FTA Trespass and Suicide Prevention Webinar

12/11/2025

U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Transit Administration

Webinar Overview

This webinar will discuss strategies for preventing trespass and suicide incidents including:

- FTA's recently published Safety Advisory
- Data trends and resources for transit agencies
- Radar camera surveillance and detection systems
- Training, video surveillance, security and community outreach
- Suicide prevention measures

Speakers:

- Ethan Novak, Safety Program Analyst, Federal Transit Administration
- Landon Dixon P.E., Civil Engineer III, Utah Transit Authority
- Deputy Chief Maurice McKinney, Metro Transit Police Department, Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA)
- Spencer Jones, Manager, Wellness and Health Strategy, WMATA

Trespassing and Suicide Prevention

Ethan Novak, Safety Program Analyst, FTA Office of Transit Safety and Oversight

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Introduction

Trespassing and suicide encompass a variety of different types of events, including but not limited to the following:

- A person intentionally moving in front of trains for the purposes of self-harm.
- A person trespassing on the rail right-of-way (ROW) around station platforms, sheltering in tunnels or along exposed track resulting in:
  - Accidental collision with a rail vehicle or
  - Fatality or injury due to tripping, falling, or electric shock.

Behind the Numbers

Why does FTA focus on both trespass and suicide events?

- **Trespassing events and suicide events have a similar risk profile**. Events in both these categories often occur in the same locations, particularly on the rail right-of-way and at rail facilities.
- **Both event types reflect intentionality**. Suicide attempts are intentional acts. Trespassing involves intentional access of unauthorized areas in violation of transit agency policy, though ensuing injuries or fatalities may be accidental.
- **Safety Risk Mitigations may overlap**. Some effective safety risk mitigations for both suicide- and trespassing-related safety risk address right-of-way access concerns. Efforts to limit track access either along the rail right-of-way or in the station may help prevent both trespassing and suicide events.

Data Trends

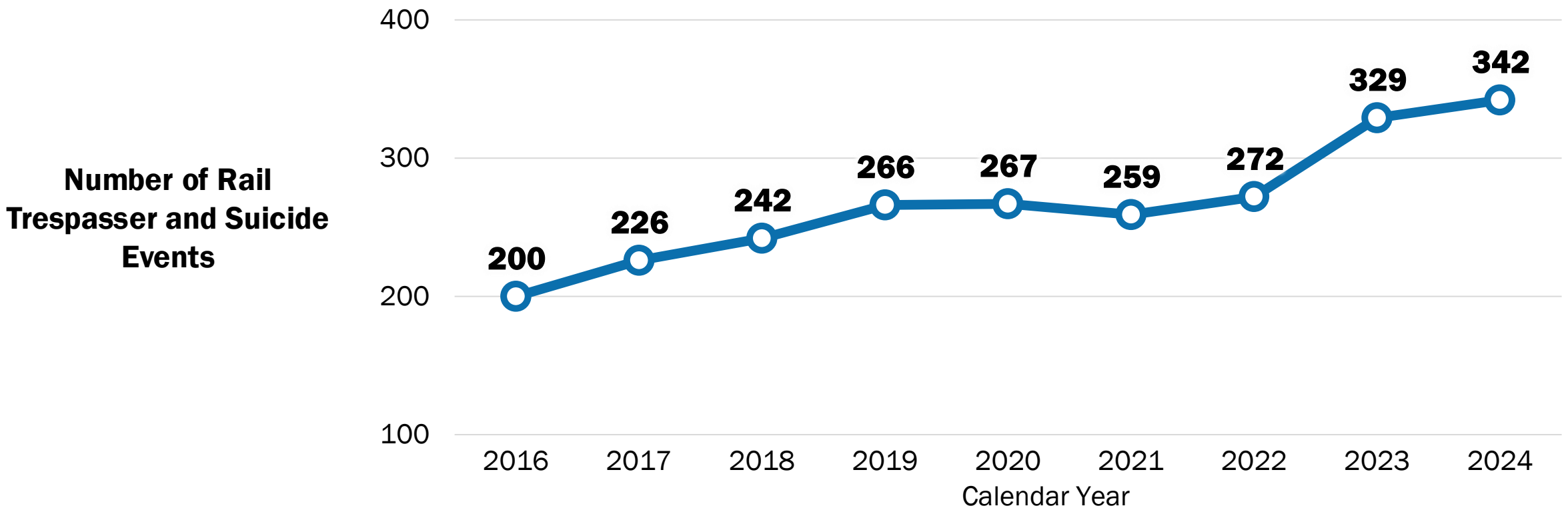
Rail suicide and trespassing safety events, fatalities, and injuries increased from 2016 to 2024.*

EVENTS	FATALITIES	INJURIES
increased	increased	increased
71%	70%	65%

*Data based on raw counts

- **Source:** National Transit Database (NTD)
  2024 data are preliminary.

Rail Trespasser and Suicide Events: Calendar Year 2016–2024



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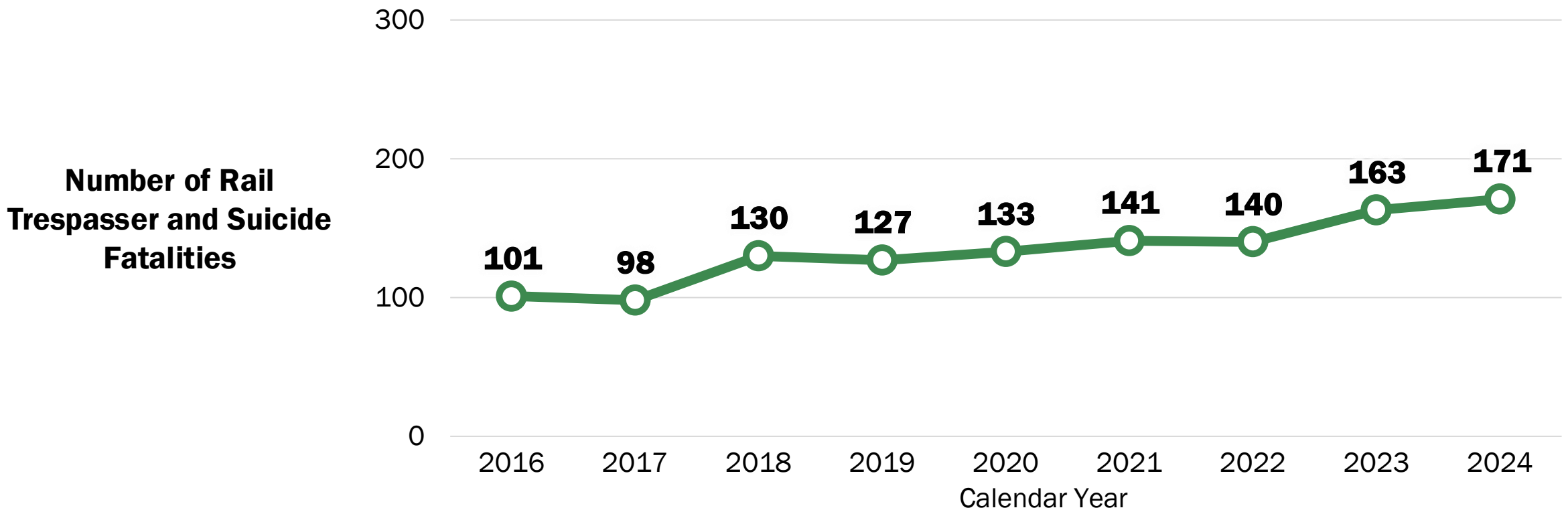
Rail Trespasser and Suicide Fatalities: Calendar Year 2016–2024



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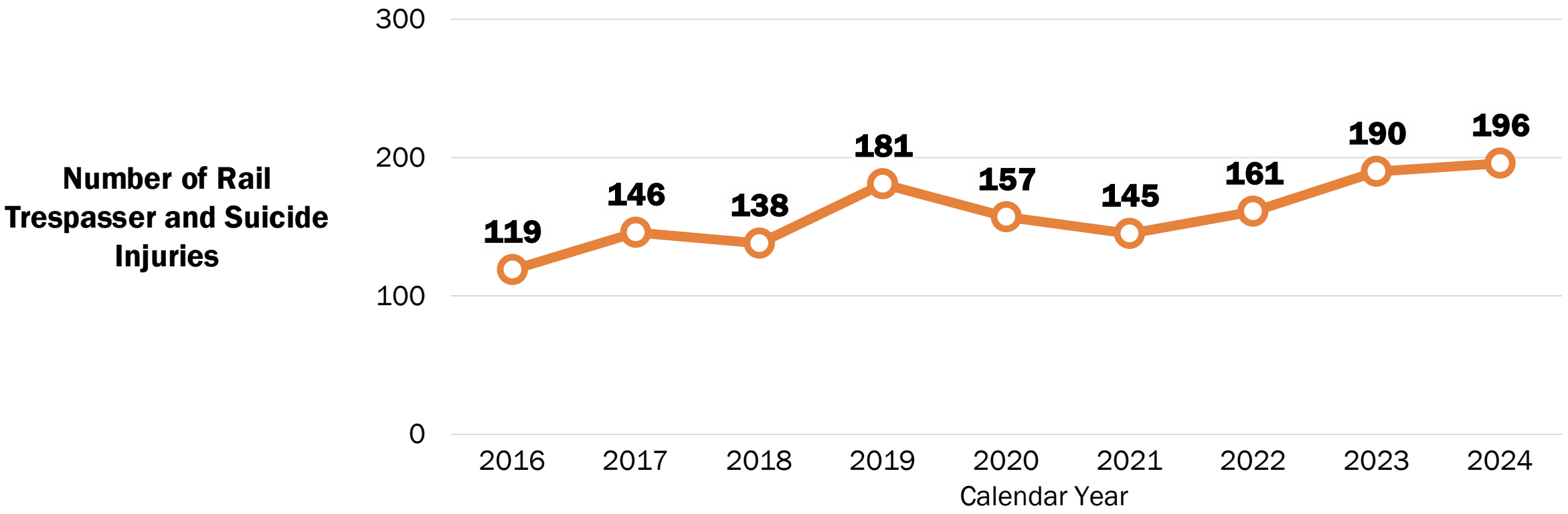
Rail Trespasser and Suicide Injuries: Calendar Years 2016–2024



- **Source:** National Transit Database (NTD)
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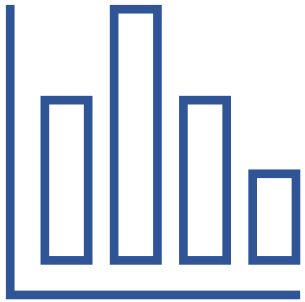
Safety Advisory 25-1: Reducing Rail Trespassing and Suicide Events

- Published to the FTA's website on November 24, 2025
- Upward trend in trespassing and suicide events identified as a concern
- Recommends Rail Transit Agencies (RTAs) use their Safety Management Systems to analyze and address the concern

Trespasser- and suicide-related events are the leading source of fatalities in the transit industry, accounting for **50% of all transit-related fatalities in calendar year 2024.**

Safety Advisory 25-1 Recommendations

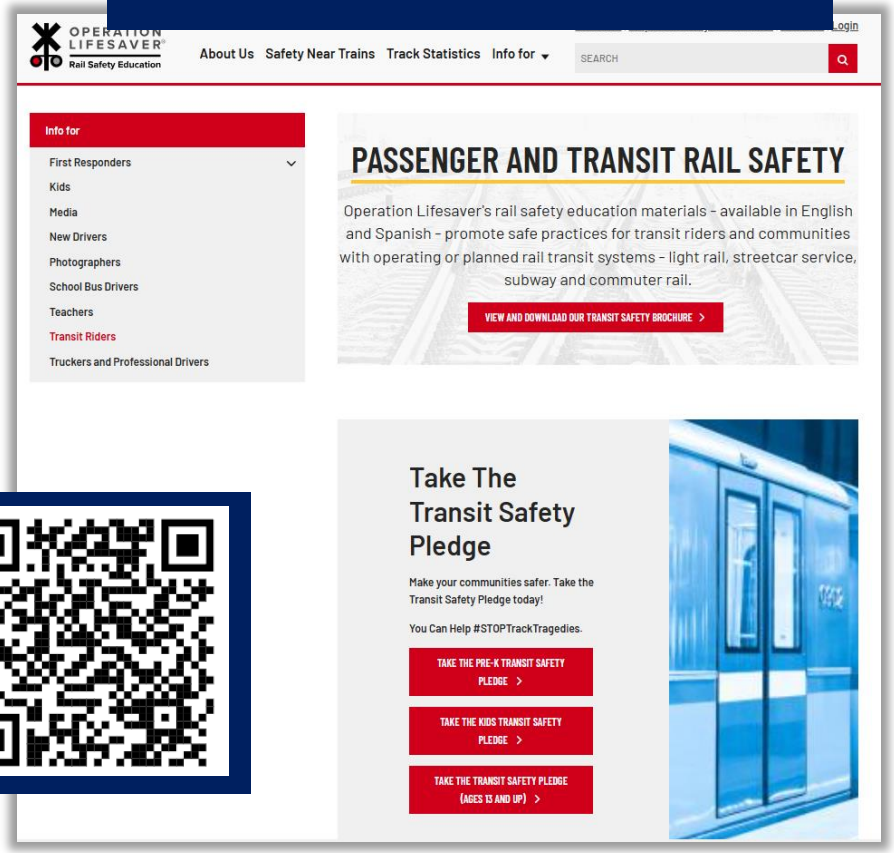
- State Safety Oversight Agencies (SSOAs) direct RTAs in their jurisdiction to:
  - Analyze their safety performance data related to trespass and suicide to identify hazards
  - Conduct a safety risk assessment using the process identified in their Agency Safety Plan
  - Identify mitigations to reduce the safety risk based on that assessment
  - Monitor the performance of the implemented mitigations
- SSOAs collect and submit documentation from RTAs to FTA by May 26, 2026



Trespassing Prevention Safety Campaign

Be Train Safe Video

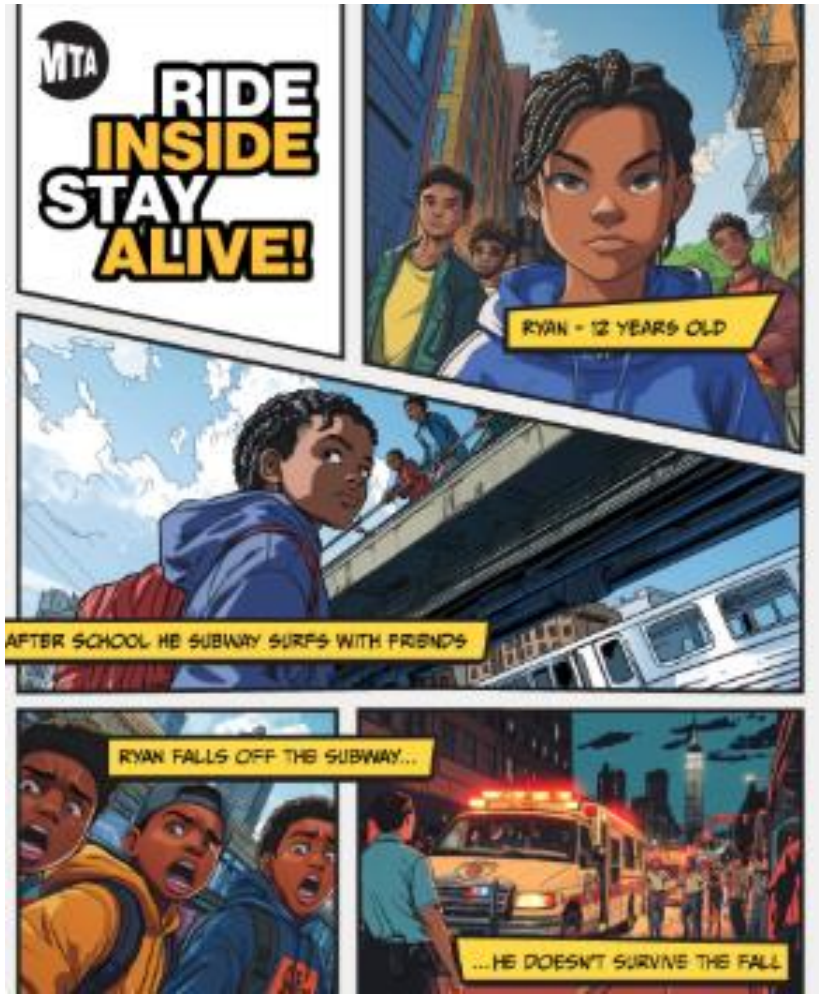
Operation Lifesaver Resources



FTA is raising awareness of the dangers of trespassing, sharing resources to support transit agencies and educating the public on remaining safe around rail transit.

Transit Agency Actions to Mitigate Trespassing and Suicide

- **Public outreach campaigns**
  - Engaging content like videos and comic strips
  - Addressing new trends like subway surfing
- **Community partnerships**
  - Umbrella service agencies
  - Mental health organizations
- **Training**
  - Engaging distressed individuals
  - Accessing resources for help



Resources for Transit Agencies

- FTA's Be Train Safe public outreach campaign
- FTA's Mental Health Resources for Transit Workers
- FTA's Transit Advisory Committee for Safety Recommendations for Innovations in Transit: Trespass and Suicide Prevention
- FTA Standards Development Program: Mitigations for Trespasser and Suicide Fatalities and Injuries
- FTA's Safety Advisory 22-4: Suicide Prevention Signage on Public Transit
- FTA's Safety Advisory 25-1: Reducing Rail Trespassing and Suicide Events
- Operation Lifesaver's Passenger and Transit Rail Safety educational materials and Public Awareness Campaigns

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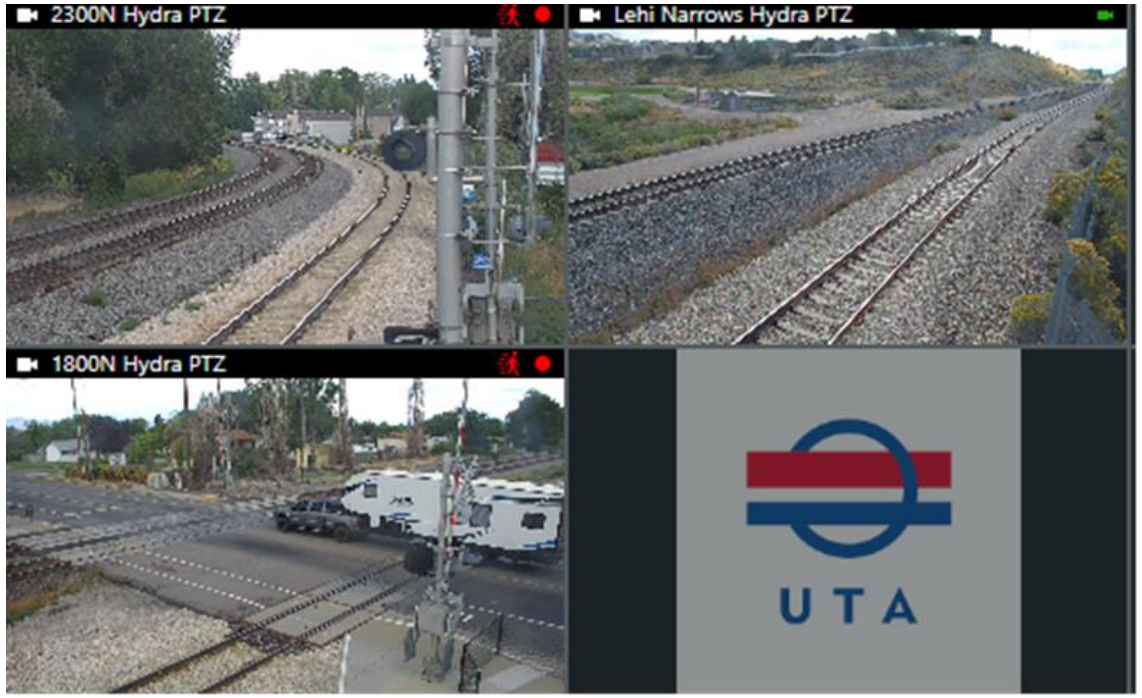
Watching Over Lives

Suicide Prevention through Surveillance Cameras

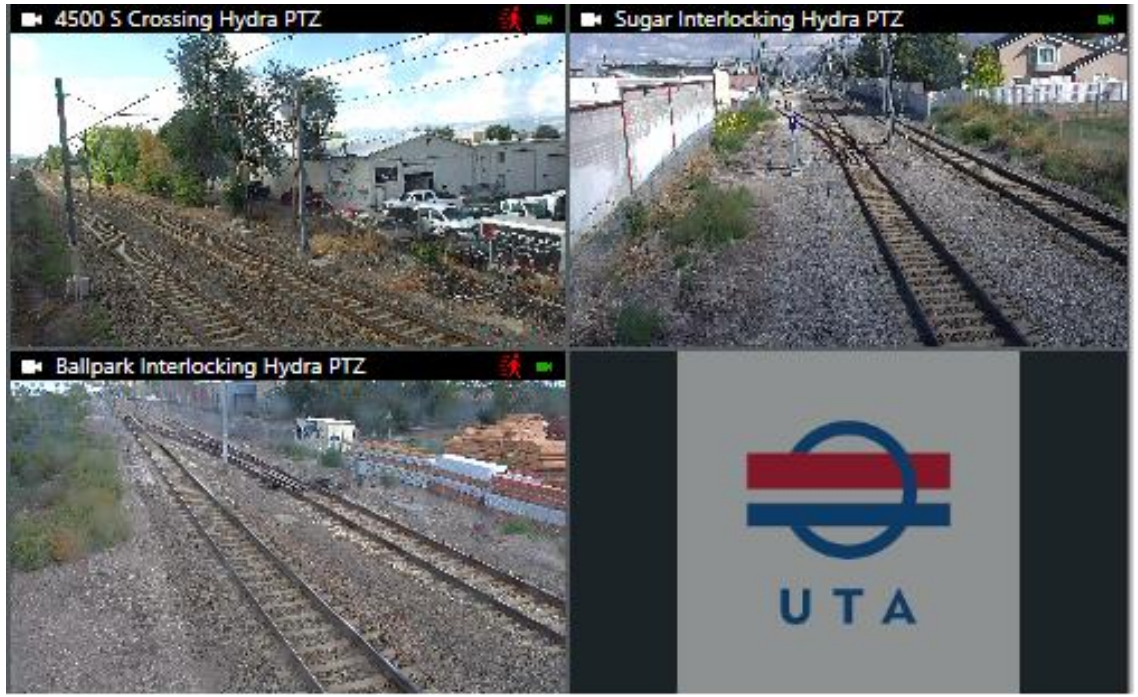
UTA

Pan Tilt Zoom (PTZ) Cameras positioned to watch vulnerable grade crossings

UTA’s 6 Locations with PTZ Cameras

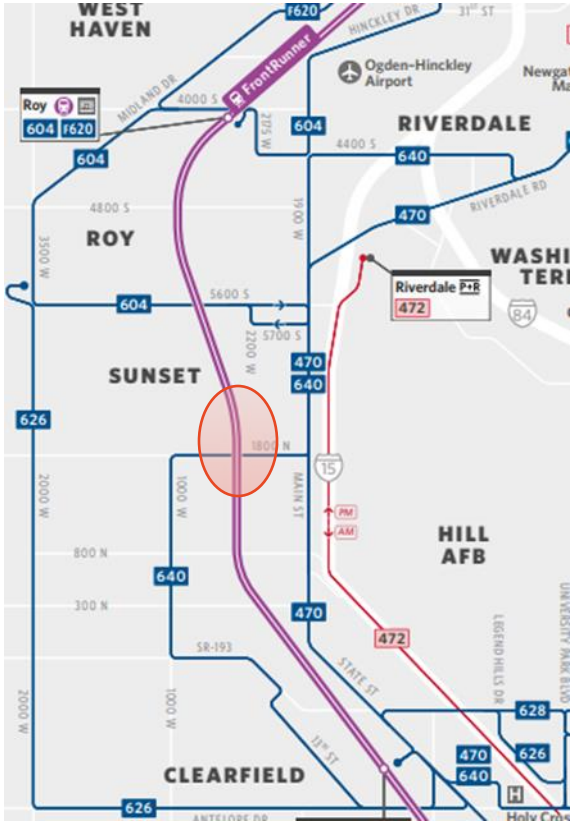


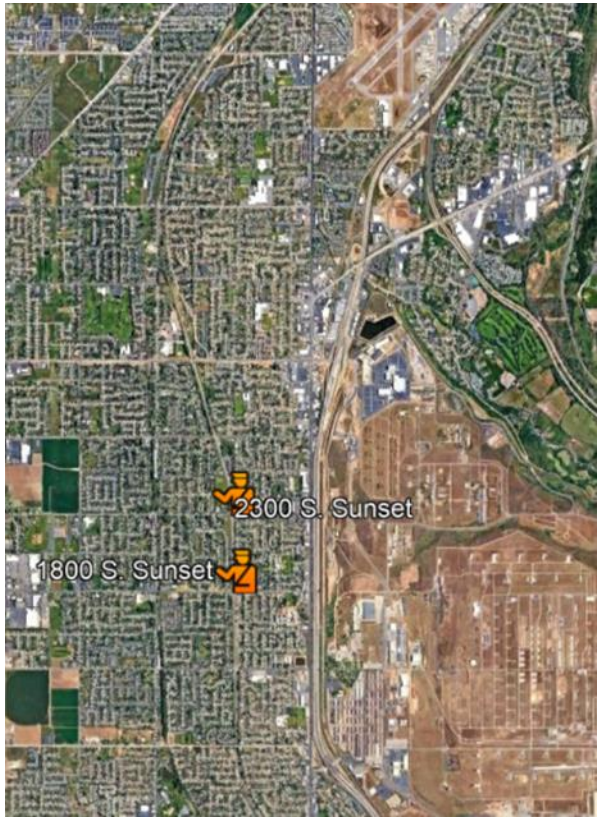
FrontRunner Locations (Commuter Rail)



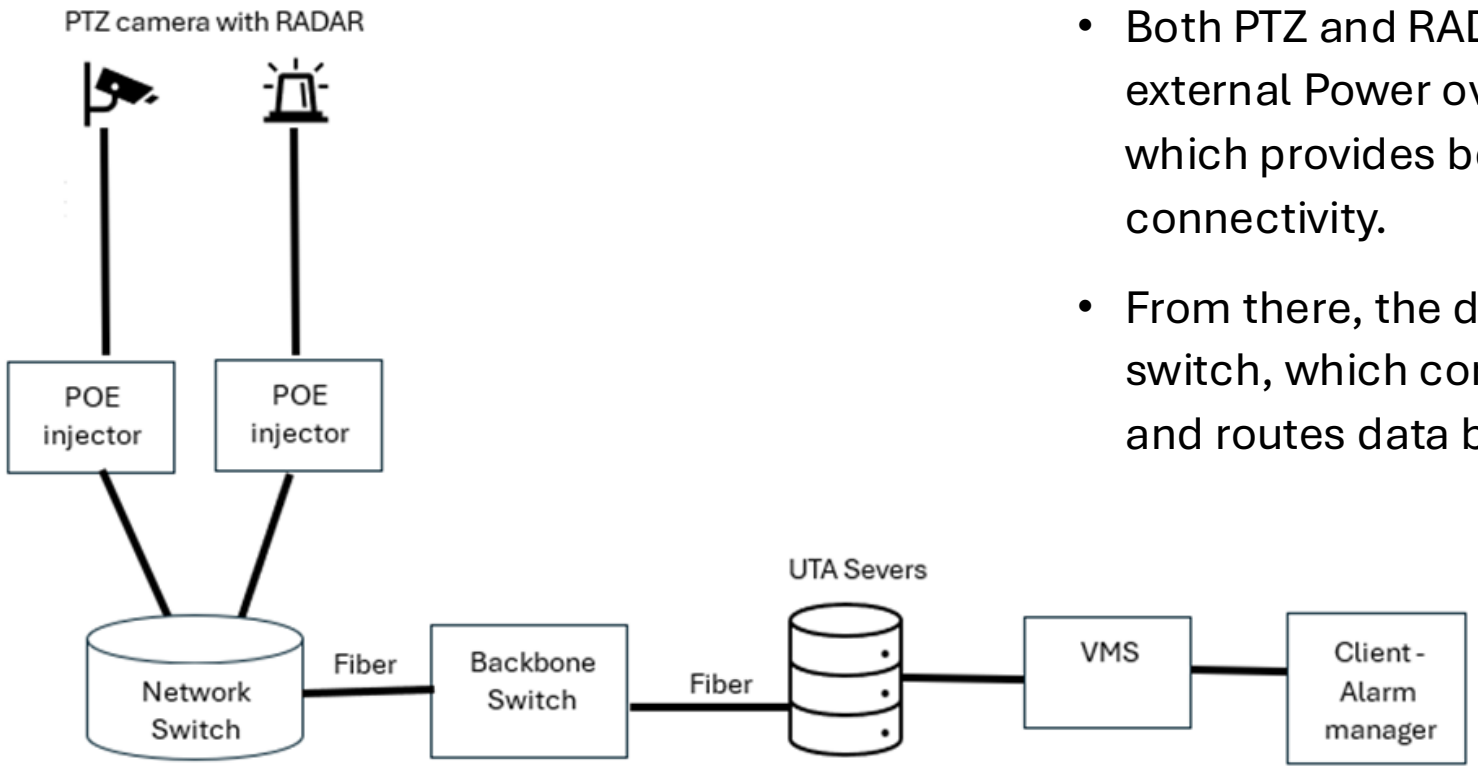
TRAX Locations (Light Rail)

2 of 6 cameras were installed near Sunset, UT known by operators as “Suicide Alley”

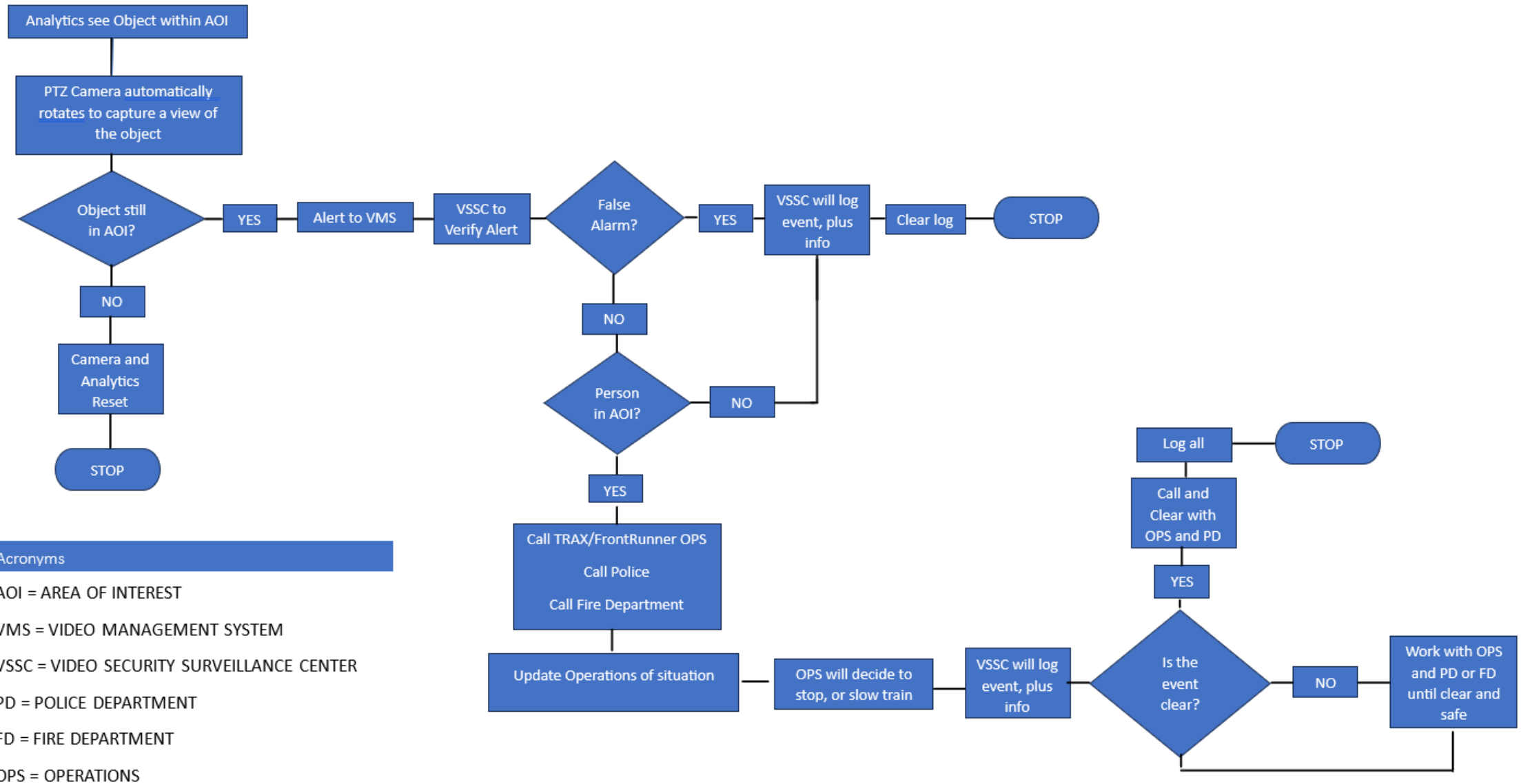




PTZ and RADAR



- Both PTZ and RADAR are connected to an external Power over Ethernet (PoE) device, which provides both power and network connectivity.
- From there, the devices are linked to a network switch, which connects to UTA's infrastructure and routes data back to our central system.



Acronyms

AOI = AREA OF INTEREST

VMS = VIDEO MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

VSSC = VIDEO SECURITY SURVEILLANCE CENTER

PD = POLICE DEPARTMENT

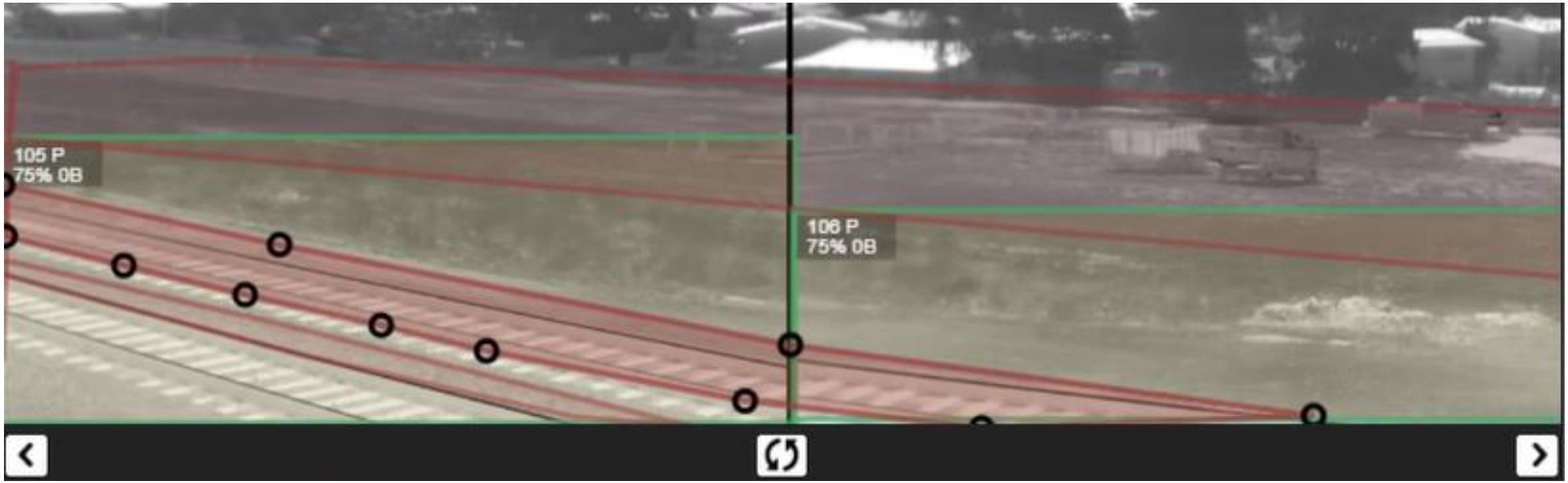
FD = FIRE DEPARTMENT

OPS = OPERATIONS

PTZ = PAN TILT ZOOM

Train Controllers were overwhelmed with False Positives

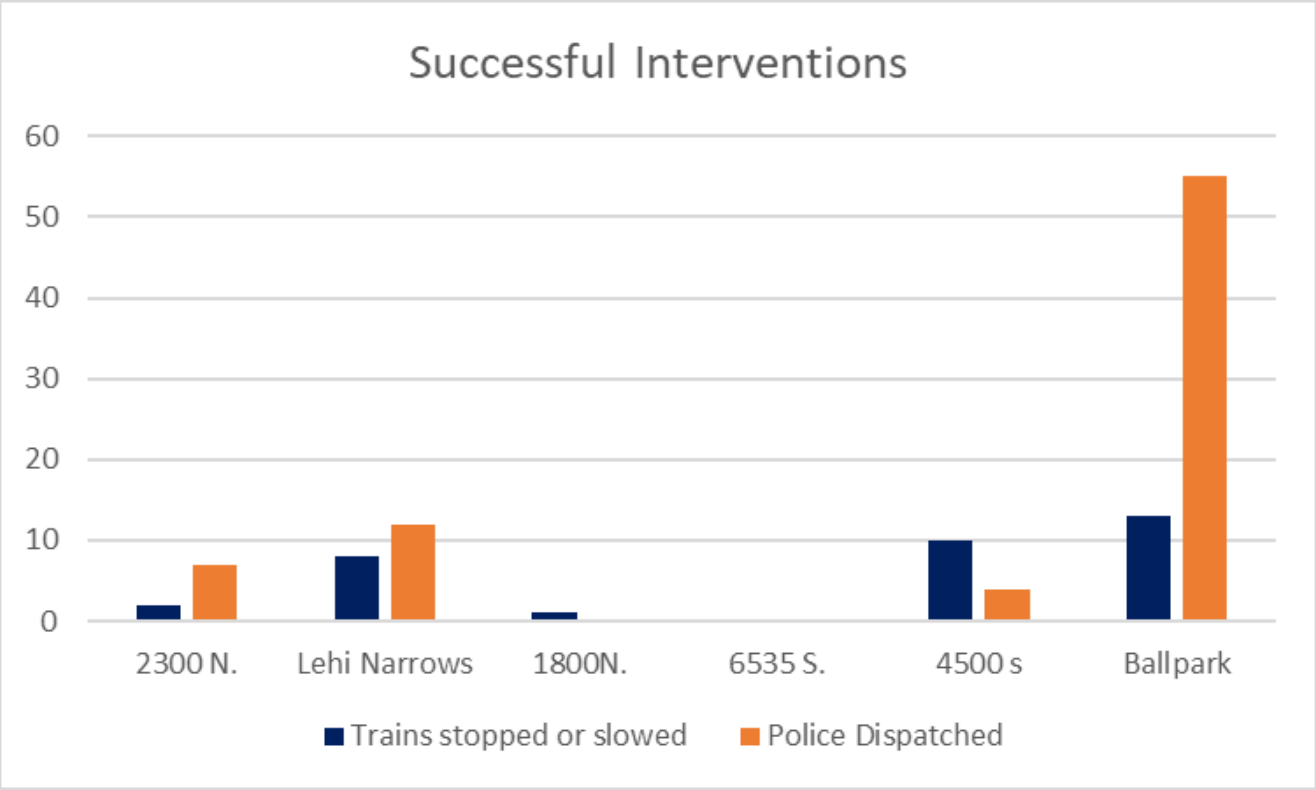
- Solutions:
  - Red areas are excluded from the Area of Interest to reduce false positives
  - Restrict Areas of Interest
  - Needed Dedicated personnel to relay True Positives



Behaviors that indicate imminent suicide attempt

- Loitering near a grade crossing, watching a few trains pass.
- Loitering near a bridge, watching a few trains pass.
- Hiding in bushes or tall grass within the rail right-of-way.
- Walking along the rail.
- Doing any of these behaviors while on the phone.

Successful Interventions



- Every police dispatch is not a suicide prevention. But it has improved our ability to respond to any incident near these cameras.
- Intent is difficult to establish.
- Incident on 11-11-2025 where a veteran was exhibiting behaviors illustrated on previous slide. He was intercepted by UTA police and helped to a hospital where he was linked up with resources to help him.

Return on Investment… Other than the life saved.

- Preventing significant travel delays for passengers.
- Preventing significant trauma for passengers and bystanders
- Prevention of Clean-up, which is both expensive and traumatic for the clean-up crews.
- UTA invests significant resources in caring for the operators involved. Prevention of these incidents could lead to a reduction in operator turnover and a reduction in the need for post incident care.
- Preventing damage to UTA's image of public safety.

One of my specialists will
pull it up and look at it,

Trespass & Suicide Prevention

Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority
December 11, 2025

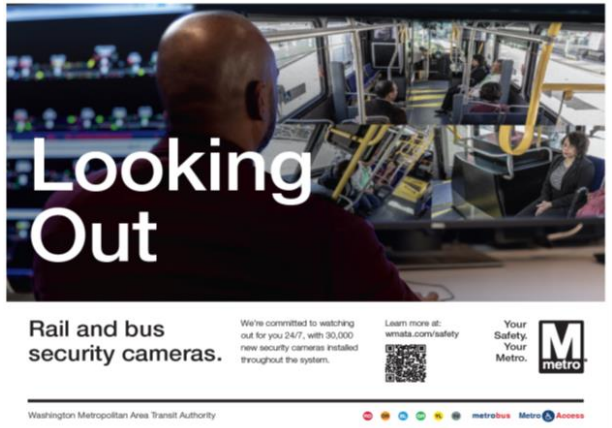
Problem-Oriented Policing

Strategies

- **Virtual Patrols** –
  - Video Operations
  - Police 1- (Lieutenant)
  - Real Time Crime Center (RTCC)
- **Comfort Dog** (Emotional Support Animal)
- **Tracking Dogs** (Non-Bite Apprehension)
- **FBI Crisis Negotiator** (Hostage Negotiator)
- **Signage in Garages & Roadway**
- **Community Organization Partnership** across the DMV (Schools, Safe Passage, DDOT)

Enforcement

- Point of Entry – Fare Enforcement
- Juvenile Truancy
- Zero Tolerance



High-Visibility Deployment and Partnerships

Local Police Agencies	
MPD	Anacostia, Fort Totten, Gallery Place, Metro Center, and Union Station
Alexandria	Potomac Yard, Eisenhower Ave and King St/Old Town
Cheverly	Cheverly
Greenbelt	Greenbelt
Hyattsville	Hyattsville
MWAA	Reagan National and Washington Dulles

- **High-visibility deployment** in five parking garages
  - Branch Avenue, Downtown Largo, New Carrollton, Southern Ave, and Suitland
- **Allied Special Police Officer Deployment**
  - 26 rail stations
  - patrolled over 287,200 trains during CY2024

Crisis Intervention Team

- Responds to individuals experiencing mental health crises, housing insecurity, and those in need of additional resources.
- Responds to critical incidents for Employees and Patrons.
- Increased number of engagements year-over-year: CY2025 will exceed CY2024 interventions.
- Grown the team to include civilian specialists and sworn officers.
- Increased presence on midnight shifts.

Crisis Intervention Comparative View (CY2023 to CY2025 YTD)			
Interaction Type	**2023**	**2024**	**2025 (Jan – Nov)**
Outreach/Engagement	9462	24,816	30,921
CIT Activities			
Trains Boarded	1,611	15,487	16,039
Buses Boarded	875	2,449	3,283
Station Platforms Walked	900	5,031	6,758

Suicide Prevention Task Force

Task Force Purpose

- Bring together Safety, Occupational Health & Wellness, Operations, Metro Transit Police, Human Capital, Communications, Engineering, and others to identify best practices and develop authority-wide suicide-prevention strategies.
- Reduce suicide attempts, reduce trauma to employees, and shift Metro culture toward proactive mental-health awareness.

Our Work

- Reviewed national data, Metro incident trends, and high-risk locations.
- Stood up four subcommittees:
  - Training, Standard Operating Procedures Review, Resilience Building, and Awareness/Outreach.
- Consulted industry leaders (FTA, Volpe Center, Willis Towers Watson) and applied their best-practice toolkits.

Task Force Outcomes

Training Recommendations:

- Mental Health First Aid Training – All Metro Transit Police Officers, CIT Members, Employee Assistance Program Counselors are trained every 3 years
- Additional Trainings – development of a mandatory Computer Based Training for Supervisors, to educate on resources to support employees during traumatic events.

Procedural Improvements:

- Add new procedure for employee support after traumatic incidents, including mandatory offering of Employee Assistance Program referral and documented follow-up.

Awareness & Public Messaging:

- Installed 1,500+ updated 988 signs, digital campaigns, and coordinated messaging with station staff.

Data-Driven Prevention:

- Identified hotspots and operational insights (age trends, station patterns, incident timing).

Protecting and Supporting Employees

Internal Supports

Employee Assistance Program:

- Metro has an internal dedicated program focused on employee mental health and well-being, with special attention to traumatic incident response.
- Outreach, counseling, support groups, transitional programs focused on returning to work after traumatic events.

Workers' Compensation:

- Coordination and partnership between Workers' Compensation and our Occupational Health and Wellness Department, specifically Employee Assistance Program.

Why this matters

- Employees are the human side of operational safety – procedures are only as strong as the people carrying them out.
- Supporting staff well-being improves safety, strengthens organizational resilience, and reduces long-term trauma-related impacts.

Questions?

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BRIEF WEBINAR SURVEY: WE VALUE YOUR FEEDBACK