

Transit Safety and Oversight Spotlight Newsletter

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Message from the Associate Administrator

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Dear Transit Colleagues:

Last month, our community was impacted by a deadly shooting at a Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) light rail operations facility in Santa Clara, California. These tragic events affect not only VTA but the 3,000 plus transit agencies nationwide, as well as all of us at FTA. This is a time for us to come together to support one another and our transit agency partners. I encourage all of you to reflect on our transit colleagues and their families at VTA and hold them in your thoughts.

President Biden has called for [June to be a National Month of Action](#) to mobilize an all-of-America sprint to get more people vaccinated by July 4, 2021. As part of this month, nearly 370 transit agencies have provided free rides to help Americans get vaccinated, many using funding from the American Rescue Plan. FTA encourages transit agencies to continue to step up and support your communities with COVID-19 vaccination access and to continue working to instill vaccine confidence in the transit workforce.

Currently, 99 percent of applicable agencies and States have certified compliance with the PTASP regulation. Agencies and States must certify that they have met the requirements of the PTASP regulation by July 20, 2021, to be eligible for continued FTA grant assistance. After that date, FTA will be unable to award grants to a recipient unless the PTASP certification is completed in the FTA Transit Award Management System (TrAMS). For more information, on how to complete your certification, please contact the [PTASP Technical Assistance Center \(TAC\)](#) and review the available resources on the [PTASP TAC webpage](#).

Lastly, this is my final *TSO Spotlight* Newsletter. June will be my last month serving in the role of Associate Administrator for Transit Safety and Oversight and Chief Safety Officer at the FTA. FTA's Regional Administrator for Region 6, Gail Lyssy, will serve as Acting Associate Administrator for TSO until FTA completes a new recruitment. Gail has over three decades of transportation experience and is a well-known leader throughout FTA and our industry. She'll work closely with TSO Deputy Associate Administrator Angela Dluger, and together with the entire TSO team they'll ensure the continued smooth delivery of the office's responsibilities.

I would like to thank the transit safety and oversight community for your support throughout the years and highlight the tremendous effort and the work that we have accomplished over the past three years. Together, we achieved the accomplishments highlighted on the next page and many others, all while keeping transit safe and moving. I look forward to continuing to work on behalf of transit systems across the country. Please continue doing the great work you do to ensure safe, accessible and efficient public transportation for America's communities.

Sincerely,

Henrika Buchanan



Henrika Buchanan

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

Henrika Buchanan FTA TSO Leadership Highlights

- **COVID-19 Pandemic Recovery Efforts**—Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, FTA engaged with stakeholders, disseminated technical assistance resources and provided funding to transit agencies to support COVID-19 recovery efforts.
- **Streamlined and Implemented Virtual Oversight Reviews**—Over the past year, we have adjusted our reviews to accommodate the new work reality created by COVID-19.
- **SSO Certifications**—In March 2019, we achieved 100 percent certification of all 31 SSO Programs in advance of the safety deadline.
- **PTASP Implementation**—In July 2019, FTA published the PTASP regulation, beginning a new era for public transit safety and completing the regulatory foundation for the National Public Transportation Safety Program. The next phase, when agencies and States implement their Agency Safety Plans, will continue to strengthen and improve transit safety.

COVID-19 Resources and Updates

On June 10, 2021, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) [announced](#) that it will amend its Face Mask Order to not require people to wear a mask in outdoor areas of conveyances or while outdoors at transportation hubs and will no longer enforce this requirement until it can amend its Order.

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

- [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.
- [FAQs from FTA Grantees Regarding COVID-19](#)—Provides answers to frequently asked questions regarding COVID-19 relief funding and other requirements.
- [Federal Mask Requirement for Transit](#)—Provides links to resources, stakeholder call materials and updated information on the Federal mask requirement. CDC continues to recommend wearing of masks in these areas by people who are not fully vaccinated.
- [Mask Requirement FAQs](#)—Provides answers to frequently asked questions on the Federal mask requirement regarding applicability, enforcement, implementation, exemptions and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Sign-Up for Updates

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

Mask Requirement Questions?

Email TransitMaskUp@dot.gov

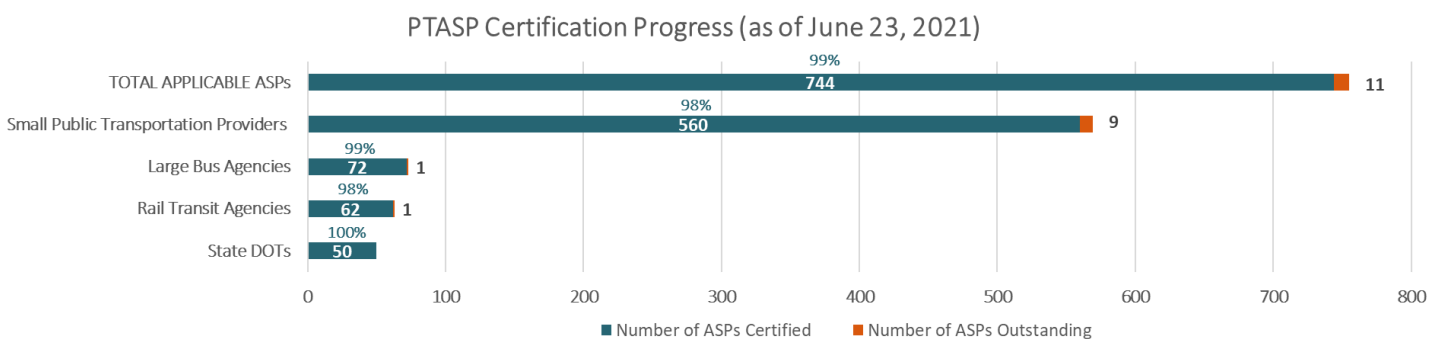
Upcoming Safety Training

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 [Fiscal Year 2021 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	July 13–16, 2021 August 2–5, 2021 August 30–September 2, 2021
SMS Principles for Transit	Virtual Live Training	July 7–9, 2021
SMS Safety Assurance	Virtual Live Training	July 22, 2021 August 19, 2021 September 16, 2021

FTA Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan (PTASP) Certification Progress

Under the [Public Transportation Agency Safety Plans \(PTASP\) regulation](#) (49 CFR Part 673), transit agencies and States that receive Federal funds under FTA's Urbanized Area Formula Grants are required to develop Agency Safety Plans that include the processes and procedures to implement Safety Management Systems. Applicable agencies and States must certify that they have met the requirements of the PTASP regulation by July 20, 2021, to be eligible for continued FTA grant assistance. The industry continues to make great progress towards FTA's goal of 100 percent certification by July 20, 2021.



FTA Transit COVID-19 Response Program Information Collection Update

The [FTA Transit COVID-19 Response Program Information Collection](#) captures COVID-19 related data monthly from over 2,100 transit providers. April submissions captured data through April 30, 2021 and were due on May 17, 2021.

Key Takeaways as of April 30, 2021

Suspensions and Reductions—At some point during the COVID-19 public health emergency through February 28, 2021, 30 percent (630 of 2,105 respondent agencies) suspended service, and 72 percent (1,516 agencies) reduced service. As of April 30, 2021, 1 percent (24 of 2,070 respondent agencies) reported suspended service and 40 percent (833 agencies) reported operating reduced service.

COVID-19 Positives and Fatalities—Since the beginning of the COVID-19 public health emergency and through April 30, 2021, transit agencies reported 47,145 confirmed COVID-19 positives, or 13 percent of the total reported transit workforce of 368,004; and transit agencies reported 462 fatalities due to COVID-19.

COVID-19 Vaccinations—Agencies that reported vaccination data for their workforce reported a transit worker vaccination rate of 42 percent, which was higher than the national vaccination rate of approximately 31 percent as of April 30, 2021.

Questions? Please contact FTASystemSafety@dot.gov.

Transit Agencies Support COVID-19 Vaccination Efforts

Transit agencies continue to work with public health agencies to support COVID-19 vaccination efforts in their communities. Below are some examples of transit's role in vaccination efforts across the country.

In Minneapolis, Minnesota, the Minnesota Department of Health and Metro Transit are working together with the Metropolitan Council and Blue Cross Blue Shield of Minnesota to convert a fleet of six Metro Transit buses into mobile vaccine clinics. This strategy has helped to target socially vulnerable communities, people at greater risk of severe illness because of their race or chronic disease status and people who have transportation or work barriers.

In San Jose, California, the Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority opened a new vaccination site at the Santa Teresa light rail station in South San Jose. The new site is designed to meet the demand of younger residents and has a drive-thru and walk-up services that can administer around 900 to 1,000 vaccines a day.

In Dubuque, Iowa, the Dubuque County Regional Transit Authority (RTA) is offering free rides to vaccine appointments for anyone needing assistance with transportation. The Dubuque RTA received \$920,000 in Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act (CARES Act) Funding to give free rides to vaccine appointments and clinics.

In Newport, Rhode Island, the state held a special COVID-19 vaccine clinic geared toward accommodating people of color. In addition, the state has placed the pop-up vaccination sites along Rhode Island Public Transit Authority (RIPTA) bus routes.



Now Available: How to Build Transit Workers' Confidence in COVID-19 Vaccines Guide



FTA, in coordination with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), published the [CDC How to Build Transit Workers Confidence in COVID-19 Vaccines Guide](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/vaccines).

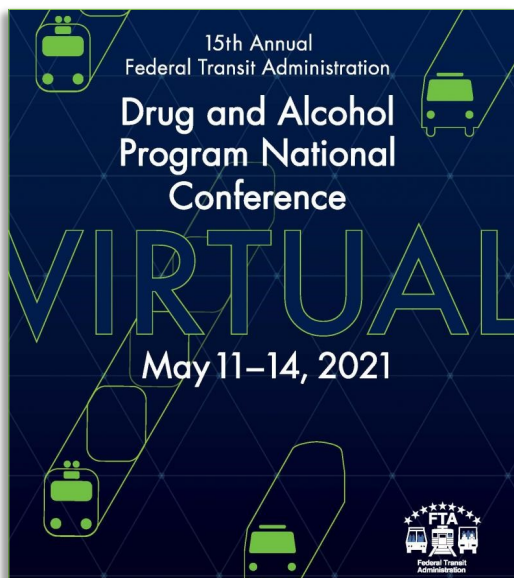
The guide is part of [President Biden's Month of Action](https://www.whitehouse.gov/biden/president-biden-month-of-action), to mobilize an all of America sprint to get as many of U.S. adults vaccinated as possible by July 4, 2021, so that more people can get vaccinated and be protected.

The guide provides six steps to building vaccine confidence among personnel, vaccine communication and confidence checklist and vaccine confidence conversation starter for transit agencies. The ultimate goal is to increase transit workers' confidence in and uptake of COVID-19 vaccines.

NEW: CDC Issues Announcement Regarding Wearing Face Masks in Outdoor Areas of Transportation Conveyances and Hubs

CDC announced that it will be amending its [Face Mask Order](https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2021/s0511-mask-order.html) to not require people to wear a mask in outdoor areas of conveyances (if such outdoor areas exist on the conveyance) or while outdoors at transportation hubs.

15th Annual FTA Drug and Alcohol Program National Conference Recap



FTA hosted its 15th Annual Drug and Alcohol Program National Conference last month. The four-day virtual conference was attended by over 2,000 Drug and Alcohol Program Managers and other transit industry professionals. FTA Associate Administrator Henrika Buchanan provided opening remarks on the first day, and FTA Senior Drug and Alcohol Program Manager Lyon Rosario kicked off the conference. Many attendees enjoyed the virtual format of the conference, as it allowed the opportunity to participate in the variety of sessions offered. Participants provided positive feedback about the information presented and the access to federal staff and industry experts.

Please visit the [FTA Drug and Alcohol Program webpage](https://www.fta.gov/drug-and-alcohol-program) for links to the presentation slides, as well as a list of other upcoming drug and alcohol program training events.

FTA Employee Spotlight: Tony Cho



Tony Cho

Director, Office of Program Management and Oversight, FTA Region 3

How would you explain your job to someone you've never met? I work for a Federal agency that provides substantial grant funding, program oversight and guidance for public transit throughout the country. My job is to provide oversight and guidance to the transit agencies to ensure that the Federal dollars are spent appropriately and that the public's experience with transit is as positive as possible.

What excites you most about your job? I am so grateful that I get to work in a field that I am passionate about and with a wonderful team. In the FTA Region 3 Office, I get to directly help our recipients with any problems they may have on a day-to-day basis and see how our program directly helps the riding public and their communities. As a supervisor, I love working with staff and talking to them about their careers and work/life balance, particularly in this past year of

maximum-telework. Recruiting new staff and building our team for the future is particularly rewarding, to know that I am helping people advance their careers and make a lasting impact on how the Region will operate for the foreseeable future.

What were you doing prior to this role? Prior to becoming the Oversight Director in 2016, I was a Community Planner in FTA Region 3 for 10 years. Before joining FTA Region 3, I started my career at FTA Headquarters in the Office of Budget and Policy, Office of Policy Review and Development, working on Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act (SAFETEA-LU) implementation.

What's the one recommendation you would make to new professionals getting started in the transit industry? Transit is such a broad, complex field that you never stop learning. I recommend finding something that you are passionate about, but do not hesitate to get out of your comfort zone and learn something new, to get a broader perspective of the industry.

What is your favorite form of transportation and why? Walking! As a planner at heart, I find the best way to experience a neighborhood and get a feel of it is by walking. Even in your own neighborhood, the best way to get to know your neighbors, the shops, parks, etc. and discover new things is by walking.

If you could time travel, which period would you go back to visit? Can I go forward? Is that cheating? I would love to go a bit into the future, to see what kind of adults my kids turn out to be and see what the future of cities will be like. I would love to hop on a future shuttle to the moon or Mars too.

Spring, summer, fall or winter: What's your favorite season and why? Right now—mid to late Spring. It is warm enough for the beach, baseball season is underway, and the Mets still have hope this early, plus the mosquitos are not horrible yet.

What's been a positive outcome of 2020? What are you reading or listening to? We had a pandemic baby! Our daughter was born last July and she is definitely the most positive outcome for me in 2020. As for reading and listening, to be honest I have not had much alone time while everyone has been home, but I have been listening to a lot of Smash Boom Best with my second grader. It is a debate podcast for kids that is surprisingly tolerable for adults too.



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

Upcoming Events and Webinars

PTASP Webinar: Implementing Safety Risk Assessment Approaches

June 30, 2021 | 2:00 pm–3:30 pm ET

PTASP Webinar: Safety Event Investigation in an SMS

July 28, 2021 | 2:00 pm–3:30 pm ET

Save the Date

19th FTA Biennial State Programs Meeting

August 3–5, 2021

State Safety Oversight Quarterly Call

August 18, 2021

2021 FTA Joint State Safety Oversight and Rail Transit Agency Virtual Workshop

October 19–20, 2021

State Safety Oversight Quarterly Call

November 17, 2021

