



U.S. Department
of Transportation

**Federal Transit
Administration**

SA-22-4

Safety Advisory

12/05/2022

Office of Transit Safety and Oversight
Washington, DC

Subject: Suicide Prevention Signage on Public Transit

Purpose: The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) is issuing Safety Advisory (SA) 22-4 to encourage transit agencies to implement, update, or expand suicide prevention signage and messaging campaigns that apply best practices for reducing suicide attempts.

Background: In the United States, suicide is the leading cause of fatalities on public transit, with most suicide events occurring on heavy rail infrastructure. According to data reported to the National Transit Database, suicides have consistently accounted for over 40 percent of all transit fatalities over the past decade, and the number of suicide events on public transit have been trending upwards. In 2019, suicide events resulted in 62 deaths and 103 injuries. In addition to the tragic loss of human life, suicide events can be physically, mentally, and emotionally traumatizing for witnesses, particularly vehicle operators. Suicide events can also trigger service disruptions in the immediate aftermath, as agencies conduct investigations and address any physical infrastructure damage.

Research suggests that suicide prevention signage is an intervention that can save lives. Signage that includes a hotline or crisis center information, such as the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline (formerly known as the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline), is particularly effective at encouraging mental health intervention. Transit agencies in the United States and internationally have found that suicide prevention signage has increased the number of suicide hotline calls, and, while transit-specific research is limited, multidisciplinary suicide prevention research has documented a correlation between suicide prevention signage and fewer suicide attempts per year. As such, FTA advises transit agencies to adopt suicide prevention signage to reduce these tragic events and encourage mental health intervention.

Recommended Action: FTA encourages transit agencies to install or update digital or physical signage to incorporate the following elements:

- Display the national Suicide & Crisis Lifeline phone number (988) and the local crisis center or local public transit helpline phone number.
- Direct patrons to nearby public phones, if available.
- Present information in all languages frequently spoken within the jurisdiction.
- Consider language, word choice, and other demographic risk factors, like age and gender, within the jurisdiction for signage and messaging campaigns.

Additionally, FTA recommends transit agencies:

- Place suicide prevention signage in highly visible areas that pose the greatest risk for suicide.
- Convey anti-suicide and general mental health awareness information on public-facing media, such as bus advertisement space, station booths, bus shelters, metro cards, and vending machine screen savers.
- Partner with suicide prevention organizations, including community mental health organizations, to coordinate mental health and suicide prevention messaging and resources.
- Assess and monitor the effectiveness of different signage approaches and make use of any available data or information to guide transit agency activities on suicide prevention as part of the agency's Safety Risk Management and Safety Assurance processes outlined in the Agency Safety Plan, as described in 49 CFR § 673.25 and § 673.27.

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Resources:

Federal Transit Administration

- [FTA Report No. 0227: Mitigations for Trespasser and Suicide Fatalities and Injuries](#) analyzes trends in railroad trespasser and suicide events and summarizes mitigations to prevent trespasser and suicide incidents, including signage mitigations.
- [Transit Advisory Committee for Safety 18-03 Final Report: Trespass and Suicide Prevention](#) provides recommendations to FTA on how to mitigate trespassing and suicide on rail transit.
- [Mental Health Resources for Transit Workers](#) provides a collection of mental health resources for frontline transit workers.
- [FTA Rail Transit Safety Data Report](#) analyzes event data collected through the State Safety Oversight program and provides a snapshot of the safety performance of the rail transit industry for the 12-year period of calendar year (CY) 2007 through CY 2018.

VOLPE National Transportation Systems Center

- [Rail Suicide Prevention Resource Page](#) provides the public, Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), rail carriers, and suicide prevention researchers with a comprehensive view of why rail suicides happen in the U.S., where and when they are most likely to occur, and how to prevent them.

FRA

- [2019 FRA Final Report: Railroad Implemented Countermeasures to Prevent Suicide](#) documents a sample of suicide prevention efforts undertaken by U.S. rail carriers, including summarizing how rail carriers may post signage and partner with national suicide prevention helplines to further prevent suicide events (pgs. 7–12).

Transportation Research Board

- [Transit Cooperation Research Program Research Report 233: Strategies for Deterring Trespassing on Rail Transit and Commuter Rail Rights-of-Way](#) provides guidance on strategies to deter trespassing, including trespass suicide events, on rail transit and commuter rail exclusive and semi-exclusive rights-of-way.

Other Mental Health Resources

- [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's Help Prevent Suicide](#) homepage provides suicide prevention resources and summarizes key statistics pertaining to suicide and suicidal ideation.
- [Operation Lifesaver](#) provides education, programming, and toolkits to support rail safety.

Contact: Please direct questions or comments regarding this Safety Advisory to Joe DeLorenzo, Associate Administrator for Transit Safety and Oversight and Chief Safety Officer, FTA, 1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE, Washington, DC 20590, telephone (202) 366-1783, or Joseph.DeLorenzo@dot.gov