

# Transit Advisory Committee for Safety (TRACS) Conference Meeting Minutes

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**Conference Dates and Times:**

July 21, 2020 (11AM EDT - 6PM EDT)

July 22, 2020 (11AM EDT - 5PM EDT)

**Conference Location:**

Virtual Conference conducted via Adobe Connect

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## Attendance<sup>1</sup>

TRACS Members	TRACS Public Participants <sup>2</sup>	Federal Transit Administration (FTA)
Pam Fischhaber (Acting Chairperson), <i>Colorado Public Utilities Commission</i>	Brian Alberts, <i>American Public Transportation Association (APTA)</i>	K. Jane Williams, <i>Deputy Administrator of FTA</i>
Elayne Berry, <i>formerly of Metropolitan Atlanta Regional Transit Authority (MARTA)</i>	Frank Castellon, <i>TriMet</i>	Henrika Buchanan, <i>Associate Administrator for the Office of Transit Safety and Oversight (TSO)</i>
David Harris, <i>New Mexico Department of Transportation (NMDOT)</i>	Mike Coplen, <i>TrueSafety Evaluation, LLC</i>	Candace Key, <i>Director of TSO's Office of System Safety (TSO-10)</i>
Jim Hickey, <i>formerly of Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT)</i>	Paul King, <i>California Public Utilities Commission, Rail Safety Division</i>	Paulina Orchard, <i>Division Chief, Safety Policy and Promotion, TSO-10</i>
Eric Muntan, <i>Miami-Dade Transit</i>	Gardner Tabon, <i>Capital Metro</i>	Bridget Zamperini, <i>Safety and Security Specialist, TRACS Program Manager</i>
Ron Nickle, <i>formerly of Massachusetts Bay Transit Authority (MBTA)</i>		Donna Aggazio, <i>Public Engagement and Stakeholder Outreach Manager, TSO</i>
Karen Philbrick, <i>Mineta Transportation Institute, San Jose State University</i>		Jeff Thompson, <i>General Engineer, TSO-10</i>
Joyce Rose, <i>WSP-Parsons Brinckerhoff</i>		Sharece Tyer, <i>Senior Program Analyst (Policy), TSO-10</i>
Brian Sherlock, <i>Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU)</i>		Heather Ueyama, <i>Attorney Advisor, Office of Chief Counsel (TCC)</i>
		Richard Wong, <i>Attorney Advisor, TCC</i>

<sup>1</sup> The first day of the July Conference included 80 total attendees, while the second day included 55 total attendees. These figures include TRACS members and public participants, FTA staff, contract support, and additional attendees who were able to join the virtual event via Adobe Connect.

<sup>2</sup> Public participants who directly supported TRACS.

## Day 1 Activities

### Conference Kick-Off

Bridget Zamperini, TRACS Program Manager, opened the July 2020 TRACS Conference by delivering welcoming remarks and reviewing the Conference goals. These goals included:

- A presentation from each of the subcommittees (Roadway Worker Protection [RWP], Employee Safety Reporting [ESR], and Trespass and Suicide Prevention [TSP]) outlining their respective recommendations to the rest of the Committee, and
- A Committee vote on each recommendation.

Pam Fischhaber, the Acting Chairperson of the Committee, took roll call of TRACS members.

### FTA Update and Administrator Introduction

Henrika Buchanan, Associate Administrator of TSO and Chief Safety Officer, addressed TRACS members by thanking them for their efforts in creating recommendations to improve transit safety. She highlighted FTA's work supporting the public transportation industry during the COVID-19 public health emergency. These efforts include additional funding from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act and a Notice of Enforcement Discretion regarding the Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan (PTASP) Final Rule. Finally, she introduced K. Jane Williams, Deputy Administrator of FTA, to TRACS members and public participants.

### FTA Welcoming Remarks

Deputy Administrator Williams commended the Committee's accomplishments and advising FTA on critical safety issues, including:

- Evaluating the effectiveness of State Safety Oversight models,
- Improving the collection and analysis of safety data, and
- Developing a framework and recommendations to implement PTASP.

Deputy Administrator Williams then thanked TRACS members for their support, particularly given the issues the COVID-19 public health emergency raised for their own transit agencies. She echoed Associate Administrator Buchanan's comments on how the CARES Act has helped address the COVID-19 public health emergency and mentioned the monthly listening sessions FTA is holding on the transit industry's response and recovery from COVID-19.

### Conference Introductions

Candace Key, Director of TSO-10, introduced additional support from FTA and contract support for the Conference. She further detailed the Notice of Enforcement Discretion regarding the PTASP Final Rule, stating that transit agencies will not be subject to this regulation until December 31, 2020. Ms. Key provided updates on the progress of PTASP compliance, the PTASP Triennial Review Process, and notified TRACS members and public participants of additional measures FTA is taking to address transit safety.

## RWP Recommendations

*Presentations by Pam Fischhaber, TRACS Chairperson and Paul King, acting lead of the RWP subcommittee and public participant*

RWP subcommittee members presented the following recommendations to the Committee for discussion:

- 1) Provide minimum safety requirements as the basis for secondary warning systems**  
 This recommendation asks FTA to develop such requirements as primary protections for roadway workers. This recommendation echoes previous ones made by organizations such as the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) and APTA. The presenters stressed that effective primary protections were an essential foundation for the implementation of secondary warning systems.
- 2) Research behavior-based safety initiatives and literature for RWP**  
 This recommendation asks FTA to research behavior-based safety (BBS) initiatives and their impact on RWP, which can be applied to improving Safety Management Systems (SMS). The Committee's initial findings suggest that BBS initiatives are successful when there is buy-in from employees and non-punitive, positive reinforcement principles from agency management.
- 3) Provide state-of-the art fatigue management guidance for roadway workers**  
 This recommendation proposes that FTA provide guidance for all employees involved in roadway work, including track, signal, and structures maintenance workers; controllers; relevant supervisors; and other non-operator personnel. The presenters cited [TRACS Report 14-02](#), which provided evaluation criteria that can be applied to RWP as scientifically based research in support of creating such guidance.
- 4) Fund research and implementation of new systems and technology**  
 This recommendation tasks FTA with providing resources for new RWP technology that may otherwise require capital and time investments from transit agencies to implement. The subcommittee acknowledged a lack of information regarding ongoing costs of funding this research and implementation, but emphasized NTSB's previous findings suggesting a similar need for additional protections for transit agencies.
- 5) Require use of secondary warning systems**  
 This recommendation asks FTA to require the use of secondary warning systems. Such technologies have been required and implemented by other transit agencies to improve safety and service. The presenters emphasized secondary warning systems' ability to further SMS and noted that NTSB's recommendations emphasize a similar need for additional protection for roadway workers.
- 6) Develop risk-based safety metrics**  
 This recommendation suggests that FTA develops risk-based safety metrics, including leading indicators, to be implemented on a national scale. Consistent risk-based safety metrics would improve the quality of safety data and expand the scope of metrics. This standardization would especially help rail transit agencies (RTAs) and State Safety Oversight Agencies (SSOAs) analyze risk.
- 7) Provide research and guidance on cognitive workload and distraction of light-rail transit operators using RWP technology in the operator car**

This recommendation suggests that FTA analyze cognitive workload and distractions for operators. A focus of this recommendation includes whether in-cab RWP safety technology causes additional cognitive workload and is distracting to operators. Through research, FTA can help mitigate potential vulnerabilities that stem from adding new safety technology.

#### **8) Develop safety technology reliability criteria**

This recommendation suggests FTA develop criteria to determine the reliability of RWP safety technology and utilize those criteria to provide information to RTAs and SSOAs. The presenters highlighted the importance of reliability in safety intervention, reminding the Committee that any technological failure could render protection useless and potentially endanger roadway workers.

### [RWP Recommendations Discussion](#)

Some TRACS members noted that the ordering of the RWP recommendations could be improved. For example, some members felt that Recommendation #1, requesting that FTA provide minimum safety requirements as the basis of secondary warning systems, could not be effective without the implementation of Recommendation #5 as prerequisite, which requested that FTA require the use of secondary warning systems. TRACS members resolved that the RWP subcommittee should reorder its recommendations so that, as applicable, recommendations effectively build on prior recommendations.<sup>3</sup>

The Committee also provided feedback to refine some RWP recommendation language. For example, one member recommended that RWP refer to RTAs more broadly in Recommendation #7 rather than a more limited reference to light-rail transit. TRACS members also cited resources and reports for the RWP subcommittee members to consult for additional background information on Recommendation #6, regarding risk-based safety metrics, and Recommendation #7, regarding safety technology reliability criteria.

### [Public Comments](#)

Public participants discussed developments from technology vendors on new transit safety systems to support RWP. Public participants also mentioned the importance of funding for safety research, considering the budget issues transit agencies are facing due to the COVID-19 public health emergency.

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<sup>3</sup> The RWP subcommittee reordered their recommendations after the July Conference and prior to the vote on Final Reports held on September 2, 2020. The order of these recommendations in the Final Report reads as follows:

- 1) Require use of secondary warning systems (previously #5)
- 2) Fund research and implementation of new systems and technology (previously #4)
- 3) Provide minimum safety requirements as the basis for secondary warning systems (previously #1)
- 4) Develop safety technology reliability criteria (previously #8)
- 5) Develop risk-based safety metrics (previously #6)
- 6) Provide state-of-the-art fatigue management guidance for roadway workers (previously #3)
- 7) Provide research and guidance on cognitive workload and distraction of light-rail transit operators using RWP technology in the operator car (previously #7)
- 8) Research behavior-based safety initiatives and literature for RWP (previously #2)

## RWP Voting

TRACS members voted unanimously to approve the eight recommendations proposed by the RWP subcommittee.

## ESR Recommendations

*Presentations by subcommittee members Elayne Berry, Jim Hickey, Eric Muntan, and Brian Sherlock and public participants Brian Alberts, Frank Castellon, Mike Coplen, and Gardner Tabon*

ESR subcommittee members presented the following recommendations to the Committee for discussion:

### **1) Adopt uniform ESR strategies**

This recommendation asks FTA to develop industry guidance to create a consistent strategy and framework for agencies to implement ESR programs (ESRPs). A shared framework would allow transit agencies to work through problems collectively rather than on an individual basis. Such guidance would supplement the PTASP regulation and help ensure consistency across the industry.

### **2) Develop implementation strategies for improving safety culture as a key mechanism of an effective ESR system**

This recommendation asks FTA to standardize terminology and methodology to improve safety culture. It suggests FTA develop a toolkit for collaboration and trust to facilitate a comprehensive ESR system, specifically addressing factors such as:

- a. SMS training for labor and management that emphasizes the importance of trust in a strong safety culture,
- b. A metric for assessing trust as a separate validated measure across all organizational levels, and
- c. Feedback to individuals who submitted safety comments and reports.

### **3) Provide guidance to the transit industry on assigning staff who are dedicated to ensuring compliance with SMS and conducting quality assurance**

This recommendation suggests that FTA provide guidance for transit agencies to dedicate critical human capital and financial resources to ensure the effectiveness of Agency Safety Plans. ESR presenters highlighted the need to accurately gather and analyze data in order to enrich safety-related leading indicators, mitigate safety-related lagging indicators, create greater internal stakeholder engagement opportunities, and enhance agencies' safety cultures.

### **4) Provide a central repository of information that allows for agency-to-agency comparisons and confidential close-call reporting**

This recommendation builds on the idea that an organization must build a culture of trust, upper management support, shared goals, and honesty to have a successful ESRP. The presenters suggested that a central repository would support agency-to-agency comparisons and confidential close-call reporting. The presenters also discussed the importance of maintaining anonymity in the reporting process.

## ESR Recommendations Discussion

In response to the first ESR recommendation, TRACS members discussed the possibility of FTA issuing a framework for uniform ESR strategies as FTA requirements rather than guidance.

Adding on to this discussion, members suggested that an unfunded mandate from FTA might not be an effective method for implementing Recommendation #1. TRACS members also raised concerns about the feasibility of transit agencies adhering to certain mandates, considering budget issues exacerbated by the COVID-19 public health emergency.

Committee members also suggested a change to Recommendation #4. Members suggested that rather than FTA providing the central repository, FTA should lead a competitive selection process for finding a third-party central repository. Committee members suggested additional changes to narrow the scope of recommendations.

Finally, throughout the discussion, TRACS members emphasized that protection from open records requests is crucial for establishing trust in ESRPs. The possibility of such disclosure, TRACS members agreed, can act as a deterrent to ESR. Thus, members decided that adding such a provision to these recommendations would increase their effectiveness.

#### Public Comments

Public participants echoed the Committee members' concerns on ensuring the confidentiality of employees who report safety issues. They suggested the need for protections to prevent public access to the names of such employees. Public participants also emphasized the importance of a transit agency establishing trust and employee buy-in to build an effective ESRP.

#### ESR Voting

TRACS members voted unanimously to approve the four recommendations proposed by the ESR subcommittee, conditional on updates to the recommendations prior to the vote of approval on the Final Reports.<sup>4</sup>

#### Day 1 Close of Business

Bridget Zamperini thanked TRACS members and public participants for a productive first day. She then discussed the high-level agenda for Day 2 of the Conference.

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<sup>4</sup> The ESR subcommittee presented these four recommendations to TRACS at the July Conference. Following the Conference and based on feedback from TRACS members, ESR added a fifth recommendation, which requested that FTA review the status of ESR programs as the foundation for subsequent recommendations. This recommendation was incorporated into the ESR Final Report and reordered as the first recommendation. The order of these recommendations in the ESR Final Report reads as follows:

- 1) Review the current status of ESR programs at RTAs, assess their effectiveness, and ensure that any needed improvements are made
- 2) Adopt uniform ESR strategies (previously #1)
- 3) Develop implementation strategies for improving safety culture as a key mechanism of an effective ESR system (previously #2)
- 4) Provide guidance to the transit industry on assigning staff who are dedicated to ensuring compliance with SMS and conducting quality assurance (previously #3)
- 5) Provide a central repository of information that allows for agency-to-agency comparisons and confidential close-call reporting (previously #4)



## Day 2 Activities

### Welcoming Remarks

Paulina Orchard, TSO-10's Safety Policy and Promotion Division Chief, welcomed TRACS members and public participants and outlined the agenda for Day 2.

### TSP Recommendations

*Presentations by subcommittee members Joyce Rose (lead), David Harris and Karen Philbrick and public participant Mike Coplen*

TSP subcommittee members presented the following recommendations to the Committee for discussion:

**1) Coordinate with the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) and align on how to define and report trespass and suicide incident data**

This recommendation asks FTA to collaborate with FRA to align the agencies' definitions and data for TSP. The presenter noted that the current gap in how these two agencies interpret such information prevents effective SMS implementation. A shared understanding would support more accurate tracking and trend analysis of trespass and suicide incidents. It would also help assess whether mitigations and countermeasures are effective.

**2) Provide targeted funding support for comprehensive post-fatality support programs**

This recommendation proposes that FTA fund critical incident programs to prevent, mitigate, and reduce the effects of traumatic exposure for safety critical transit employees. These programs would include resilience training, post-event screening and assessments, and other treatments. Presenters stated that such programs are critical for the mental health, cognitive functioning, well-being, and job performance of transit safety workers.

**3) Develop standard signage for railway stations**

This recommendation suggests that FTA develop standard language and placement guidelines for signage as a low-cost, easily implemented solution to prevent trespassing and suicide. This signage should also include hotline referral numbers that can direct distressed individuals to appropriate resources. Research indicates that placing signage near trespass and suicide hotspots has acted as an effective deterrent.

**4) Support research on the use of detection technologies to identify rail trespassing hotspots**

This recommendation proposes that FTA help fund research on technology that can detect trespass and suicide hotspots. Available technology could be utilized to develop a reference system and expand transit agencies' understanding of both trespass and suicide hotspots and how to address them. Presenters emphasized that such integration would be essential for furthering SMS.

**5) Support building low-cost barriers around railroad right-of-way**

This recommendation asks FTA to support construction of low-cost barriers (e.g., fencing, landscaping) to prevent trespassing and suicide around the right-of-way. Presenters stated that barriers are already being used by some transit agencies and appear to be having a significant effect at critical locations and hotspots. These barriers are becoming one of the most effective countermeasures against trespassing and suicide.

**6) Research artificial intelligence (AI) technologies**

This recommendation asks FTA to research how AI technology can further transit agencies' understanding of trespassing and suicide. Researching these technologies could lead to real-time alerts and responses and a better general understanding of trespassing and suicide.

**7) Support proof of concept research on emergency technologies that may prevent rail trespassing and suicide**

This recommendation proposes that FTA support research on emergency technologies to aid in TSP. These technologies might detect and communicate intrusions along the right-of-way on rail transit routes. The TSP subcommittee identified this recommendation as high impact and emphasized the potential for this recommendation to further SMS.

#### TSP Recommendations Discussion

When discussing TSP signage, TRACS members noted the importance of considering factors of equity in the implementation process. Committee members suggested that signage provide additional resources besides suicide hotlines given that at-risk populations might not have access to a phone to call such hotlines. Committee members highlighted the potential benefits and limitations of AI and other technologies to impact transit safety. The Committee also suggested broadening the language in some recommendations to be inclusive of more transit agencies.

#### Public Comments

Public participants suggested additional changes in language and provided resources for evidence to support TSP recommendations. They provided specific feedback on Recommendation #6, regarding AI technologies, and Recommendation #7, regarding research on emerging technologies, suggesting the subcommittee update these recommendations to present more feasible goals given the scope of AI and other technologies available to the transit industry.

#### TSP Voting

TRACS members voted unanimously to approve the seven recommendations proposed by the TSP subcommittee.

#### Summary of Voting Results

Using the virtual meeting polling feature, FTA contract support confirmed that each recommendation presented at the Conference across all three subcommittees received unanimous approval from TRACS members.

## TRACS Next Steps and Subcommittee Workplans

### Next Steps

Bridget Zamperini provided a schedule and overview of upcoming tasks for FTA and TRACS through the remainder of the Charter. These action items included:

Dates	Task
July 22 – August 14, 2020	FTA to compile draft recommendations and language from the TRACS First Year Report into Final Report drafts.
August 14, 2020	FTA and contract support to distribute Final Report drafts to TRACS members for review, updates, and finalization.
August 14 – September 12, 2020	TRACS to review, update, and finalize Final Reports.
September 2, 2020 <sup>5</sup>	TRACS members to vote on Final Reports.
September 12, 2020	TRACS members to submit Final Reports to FTA by this date.

### Subcommittee Workplans

Following the overview of next steps, Bridget Zamperini facilitated discussions among each subcommittee to coordinate availability for final reviews and meetings. Each subcommittee planned to meet at least once before the final vote to communicate progress on recommendations and outline remaining action items. The subcommittee meetings were scheduled for the following dates:

- RWP – July 29, 2020
- TSP – August 25, 2020
- ESR – August 26, 2020

The subcommittees agreed to share their Final Reports internally with the full Committee by August 31, 2020 to allow time for members to read the Final Reports prior to the final vote on September 2, 2020.

### Close of Business

Bridget Zamperini closed the July 2020 TRACS Conference by thanking TRACS members and public participants for their participation and engagement. She also reiterated important dates and next steps for the subcommittees in preparation for the vote on Final Reports.

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<sup>5</sup> TRACS members identified September 2, 2020 as the date with the most availability among members to conduct the vote on Final Reports.