season!

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:

- **NEW: [USDOT-FTA and HUD-PIH Partnership for COVID-19 Recovery](#)** – Provides information on how transit agencies can form partnerships to support access to transportation, educational support services, food, medical appointments and other essential services.
- [COVID-19 Recovery Listening Session Materials](#) – Provides a schedule of upcoming and past 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.
- [COVID-19 Resource Tool](#) – A compilation of Federal COVID-19 guidance and recommendations.
- [Frequently Asked Questions from FTA Grantees Regarding COVID-19](#) – Includes recent updates from December 3 and 11, 2020.

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 TSI@dot.gov or 405-954-3682. TSI can verify the status of all scheduled courses and assist with any other course-related questions.

eLearning 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

Overseeing the Safety Management Process for SSOAs	Virtual Live Training	January 11-14, 2021 February 8-11, 2021 March 29-April 1, 2021
SMS Principles for Transit	Virtual Live Training	March 1-3, 2021
SMS Safety Assurance	Virtual Live Training	December 17, 2020 January 21, 2021 February 18, 2021 March 11, 2021

In-Person Training — Required by the Public Transportation Safety Certification Training Program (RAIL)*

Effectively Managing Transit Emergencies	Salt Lake City, UT	January 11-14, 2021
	Houston, TX	January 25-28, 2021
	Charlotte, NC	March 1-4, 2021
	San Bernardino, CA	March 15-18, 2021
	Glenn Dale, MD	March 29-April 1, 2021
SMS Principles for State Safety Oversight (SSO) Programs	Tampa, FL	January 15, 2021
SMS Principles for Transit	Boise, ID	January 20-22, 2021
	Atlanta, GA	February 9-11, 2021
	Philadelphia, PA	March 3-5, 2021
Transit Rail Incident Investigation	Tucson, AZ (Registration Closed)	January 4-8, 2021
Transit Rail System Safety	Oklahoma City, OK	January 25-29, 2021
	Glenn Dale, MD	February 8-12, 2021
	Sacramento, CA	March 22-26, 2021

In-Person Training — Voluntary Courses for the Public Transportation Safety Certification Training Program (BUS)**

Fundamentals of Bus Collision Investigation	El Paso, TX	January 4-8, 2021
	Orlando, FL	February 22-26, 2021
	Newington, CT	March 8-12, 2021
	Oklahoma City, OK	March 29-April 2, 2021
Transit Bus System Safety	Tampa, FL	January 11-15, 2021
	Sacramento, CA	February 1-5, 2021
	York, PA	March 15-19, 2021
	Atlanta, GA	March 22-26, 2021

In-Person Training — Additional Bus and Rail Courses

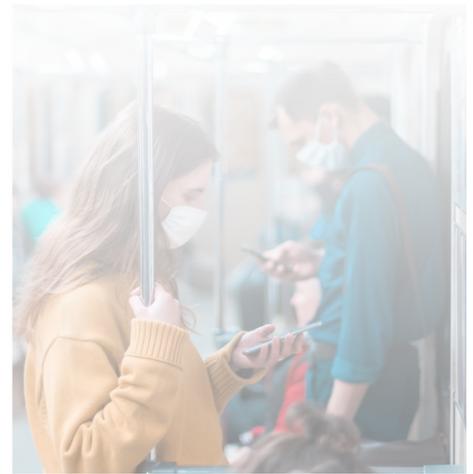
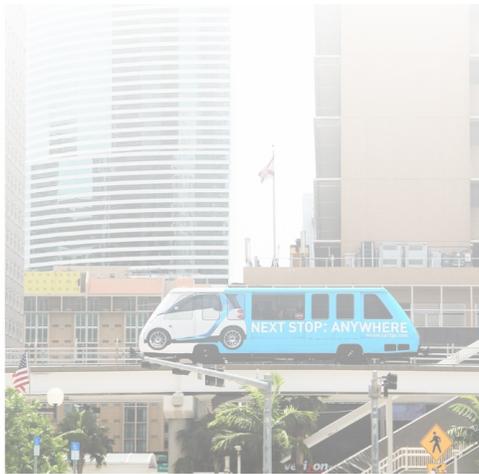
Instructor's Course for Transit Trainers	Santa Maria, CA	January 11-15, 2021
	Grand Rapids, MI	March 8-12, 2021
Reasonable Suspicion and Post-Accident Testing Determination Seminar	Boise, ID	March 19, 2021
	Alexandria, VA	March 26, 2021

In-Person Training — Additional Bus and Rail Courses

Substance Abuse Management and Program Compliance	Boise, ID Alexandria, VA	March 16-18, 2021 March 23-25, 2021
Transit Industrial Safety Management	Columbia, SC	February 1-5, 2021
Transit Safety and Security Audit Course	Memphis, TN Philadelphia, PA	February 3-5, 2021 March 31-April 2, 2021
Transit System Security	Portland, OR Salt Lake City, UT San Luis Obispo, CA White Plains, NY	January 4-8, 2021 January 25-29, 2021 March 8-12, 2021 March 29 -April 2, 2021

*Applies to SSOA personnel and contractors who conduct safety audits and examinations of public transportation systems not subject to Federal Railroad Administration regulation, as well as rail fixed guideway public transportation system personnel and contractors who are directly responsible for safety oversight. Other safety personnel, including those from bus agencies, are encouraged to participate in the voluntary program.

**The voluntary bus program also includes Effectively Managing Transit Emergencies, SMS Awareness, SMS Safety Assurance, and SMS Principles for Transit. If you would like to participate in the voluntary, program please contact FTASafetyPromotion@dot.gov to request an ITP and see the rail schedule above for course availability.



COVID-19 Listening Session Recap for 2020



On October 29, 2020, FTA hosted its fifth COVID-19 listening session on innovations in restoring passenger confidence and managing COVID-19 operational considerations, attracting over 350 participants. Panelists from Central Ohio Transit Authority (COTA) in Columbus, OH, Jacksonville Transportation Authority (JTA) in Jacksonville, FL and Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) in New York, NY shared innovative methods they are implementing to support their local communities during their COVID-19 recovery efforts. The solutions included: (1) Health – providing onsite COVID-19 testing, thermal screening and face shields for employees; (2) Technology – creating a mobile service where customers can request on-demand rides via a mobile app and resolving broadband access challenges by making transit vehicles Wi-Fi hotspots; and (3) Social Distancing – adding a second standee line to fixed route buses. To learn more, [view the presentation and recording](#) on FTA’s website.



Last month, FTA 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 the COVID-19 public health emergency. On November 13, 2020, FTA hosted its sixth COVID-19 listening session on this initiative attracting nearly 700 participants. To learn more about this unique partnership and how you can encourage these activities in your community, access the [presentation and recording](#) on FTA’s website.



This month, FTA hosted its seventh COVID-19 listening session on how transit solicits and incorporates information about riders’ changing needs to restore ridership, support COVID-19 operations and rebuild public confidence, attracting 400 participants. Panelists from City of Saint Paul and East Metro Strong (Metro Transit) in Saint Paul, MN; Miami-Dade County Department of Transportation and Public Works (Miami-Dade Transit) in Miami, FL; Penquis Transportation Brokerage in Bangor, ME and SunLine Transit Agency in Thousand Palms, CA. The agency representatives shared their methods on redesigning, rerouting

or changing service to support rider needs and advance equity and inclusiveness. Metro Transit partnered with HOURCAR, a Minnesota nonprofit car-sharing organization serving Rochester and the Twin Cities. Miami-Dade Transit created Go Nightly, an alternative transportation solution that provides on-demand ride options for late-night essential travel to ensure safe and reliable transit for riders between midnight and 5 am. Miami-Dade Transit also partnered with Transit Alliance to redesign the bus system using input from the community to better serve riders' needs. SunLine Transit launched a #RideWithConfidence social media campaign to encourage transit passengers to proudly wear their face masks to protect themselves, other passengers and operators. To learn more, [view the presentation and recording](#) on FTA’s website and continue the conversation with your peers in [FTA’s COVID-19 Recovery Discussion Forum](#).

Register for the New Virtual Course for State Safety Oversight Agencies

In September 2020, FTA piloted the new Overseeing the Safety Management Process for State Safety Oversight Agencies virtual course with 24 of 31 State Safety Oversight Agencies (SSOAs). SSOAs provided feedback used to enhance the course. Many SSOA participants appreciated the ability to work with their peers and exchange methods to oversee their Rail Transit Agencies.

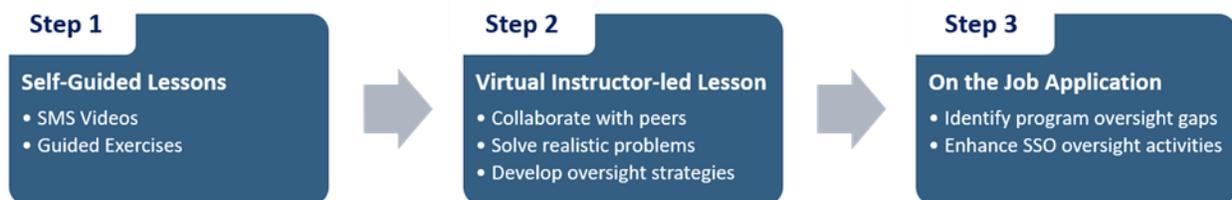
Participant feedback on the course included:

- “The information was very valuable, but getting a chance to discuss the information with peers was highly valuable.”
- “All the information presented was relevant to my current job and as a newer SSOA employee it is always nice to interact with professionals and peers and their experiences.”
- “Hearing other SSOA insights and processes provides a good measure of what my team can improve on and where we excel.”

Course Description

The Overseeing the Safety Management Process for State Safety Oversight Agencies virtual course was developed for SSOA personnel and contractors to offer a practical approach for managing State Safety Oversight (SSO) programs while rail transit agencies (RTAs) transition to a Safety Management System (SMS) framework at their organizations. During this course, participants take on the role of a State Department of Transportation (SDOT) program manager to oversee how the fictional Straightline Transit Agency manages a series of critical railcar door malfunctions. Participants will re-view SMS requirements under the [Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan regulation \(49 CFR part 673\)](#), clarify the role of the SSOA in overseeing an RTA’s SMS and develop strategies to oversee the components of SMS.

Course Components



Register Today!

Register for this course through the [Transportation Safety Institute \(TSI\)](#). This course is offered monthly from January–September 2021. After September 2021, the course may be offered twice per year. This course may be used to further develop your knowledge of SMS, develop your agency’s SMS oversight activities and satisfy the [Public Transportation Safety Certification Training Program \(PTSCTP\)](#) refresher training requirements.

“This class gave me a lot of guidance for our future program standard rewrite to incorporate more SMS principles into it.” – SSOA Program Manager

Lessons Learned from Voluntary Agency Safety Plan Reviews Part 2

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 second in a series that discusses some of the industry's most common ASP questions, issues and concerns.

Monitoring as an Essential Safety Assurance Function

One of the key elements of Safety Assurance is monitoring. Particularly, through monitoring:

- Compliance with and sufficiency of operations and maintenance procedures (§673.27(b)(1));
- Effectiveness of safety risk mitigations (§673.27(b)(2)); and
- Information reported through internal safety reporting programs (§673.27(b)(4)).

Related Resources

- [PTASP Applicability Webinar](#)
- [Safety Assurance Webinar](#)
- [Safety Assurance Lessons Learned Webinar](#)

The ASP must outline these monitoring programs. Some ASPs do not describe monitoring as an ongoing activity. Although the regulation does not specify how often agencies must conduct these monitoring activities, agencies may benefit from specifying the expected frequency of each monitoring activity.

Investigations and Causal Factors

Agencies must investigate "safety events to identify causal factors" (§673.27(b)(3)). Some agencies focus their causal factor identification on a narrow range of factors.

When identifying causal factors, agencies may find it helpful to consider:

- **Human factors**, such as human error or rule violations;
- **Equipment and infrastructure factors**, such as vehicle or infrastructure failures;
- **Environmental factors**, such as lighting, weather or visibility; and
- **Organizational factors**, such as resource management, organizational culture or processes.

Related Resources

- [Guide to Developing the Safety Assurance Component of an ASP](#)
- [Introduction to Safety Performance Indicators and Targets](#)
- [Monitoring Compliance with and Sufficiency of Operations and Maintenance Procedures](#)

Management of Change and Continuous Improvement

Rail transit agencies and bus transit agencies that are not small public transportation providers must include Management of Change and Continuous Improvement processes in their ASP (§673.27(c) and (d)). Some ASPs reviewed from these agencies do not reflect the fundamental requirements of these two processes.

Continued from Page 7

For example, Management of Change activities are most effective when implemented **before** a change is made. Knowing how a change may impact safety performance before the change is implemented helps the agency make informed decisions and prepare for unintended impacts caused by the proposed change.

Some ASPs do not address the requirement in Continuous Improvement for acting on the results of a safety performance assessment. The ASP should describe how the agency develops and carries out a plan, under the direction of the Accountable Executive, to address any identified safety deficiencies (§673.27(d)(2)).

Safety Communication

While the safety training required in the PTASP regulation only applies to workers who are directly responsible for safety (§673.29(a)), safety communication applies to every person in the transit agency (§673.29 (b)). Some ASPs do not clearly describe how an agency shares safety communications throughout the entire agency. The ASP should clearly define the communication tools and processes that the agency uses to ensure that all workers receive clear safety communication and understand their safety responsibilities.

Visit the [TAC Resource Library](#) for guides, fact sheets and webinars on the PTASP regulation. Contact the PTASP TAC at 1-877-827-7243 or PTASP-TAC@dot.gov for assistance with any PTASP-related topic.

Related Resources

- [Guide to Developing the Safety Promotion Component of an ASP](#)
- [Safety Training Resources](#)
- [Understanding PTASP Safety Training and Communication Requirements](#)

FTA Publishes 2021 Annual Drug and Alcohol Random Testing Rates



FTA is required annually to publish the [random testing rates](#) for public transportation employees subject to the requirements of [FTA Drug and Alcohol Testing regulation \(49 CFR part 655\)](#).

Effective January 1, 2021, as mandated by its regulation, FTA will maintain the required minimum rate of random drug testing at 50 percent of covered employees for recipients of FTA Urbanized Area Formula Program Grants (49 U.S.C. § 5307), Capital Investment Grants (49 U.S.C. § 5309), Formula Grants for Rural Areas (49 U.S.C. § 5311) and Grants for Buses and Bus Facilities (49 U.S.C. § 5339). The minimum random alcohol testing rate also will remain at 10 percent.

For calendar year 2021, FTA has determined that the random drug testing rate for covered employees will remain at 50 percent, based on a verified violation rate of 1.16 percent for calendar year 2019. Additionally, FTA has determined that the random alcohol testing rate for calendar year 2021 will remain at 10 percent because the violation rate again was lower than 0.5 percent for calendar years 2018 and 2019. The random alcohol violation rates were 0.20 percent for 2018 and 0.16 for 2019. FTA requires drug and alcohol testing for transit employees performing safety-sensitive functions and for employers to submit annual drug and alcohol testing reports by March 15 of each year.

[View detailed reports](#) on FTA's drug and alcohol testing data collected from transit employers on [FTA's Drug and Alcohol Program website](#). For more information, contact FTA's [Lyon Rosario](#).

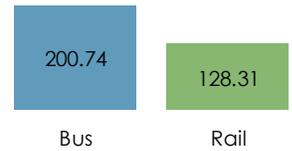
Data Spotlight: Collisions by Time of Year, 2015—2019

The FTA *Transit Safety and Oversight Spotlight* Newsletter includes a “Data Spotlight” to share safety data trends and highlight data sets that may help the industry identify safety performance targets for their [Agency Safety Plans](#).

This month, we focus on National Transit Database (NTD) reporting of collisions¹ broken down by season from 2015 to 2019.² Questions? Please contact FTA’s [Jeff Thompson](#).

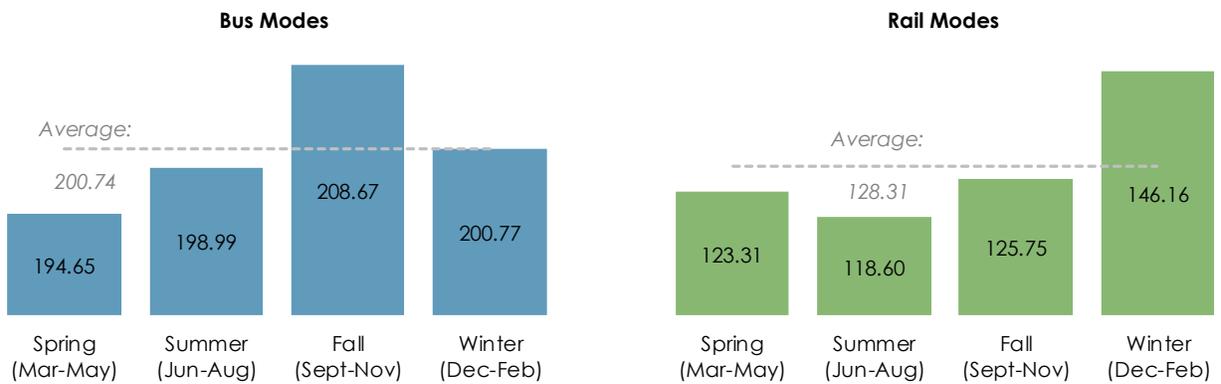
Transit agencies reported 34,881 collisions to the NTD, including 29,729 bus collisions and 5,143 rail collisions, between 2015 and 2019. When we account for different service levels for each mode, this comes to 200.74 bus collisions per 100 million vehicle revenue miles (100M VRM) and 128.31 rail collisions per 100M VRM.

Collision Rate per 100M VRM



The charts below show variation in each mode’s collision rate over the course of the year.

Seasonal Collision Rates per 100M VRM Compared to Full-Year Averages by Mode, 2015 – 2019²

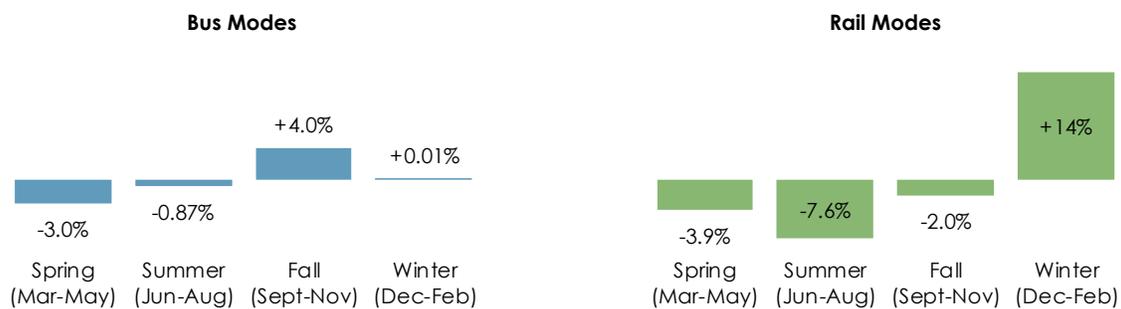


Note: Graphs not to scale

Collision rates for both bus modes and rail modes were higher in the fall and winter than in the spring and summer. Bus collision rates were highest during the fall months, while the rate during winter months was about average. In contrast, the rail collision rates peaked during winter months, while all other months were below average. Bus collision rates were lowest in the spring, while rail collision rates were lowest in the summer.

The charts below show how much each season’s collision rate varied from the full-year average rate for bus and rail modes. Rail modes highest and lowest seasonal collision rates varied more from their full-year average collision rate (+14 percent and -7.6 percent) than bus modes highest and lowest variances (+4 percent and -3 percent).

Seasonal Collision Rates per 100M VRM by Mode, 2015 – 2019²



¹Collisions include all reportable events involving a collision between a transit vehicle and anything else, including other vehicles, people and fixed objects. Data only include reporting from NTD full reporters and exclude all collisions involving suicides.

²Data reflects agency submissions to the NTD through March 13, 2020. Data submitted to the NTD for 2018 and 2019 are preliminary and subject to revision.

Transit Safety and Oversight Office Spotlights Marcia Simms



Marcia Simms

Program Analyst -
Stakeholder Engagement

How would you explain your job to someone you've never met? I recently began in September 2020 (a week prior to the virtual 2020 Joint SSO and RTA Virtual Workshop) and I am still working on my 30-second elevator speech for what I do! At a high-level, I work in a fast-paced communications position where I support divisions within the FTA Office of Transit Safety and Oversight (TSO), while directly supporting the needs of the TSO Associate Administrator and the Deputy Associate Administrator on a variety of communication instruments for transit industry stakeholder outreach.

What excites your most about your job? My role directly supports TSO's outreach efforts in response to COVID-19. I am passionate about my small part in increasing ridership levels and keeping public transportation safe and available for all passengers. I am also encouraged by public transit meeting the socio-economic and environmental needs of communities. Transit is vital for so many in our Nation and I am honored for the opportunity to do good work to support transit industry stakeholders and their customers. I also like the variety of the job and the juggling of tasks and deliverables throughout the course of the day. Sure, I have a few standard weekly projects, but not one day looks the same. I enjoy being involved and present. Although the work is rigorous, I welcome the newly found TSO-shuffle!

What were you doing prior to this role? I transferred from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) Region III office located in Baltimore, MD where I worked as a Regional Program Manager. I managed the relationship and grant oversight on behalf of NHTSA for the State of Maryland. While supporting the State, we were also assigned program areas that affect road safety risk and equity and my program areas were drug-impaired driving and pedestrian-bicyclist, or vulnerable road-user safety. I essentially offered technical guidance on the allowed grant use and traffic safety project activity recommendations to reduce the number of traffic fatalities and serious injuries. With my background in marketing and communications, I also offered insight and guidance on regional media campaigns promoting driver and road user behavioral change.

What is your favorite travel memory? One of my favorite travel memories is when I went to visit my great aunt and great uncle in Miami the summer before I went away to college. My brother is 6'5" and watching him fly on a plane for the first time was priceless. There was this terrified giant holding on for dear life on one of the smoothest flights ever. Since I am the youngest and perhaps the brattiest, the jokes were endless throughout our family vacation. My brother has not been on an airplane since then and opted to take Amtrak during a subsequent trip to Miami. He took that train ride with my late grandmother and a few of her siblings who lived North that also refused to fly.

What is your favorite form of transportation and why? This is a tough one. Not sure I have an absolute favorite mode of transportation. I like most modes for different reasons. However, considering our current limitations, I will say personal vehicle. I like the ability to hop in my car when I feel a need to explore. I do not have to worry about social distancing or wearing a mask as I travel down the road, alone. The beauty of this mode for me is sometimes driving without an agenda and just going where the road takes me and coming across the most amazing finds and people along the way!

What is the best piece of advice you have been given? I am my biggest competition. It is important to be a better person today than I was yesterday. I strive to keep learning to improve myself for myself and not for others.

What are you most looking forward to this holiday season? With so many holiday traditions being modified this year, I am most looking forward to keeping up the tradition of going to the Christmas tree farm with my boyfriend. We enjoy spending time searching for that perfect tree as we walk through aisles of the many types of firs and pine trees with a manual saw and wagon in tow. This year, I will miss the stop for brunch after securing the tree to the rooftop, but I am looking forward to seeing the many families experiencing a time-honored tradition safely outdoors.



U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Transit Administration

Federal Transit Administration
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Upcoming Speaking Events and Webinars

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

December 17, 2020 | 2:00 pm EST

[Safety and Awareness: Transit's Role in Combating Trafficking](#)

January 14, 2021 | 2:00 pm EST

