

# Transit Safety and Oversight Spotlight Newsletter

U.S. Department of Transportation  
Federal Transit Administration

## Message from the Acting Associate Administrator

September 2021  
Vol. 6 No. 9

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

COVID-19 Resources and Updates	2
FTA Transit COVID-19 Response Program Information Collection Update	2
FTA Announces Fiscal Year 2022 Safety Training	3-4
New Dates Added: NTI Virtual AAP and VTW Courses	4
FTA, FRA and NHTSA Hold Joint Fall Campaign: Stop. Trains Can't.	5
Operation Lifesaver Hosts 2021 Rail Safety Week	5
Register Now for the 2021 Joint SSO and RTA Virtual Workshop	6
FTA Publishes Research on Inward- and Outward-Facing Audio and Video Recordings for Transit Rail Vehicles	7
Data Spotlight: Vanpool Events 2015—2019	8
FTA Employee Spotlight: Rebecca Johnson	9
Upcoming Events and Webinars	10

Dear Transit Colleagues:

FTA recently [extended](#) the comment submission deadline for the [RFI on Transit Safety Concerns](#) to September 22, 2021 to allow more time for the transit industry to submit comments. The public’s input received will help inform FTA’s identification and evaluation of safety concerns at the Federal level. Thank you to those who submitted comments to support FTA with this important safety evaluation effort.

The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) also recently announced an [extension](#) of the [Federal face mask requirement](#) for all transportation networks, including public transportation, through January 18, 2022. TSA has [increased](#) the range of civil penalties that may be imposed on individuals who violate the Federal mask mandate at airports, on commercial aircraft, and in various modes of surface transportation, including passenger railroads, intercity bus services and other public transportation. You can learn more about FTA’s guidance to the transit industry on the Federal mask requirement for public transit at the [FTA Transit Mask Up webpage](#).

I am proud to announce that registration is open for the [2021 FTA Joint State Safety Oversight \(SSO\) and Rail Transit Agency \(RTA\) Virtual Workshop](#) for SSO staff, RTA Chief Safety Officers, Safety Directors and their staff, including contractors. The workshop will once again be hosted virtually— please join us on Tuesday, October 19 and Wednesday, October 20, 2021. This year’s virtual workshop will focus on effective working relationships among SSOs and RTAs, combating cyber threats in the transit industry, current transit safety policy and guidance updates.

Finally, September 15–October 15, 2021 is National Hispanic American Heritage Month. This month we honor the Hispanic Americans who influence and contribute to advancing safety in the transit industry. We encourage you to follow [FTA on social media](#) to engage in our activities.

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.

Transportation Security Administration (TSA) has [extended](#) the face mask requirement for all transportation networks, including public transportation, through **January 18, 2022.**

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

**Mask Requirement Questions?**  
Email [TransitMaskUp@dot.gov](mailto:TransitMaskUp@dot.gov)

## 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. July submissions captured data through July 31, 2021 and were due on August 16, 2021.

### Key Takeaways as of July 31, 2021

**Suspensions and Reductions**—At some point during the COVID-19 pandemic through February 28, 2021, 30 percent (629 of 2,096 respondent agencies) suspended service and 72 percent (1,516 agencies) reduced service. As of July 31, 2021, 0.5 percent (11 of 2,044 respondent agencies) reported suspended service and 31 percent (639 agencies) reported operating reduced service.

**COVID-19 Positives and Fatalities**—Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic and through July 31, 2021, transit agencies reported 51,168 confirmed COVID-19 positives, or 13.8 percent of the total reported transit workforce of 371,270; and transit agencies reported 499 fatalities due to COVID-19.

**COVID-19 Vaccinations**—Agencies that reported vaccination data for their workforce reported a transit worker vaccination rate of 52 percent, which was lower than the national adult vaccination rate of approximately 60 percent as of July 31, 2021.

**Vaccine Access Services**—49 percent of agencies (992 of 2,044 respondents) reported that they have used FTA funds to support vaccine access services at some point since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic through July 31, 2021.

- **Types of Vaccine Access Services Provided**
  - 43 percent of respondents (877 agencies) reported providing free rides to support vaccine access.
  - 9 percent of respondents (180 agencies) reported providing reduced fares for passengers travelling to receive vaccinations.
  - 6 percent of respondents (113 agencies) reported using transit facilities as vaccination sites.
  - 2 percent of respondents (41 agencies) reported using transit vehicles as mobile vaccination clinics.
- **Types of FTA Funds Used to Support Vaccine Access Services**
  - 39 percent of respondents (803 agencies) reported using Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act funds.
  - 6 percent of respondents (116 agencies) reported using Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act funds.
  - 2 percent of respondents (32 agencies) reported using American Rescue Plan funds.
  - 11 percent of respondents (221 agencies) reported using other FTA funds.

## FTA Announces Fiscal Year 2022 Safety Training

[Registration](#) is open for Transportation Safety Institute (TSI) safety training courses for transit personnel. These courses also support FTA grantees subject to the [Public Transportation Safety Certification Training Program \(PTSCTP\) regulation](#) with initial training and refresher training requirements. The [Fiscal Year 2022 TSI Training Schedule](#) is also available. New this fiscal year, all rail PTSCTP courses will be delivered virtually.

The status of in-person TSI courses will depend upon each host's local guidance. Please contact TSI at [TSI@dot.gov](mailto:TSI@dot.gov) or 405-954-3682 for more information. TSI can verify the status of all scheduled courses and assist with any other course-related questions.

### General Rail/Bus PTSCTP Virtual Live Training Courses

<p><a href="#">SMS Principles for Transit</a>: Includes an introduction to the principles and four components of a Safety Management System (SMS): Safety Policy; Safety Risk; Safety Assurance; and Safety Promotion.</p>	<p>October 12-14, 2021 January 3-5, 2022 February 7-9, 2022 April 5-7, 2022 June 22-24, 2022 July 26-28, 2022</p>
<p><a href="#">SMS Safety Assurance</a>: Examines the Safety Assurance (SA) component within a SMS and discusses the three key sub-components and essential SA activities and tools necessary to verify the effectiveness of safety risk mitigations and that no new safety risks have been introduced through implementation of the mitigations or changes.</p>	<p>October 21, 2021 November 10, 2021 February 1, 2022 March 22, 2022 May 11, 2022 July 29, 2022</p>
<p><a href="#">Effectively Managing Transit Emergencies</a>: Provides participants with information on understanding the necessity, purpose, development and implementation of emergency management and how it relates to the other safety functions of a transit system.</p>	<p>December 14-17, 2021 January 18-21, 2022 February 15-18, 2022 April 19-22, 2022 May 31-June 3, 2022 July 19-22, 2022</p>

### Rail PTSCTP Virtual Live Training Courses

<p><a href="#">SMS Principles for SSO Programs</a>: Provides participants with the knowledge, skills and tools State Safety Oversight Agencies (SSOAs) need as their Rail Transit Agencies (RTAs) move from SMS planning and implementation to SMS operation.</p>	<p>October 15, 2021 January 6, 2022 February 10, 2022 April 8, 2022 June 29, 2022 July 7, 2022</p>
<p><a href="#">Transit Rail System Safety</a>: Provides basic rail system safety and SMS principles, as well as the required elements of MAP-21 rule making and the SSO Rule 49 CFR Part 674.</p>	<p>November 1-5, 2021 December 6-10, 2021 March 28-April 1, 2022 May 2-6, 2022 June 13-17, 2022 July 11-15, 2022</p>

### Rail PTSTP Virtual Live Training Courses

[Transit Rail Incident Investigation](#): Provides participants with the knowledge and skills to successfully investigate various types of transit incidents and comply with the requirements of State Safety Oversight (SSO) Rule 40 CFR Part 674.

November 15-19, 2021  
January 10-14, 2022  
March 7-11, 2022  
April 11-15, 2022  
May 16-20, 2022  
June 6-10, 2022

### Non-PTSTP Virtual Live Training Courses

[Overseeing the Safety Management Process for SSOAs](#): Provides a practical approach for managing SSO programs while rail transit agencies transition to a Safety Management System (SMS) framework at their organizations.

November 30-December 3, 2021  
March 1-4, 2022  
August 15-18, 2022

### eLearning Self-Paced Virtual Courses Available 24/7

[Bus Nomenclature](#): Provides participants with an introduction the basic terminology and components used in bus transit systems.

[Curbing Transit Employee Distracted Driving](#): Provides participants with a raised awareness of distracted driving with the desired outcome of reducing the risk of distracted driving by public transportation professionals.

[Fatigue and Sleep Apnea Awareness for Transit Employees](#): Provides participants with the knowledge and skills to identify individuals at high risk for obstructive sleep apnea and other sleep disorders as well as general concepts about sleep and fatigue.

[Rail Nomenclature](#): Provides participants with an introduction to the basic terminology and components used in rail systems.

[Roadmap to Drafting an Agency Safety Plan for Bus Agencies](#): Provides participants with examples of how to translate the requirements of the Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan Regulation 49 CFR Part 673 into a compliant Agency Safety Plan.

[SMS Awareness](#): Provides participants with an introduction to SMS. This course is the mandatory prerequisite for the SMS Principles for Transit and Safety Assurance VLT courses.

## New Dates Added: NTI Virtual AAP and VTW Courses

The National Transit Institute (NTI) is offering additional virtual Assault Awareness and Prevention (AAP) and Violence in the Transit Workplace (VTW) courses. These courses support the [FTA Enhanced Transit Safety and Crime Prevention Initiative](#) to provide information and resources to help transit agencies address and prevent crime on their systems and protect transit workers and riders. **Registration is required.** Please contact NTI at 848-932-1700 or [nti\\_info@nti.rutgers.edu](mailto:nti_info@nti.rutgers.edu) with any questions. For questions about FTA safety training offerings, please contact [FTASafetyPromotion@dot.gov](mailto:FTASafetyPromotion@dot.gov).

### NTI Virtual AAP and VTW Courses

[AAP Direct Delivery Course](#): Provides transit bus operators with prevention strategies necessary to reduce the likelihood of assault incidents.

September 23, 2021  
October 7, 2021  
November 4, 2021  
December 2, 2021

[AAP Train-the-Trainer Course](#): Provides transit agency instructional staff with the support necessary to deliver the course within their agencies.

October 14, 2021  
November 10, 2021  
December 9, 2021

[VTW Train-the-Trainer Course](#): Provides participants with knowledge and skills to prevent, respond to and recover from workplace violence.

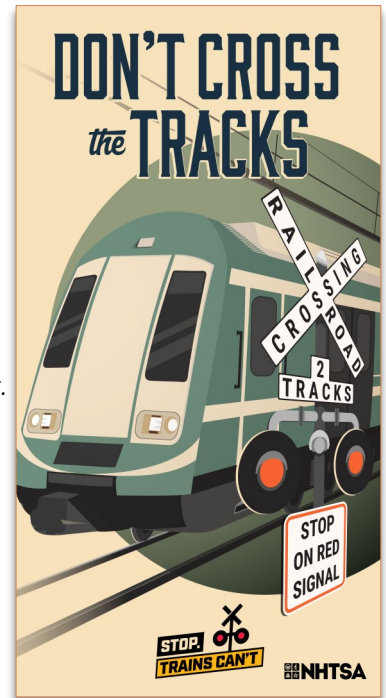
October 21, 2021  
November 18, 2021  
December 16, 2021

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

September is Rail Safety Month! Throughout the month, it is important to amplify awareness about safety near highway-rail grade crossings and railroad rights-of-way. In 2020, there were 1,377 motor vehicle collisions at public rail grade crossings, resulting in 94 fatalities and 488 injuries. Of those total collisions, 449 occurred at rail transit train crossings, resulting in seven fatalities and 139 injuries. Whether it was freight or commuter train, light or passenger rail, many of these crashes were caused by poor driving behaviors that could have been prevented.

For a second time this year, FTA joins the 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.

From September 6-27, 2021, please be sure to visit the [campaign webpage](#) for complimentary creative materials to help promote this safety message in your system and region. Always remember: The right choice at railroad crossings could save your life. Stop. Trains Can't.



## Operation Lifesaver Hosts 2021 Rail Safety Week



[Rail Safety Week \(RSW\)](#), hosted by Operation Lifesaver, Inc. (OLI) in September each year, helps to raise awareness of rail safety education and empower the public to keep themselves safe near highway-rail grade crossings and railroad rights-of-way. OLI is a non-profit organization and leader in rail safety education committed to preventing collisions, injuries and fatalities on and around railroad tracks and highway-rail grade crossings.

September 23, 2021 focused on rail transit safety and promoted transit specific safety messages and materials. Additional themes for this year's campaign included: #STOPTrackTragedies; Operation Clear Track; Crossing Safety; Professional Driver Safety; Wear Red for Rail Safety; Trespass Prevention; and No Photo/Video/Selfie is Worth the Risk. OLI offers a free [digital library](#) of resources to help raise awareness about the importance of rail safety.



## Register Now for the 2021 FTA Joint SSO and RTA Virtual Workshop

Registration is open for the [2021 FTA State Safety Oversight \(SSO\) and Rail Transit Agency \(RTA\) Virtual Workshop](#). This year's virtual workshop will take place on October 19-20, 2021 and will focus on effective working relationships among SSOs and RTAs, combating cybersecurity threats in the transit industry, current transit safety policy and guidance updates. FTA's Transit Safety Oversight, Headquarters, Regional Offices, as well as other Federal agencies will provide insights regarding new programs and requirements to strengthen rail transit safety oversight.



The virtual workshop is open to SSO staff, RTA Chief Safety Officers and Safety Directors. Contract staff that collaborate with the safety office are also encouraged to attend.

### Session Highlights

- Transportation Security Administration (TSA) Security Requirements**  
 This session will cover the TSA rule requirement for public transportation agencies to provide TSA-approved security training to employees who perform security-sensitive functions. The training curriculum will teach employees how to observe, assess and respond to terrorist-related threats and/or incidents.
- Cybersecurity: Cyber Threats in the Transit Industry**  
 This session will outline the Cybersecurity & Infrastructure Security Agency Transportation Systems Sector (TSS) implementation guidance, resources and options to assist a TSS organization in adopting the National Institute of Standards and Technology cybersecurity framework.
- State Safety Oversight and Rail Transit Agencies Effective Working Relationships**  
 This session will discuss the authority of the State Safety Oversight Agency (SSOA) to oversee the safety of rail fixed guideway public transportation systems; the policies that govern the activities of the SSOA; the reporting requirements that govern both the SSOA and the rail fixed guideway public transportation systems; and the steps the SSOA will take to ensure open, on-going communication between the SSOA and every rail fixed guideway public transportation system within its oversight.

Access the [workshop website](#) to register and review the agenda and speaker information. Please contact [FTASafetyStakeholder@dot.gov](mailto:FTASafetyStakeholder@dot.gov) with any questions.



## FTA Publishes Research on Inward- and Outward-Facing Audio and Video Recordings for Transit Rail Vehicles

FTA recently published a research report, [Inward-and Outward-facing Audio and Video Recordings for Transit Rail Vehicles](#), in response to safety events and a National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) investigation. The NTSB investigated the collision between two SEPTA trains and as a result issued [Safety Recommendation R-17-13](#) related to the installation of crash- and fire-protected inward- and outward-facing audio and image recorders capable of providing recordings to verify train crew actions and train operations. The research report includes a literature review, gap analysis and an industry survey. In addition, the study was supported by industry stakeholder involvement through a working group.



Photo Credit: Bay Area Regional Transit (BART)

### Key Findings

**Finding 1: Industry standardization of inward- and outward-facing camera and audio devices can aid future agency procurements. Standards may include the following details:**

- Location of video cameras (inside and outside controlling cabs)
- Audio/microphone recording to verify train crew actions
- Minimum recording data retention time (onboard and agency requirements) necessary for the transit environment
- Data output format standardization
- Crash- and fire-protected memory module requirements
- Data upload guidelines for real-time viewing and data downloads

In addition, voluntary standards organizations may consider developing guidelines on data upload for real-time viewing (wireless) instead of having to rely on manual downloads.

**Finding 2: Implementation of these devices and incorporation of expanded and corresponding technology applications can provide additional data and benefits to transit agencies. These applications and their benefits may include but are not limited to:**

- Inward-facing cameras with machine learning agents and image algorithms that can monitor operator performance, detecting fatigue and awareness
- Outward-facing cameras that can be used to monitor wayside assets to detect obstructions and defects
- Outward-facing cameras with image algorithms currently used in the freight rail industry that examine ties and track-related infrastructure

**Finding 3: Research indicates that several existing industry standards already incorporate both technical and performance standards and/or specifications related to inward- and outward-facing cameras, including:**

- Operation of inward- and outward-facing cameras
- Required maintenance
- Practices to effectively use recordings for accident/incident investigations
- Overall safety improvement initiatives

For more information, please contact FTA's [Raj Wagley](#), General Engineer, Office of Infrastructure, Safety and Asset Innovation.

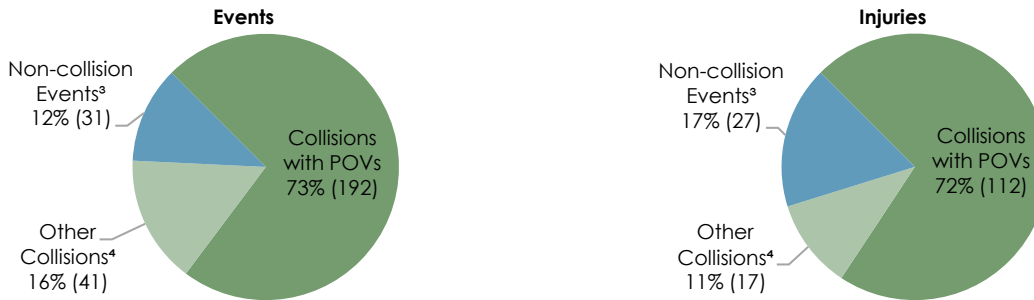
## Data Spotlight: Vanpool Events 2015—2019

The FTA Transit Safety and Oversight Office’s data spotlight shares safety data trends and highlight data sets that may help the transit industry establish safety performance targets as part of an [Agency Safety Plan](#). This month, we focus on National Transit Database (NTD) vanpool event reporting for the 2015–2019 period.<sup>1</sup> Questions? Please contact FTA’s [Marjorie Collins](#), Program Analyst, Office of System Safety.

The NTD’s vanpool mode includes public mass transit services that provide direct rides for a pre-arranged group of commuters to regular destinations within the same geographic area. Vanpools use roadway vehicles that hold at least seven people to provide these services. From 2015 to 2019, agencies reported over 1.1 billion vehicle revenue miles (VRM) of vanpool mode service to the NTD, accounting for roughly 8 percent of all bus VRM<sup>2</sup>. Vanpools reported 264 safety and security events, including one fatality and 156 injuries, during this time period.

Collisions between vanpool vehicles and non-transit roadway motor vehicles, or privately operated vehicles (POV), accounted for 73 percent of reported vanpool events from 2015 to 2019. 72 percent of reported vanpool injuries also resulted from collisions with POVs, as did the single reported fatality.

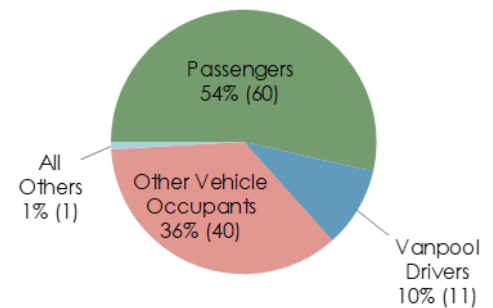
**Vanpool Events and Injuries by Event Type, 2015–2019<sup>1</sup>**



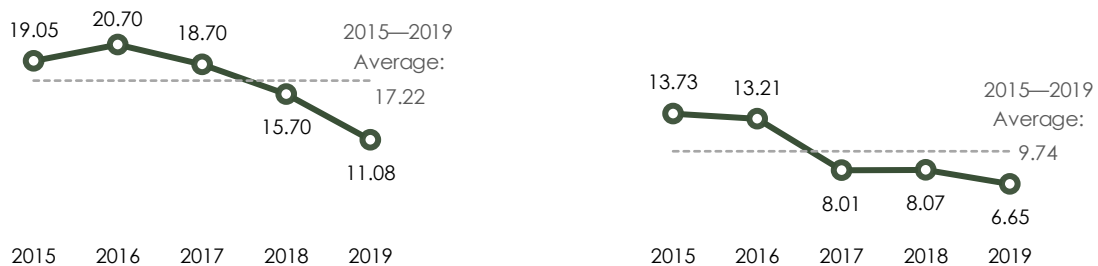
From 2015 to 2019, 54 percent of the 112 people injured during collisions between vanpool vehicles and POVs were passengers. POV occupants accounted for 36 percent of vanpool injuries reported during this time period, while injuries to vanpool drivers comprised another 10 percent of the total. The one reported fatality was also a vanpool driver.

Accounting for transit service provided by the vanpool mode, for each 100 million VRM provided during the 2015 to 2019 period, transit agencies reported 17.05 vanpool events, 0.09 fatalities and 9.95 injuries. Events and injuries per 100 million VRM substantially decreased between 2016 and 2019. During this period, the one reported vanpool fatality occurred in 2019.

**Vanpool POV Collision Injuries by Person Type, 2015–2019<sup>1</sup>**



**Trend in Annual Vanpool Event and Injury Rates per 100M VRM, 2015–2019<sup>1</sup>**



Note: Graphs not to scale.

<sup>1</sup>Submitted NTD data for 2015–2019 are preliminary and subject to validation.

<sup>2</sup>Figures reflect service data submitted by NTD full-reporter agencies only. Vanpools are one of eight distinct bus modes used in NTD event reporting.

<sup>3</sup>Non-collision events include security events, fires, slips, trips, falls and all other events that are not collisions involving vanpool vehicles.

<sup>4</sup>“Other” collisions include all collisions between vanpool vehicles and anything other than a POV, including fixed objects, pedestrians, bicyclists and animals.



## FTA Employee Spotlight: Rebecca Johnson



**Rebecca Johnson**  
Administrative Management  
Specialist, Office of Transit Safety  
and Oversight, FTA

**How would you explain your job to someone you have never met?** I work for FTA’s Office of Transit Safety and Oversight (TSO) where we strive to improve public transportation and ensure that everyone is traveling by the safest modes of transportation. One of my key roles is to ensure that our staff is well trained and equipped with the tools needed to succeed in their role.

**What excites you most about your job?** Helping others, growth opportunities, knowing that my voice is heard and producing results—these are some motivations that help me demonstrate daily strong work ethics.

**What were you doing prior to this role?** Prior to becoming an Administrative Management Specialist for TSO, I served as the Administrative Staff Assistant to the Deputy Associate Administrator and Associate Administrator. Serving in this capacity, communication, timeliness and problem-solving skills are essential to aid the TSO staff in achieving FTA’s mission of improving public transportation for America’s communities.

**What is your favorite form of transportation and why?** My favorite mode of transportation is by car. Although I am an extrovert, I love my alone time in my car. It allows me to unwind, relax and recharge on my ride home for the next challenge of that day.

**If you could time travel, which period would you go back to visit?** I would travel to the 1960s to meet my great-grandmother. I would love to soak up her wisdom, experience her daily life and learn more about my family. I remember learning how my great-grandmother and her six children walked down country roads to our family church. One Sunday, while visiting my great-grandmother’s home, which is now the family home, I decided to take that walk. Shortly after starting my walk down the country road, I heard a snap, crackle and pop that startled me. When I turned to my left, I saw a deer observing me, so I smiled and continued my walk. Immediately after that encounter, I heard another snap, crackle and pop, and this time there was another deer and two foxes. I re-routed and briskly walked back to the family house, constantly looking over my shoulders. Hopefully, one day I will make it to the church!

**If you could learn any skill, what would it be?** It is a toss-up between being multilingual or a great cook. Communicating with others in their native language is one of the coolest things. As for being a great cook, creating and mastering family recipes is a challenge for me. I am with the new generation—make it good and quick!

**What is the best piece of advice you have been given?** Currently, “focus on today, tomorrow has its own problems” is the best advice I have received.

**Spring, summer, fall or winter: What is your favorite season and why?** Fall is my favorite season, hands down. The taste and smell of pomegranates, pumpkins, and apples permeating the air while wearing cute sweaters and boots and enjoying the cool weather brings about a loving ambiance for me.



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

### [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

