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# Transit Safety and Oversight Spotlight Newsletter

September 2023  
Vol. 8 No. 9

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## Message from the Associate Administrator

Dear Transit Colleagues:

As we approach the end of Federal Fiscal Year (FY) 2023, I want to reflect on the safety goal of using data to inform safety decisions and ask how FTA can assist you in meeting your goals. FTA is here to work with you to create safer transit systems across America, whether it is through [webinars](#) or the [Public Transportation Agency Safety Plans \(PTASP\) Technical Assistance Center \(TAC\)](#).

FTA published the [Safety Training Schedule for FY 2024](#) earlier this month. Safety training plays a vital role in creating safer transit systems across America and the new training offers additional face-to-face deliveries. I encourage you to review the training schedule and plan accordingly for any training requirements you may have under the [Public Transportation Safety Certification Training Program regulation](#).

In addition, FTA issued a [safety advisory](#) recommending that transit agencies consider mitigation strategies to reduce the likelihood and severity of bus collisions with pedestrians, bicyclists, and people using other micromobility devices. Learn more about the safety advisory on page 6.

Looking ahead to the fall, mark your calendars for the [2023 FTA Joint State Safety Oversight and Rail Transit Agency](#) Workshop in St. Louis, MO from Tuesday, November 14, 2023 to Thursday, November 16, 2023! This year, the first day of the workshop will be in-person and is intended for State Safety Oversight Agencies and their approved contractors only. Registration is open on the workshop [webpage](#).

Lastly, FTA recognizes [Rail Safety Week](#). In addition to highlighting the Stop Track Tragedies campaign, this year's Rail Safety Week resources include new youth materials developed as part of FTA's cooperative agreement with Operation Lifesaver Inc. FTA published a dedicated [rail grade crossing safety webpage](#) and will host a [webinar](#). [FTA Deputy Administrator Veronica Vanterpool](#) and I recorded video messages supporting this mission. While emphasizing the importance of rail safety, I want to stress that transit safety is a year-round priority.

Sincerely,  
Joe

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**Joe DeLorenzo**  
Associate Administrator for Transit Safety and Oversight and Chief Safety Officer, FTA

## Meet the Transit Advisory Committee for Safety Members: Molly Hughes, Donna Johnson and Laura Karr

The [Transit Advisory Committee for Safety \(TRACS\)](#) provides information, advice and recommendations on transit safety to the U.S. Transportation Secretary and FTA Administrator. TRACS is comprised of a diverse panel of professionals representing a variety of stakeholders and interests to address transit safety issues cooperatively.

### Molly Hughes

Public Transportation Safety Administrator, Washington State Department of Transportation

*What do you look forward to most as part of TRACS and what has been your biggest*

*achievement to date?* I am looking forward to learning from my colleagues! They are such smart people and come from such diverse backgrounds. We share the same vision but come to it from such different places — which makes it the best kind of team. I am super proud to lead a team of safety specialists who have created an environment of transparency with our light rail partners, while still holding them to the highest standards. They have made space for the agencies to be candid about both successes and challenges without fear of reprisal.



Molly Hughes



### Donna Johnson

Vice President and Chief Strategy Office, Dallas Area Rapid Transit

*Why did you join TRACS and what do you look forward to the most as part of TRACS?* I joined

TRACS to serve as a liaison and a contributor to help guide the direction of building a safe transit system for employees, riders and stakeholders. I look forward to serving as a resource in the development of processes, rules and procedures that contribute to the overall safety of the transit industry.

*What made you interested in pursuing a career in public transportation safety?* I felt I could contribute and make a difference in ensuring the safety of passengers and employees in a transit environment ensuring that each and every employee and rider experience a safe and reliable transit system.

Donna Johnson

### Laura Karr

Associate General Counsel, Amalgamated Transit Union

*Why did you join TRACS?* I joined TRACS to help ensure that transit workers have a voice in the development of recommendations that stand to impact their safety and working conditions. Although the management-side of TRACS members certainly have worker safety in mind, their perspective is not the same as, for example, the bus operator who spends long days driving a vehicle that leaves them vulnerable to the rising tide of assaults on transit workers, or the rail maintenance worker who wonders whether underground communication systems will alert them in time to avoid an oncoming train. Amalgamated Transit Union members face these threats and more every day, and they are therefore experts in transit hazards and how to fix them. My role in TRACS is to bring worker perspectives to the forefront and to ensure that they are central to the development of TRACS recommendations.



Laura Karr

## FTA at Transit Industry Event



On September 7, 2023, Associate Administrator Joe DeLorenzo participated as a speaker at the [Midwest Transit Conference](#) in Kansas City, MO.

He spoke at the “What’s on the Agenda for FTA’s Safety and Oversight Office — Updates, News and More” session, where he provided updates on the safety regulatory agenda, gave an overview of the current transit safety landscape and identified ways to connect with FTA.

See the presentation from this event and other FTA conference presentations on FTA’s [webpage](#).

Associate Administrator addresses attendees during the “What’s on the Agenda for FTA’s “What’s on the Agenda for FTA’s Safety and Oversight Office — Updates, News and More” session at the Midwest Transit Conference.

## Fiscal Year 2024 Transportation Safety Institute (TSI) Safety Training Available

[Registration](#) is open for the Transportation Safety Institute’s (TSI) Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 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 FY24 safety training schedule offers some additional face-to-face deliveries.



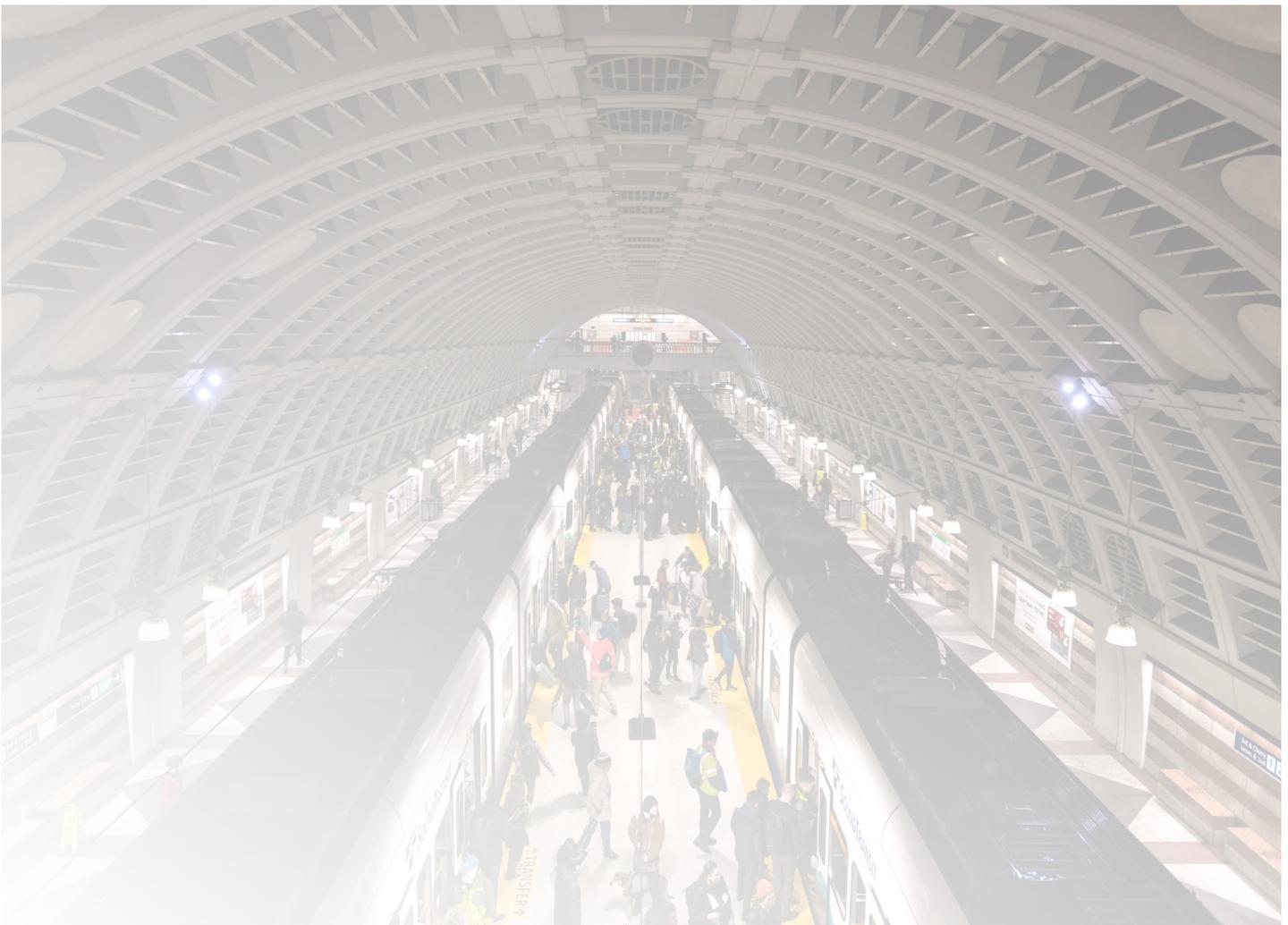
- [FTA Safety Training Page](#) — outlines training requirements and available training courses. Contact [FTASafetyPromotion@dot.gov](mailto:FTASafetyPromotion@dot.gov) for more information about course offerings, Individual Training Plans, credit for non-FTA sponsored coursework and other safety training related matters.
- [FTA-Sponsored Training Courses](#) — provides information on FTA-sponsored FY24 training delivered by the TSI.
- [TSI Course Schedule](#) — includes TSI safety training courses for transit personnel to support FTA grantees subject to the [PTSCTP](#) regulation with initial training and refresher training requirements. In addition to PTSCTP bus and rail courses, training includes courses for bus, rail, general transit safety and transit crime prevention and emergency management. Contact TSI at [TSI@dot.gov](mailto:TSI@dot.gov) or 405-954-3682 for more information. TSI can verify the status of scheduled courses and assist with any other course-related questions.
- [Enhanced Transit Safety and Crime Prevention Initiative Related Training](#) — offers virtual Assault Awareness and Prevention (AAP) and Violence in the Transit Workplace (VTW) courses, provided by the National Transit Institute (NTI). The AAP and VTW courses support the FTA Enhanced Transit Safety and Crime Prevention Initiative. Transit agencies can also use the AAP course to fulfill the new [Bipartisan Infrastructure Law requirement](#) for de-escalation training. Contact NTI at [nti\\_info@nti.rutgers.edu](mailto:nti_info@nti.rutgers.edu) or 848-932-1700 with any questions.

## FTA Awards Research Grant to the USF to Support Worker Safety

FTA awarded a research grant to the University of South Florida (USF) to identify safety risks for transit workers and riders and to determine the most effective strategies to minimize the risk. USF brings decades of experience working with transit agencies, transit workers' unions and other industry partners around transit safety and operations. The grant is part of the first phase of FTA's [Transit Worker and Rider Safety Best Practices](#) initiative. The initiative will better inform FTA's efforts in developing public transportation safety measures in the light of many reports of violence towards transit workers. The first phase is expected to take approximately 18 months to complete. A major deliverable for this phase will be a best practice report on transit assault mitigation strategies and countermeasures.

After identifying best practices, a second research phase will establish pilot demonstration projects with transit agencies to validate and promote the mitigation strategies using a [Safe System Approach](#) to reduce safety hazards affecting transit workers and riders. FTA has initiated multiple actions to both identify potential transit worker safety mitigations, safety standards, and to prevent operator assault. These efforts include proposed rules to increase transit safety and operator safety, soliciting public input on improving safety for transit workers, convening stakeholders to discuss and test concepts for redesigning bus compartments for operator safety, and funding research on the impact of using bus automation to improve transit safety.

For more information, contact the Office of Research and Innovation's Transit Worker and Rider safety program manager [Roy Chen](#).



## Available FTA Resources in Support of Rail Safety Week September 18 – 24



[Rail Safety Week](#) is an annual observance event spearheaded by [Operation Lifesaver, Inc. \(OLI\)](#) and rail safety partners across the U.S., Canada and Mexico. This event aims to raise awareness on ways to *Stop Track Tragedies*. Rail Safety Week is September 18–24, 2023.

In support of Rail Safety Week, FTA published a dedicated [Rail Grade Crossing Safety webpage](#) with links to safety bulletins, safety advisories, Transit Advisory for Safety Committee (TRACS) reports and other transit resources. In addition, [FTA Deputy Administrator Veronica Vanterpool](#) and [Associate Administrator Joe DeLorenzo](#) supported Rail Safety Week by filming video messages that stress rail safety. Lastly, OLI has created new materials to help promote rail safety during Rail Safety Week and beyond. This includes new [resource materials](#) focused on youth and a [new rail transit safety pledge](#).

FTA will host a webinar discussing transit rail grade crossing safety from operational and public education and outreach perspectives. FTA will provide an overview and the Center for Urban Transportation Research and MxV Rail will highlight research on engineering aspects related to rail grade crossing safety, as featured in the FTA Standards Development Program [Rail Transit Roadway and Pedestrian Grade Crossing Exploratory Report](#), and discuss research results. The webinar also will feature guest speakers from TriMet who will speak about their experiences with rail grade crossings and the non-profit, OLI, who will discuss safety education and outreach to transit riders and available transit agency resources. The webinar recording and presentation will be available soon.



# FTA Issues Safety Advisory on Bus-to-Person Collisions

On September 19, 2023 FTA issued [Safety Advisory 23-1: Bus-to-Person Collisions](#) in the [Federal Register](#) to recommend that transit agencies consider mitigation strategies to reduce the likelihood and severity of bus collisions with pedestrians, bicyclists and those using other micromobility devices.

Data from the National Transit Database shows that bus-to-person collisions remain a top safety concern accounting for 15 percent of transit fatalities from 2008 to 2021, with left turns as a predominant risk focus area. FTA Safety Advisory 23-1 recommends that transit agencies identify specific hazards that may cause or contribute to bus-to-person collisions, assess the safety risks and implement mitigations to reduce the likelihood and severity of those collisions.

On FTA’s website, you can find fact sheets, guidance and training available for [transit providers](#) on identifying safety hazards, completing a safety risk assessment and developing mitigations. FTA also has a dedicated [bus-to-person collision webpage](#) available with additional information. FTA will host a [webinar](#) on Thursday, October 5, 2023 at 2 p.m. ET to review key elements from the Safety Advisory, share resources available to transit agencies with safety risk assessments and mitigation implementation about bus-to-person collisions and will feature a transit agency guest speaker who will share their experience with addressing risks associated with bus-to-person collisions, including mitigation strategies and lessons learned.

For further questions regarding this Safety Advisory, please email [FTASystemSafety@dot.gov](mailto:FTASystemSafety@dot.gov).



# Now Available: FY 2024 FTA-Sponsored Safety Training



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U.S. Department of Transportation  
 USDOT's Transportation Safety Institute  
 Transit Safety & Security Division, RTI-80  
 6500 S. MacArthur Blvd., Oklahoma City, OK 73169-6900  
 (405) 954-3682 www.transportation.gov/tsi

**FY-24 Transit Training Schedule as of August 14, 2023**

Class No.	Location	Date	Hosting Agency	Change
<b>GENERAL RAIL/BUS PTCTP* COURSES</b>				
<b>FT00568 - SMS AWARENESS - 50</b>				
<b>FT00564 - SMS PRINCIPLES FOR TRANSIT - 560</b>				
2401	Boston, MA	October 24 - 26, 2023	MBTA	
2402	Myrtle Beach, SC	December 5 - 7, 2023	National RTAP	
2403	Newark, NJ	February 13 - 15, 2024	NJT	
2404	Lanham, MD	February 21 - 23, 2024	WMATA	
2405	Hilo, HI	March 5 - 7, 2024	County of Hawaii MTA	
2406	Tampa, FL	April 30 - May 2, 2024	CUTR	
2407	Philadelphia, PA	June 11 - 13, 2024	SEPTA	
2408	Seattle, WA	July 23 - 25, 2024	Sound Transit	
2409	Lanham, MD	August 20 - 22, 2024	WMATA	
<small>*MANDATORY PRE-REQUISITE: SMS Safety Awareness (FT00568)</small>				
<b>FT00564-Y - SMS PRINCIPLES FOR TRANSIT - 50</b>				
2401	Virtual-Live Training	November 6-8, 2023	TSI	



## FTA Employee Spotlight: Valerie Beck



**Valerie Beck**

Division Chief, Safety Assurance and Risk Management, Office of System Safety, Office of Transit Safety and Oversight, FTA

**How would you explain your job to someone you have never met?** I am the Chief of the Safety Assurance and Risk Management Division in the Office of Transit Safety and Oversight. The division is responsible for monitoring industry safety performance, identifying safety hazards and mitigating safety risks to improve transit safety.

**What were you doing prior to this role?** Prior to joining FTA, I spent nine years as an Enforcement and Litigation Attorney at the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA), where I worked on a broad array of safety enforcement and compliance programs, including FMCSA's data-based risk prioritization system and its hours of service regulations. I also worked in FMCSA's Office of Policy and its Office of Enforcement and Compliance. Prior to that, I worked as a litigator for a large law firm in New York for six years.

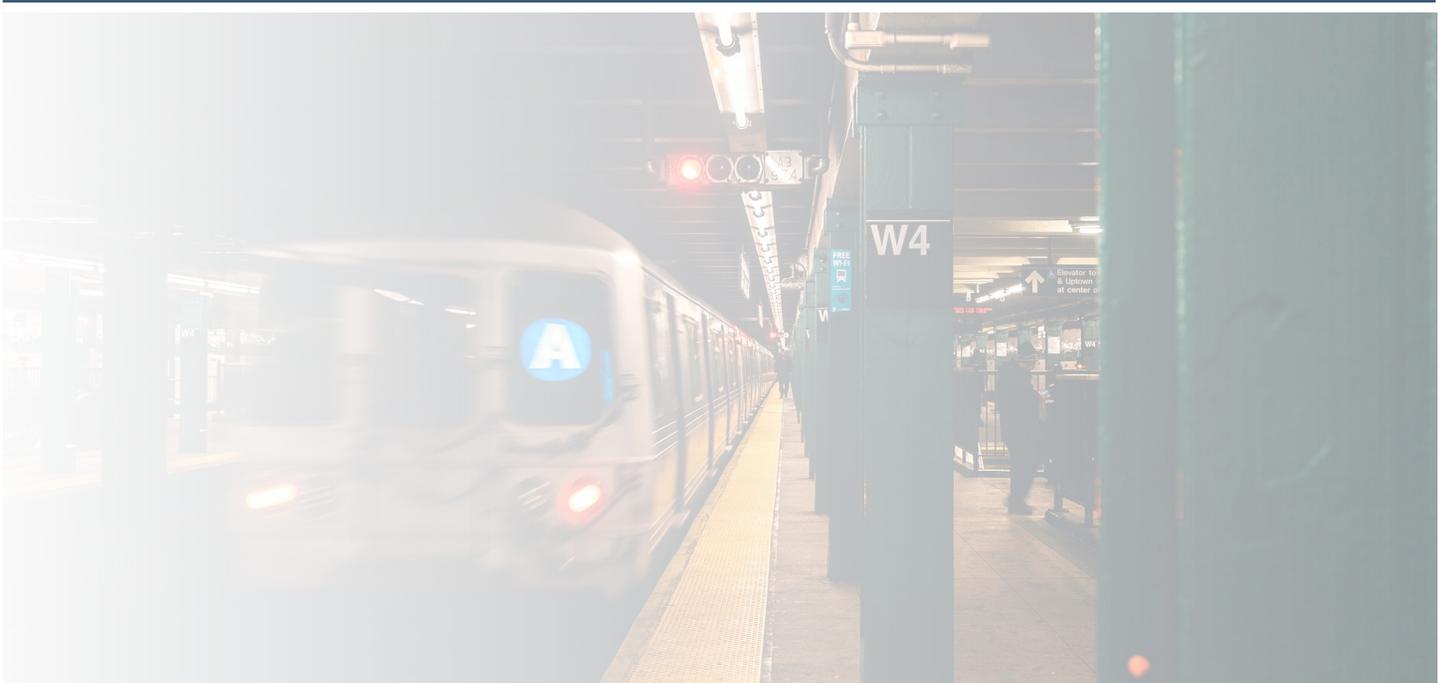
**What is your favorite transit system in the U.S.?** I appreciate how New York City transit allows you to do absolutely everything without a car. I especially like the ferry system. It is an incredibly extensive and accessible transit system.

**What was your first time using public transit like?** I have many early memories of taking the train into New York with my family. We would often take the Port Authority Trans-Hudson train to the World Trade Center to meet my dad for dinner.

**What people or experiences have shaped you?** There are so many! Starting my career in the federal government with FMCSA was a wonderful experience in working for an extremely mission driven organization. The culture at FMCSA is entirely focused on safety. I worked on FMCSA's initiative to make bus and truck safety data transparent to the public and saw firsthand how that program transformed the safety culture in the industry.

**What does your perfect breakfast look like?** A good egg sandwich, fresh fruit and, of course, lots of coffee.

**What do you do to unwind after a hard day?** I have a four-year-old and an eight-year-old, so generally, there is no unwinding! When I have time to myself, I enjoy music, exercise and yoga.





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](#).

## Upcoming FTA TSO Office Speaking Engagements

### [APTA TRANSform Conference](#)

October 8 – 11, 2023 | Orlando, FL

### [AASHTO Safety Summit](#)

October 17, 2023 | Kansas City, MO

### [New York State Public Transit Conference](#)

November 2, 2023 | Albany, NY

### [AASHTO Council on Public Transportation Winter Meeting](#)

November 7 – 8, 2023 | Nashville, TN

### [2023 FTA Joint SSO and RTA Workshop](#)

November 14 – 16, 2023 | St. Louis, MO

### [FRA Rail Share](#)

November 28 – 29, 2023 | Kansas City, MO

### **APTA Midyear Safety and Risk Management Seminar**

December 10 – 13, 2023 | Austin, TX

*The contents of this document do not have the force and effect of law and are not meant to bind the public in any way. This document is intended only to provide clarity to the public regarding existing requirements under the law or agency policies. Grantees and subgrantees should refer to FTA's statutes and regulations for applicable requirements.*