

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Transit Administration

[Special Directive No. 25-3, Notice No. 1]

Special Directive Under 49 U.S.C. § 5329 and 49 CFR Part 670 to the Chicago Transit Authority Regarding Required Actions to Address Transit Worker Assault and Public Safety Concerns

AGENCY: Federal Transit Administration (FTA), U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT).

SUMMARY: FTA issues Special Directive (SD) 25-3 to the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) requiring immediate, measurable corrective actions to reduce assaults on transit workers and passengers and to address unsafe system conditions contributing to elevated rates of violent crime on CTA's bus and rail system. FTA has determined that a combination of unsafe conditions or practices exists such that there is a substantial risk of death or personal injury and that the public interest requires the avoidance or mitigation of a hazard or risk through immediate compliance.

This Special Directive identifies two findings related to CTA's failure to:

- Update its Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan (PTASP); and
- Maintain a safe operating environment for workers and passengers, including failure to implement adequate mitigations to address a years-long pattern of elevated worker assaults, customer assaults, and serious violent crime.

FTA directs CTA to undertake two required actions to address these findings.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: For program matters, Mr. Joseph DeLorenzo, Associate Administrator for Transit Safety and Oversight and Chief Safety Officer, telephone 202-366-1783 or joseph.delorenzo@dot.gov; for legal matters, Mr. Matthew Cahill, Chief Counsel, FTA, telephone 202-843-4082 or matthew.cahill@dot.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

FTA administers a national public transportation safety program to advance safe and reliable transit service throughout the United States. FTA conducts safety investigations, assesses transit agency safety management practices, and issues Special Directives when, among other things, it identifies unsafe conditions or practices that present a substantial risk of death or personal injury.

CTA operates one of the largest combined heavy rail and bus transit systems in the United States, providing more than a million passenger trips each weekday across the City of Chicago and 35 surrounding suburbs. CTA's system includes 146 rail stations, eight rail lines that operate across over 220 miles of track, and 127 bus routes that run along 1,516 street miles. Riders and transit workers must have a safe and secure environment. However, CTA has experienced sustained, systemwide increases in violent crime, including homicides, aggravated batteries, assaults on operators and customers, and robberies. CTA publicly has acknowledged these trends in Board of Directors presentations, and Chicago Police Department (CPD) CompStat data confirms elevated incidents on or adjacent to CTA property.

Of particular note:

Escalating Worker Assault Rates

National Transit Database (NTD)-reported safety data shows that CTA's transit worker assault rate has exceeded the national average of comparable transit agencies reporting to the NTD (national average) every year since FY 2015.

- Bus: Worker assault rates have increased each of the past six years and were nine times the national average in FY 2025.
- Rail: Worker assault rates exceeded the national average from FY 2021 through FY 2024 and remain significantly elevated in FY 2025.

Escalating Customer Assaults and Violent Crime

- Customer assaults on CTA vehicles and property have increased 150 percent in the past five years. CTA's rate is five times the national average.
- Homicides on CTA property have increased sharply: four to date in FY 2025 and five in FY 2024, compared to one in FY 2023.
- Several widely publicized rail attacks—including recent violent assaults on CTA platforms and trains—demonstrate clear gaps in system security and threat mitigation. This includes an attack on November 17, 2025, in which a 26-year-old woman was lit on fire by a repeat criminal with a reported 72 prior arrests.

PTASP Requirements

Under 49 CFR part 673, CTA must maintain an up-to-date Agency Safety Plan (ASP) incorporating safety risk management processes, safety committees, a safety risk reduction program, and de-escalation training focused, in part, on addressing transit worker assault and public safety concerns. To date, CTA has not completed required PTASP updates following its responses to FTA's General Directive 24-1 or updated the plan to incorporate known changes in risk related to worker assaults and violent crime trends.

Finding 1: CTA has not completed PTASP updates

FTA is concerned that CTA has demonstrated insufficient progress to complete its required 2025 annual ASP update process, which CTA must finalize by December 31, 2025 to maintain compliance with Federal requirements. For example, the ASP has not been updated to reflect the processes CTA has put in place to ensure the effectiveness of the mitigations identified and implemented by CTA in response to:

- Special Directive 22-15: Required Actions Regarding Transit Worker Assault, issued October 4, 2022; and
- General Directive 24-1: Required Actions Regarding Assaults on Transit Workers, issued September 25, 2024.

CTA also has not incorporated the significant and sustained increase in worker assaults and violent crime into its safety risk management processes, as required by its own Safety Management System framework.

Accordingly, FTA will initiate an audit of CTA's ASPs related to preventing assaults on transit workers. FTA will conduct the audit pursuant to its authority under 49 U.S.C. § 5329(f)(1) and 49 CFR Part 670. FTA will assess CTA's compliance with 49 CFR Part 673, CTA's implementation of its ASPs, and CTA's responses to FTA's directives focused on mitigating the safety risks associated with assaults on transit workers.

Specifically, the audit will include, but not be limited to, the following:

- (1) An assessment of CTA’s Safety Risk Reduction Program related to assaults on transit workers.
- (2) An evaluation of the effectiveness of the mitigations identified and implemented by CTA in response to:
 - Special Directive 22-15: *Required Actions Regarding Transit Worker Assault*, issued October 4, 2022; and,
 - General Directive 24-1: *Required Actions Regarding Assaults on Transit Workers*, issued September 25, 2024.

Finding 2. CTA has not met its responsibility to maintain a safe operating environment for workers and passengers

On September 11, 2025, the U.S. DOT directed CTA to provide key information regarding the agency’s actions and plans to enhance public safety, as well as financial information regarding funding programmed to improve the security of passengers and workers.

Based on FTA’s review of this information and continued serious assaults and other violent crime on the CTA system, FTA finds that CTA has not implemented effective, risk-based mitigations proportionate to the scale and severity of worker assaults and safety threats to passengers on its system. CTA has not demonstrated that existing protective measures meaningfully reduce assaults or deter the violent use of dangerous weapons on and adjacent to CTA property.

DIRECTIVE AND REQUIRED ACTIONS:

In accordance with 49 U.S.C. § 5329 and 49 CFR part 670, FTA directs CTA to take the following actions:

Findings		Tracking #	Required Actions
Finding 1	CTA has not completed required PTASP updates under 49 CFR § 673.11(a)(5).	FTA-25-3-001	CTA must update its Agency Safety Plans by December 31, 2025 and send to FTA within seven business days of approval by CTA’s Transit Board Committee. CTA also must send its updated Rail Agency Safety Plans to the Illinois Department of Transportation, the State Safety Oversight Agency. In addition, CTA must submit the requested documents identified in the enclosed Appendix A to FTA within 14 days of Transit Board Committee approval of CTA’s 2025 ASPs.
Finding 2	CTA has not upheld its responsibility to maintain a safe operating environment for	FTA-25-3-002	1. By December 15, 2025, CTA must develop and submit a security enhancement plan for FTA approval that includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • targeted, significant reductions in transit worker and customer assaults and other

Findings		Tracking #	Required Actions
	workers and passengers.		<p>crime required to be reported to the NTD on its bus and rail systems; and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a staffing surge plan that significantly increases security and/or law enforcement presence on its rail and bus transit systems to achieve those assault and other violent crime reduction targets. Assault and other violent crime reduction targets must reflect reductions in incidents across applicable NTD-reportable categories. Targets must be set showing reductions for each of the next six months, the sufficiency of which will be determined by FTA. <p>CTA must document current baseline law enforcement and security staffing levels and practices and must demonstrate that its staffing surge plan represents a significant increase in actual security hours systemwide compared to the prior 6-month rolling average.</p> <p>2. By December 19, 2025, CTA must implement the security enhancement plan in full, as approved by FTA</p> <p>CTA must provide evidence of full implementation of these required actions. CTA must provide biweekly (every two weeks) status reporting to FTA.</p>

FTA will receive submissions and monitor CTA’s progress in resolving each finding and required action. FTA will conduct scheduled meetings with CTA to review its progress until such time as FTA determines that these meetings are no longer needed or may be conducted with less frequency. FTA also may conduct onsite inspections and assessments to confirm implementation of required actions.

PETITIONS FOR RECONSIDERATION:

As set forth in 49 CFR § 670.27(d), CTA has 30 calendar days from the date of this Special Directive to petition for reconsideration with the FTA Administrator. The petition must be in writing, signed by CTA’s Accountable Executive, and must include a brief explanation of why CTA believes the Special Directive should not apply or why compliance is not possible, not practicable, unreasonable, or not in the public interest. The petition may include relevant information regarding the factual basis upon which the Directive was issued; information in response to any alleged violation or in mitigation thereof; recommended alternative means of compliance for consideration; and any other information CTA deems

appropriate.

Unless explicitly stayed or modified by the Administrator, this Special Directive remains in effect pending review of any petition.

Within 90 days of receipt of a petition, the Administrator will provide a written response. Relief may be granted only where CTA clearly articulates alternative actions that will provide, in the Administrator's judgment, a level of safety equivalent to compliance with this Special Directive, or where CTA identifies legal or material facts not in evidence at the time the Special Directive was issued.

ENFORCEMENT:

FTA may take enforcement action for any violation of this Special Directive or the terms of any written plan adopted pursuant to this Special Directive in accordance with FTA's authorities under 49 U.S.C. § 5329, including but not limited to (1) directing CTA to use Federal financial assistance to correct safety deficiencies; (2) withholding up to 25 percent of financial assistance to CTA under 49 U.S.C. § 5307; and (3) issuing restrictions or prohibitions as necessary and appropriate to address unsafe conditions or practices that present a substantial risk of death or personal injury.

Issued on: December 8, 2025

Matthew J. Welbes
Executive Director
Federal Transit Administration
U.S. Department of Transportation

APPENDIX A: CTA AUDIT REQUESTED MATERIALS LIST

For purposes of this audit, FTA requests CTA provide the following documentation related to the implementation of its Agency Safety Plan (ASP) addressing assaults on transit workers, as well as information regarding actions taken in response to Special Directive 22-15, and General Directive 24-1.

#	ASP and Safety Performance Targets
1	CTA’s 2025 board-approved Agency Safety Plans covering rail and bus modes that are covered by FTA’s Public Transportation Safety Program.
2	Documentation of any CTA safety performance targets related to assaults on transit workers, including how targets are established and monitored, from 2022-present.
3	Documentation related to the implementation of the Safety Risk Reduction Program for assaults on transit workers, including actions taken, targets established, mitigations implemented, and relevant dates.
4	Safety risk assessment documentation related to assaults on transit workers, from 2022-present.
5	Documentation of CTA’s employee safety reporting process, and all reports related to assaults on transit workers from 2022-present.
6	Documentation related to the development and implementation of the agency’s de-escalation training, including employee completion status.
#	Joint Labor-Management Safety Committee Procedures
7	Documentation of safety risk mitigations related to assaults on transit workers identified and recommended by the Safety Committee, from 2022-present.
8	Documentation of CTA’s Safety Committee activities and information regarding the Safety Committee’s role in monitoring the effectiveness of mitigations related to assaults on transit workers.
#	Implementation of FTA Safety Directives
9	Documentation of CTA’s implementation of identified mitigations in response to Special Directive 22-15, addressing the risk of assaults on transit workers, including status updates, internal monitoring, relevant dates, and evaluation of the effectiveness of mitigations.
10	Documentation of CTA’s implementation of identified mitigations in response to General Directive 24-1, addressing the risk of assaults on transit workers, including status updates, internal monitoring, relevant dates, and evaluation of the effectiveness of mitigations.