

Transit Safety and Oversight Spotlight Newsletter

U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Transit Administration

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Message from the Acting Administrator

March 2021
Vol. 6 No. 3

Dear Transit Colleagues:

We are at a critical moment in our Nation's response and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. FTA continues to focus on safety, and implementing the Biden Administration's [Federal mask requirement for public transportation](#). The next step is to support the President's direction that every adult in America have access to the COVID-19 vaccine by May 1, 2021.

In support of vaccine efforts, we are working to ensure our frontline transit workers receive vaccinations and are highlighting effective strategies transit agencies are undertaking to support local vaccine efforts. In addition, we are recommending that transit agencies establish partnerships with state and local vaccination authorities, including the Federal Emergency Management Agency and [State Emergency Operations Centers](#), to ensure that transit workers are eligible for vaccination and support local vaccine access efforts in their community.

FTA has published an FAQ that clarifies that transit agencies may use transit vehicles to provide non-public transportation service to COVID-19 vaccination sites and use transit facilities as vaccination sites, as eligible incidental uses, as long as the services do not conflict with the provision of transit services or result in a reduction of service to transit passengers. Several FTA funding programs can be used to set up and operate vaccination sites at transit facilities and support transportation services to and from COVID-19 vaccination sites as an incidental use of transit vehicles and facilities (see [FAQ CE18](#)).

We want to make sure that FTA—and our resources—support your efforts to keep your workers and riders safe. The Federal funding, we are administering right now to support public transportation is unprecedented. We will continue to shepherd these funds quickly, responsibly and equitably to ensure that vaccine access is a priority.

This Women's History Month, I am proud to recognize the successful women who have come before me and those who will follow. While women have traditionally been underrepresented in the transit sector, the percentage of women in transit—and those advancing into management and leadership positions—has increased over the past five years. I am very proud to lead a diverse workforce at FTA.

Sincerely,

Nuria Fernandez



Nuria Fernandez

Acting Administrator,
Federal Transit
Administration

COVID-19 Available Guidance and Resources for the Transit Industry

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

- **NEW: [Mask Requirement FAQs](#)**—Provides answers to frequently asked questions on the Federal mask requirement regarding applicability, enforcement, implementation, mask exemption and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).
- **NEW: [FAQs from FTA Grantees Regarding COVID-19](#)**—Provides answers to frequently asked questions regarding the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSAA), 2021 and other requirements.
- **[Federal Mask Requirement for Transit](#)**—Provides links to resources, stakeholder call materials and updated information on the Federal mask requirement.
- **[COVID-19 Recovery Practices in Transit](#)**—Provides web links to practices implemented by transit systems worldwide in response to COVID-19, updated monthly.
- **[COVID-19 Resource Tool](#)**—A compilation of Federal COVID-19 guidance and recommendations, updated weekly.

Sign-Up for Updates

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

Mask Requirement Questions?
Email TransitMaskUp@dot.gov.

Upcoming Safety Training

USDOT'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	March 29–April 1, 2021 April 12–15, 2021 May 11–14, 2021
SMS Principles for Transit	Virtual Live Training	April 5–7, 2021
SMS Safety Assurance	Virtual Live Training	April 22, 2021 May 20, 2021

NTI Assault Awareness and Prevention for Transit Operators Courses

The National Transit Institute (NTI) opened registration for virtual offerings of the [Assault Awareness and Prevention for Transit Operators course](#). The course provides transit bus operators with prevention strategies to reduce the likelihood of assault incidents. Prevention strategies focus on communication and response skills, the value of reporting incidents and the importance of seeking assistance to reduce the risk of assault incidents. On February 26, 2021, NTI released [a recorded course video](#) to accommodate demand and provide 24/7 access to this training.

Incidental Uses of Transit Vehicles and Partnerships for COVID-19 Vaccination

The National Center for Mobility Management (NCMM) has compiled [examples](#) of how transit agencies are working with public health agencies and their communities to support vaccination efforts to help share ideas across the public transportation industry. Here are some examples of transit's role in vaccination efforts in their communities:



Photo Credit: VIA Metropolitan Transit (VIA)

The Comanche Nation Transit in Lawton, Oklahoma is providing free transportation for anyone 65 and older wanting to receive a COVID-19 vaccine. The transit agency has made changes to the appointment process to make it more seamless and sanitizes vehicles in-between trips to increase safety.

VIA Metropolitan Transit (VIA) in San Antonio, Texas is offering complimentary transportation for riders traveling to or from a city/county-sponsored COVID-19 vaccination site. Riders are asked to present their appointment registration or their COVID-19 vaccination record to ride fare-free on the day of the appointment.

Wave Transit in New Hanover County, North Carolina began free transportation to designated vaccination distribution sites for

community members with vaccination appointments. Riders receiving a COVID-19 vaccination or assisting someone receiving a vaccination at a North Carolina vaccine provider are eligible for transportation.

Additionally, the NCMM also partnered with FTA and the Community Transportation Association of America to present the Mobilizing Transportation to Increase COVID-19 Vaccination webinar with public health experts from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the National Association of County and City Health Officials. This webinar was designed to assist the public health and public transportation sectors identify ways to collaborate to ensure all Americans living in rural and small urban communities are vaccinated. Access the [webinar slides](#) and [transcript](#) on NCMM's COVID-19 Resource Center.



Photo Credit: WWAY TV3

PTASP Documentation and Recordkeeping

The [Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan \(PTASP\) regulation \(49 CFR Part 673\)](#) establishes requirements for public transportation systems to implement an Agency Safety Plan (ASP). One of these requirements is for transit agencies to maintain ASP documents ([§ 673.31](#)). This article presents some considerations for transit agencies about PTASP documentation and recordkeeping.

Related Resources

- [PTASP Bus Workshop Participant Guide](#)
- [PTASP Webinar: Transitioning to Agency](#)

Requirement for Documentation and Recordkeeping

The PTASP regulation (§ 673.31) establishes a few requirements for documentation and recordkeeping. Transit agencies must maintain the following materials for a minimum of three years after they are created:

- Documents that set forth their ASP, including those related to implementing a Safety Management System (SMS);
- Results from their SMS processes and activities; and
- Documents included in whole, or by reference, that describe the programs, policies and procedures that the agency uses to carry out its ASP.

Transit agencies must make these documents available upon request by FTA or other Federal entities. For rail transit agencies, they must also make these documents available to their State Safety Oversight Agency.

Examples of Documents and Records to Maintain

The PTASP Technical Assistance Center (TAC) has received questions about what documents and records FTA requires transit agencies to maintain. In short: if it's an input or output of the ASP or SMS, keep it. Below are a few examples of documents your agency may develop and will need to maintain for at least three years.

ASP and Subsequent Revisions

- ASP revision meeting agendas and minutes; and
- Concurrences or other documentation approving ASP revisions.

Carrying out the ASP

- Meeting agendas, minutes, and sign-in sheets for meetings or trainings on implementing the ASP;
- Policies, procedures, or other instructions for implementing any part of the ASP;
- Work direction forms or other contractor agreements that relate to implementing the ASP; and
- Agreements with organized labor on ASP implementation.

Results of the SMS

- Reports submitted to the Employee Safety Reporting Program, documentation of the activities the transit agency performed to investigate and/or address reported safety concerns, and documentation of notifications to employees who submitted reports;
- Accident investigation procedures, reports, memoranda, testing records and briefing materials;
- Hazard logs or safety risk registers, documentation of risk-based prioritization decisions and approval of safety risk mitigations; and
- Compliance checklists or other records of operations and maintenance procedure compliance monitoring.

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This is not an exhaustive list and transit agencies are encouraged to contact the PTASP TAC with specific questions about document and record retention requirements.

Visit the [PTASP 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.

Want more information about PTASP documentation and recordkeeping?

FTA's March 2021 webinar, "PTASP Documentation and Recordkeeping," will be available in the [PTASP Technical Assistance Center \(TAC\) Resource Library](#)

FTA, FRA and NHTSA Hold Joint Campaign: Stop. Trains Can't.

In 2019, there were 1,671 motor vehicle collisions at public rail grade crossings, resulting in 129 fatalities and 657 injuries. Of those total collisions, 613 occurred at rail transit train crossings, resulting in 9 fatalities and 197 injuries. What's more—most of these collisions could have been avoided!

Beginning March 22 through April 21, 2021, FTA joins the U.S. Department of Transportation's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) and the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) for the national *Stop. Trains Can't.* campaign to help reduce collisions, deaths and injuries at freight and commuter train, and rail transit train crossings. The campaign will utilize geo-targeted radio, digital and social media channels to target—those who research shows are most at risk—men ages 18-49 reminding them to stop at rail grade crossings. Whether it is a freight or commuter train, or light rail or passenger rail train, given their size, weight and mass, trains need a long time to stop, even after emergency brakes are applied. Visit the [campaign landing page](#) for complimentary creative materials you can use to amplify this safety message in your system and region. We also encourage you to follow FTA on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#) during the campaign to repost and retweet.

Please remember National Rail Safety Week is September 20–26, 2021, but this important safety message should be promoted throughout the year: *Stop. Trains Can't.*



Data Spotlight: Collisions by Time of Day, 2015 to Present

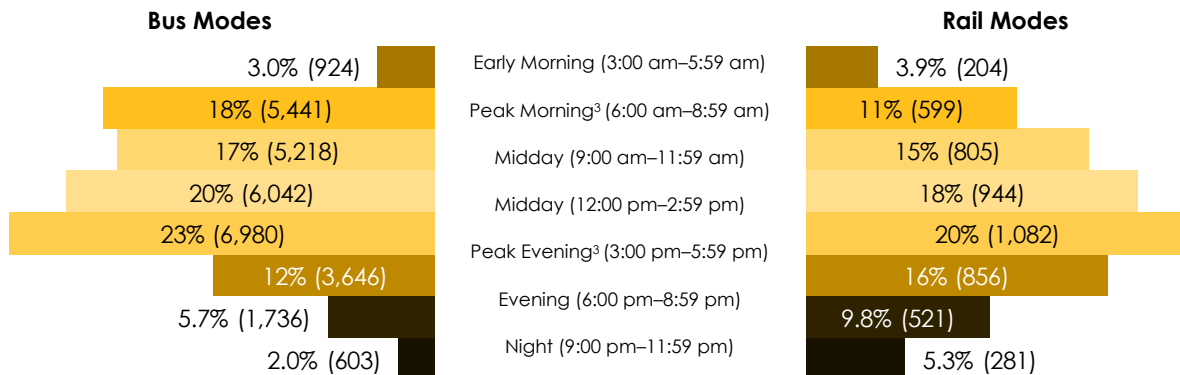
The Transit Safety and Oversight Spotlight includes a “Data Spotlight” to share safety data trends and highlight data sets that may help the industry identify safety performance targets in accordance with their [Agency Safety Plans](#).

This month, the focus is on the National Transit Database (NTD) reporting of collisions¹ according to what time of day the collisions occurred. Questions? Please contact [Jeff Thompson](#), General Engineer for FTA’s Office of System Safety.

From January 2015 to February 2020, transit agencies reported 30,590 bus collisions and 5,292 rail collisions to the NTD for a total of 35,882. These resulted in 738 fatalities (418 from bus collisions and 320 from rail collisions) and 44,997 injuries (42,555 from bus collisions and 2,442 from rail collisions).

The histograms below show when bus and rail collisions occurred by time of day.

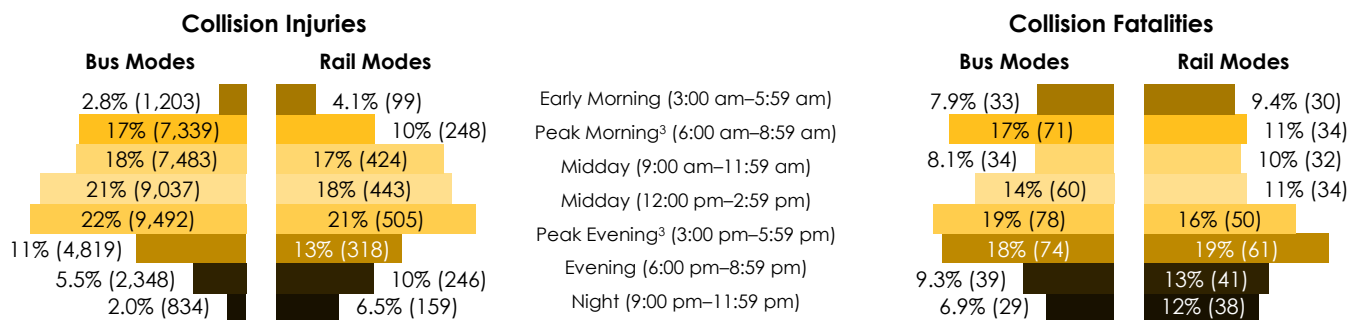
Collision¹ Distribution by Time of Day and Mode, Jan 2015–Feb 2020²



Data shows that 55 percent of bus and 54 percent of rail collisions occurred in the afternoons and early evenings between noon and 8:59 pm. Transit agencies reported five percent more bus collisions during afternoon peak hours³ (between 3:00 pm and 5:59 pm) than during the morning peak hours (between 6:00 am and 8:59 am). Rail modes showed a similar pattern with nine percent more collisions during the afternoon peak period. Relatively few bus (11 percent) and rail (19 percent) collisions occurred during nights and early mornings between 9:00 pm and 5:59 am.

The histograms below show when bus and rail collision fatalities and injuries occurred by time of day.

Collision¹ Injury and Fatality Distribution by Time of Day and Mode, Jan 2015–Feb 2020²



The distribution of bus and rail collision injuries are similar to the distribution of collisions, with a majority occurring between noon and 8:59 pm. In contrast, collisions during night and early morning hours result in fatalities more often than at other times. As noted above, relatively few collisions occurred between 9:00 pm and 5:59 am, but 24 percent of bus collision fatalities and over one-third (34 percent) of rail collision fatalities occurred during this time of day.

¹Collisions include all reportable events involving collisions between transit vehicles and anything else, including other vehicles, people, bicyclists 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 April 2, 2020. Data submitted to the NTD for years 2018–2020 are preliminary and subject to revision.

³A separate NTD analysis showed that, on average, transit agencies reported a morning peak period from 6:00 am–9:30 am and an afternoon peak period from 3:00 pm–6:30 pm during a typical weekday.

FTA Safety and Oversight Employee Spotlight: Tiffany Gallegos, P.E.



Tiffany Gallegos, P.E.
Director of Operations and Program Management, FTA Region 8

How would you explain your job to someone you've never met? I work for a Federal agency that makes grant funds available to provide transportation options for people living in communities of all sizes. In my job, I help make sure public funds are used properly and to the benefit of American taxpayers.

What excites you most about your job? In my role as Director of Operations and Program Management for FTA Region 8, my team spends a lot of time in the post-award phases of grant management. The longest phase of a grant is implementation, which can sometimes happen very quickly, and other times take years or decades. One of the silliest little things that excites me is grant closeout. I LOVE closing grants because—to my engineering, implementation-driven mind—closeout means we finished the project and we delivered. I get giddy, with butterflies in my stomach, when I think about getting a grant closed, and this is how I know we are delivering on FTA's mission of "Improving Public Transportation for America's Communities."

What is your favorite form of transportation? Flying. I love the fact that you can get on an airplane and within a matter of a few short hours arrive at your destination anywhere in the country, or the world for that matter. The time efficiency of that kind of travel is remarkable.

When you were a child, what did you want to be when you grew up? I wanted to be a neurosurgeon! In late elementary and through middle school years, the school district where I grew up provided amazing opportunities to dissect different bodily organs. We lived in an area where a meat processing plant was nearby, and therefore had a plentiful supply of animal organs—eyes, lungs, hearts and brains. I stepped up to the plate and took one for the team. Making the incisions to halve a sheep's brain, seeing the different textures and densities and three little yellow balls (glands) fall out of otherwise light gray matter was incredible. I seriously considered being a brain surgeon after that but the fear of holding someone's life in my hands got the better of me and I chose a career I felt would be less stressful.

If you could take a month to travel anywhere, where would you go? It may sound cliché, but travel across Europe with my husband. Of course, we must hit the highlights – London, Paris and Rome. We would have to balance busy, bustling cities with peaceful and serene countryside though, so a month may not be enough.

If you could learn any skill, what would it be? A few years back I took a few classes on the basics of cake decorating. The GOAL: make a fancy cake for my sister's baby shower. Within six-weeks I made my first multi-tiered fondant cake, complete with a hand-made, fully decorated sugar-paste peony flower to adorn the top. It turned out lovely. I had a great time working on the project even though I was up till 4 am the day of the party making sure to finish. Someday when I have the time, I would love to continue learning new baking artistry skills, and practice perfecting techniques.

What is the best piece of advice you have been given? In the context of work, I remember struggling to get a detailed project schedule from a capital project sponsor. No later than receiving the most current project schedule during a quarterly meeting, the sponsor would announce that the schedule is being revised. A wise Project Management Oversight Contractor (PMOC) told me, "schedules are made to be broken." Boy, was he right. Broken schedules will happen—either falling behind schedule, or beating a record for a tight schedule—you will always be chasing the schedule.

What are you most looking forward to in 2021? I look forward to completing my basement finish project and continuing to make my home stay-cation worthy. While our family of four has been working and schooling from home this last year, we have decided it is time to take the plunge on that big remodel project. We want our projects completed so we can enjoy our home, and at this point who knows when we will be back to "normal." I never imagined we would be in this situation for so long, and no true end in sight yet. With all of us home, and each of us trying to manage our own schedules and Zoom calls, it has caused us to rethink the uses for space in our home. It will be nice to spread out when the basement is finished.



U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Transit Administration

Federal Transit Administration
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Upcoming Speaking Events and Webinars

[PTASP Webinar: PTASP Documentation and Recordkeeping](#)

March 31, 2021 | 2:00 pm ET

[PTASP Webinar: Planning and Carrying Out the Annual ASP Review](#)

April 29, 2021 | 2:00 pm ET

[15th Annual FTA Drug and Alcohol Program National Conference](#)

May 11–14, 2021

