

Transit Safety and Oversight Spotlight Newsletter

U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Transit Administration

Message from the Associate Administrator

April 2021
Vol. 6 No. 4

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

COVID-19 Resources and Updates	2
Upcoming Safety Training	2
The Agency Safety Plan Review Process	3-4
Data Spotlight: Bus Rapid Transit Events, 2015–Present	5
U.S. Department of Transportation Launches “Mask Up” Campaign	6
FTA Safety and Oversight Employee Spotlight	6
Upcoming Events and Webinars	7

Dear Transit Colleagues:

Over the past year, Congress has provided \$70 billion in additional funding to support transit’s COVID-19 response and recovery efforts. This includes funding from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act; the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSAA); and, most recently, the [American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 \(ARP\)](#).

Beginning in April, FTA is hosting [a webinar series](#) to provide technical assistance to transit agencies on how to calculate and document operating expenses when charging them to FTA grants. The presentations and recordings will be posted online. In Fiscal Year 2021, FTA will enhance oversight of the new Federal COVID-19 relief funding, including spot reviews of select recipients who are not scheduled to receive a Triennial or State Management Review this year. These reviews will focus on expenses charged to FTA grants and recipients’ financial systems to ensure proper tracking of new types of FTA funds with different eligibilities and local match requirements. We believe this additional oversight will help us identify and resolve any issues related to using COVID-19 relief funding at an early stage and work with grantees to address any eligibility issues.

Last month, President Biden signed the American Rescue Plan Act to ensure that our transportation systems keep running during and beyond the pandemic. The ARP includes \$30.5 billion to help hard-hit transit agencies, including funding to assist with operating costs, such as, payroll and expenses related to personal protective equipment. One of the ARP’s primary goals is to support a national vaccination program. The transit industry is playing a critical role in helping improve vaccine access in communities across the country.

On March 26, 2021, FTA hosted a [National Peer Exchange on Vaccine Access](#) to share best practices. The virtual event featured speakers including: The Federal Emergency Management Agency; the National League of Cities; Brazos Transit District in Bryan, Texas; Brazos Valley Center for Independent Living in Bryan, Texas; Foothill Transit in Covina, California; Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority in Atlanta, Georgia; and Utah Transit Authority (UTA) Salt Lake City, Utah. The presentation and recording are available on the [FTA COVID-19 webpage](#). We have seen many partnerships between transit and public health agencies to support communities in their vaccination efforts. In Levelland, Texas, SPARTAN retrofitted its brand-new transit facility to be its community’s first mass vaccination site, and in Seattle, Washington, Sound Transit is offering free light rail service to passengers with confirmed appointments. To view more examples of vaccination partnerships between transit and public health agencies, follow FTA on [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#) and [Twitter](#).

In closing, FTA will continue to support the safety of our transit partners and passengers during this critical recovery period from the COVID-19 pandemic while being stewards of the COVID-19 supplemental resources. FTA will continue to provide funding, technical assistance, and administrative relief as we work collectively to keep America safe and moving.

Sincerely,
Henrika Buchanan



Henrika Buchanan

Associate Administrator for
Transit Safety and
Oversight & Chief Safety
Officer, Federal Transit
Administration

COVID-19 Resources and Updates

FTA continues to provide [updated resources](#) on COVID-19. The following resources are available:

- **NEW: [USDOT Mask Up Toolkit](#)**—Includes shareable background materials, talking points, digital assets and print-ready resources, in English and Spanish, to support your outreach efforts.
- [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).
- [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	May 11–14, 2021 June 14–17, 2021 July 13–16, 2021
SMS Principles for Transit	Virtual Live Training	July 7–9, 2021
SMS Safety Assurance	Virtual Live Training	April 22, 2021 May 20, 2021 June 9, 2021 July 22, 2021

NTI Assault Awareness and Prevention for Transit Operators Courses

The National Transit Institute (NTI) opened registration for [Train the Trainer](#) and [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. A [recorded course video](#) is also available to accommodate demand and provide 24/7 access to this training.

The Agency Safety Plan Review Process

The Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan (PTASP) regulation requires applicable transit agencies to establish a process and timeline for conducting an annual review and update of their Agency Safety Plan (ASP) ([§ 673.11\(a\)\(5\)](#)).

Agencies may design an annual review and update process that reflects their unique administrative set up. The graphic below shows one way an agency could organize their ASP review process. In the example, the **Chief Safety Officer (CSO)** initiates the annual ASP review. The ASP then goes to the **ASP Review Team**, which creates a review checklist to guide their review (identifying and revising out-of-date references, vetting proposed changes with relevant departments, etc.), completes the checklist and makes necessary updates to the ASP.

FLOWCHART KEY

- ◇ **Diamond shape: PTASP requirement**
- **Rectangle shape: Voluntary process**
- **Teal color: All transit modes**
- **Purple color: Rail transit modes only**
- ▶ **Dotted line: Applicable to rail transit agencies only (not to bus agencies)**

Figure 1

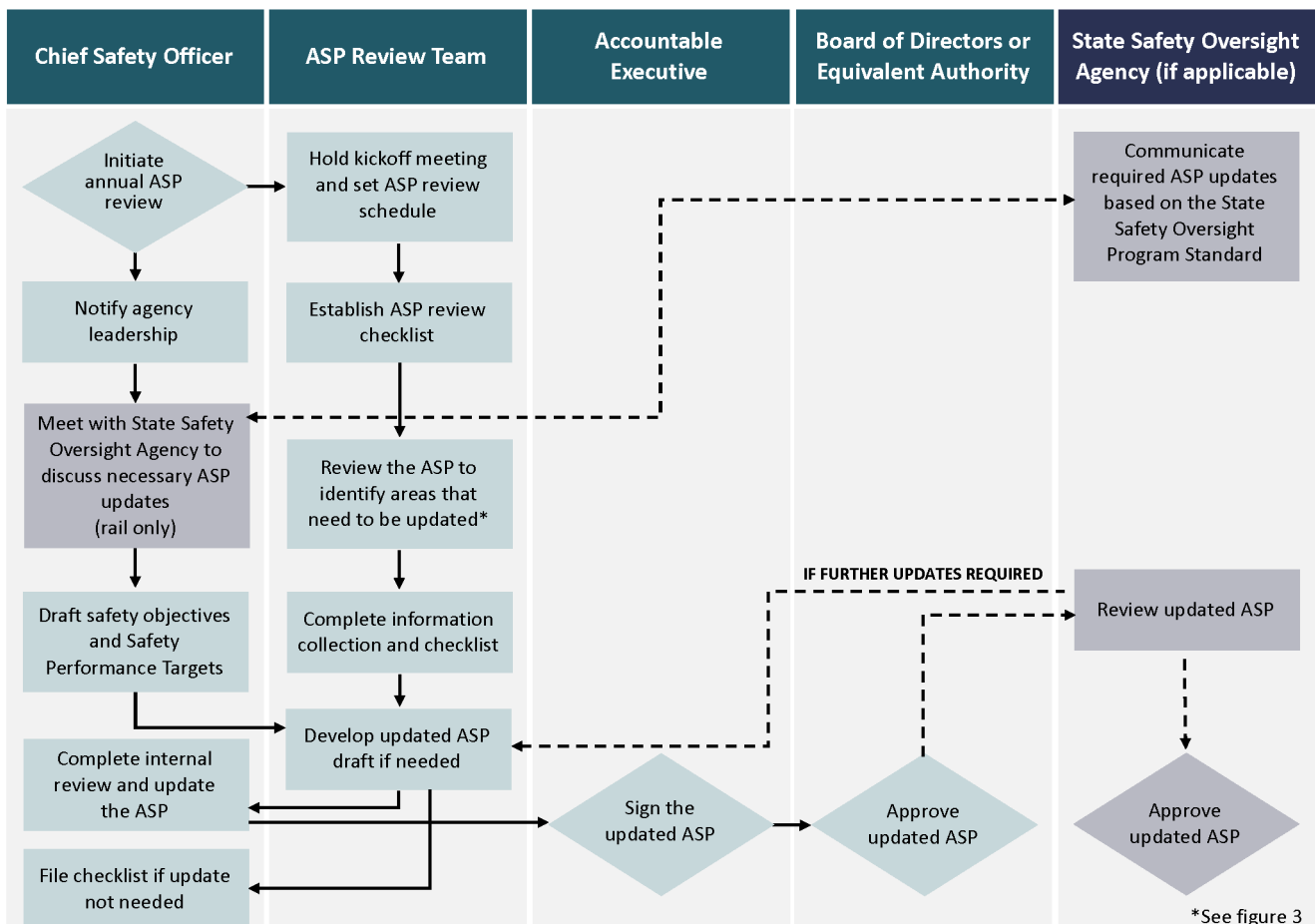
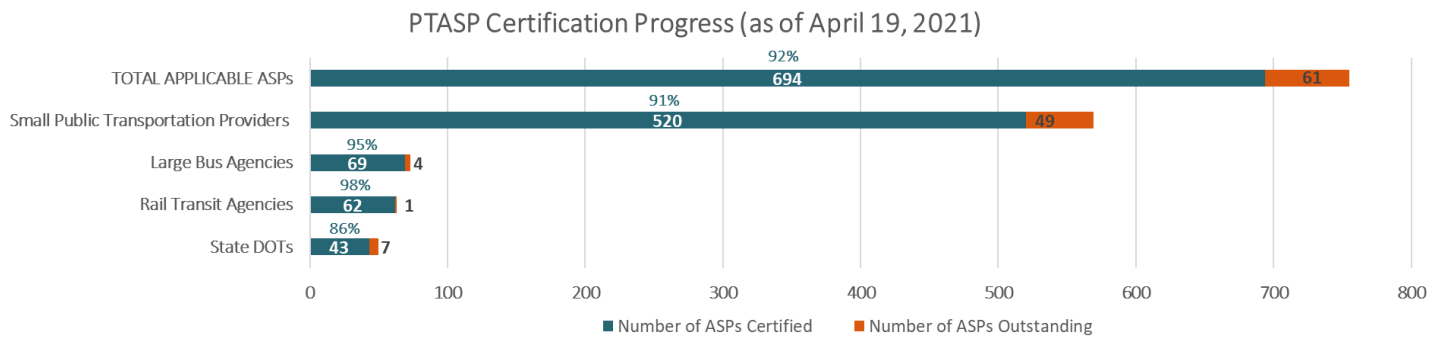


Figure 2: Sample ASP Review Process

*See figure 3



ASP Reviews: Receive valuable feedback on your ASP by emailing your plan to the PTASP Technical Assistance Center (PTASP TAC) at PTASP-TAC@dot.gov *before* May 28, 2021



When to Update the ASP

There are many reasons your agency might update your ASP, such as significant changes to your agency's management structure, processes, policies or procedures (see figure 3). During the review process, however, your agency may find that there are no significant changes and that updates to the ASP are unnecessary. In this case, FTA recommends you file a record of the review. Since your agency did not change the ASP, your agency does not have to go through the signature and approval process.

If your agency operates a rail fixed guideway system, make sure your process aligns with the requirements laid out in your State Safety Oversight Agency (SSOA) Program Standard. For example, your CSO may be required to meet with the SSOA to discuss any necessary updates.

When your agency has finished making updates to the ASP, the **Accountable Executive** must sign the ASP, and the agency's **Board of Directors or Equivalent Authority** must approve the ASP ([§ 673.11\(a\)\(1\)](#)). In addition, for rail fixed guideway systems, the SSOA must review and approve the ASP ([§ 673.13\(a\)](#)).

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.

Areas that may prompt updates to the ASP:

- **Significant changes to the transit agency's management organization structure and/or system characteristics.**
- **Changes to processes, policies, or procedures that affect Safety Management Systems (SMS) or safety in general.**
- **Compliance with new or revised FTA regulations relating to the ASP or SMS.**
- **Compliance with SSO Program Standard or Corrective Action Plans.**
- **Updated transit agency safety objectives and safety performance targets.**
- **Changes to the Employee Safety Reporting Program.**
- **New training or safety promotion initiatives.**

Figure 3

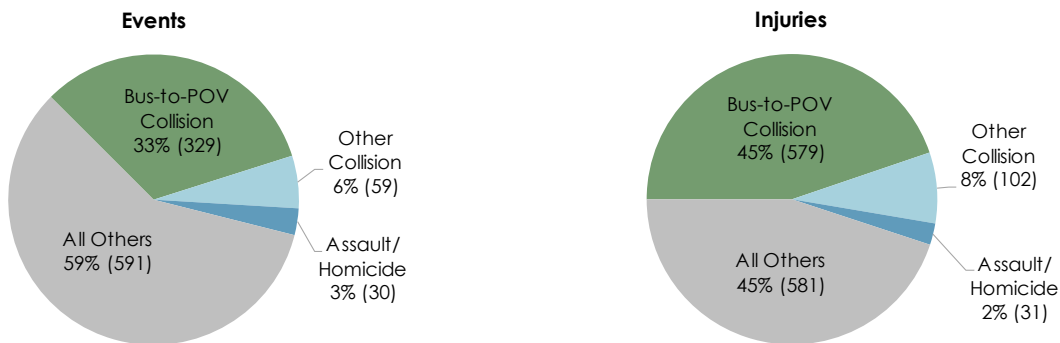
Data Spotlight: Bus Rapid Transit Events, 2015–Present

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 \(ASP\)](#). This month, the focus is on National Transit Database (NTD) event reporting for the bus rapid transit (RB) mode. Questions? Please contact [Jeff Thompson](#), General Engineer for FTA’s Office of System Safety.

The NTD defines the RB mode as fixed-route bus systems that operate at least 50 percent of the service on a fixed guideway. From January 2015 to March 2020, 13 transit agencies submitted RB mode data that accounted for less than one percent of all bus vehicle revenue miles (VRM) traveled. Transit agencies reported 1,009 RB mode events that resulted in one fatality and 1,293 injuries during this time period.

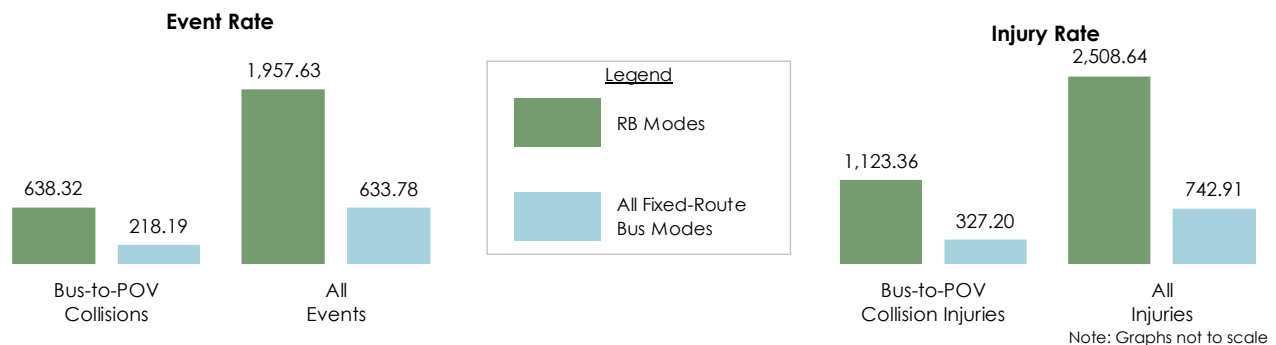
Collisions² between buses and privately operated vehicles (POV) comprised 33 percent of RB events reported between January 2015 and March 2020; 45 percent of reported injuries resulted from these collisions. Other RB collision types like bus-to-bicyclist or bus-to-person accounted for six percent of RB events and eight percent of RB injuries. The only RB fatality from this time period resulted from a bus-to-person collision.

RB Events and Injuries by Event Type, January 2015–March 2020¹



RB modes reported fewer than two percent of all events and injuries among fixed-route bus modes³ during this time period. However, once we adjust for VRM, RB modes reported higher event and injury rates than average for all fixed-route bus modes, which may be due in part to the much lower level of reported RB VRM.

Event and Injury Rates per 100M VRM, January 2015–March 2020



RB modes reported over three times as many events and injuries per VRM than fixed-route bus modes as a whole. After we adjust for differing service levels, RB modes also had a higher frequency of bus-to-POV collisions and injuries relative to fixed-route bus modes.

¹Data reflect full-reporter agency submissions to the NTD through May 4, 2020. Data submitted to the NTD for 2018–2020 are preliminary and subject to revision.

²Collisions include all reportable events involving a collision between a transit vehicle and anything else, excluding suicides.

³Fixed-route bus modes include bus (MB), commuter bus (CB), público (PB), bus rapid transit (RB) and trolley bus (TB) modes.

U.S. Department of Transportation Launches “Mask Up” Campaign

The U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) launched a “Mask Up” campaign to educate travelers and transportation providers, including transit agencies, on their responsibility to comply with the Federal mask requirement on public transportation. The national requirement to wear a mask while traveling, follows the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\) Order](#) and [Transportation Security Administration Security Directive](#), and failure to comply with the requirement can result in civil penalties.

The centerpiece of the campaign is a [digital toolkit](#) that includes background materials, talking points, digital assets and print-ready resources, in English and Spanish, to support your outreach efforts. Each item is downloadable and shareable.



Darin Allan

Director of the Office of Financial Management and Program Oversight, FTA Region 9

FTA Safety and Oversight Employee Spotlight: Darin Allan

How would you explain your job to someone you’ve never met? Along with my colleagues in FTA, I help state and local officials navigate Federal funding requirements so that they may provide the public transit services they have planned for their communities.

What excites your most about your job? Helping colleagues and FTA Recipient staff, particularly through a logjam and, then, every day, seeing the results of our collective efforts: people getting to work, taking transit to and from medical appointments, being evacuated from danger during emergencies, choosing transit instead of driving to sporting and cultural events, and more. When I travel, I also use transit for convenience, cost, and a richer experience of the community I’m visiting. My work supports the future, which includes me getting around in retirement!

What were you doing prior to this role? I’ve been in Region 9 for two and a half years after three years in Region 8, but I have served most of my 18 years with FTA as a Community Planner in the Office of Planning and Environment (TPE) and in Region 2. Before FTA, I supported transit as a planning consultant with BRW/URS, university researcher at the Center for Urban Transportation Research at the University of South Florida in Tampa, and planner with three Recipients: Central Florida Regional Transportation Authority (dba “Lynx” in Orlando, FL), Bi-State Development Agency (dba “Metro” in St Louis, MO), and Bloomington Public Transportation Corporation (Bloomington, IN).

What are three positive words that people often use to describe you? Passionate, Inquisitive, Fun.

What is your favorite form of transportation and why? Walking, because, on good days, it provides the most independence and a depth of perception that faster modes can’t afford.

What is the best piece of advice you have been given? I can’t share the best; however, another very good piece is “Don’t assume you know what someone is thinking.”

What movie can you watch over, and over again? Contact (based on the book by Carl Sagan, starring Jodie Foster and Matthew McConaughey).



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

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

Upcoming Events and Webinars

[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

Upcoming Virtual Bus ASP Implementation Workshops

FTA will host virtual Bus Agency Safety Plan (ASP) Implementation Workshops to help participants plan and practice implementing elements of their ASPs. In these new workshops, participants will collaboratively explore ways to implement and assess Safety Management System processes described in their ASPs. The workshops are offered based on agency size to allow participants to share and discuss processes relevant to their agency type.

[Small Bus Agencies](#)

May 12, 2021 | 1:00 pm–4:30 pm ET

This event is now full. Please send an email to the PTASP Technical Assistance Center (TAC) at PTASP-TAC@dot.gov to be placed on a waiting list or to let the TAC know that you are interested in future workshops.

[Small Bus Agencies](#)

May 26, 2021 | 1:00 pm–4:30 pm ET

This event is now full. Please send an email to the PTASP Technical Assistance Center (TAC) at PTASP-TAC@dot.gov to be placed on a waiting list or to let the TAC know that you are interested in future workshops.

[Large Bus Agencies](#)

June 10, 2021 | 1:00 pm–4:30 pm ET

[Large Bus Agencies](#)

June 23, 2021 | 1:00 pm–4:30 pm ET

