



## Transit Safety and Oversight Spotlight

Federal Transit Administration  
Office of Transit Safety and Oversight

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## Message from the Associate Administrator

Dear Transit Colleagues,

In April, personnel from all 31 State Safety Oversight (SSO) Agencies across the country will gather in Baltimore, Maryland to participate in the FTA's annual SSO Program Managers' Training Workshop. We have an excellent program lined up this year.

The workshop will focus on the application and certification process for states to demonstrate compliance with the [SSO final rule](#) by April 15,

2019. By law, the FTA is required to certify whether each SSO Program meets Federal requirements for safety oversight of rail transit agencies, and the workshop provides a face-to-face opportunity for us to help SSO personnel navigate this process. For a summary of the SSO Program certification process and a list of affected states, please refer to our [fact sheet](#).

The SSO community, FTA staff, and transit agency officials also will lead discussions on topics such as the SSO grant cycle, hazard management, roadway worker protection, corrective action plans, engineering and construction, and safety hazard identification. We will be joined by guest speakers from the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) to discuss the NTSB's accident investigation process and the Transportation Security Administration to address rail transit security. Additionally, the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) will host a day-long onsite visit.

I'm looking forward to the exchange of ideas between the organizations represented at this year's workshop, and seeing how states apply what they learn to improve the safety of their rail transit systems for workers and riders.

Sincerely,

Thomas Littleton, Ph.D.



An MTA light rail train at the University of Baltimore Station in Maryland. Photo courtesy of Flickr user [jpellen](#) under a [Creative Commons license](#).

## Upcoming Training

The FTA sponsors several safety training courses, including those listed below. Refer to the FTA's website for the [full list](#) of safety training courses offered in FY 2017.

The FTA's training website is unavailable until further notice, but you may contact [Radonna Snider](#) at the FTA-sponsored [Transportation Safety Institute \(TSI\)](#) at (405) 954-4799 for safety training registration and courses.

### eLearning Self-Paced Online Courses

Curbing Transit Employee Distracted Driving	Go to tsi.dot.gov
Fatigue and Sleep Apnea Awareness for Transit Employees	Go to tsi.dot.gov
SMS Awareness	Go to tsi.dot.gov

### General Transit Safety Courses

SMS Principles for Transit	Everett, WA	April 19-21
Transit Safety and Security Audit Course	Kansas City, MO	April 26-28
SMS Safety Assurance	Virtual-Live Training	April 27
SMS Principles for Transit	Portland, OR	May 3-5
Transit Industrial Safety Management	Knoxville, TN	May 8-12
Substance Abuse Management and Program Compliance	Owensboro, KY	May 9-11
Reasonable Suspicion and Post-Accident Testing Determination Seminar	Owensboro, KY	May 12
Transit Supervisor Certification Course	Baltimore, MD	May 22-26
SMS Safety Assurance	Virtual-Live Training	May 23
SMS Principles for Transit	San Jose, CA	June 5-7
SMS Safety Assurance	Virtual-Live Training	June 6
Substance Abuse Management and Program Compliance	Pierre, SD	June 6-8
Reasonable Suspicion and Post-Accident Testing Determination Seminar	Pierre, SD	June 9
SMS Principles for Transit	Landover, MD	June 14-16
SMS Principles for Transit	Clemson, SC	June 26-28

### Rail Transit Courses

Transit Rail System Safety	Philadelphia, PA	May 1-5
Advanced Rail Accident Investigation	Landover, MD	May 15-19
Transit Rail Incident Investigation	Baltimore, MD	June 5-9
Transit Rail System Safety	Dallas, TX	June 19-23

Training, cont. from pg. 2

Bus Transit Courses		
Fundamentals of Bus Collision Investigation	West Palm Beach, FL	April 24-28
Fundamentals of Bus Collision Investigation	Oceanside, CA	May 8-12
Transit Bus System Safety	Cleveland, OH	May 9-12
Instructors Course for Transit Trainers	Charleston, SC	May 22-26
Fundamentals of Bus Collision Investigation	Chicago, IL	June 5-9
Transit Bus System Safety	Boston, MA	June 5-9
Transit Bus System Safety	Seattle, WA	June 12-16
Advanced Problems in Bus Collision Investigation	St. Petersburg, FL	June 19-23
Instructors Course for Transit Trainers	Orange, CA	June 26-30

Transit Crime Prevention and Emergency Management Courses		
Transit System Security	Arlington, VA	April 24-28
Effectively Managing Transit Emergencies	Dallas, TX	April 25-28
Transit System Security	Miami, FL	May 1-5
Effectively Managing Transit Emergencies	Atlanta, GA	May 16-19
Effectively Managing Transit Emergencies	Landover, MD	May 22-25
Transit System Security	Boston, MA	May 22-26
Effectively Managing Transit Emergencies	San Francisco, CA	June 20-23

## Upcoming Procurement System Review and Financial Management Oversight Review Workshops

The FTA is hosting the following Procurement System Review (PSR) and Financial Management Oversight (FMO) Review workshops. Additionally, workshops in Chicago, IL; Fort Worth, TX; and Seattle, WA have already occurred. Please contact FTA's [Sandra McCrea](#) with questions.

Denver, CO	April 18-19	PSR only
Atlanta, GA	April 18-21	PSR and FMO
San Francisco, CA	April 24-27	PSR and FMO
Philadelphia, PA	May 1-2	PSR only
Boston, MA	May 8-11	PSR and FMO
Saratoga Springs, NY	May 9-12	PSR and FMO
Kansas City, MO	May 16-17	PSR and FMO

## Deputy's Corner

### Oversight Review Contractors and FTA Staff Gather for Annual Oversight Meeting

*Kimberly Burtch, Acting Deputy Associate Administrator for Transit Safety and Oversight*

Last month, I had the opportunity to participate in the FTA's Annual Oversight Meeting that took place in Washington, DC, and was attended by FTA staff and oversight review contractors. Together with the Deputy Associate Administrators from other FTA program offices, we provided an overview of FTA headquarters' responsibilities. Our goal was to help FTA's regional staff and oversight review contractors better understand the linkages between headquarters, regional offices, and the responsibilities of each when it comes to program oversight. Our panel was just one component of a five-day meeting focusing on evaluating and improving FTA's oversight review processes and programs.

One of the opening sessions, "The Role of Program Oversight," helped set the framework for subsequent discussion on oversight. By probing different points of view, from FTA headquarter and regional offices to review contractors, the session helped participants develop a common understanding of what program oversight is, what it is not, and what, fundamentally, it accomplishes by reviewing grantee compliance with Federal grant requirements. While there was general agreement that FTA's oversight reviews provide an opportunity to strengthen grantees and promote compliance, there were differences of opinion on how grantees perceive FTA's oversight. Some felt that grantees view the process as burdensome, an audit, or means to "get them into trouble." However, several of the review contractors noted that grantees often express appreciation for the review and recognize its value to them. The session ended by stressing the importance of collaboration and relationship-building with grantees to foster compliance.

Other topics included review finding data, trends, and management; quality assurance; and how to best provide support to grantees through workshops, technical assistance, and larger efforts like the FTA's temporary and direct safety oversight of the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority Metrorail system.

I enjoyed seeing how FTA staff and contractors gather to support and strengthen our oversight review programs, and I look forward to seeing participants put into practice what they learned over the course of the next year.



Kimberly Burtch, Acting  
Deputy Associate  
Administrator



Scott Giering, Acting Director, Office of Program Oversight, moderates a discussion on the role of program oversight at the Annual Oversight Meeting on March 7, 2017



## Employee Safety Reporting: Ongoing Pilot Demonstration Efforts to Develop Best Practices

The FTA is partnering with the [Volpe Center](#) to embark on a multi-year safety reporting program research effort to identify best practices for implementing safety reporting systems at transit agencies, including both risk-based and incident-based employee reporting approaches. Multiple agencies will participate in the research, providing an opportunity to test several reporting approaches. The effort is still in its early stages, but eventually will yield guidance documents and other assistance for transit agencies to use when implementing their own programs.

In the meantime, the aviation industry and others who have successfully implemented proactive risk-based employee safety reporting in their organizations have shared observations about what makes a reporting system work. Many of those practices are applicable to transit:

**Train employees to identify reportable hazards:** Ensure employees know what types of safety concerns or issues they should look for and how they should communicate them. A reporting system will be of little use if employees are unsure what types of events to report or how to report them.

**Ensure the reporting system is easy for employees to use:** If the system is time-consuming, complex, or difficult to access, then employees are less likely to use it.

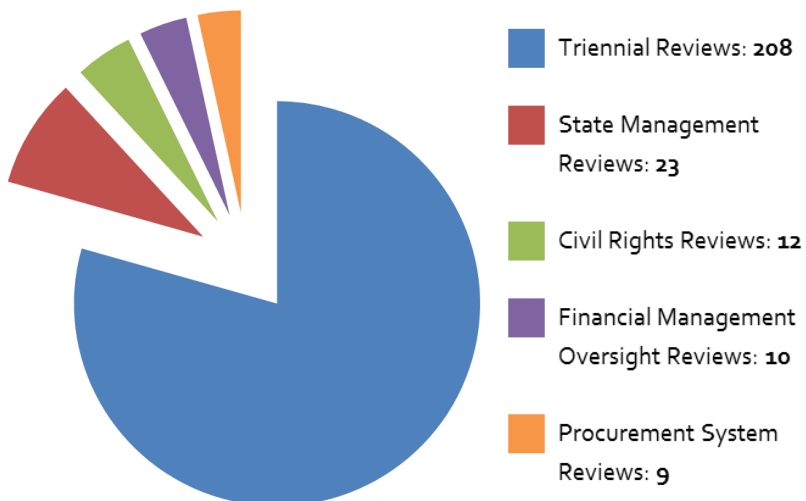
**Demonstrate that reporting is valued:** Managers should take time to evaluate each report and follow up with timely feedback to show what actions were taken as a result of the report.

**Clearly identify actions that will—and will not—lead to discipline:** Employees may be concerned about the consequences of filing a report. A reporting program should clearly outline those actions that will lead to discipline (such as willful misconduct, illegal activity, or drug and alcohol impairment) and those which will not (human error). Also, be consistent in applying those actions. Set and follow clear guidelines for addressing unacceptable behavior.

The FTA will share best practices and guidance about safety reporting systems, including employee safety reporting, as the research effort advances and as we continue to guide risk-based safety management implementation across the transit industry. If you have questions, please contact FTA's [Lynn Spencer](#), Director, Office of System Safety.

Please see the corrected version of our [March 2017 article](#) on employee safety reporting, which clarifies the difference between incident- and risk-based reporting.

## Program Oversight Stat of the Month: Reviews Planned for FY17



Breakdown of FTA's planned oversight reviews by type for FY17

In Federal fiscal year (FY) 2017, the FTA's Office of Program Oversight will conduct more than 250 reviews. Triennial Reviews and State Management Reviews, which assess compliance across a broad range of topics, comprise 88 percent of FY17 reviews. The remaining 12 percent are composed of Procurement System Reviews, Financial Management Oversight Reviews, and various civil rights reviews including Americans with Disabilities Act paratransit and lifts, Disadvantaged Business Enterprise, and Title VI. For more information about reviews, contact FTA's [Nathan Smedley](#).

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## Raise your Awareness of Transit Operator Fatigue Issues during Sleep Awareness Week, April 23-29

Transit operator fatigue is a critical safety issue that can impact transit workers and riders alike. In fact, it's a concern that's prevalent across the transportation industry—"Reduction of fatigue-related accidents" appears yet again on this year's [National Transportation Safety Board's Most Wanted List](#). One particular sleep disorder, sleep apnea, is believed to contribute to many fatigue-related accidents, and according to the American Sleep Apnea Association, may affect as many as 22 million Americans, with approximately 80 percent of those individuals undiagnosed.

The [National Sleep Foundation](#) has designated the week of April 23 "Sleep Awareness Week" to educate the public about the importance of sleep health. In recognition of the week, here are a few FTA resources and projects that address fatigue and sleep disorders in the transit industry:

- The FTA is working with the University of South Florida's Center for Urban Transit Research (CUTR) on a program to develop new or modify existing transit safety standards. Current efforts are focused on fitness for duty and fatigue management standards, including testing for sleep disorders, medical examination certificates, and training. The FTA and CUTR will determine where standards are lacking, where existing standards are inadequate, and where standards or other guidelines should be developed to address fatigue. Researchers expect to deliver a final report on the project by July 31, 2017.
- A 50-minute, online course called "Fatigue and Sleep Apnea Awareness for Transit Employees" is available through the [Transportation Safety Institute](#) in conjunction with the FTA. The course is designed to inform and guide transit operators and systems regarding the identification and treatment of individuals at high risk for obstructive sleep apnea and other sleep disorders, as well as general concepts about sleep and fatigue.
- The FTA asked its Transit Advisory Committee for Safety (TRACS) to develop recommendations for establishing a fatigue management program for bus and rail transit. The 2015 report, [Establishing a Fatigue Management Program for the Bus and Rail Transit Industry](#), is available on the FTA's website.

If you have questions or comments, please email [FTASafetyStakeholder@dot.gov](mailto:FTASafetyStakeholder@dot.gov). To anonymously screen yourself for sleep disorders, please visit the [Anonymous Sleep Disorders Screening Tool](#).

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## Reminder: State Safety Oversight Quarterly Call is May 17



The next State Safety Oversight (SSO) Quarterly Call is scheduled for Wednesday, May 17, 2017. Participants will receive an email with additional details.

SSO Quarterly Calls are also scheduled for August 16 and November 15.

If you have questions, please contact your FTA SSO Program Manager.

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## TSO Profile

*Q&A with Paulina Orchard, SMS Implementation Pilot Program Manager and Bus Safety Program Manager*



Paulina Orchard, SMS Implementation Pilot Manager and Bus Safety Program Manager

**How would you explain your job to someone you've never met**

**before?** I manage FTA's efforts to learn, from real-world experience, how best to implement a Safety Management System (SMS) at different types of transit agencies. I also develop technical assistance tools that share our lessons learned about SMS implementation with the transit industry.

**What were you doing prior to this role?** I coordinated risk-informed strategy development projects at the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. I learned a lot about what it takes to effectively manage large-scale, multi-year initiatives like SMS implementation, and the importance of bringing individuals together from across an organization to make significant organizational change successful.

**What are some current projects or initiatives you or your team are working on?** The SMS Implementation Pilot Program is an opportunity for the FTA to work with a variety of transit agencies, from a large multi-modal agency to a small rural one, to learn best practices for implementing an SMS at different

types of transit agencies. The Bus Safety Program, which I recently started managing, provides technical assistance to bus transit agencies on safety and safety management.

**How do you work with people outside of the FTA? How would you like to be working with them in the future?** I work closely with transit agencies through the SMS Implementation Pilot Program, leading workshops and assisting with SMS implementation efforts. I also engage with industry stakeholders at meetings and conferences and respond to inquiries from members of the public about bus safety.

In the future, the FTA will roll out guidance documents, templates, and other technical assistance that we're developing based on what we are learning through the SMS Implementation Pilot Program. I look forward to receiving feedback from the transit industry about these tools and documents.

**What is something you wish people knew about FTA or TSO?** TSO values the industry's views and would like to know what types of SMS related products you want and need from us. We would also appreciate your feedback about our guidance documents, technical assistance tools, and presentations. In particular, we are interested in your input on whether these products are useful, how they are used, and what additional guidance you'd like to see from us in the future. Your feedback will help us determine useful products to develop to address your needs. You can reach out to us through the [Contact Us feature on FTA's website](#) or at [FTASafetyStakeholder@dot.gov](mailto:FTASafetyStakeholder@dot.gov).



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