



Transit Safety and Oversight Spotlight Newsletter

U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Transit Administration

Message from the Acting Associate Administrator

August 2021
Vol. 6 No. 8

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

COVID-19 Resources and Updates	2
Upcoming Safety Training	2
FTA Transit COVID-19 Response Program Information Collection Update	3
FTA Key Procurement Deficiencies Webinar Series Recap	3
FTA Transit Renewal Initiative: America's Open and Transit's Open Listening Session #2 Recap	4
Transit Advisory Committee for Safety 2018—2020 Charter Recommendations to FTA	4-5
Traffic Incident Management Practices Improve Transit Safety	6
FTA Employee Spotlight: Robert Buckley	7
Upcoming Events and Webinars	8

Dear Transit Colleagues:

FTA recently [announced](#) 100 percent of the more than 700 transit agencies and States across the country have successfully met the [Public Transportation Agency Safety Plans \(PTASP\) regulation](#) (49 CFR Part 673) July 20, 2021 certification deadline. FTA is extremely proud of all the hard work accomplished by agencies and States to meet this extremely important transit safety milestone. Agency Safety Plans (ASPs) will enable a safe ride on public transportation for everyone. As FTA continues to focus on ASP implementation, please review the available resources on the [PTASP TAC webpage](#).

Safety remains DOT's number one priority. FTA recently published a [Request for Information \(RFI\)](#) to receive feedback from transit riders and agencies to help FTA identify high priority safety concerns relevant to the transit industry.

The RFI received public comments that will help FTA better understand critical transit safety challenges. One of our most recent campaigns, the [Enhanced Transit Safety and Crime Prevention Initiative](#), launched on July 13 and provides information and resources to help transit agencies address and prevent crime on their systems and protect transit workers and riders. FTA resources can be used by transit agencies to prevent and address crime in their systems and protect transit workers and riders. We encourage you to review the related safety trainings available on FTA's website to educate and support the transit workforce. For more information, contact FTASystemSafety@dot.gov.

Last month, I had the opportunity to participate in the Operation Lifesaver Leadership (OLI) Conference: Safety Partnerships—Together Towards Tomorrow along with our Federal partners, Federal Railroad Administration Deputy Administrator Amit Bose and Federal Highway Administration Associate Administrator for Safety Cheryl Walker to share an overview of the importance DOT places on working together to improve rail safety. Our OLI partnership and collaboration with our Federal partners show we can improve safety by working together to encourage safe behavior around rail transit.

Finally, I am excited to share that registration will open soon for the [2021 FTA Joint State Safety Oversight and Rail Transit Agency Virtual Workshop](#). The workshop will once again be hosted virtually—please join us on Tuesday, October 19 and Wednesday, October 20, 2021. The FTA Office of Transit Safety and Oversight is busy preparing a robust program. Please stay tuned in the coming weeks for a preview of the workshop.

As summer comes to an end, please keep in mind that working together, we can improve transit safety. FTA is here to support your important safety work.

Sincerely,

Gail Lyssy



Gail Lyssy
Acting Associate
Administrator for Transit
Safety and Oversight &
Chief Safety Officer, FTA

COVID-19 Resources and Updates

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, [FAQs](#) and updated information on the Federal mask requirement.

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 the FTA 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.

The [Public Transportation Safety Certification Training Program \(PTSCPT\) regulation](#) requires FTA grantees subject to the PTSCPT regulation to certify compliance with initial training and refresher training requirements. The regulation set August 20, 2021 as the deadline to complete training requirements. As a reminder, applicable personnel will have until **August 20, 2022** to [comply](#).

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	August 30–September 2, 2021
SMS Safety Assurance	Virtual Live Training	September 16, 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. June submissions captured data through June 30, 2021 and were due on July 15, 2021.

Key Takeaways as of June 30, 2021

Suspensions and Reductions—At some point during the COVID-19 public health emergency through February 28, 2021, 30 percent (628 of 2,105 respondent agencies) suspended service, and 72 percent (1,515 agencies) reduced service. As of June 30, 2021, less than 1 percent (20 of 1,871 respondents) reported suspended service and 33 percent (617 agencies) reported operating reduced service.

COVID-19 Positives and Fatalities—Since the beginning of the COVID-19 public health emergency and through June 30, 2021, transit agencies reported 49,187 confirmed COVID-19 positives, or 13 percent of the total reported transit workforce of 369,891; and transit agencies reported 486 fatalities due to COVID-19.

COVID-19 Vaccinations—Agencies that reported vaccination data for their workforce reported a transit worker vaccination rate of 49 percent, which was higher than the national vaccination rate of approximately 47 percent, as of June 30, 2021.

Vaccine Access Services—52 percent of agencies (973 of 1,871 respondents) reported that they have used FTA funds to support vaccine access services at some point since the beginning of the public health emergency, through June 30, 2021.

- 40 percent of respondents (753 agencies) reported having provided free rides to support vaccine access.
- 8 percent of respondents (144 agencies) reported having provided reduced fares for passengers travelling to receive vaccinations.
- 5 percent of respondents (95 agencies) reported having used transit facilities as vaccination sites.
- 2 percent of respondents (36 agencies) reported having used transit vehicles as mobile vaccination clinics.

FTA Key Procurement Deficiencies Webinar Series Recap



In July and early August 2021, FTA hosted webinars to highlight key areas of procurement deficiencies in the [FTA oversight review programs](#). During these webinars, FTA discussed five key procurement deficiencies, explained the requirements related to key procurement deficiency areas, discussed common drivers of deficiencies, explored methods for preventing these deficiencies and discussed procurement aspects of the FTA COVID-19 supplemental funds.

In total, 1,500 participants attended the webinars and provided feedback that the content was very helpful. The webinar [presentation](#) is available on the [FTA website](#). For questions regarding this topic, please contact FTA's [Hope Jensen](#).

FTA Transit Renewal Initiative: America's Open and Transit's Open Listening Session #2 Recap



On August 6, 2021, Gail Lyssy, FTA's Acting Associate Administrator for Transit Safety and Oversight & Chief Safety Officer, led the second [America's Open and Transit's Open Listening Session](#) focused on how improvements in safety can build confidence in transit.

As ridership continues to increase, transit agency leaders, transit associations and other organizations shared best practices to ensure

transit is safe, clean and reliable for riders and employees. Below are some examples of how transit agencies are improving safety to its systems and communicating these updates with its riders.

In Washington, DC, Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) recently published a [progress report](#) marking the halfway point of its [Capital Improvement Program](#) outlining infrastructure investments that improve the safety and reliability of the system in an effort to build back rider confidence. WMATA is helping to protect employees with intense cleaning and disinfecting protocols, providing personal protection equipment and assistance for COVID-19 tests and vaccinations. WMATA is also protecting its riders by upgrading air filters and providing real-time crowding information. WMATA has been communicating these improvements through its ["Doing Our Part" campaign](#).

In New Orleans, Louisiana, the New Orleans Regional Transit Authority (RTA) made strategic changes in its services throughout the pandemic to retain critical access to hospitals, medical facilities and grocery stores, redesigned its transit network to focus on equity, [announced](#) a phased return to normal operations and [introduced](#) reduced fares and new passes for youth and seniors to help build back ridership. RTA is now also requiring COVID-19 vaccines for its more than 800 employees to protect the health and safety of operators, administrative employees and riders.

In Raleigh, North Carolina, GoCary, GoDurham, GoRaleigh and GoTriangle [announced](#) that they will continue to suspend bus fares through June 30, 2022, to ease financial burdens for the frontline workers and community members. The transit system also created a marketing campaign to outline the benefits of riding transit to help increase ridership.

The webinar [presentation](#) and [recording](#) are available on the FTA website. Questions? Please contact transitsopen@dot.gov.

Transit Advisory Committee for Safety 2018—2020 Charter Recommendations to FTA

By: Dr. Pamela Fischhaber, TRACS Acting Chair

FTA published the final reports from the [Transit Advisory Committee for Safety \(TRACS\)](#) 2018-2020 Charter on July 20, 2021. TRACS, first chartered in 2009, provides recommendations for FTA on emerging technologies and innovations for improving transit safety.

The 2018-2020 TRACS Charter delivered three final reports to FTA that focus on the following safety focus areas: (1) [Employee Safety Reporting \(ESR\)](#); (2) [Roadway Worker Protection \(RWP\)](#); and (3) [Trespass and Suicide Prevention \(TSP\)](#).



Pamela M. Fischhaber, Ph.D., P.E., WSO-CSS

Deputy Director for Public Safety and Chief of the Rail/Transit Safety Section, Colorado Public Utilities Commission (PUC)

The 2018-2020 TRACS provided a total of 20 recommendations to FTA across the three reports.

- **ESR Recommendations:** (1) FTA Should Review the Current Status of ESR Programs at Rail Transit Agencies (RTAs), Assess their Effectiveness and Identify Any Needed Improvements; (2) Adopt Uniform ESR Strategies, Attending to the Differences Between RTAs to Provide Any Needed Flexibility; (4) Transit Agencies Should Have Dedicated Staff Who Ensure that Agencies are Safety Management Systems (SMS) Compliant and to Conduct Quality Assurance; and (5) FTA Should Provide a Third-Party Central Repository for Information that Includes the Ability to Conduct Agency-to-Agency Comparisons and Confidential Close Call Reporting System (C3RS).
- **RWP Recommendations:** (1) Require Use of Secondary Warning Systems; (2) Funding for New Research and Implementation of New Systems and Technology; (3) Minimum RWP Safety Requirements as the Basis for Secondary Warning Systems; (4) Develop RWP Safety Technology Reliability Criteria; (5) Development of Risk-Based Safety Metrics Including Leading Indicators; (6) Fatigue Management for Maintenance, Controller and Non-Operating Personnel; (7) Research and Create Guidance on Cognitive Workload and Distraction of Light Rail Transit Operators Using In-Cab RWP Technology; and (8) Behavior-Based Safety Systems for RWP.
- **TSP Recommendations:** (1) Align FTA and FRA Trespass and Suicide Data Definitions and Reporting; (2) Provide Targeted Funding Support for Comprehensive Post-Fatality Support Programs; (3) Develop Standard Suicide and Trespassing Prevention Signage; (4) Support Research on Use of Detection Technologies to Identify Rail Trespassing Hotspots; (5) Support Building Low-Cost Barriers and Signage Around Railroad Right-of-Way; (6) Research Artificial Intelligence Technologies; and (7) Support Proof of Concept Research on Emerging Technologies that May Prevent Rail Trespassing and Suicide.

Each report contains key takeaways, research findings, information gaps and additional information for each TRACS recommendation. The recommendations highlight some commonalities across the three safety research areas:

- **Funding Research:** The recommendations identify a need for funding. Whether the recommendation calls for comprehensive post-fatality support programs, a third-party C3RS or new systems and technology, funding will be necessary to research and implement these recommendations.
- **Uniformity and Alignment:** The recommendations identify a need for uniformity through definition alignment and the creation of standards for data collection to allow agency-to-agency comparisons. Currently, each RTA and State Safety Oversight Agency has its own method of gathering, analyzing and comparing data because of differing definitions and a lack of uniform standards used by RTAs. Uniformity of information, standards, definitions and data collection would support national comparison of data and could lead to intermodal consistency between RTAs and railroads for review and comparison of national issues common to both modes.
- **Consideration of Human Factors:** The recommendations identify the need to influence positive changes in human behavior. For TSP, the recommendations identify a need to support proof-of-concept research on technologies that may prevent rail trespassing and suicide. For ESR, the recommendations identify a need to improve safety culture. For RWP, the recommendations identify a need to research and review behavior-based safety systems for RWP workers.

The TRACS committee believes implementing new technology is critical as transit agencies develop and mature their SMS programs. Successful implementation must include development and refinement of technology and the application of more uniform definitions, standards, data collection, analysis and comparisons. Questions? Please contact FTA's [Bridget Zamperini](#).

Traffic Incident Management Practices Improve Transit Safety

Traffic Incident Management (TIM) offers coordinated strategies to detect, respond and clear traffic incidents. When a crash, debris, stalled vehicle or other incident affects roadways and flow of transit vehicles, TIM programs work to make sure the right people show up and collaborate to clear the incident scene safely and quickly. Firefighters, emergency medical services, emergency medical technicians, law enforcement, towing and recovery, public works, public transportation and 911 dispatchers are many of the disciplines that work together using well-rehearsed procedures and advanced technologies to save lives and return traffic to normal conditions. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) TIM program promotes the advancement and use of TIM principles to improve the safety of responders and road users, the reliability of travel and the efficiency of incident and emergency response.

TIM is effectively coordinated through regional committees that include all responder disciplines as well as other public and private organizations that support incident mitigation. Committees meet quarterly, or even more frequently, to improve collaboration and implement strategies to advance safe, quick clearance.

Transit agencies benefit from participation in Regional TIM Committees in many ways as listed below.

- Enhanced communication between traffic operations and transit services, providing greater awareness of roadway incidents that may impede transit operations.
- Enhanced fleet safety and schedule adherence through avoidance of incident locations.
- Improved transit-incident response through collaboration with TIM response communities.
- Improved traveler information by informing riders of transit schedule delays.

Modern TIM practices are the result of decades of focused investment in training, processes and technologies. From its genesis in the 1960s with freeway service patrols, TIM has grown to reflect a full discipline that supports emergency responder, transit and motorist needs.

Nearly 500,000 incident responders are now trained through the free in-person or virtual [National TIM Responder Training 4-hour course](#).

TIM can often include an effective range of technologies, enabling each responder agency to serve the public more efficiently and effectively. Technologies such as unmanned aerial systems, notification of active responders in the vicinity, and passive incident detection using crowdsourced data and high-resolution video-sharing help TIM professionals do their jobs more safely and quickly.

Diverse geographic regions across the U.S. have recognized tremendous returns on investment in TIM. For example, the Arizona Department of Public Safety saved 25 full-time equivalent staff hours by improving TIM practices, and the Maryland TIM program eliminated 38.6 million vehicle-hours of delay, equating to more than \$1.4 billion in annual benefits.

The FHWA Next-generation (NextGen) TIM initiative currently promotes local agency TIM innovations and offers many resources to help improve TIM at the local level. To learn how to make use of the resources available through the NextGen TIM initiative and the [FHWA Office of Operations TIM Program](#), please contact FHWA's [Joseph Tebo](#).



FTA Employee Spotlight: Robert Buckley



Robert Buckley
Director, Office of Financial
Management & Program
Oversight, FTA Region IV

How would you explain your job to someone you've never met? FTA helps provide funding to public transportation systems across the nation and ensures that funding is spent consistent with all the Federal rules and requirements. My role focuses on the Southeastern U.S., Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

What excites you most about your job? I am most excited meeting and helping the smaller transit providers throughout Region IV. These smaller providers often have limited staff, and sometimes their executive directors have to drive buses to make sure the needed service is provided. It is not the type of service most people think of when they hear "transit," but the smaller providers are passionate about service and their riders.

What were you doing prior to this role? I have been at FTA Region IV in various roles since 2008. I started as an intern while at Georgia Tech for my Master's in City and Regional Planning. I was lucky enough to be brought on full time after graduating as a community planner. Prior to my time at FTA, I worked at the Georgia General Assembly for two years.

What is the one recommendation you would make to new professionals in the transit industry? Be open to learning new areas outside of your specialty. I started in planning, then volunteering, and I am now more focused on oversight and emergency response. You never know where your career in transit could take you.

What is your favorite form of transportation and why? While I have definitely become a transit nerd since joining FTA (I always try the local transit service when I visit a new city), running is probably my favorite form of transportation and exercise.

If you could take a month to travel anywhere, where would you go? I would like to travel across Europe. There are so many beautiful cities and historic sites, and I could take the train to see all kinds of different locations.

Which holiday is your favorite and why? I really enjoy Christmas. It is always hectic since I have a lot of family close by, but especially since I have children, getting to watch them run around with all the various family members gives me incredible happiness.

If you could only pick three foods to eat for a month, which foods would you choose? Chips and cheese dip—one of my favorite snacks/appetizers. If it is available at a restaurant, I most likely will order it. Peanut butter and jelly (PB&J) sandwich. There was a significant period of time when I brought a PB&J to eat for lunch every day and it did not get old. I am also not above combining the first two favorites as part of one meal! Lastly, this might not be food, but I cannot fully function without coffee, so I am going to go with that as my third favorite.



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 the [FTA Transit Safety and Oversight Spotlight Newsletters](#) on the FTA website.

Upcoming Events and Webinars

[Rail Safety Week](#)

September 20–26, 2021

[APTA Mid-Year Safety Seminar](#)

October 3–6, 2021

[2021 FTA Joint State Safety Oversight and Rail Transit Agency Virtual Workshop](#)

October 19–20, 2021

Save the Date

State Safety Oversight Quarterly Call

November 17, 2021

