



Transit Safety and Oversight Spotlight

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Office of Transit Safety and Oversight

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INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

FTA Receives Feedback on Transit Worker Assault Issue	2
Deputy's Corner: Stay in the Know—Subscribe to FTA Updates through GovDelivery	2
TSO Profile: Christopher Der	3-4
Upcoming Training	5
Upcoming Events	5
Reminder: TRACS Meeting	5
SMS Expands SMS Implementation Pilot	6

Note from the Associate Administrator

Dear Transit Colleagues,

Last month, I traveled to Atlanta, Georgia, where I saw firsthand many of the ongoing transit projects and programs in FTA's [Region IV](#). I also observed how the successful collaboration between the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) (who serves as Georgia's State Safety Oversight Agency (SSOA)), FTA's regional office, and our team at FTA headquarters has helped move forward our safety program across the region.



MARTA trains in Atlanta, GA (photo courtesy of MARTA)

I had a fantastic meeting with Nancy Cobb and Carol Comer of GDOT, whose enthusiasm and eagerness to promote safety is evident in their work. We discussed their questions about the new [State Safety Oversight Rule \(49 CFR Part 674\)](#) and how their state will implement the rule to strengthen their safety oversight capabilities.

I also visited the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA) where we had a good discussion about the value of employee reporting systems. We talked about how other organizations have implemented effective employee or close call reporting, which can identify previously unknown safety problems and help mitigate safety risks through the implementation of new equipment, technology, policies and procedures, or other means.

While touring Atlanta's streetcar operations and maintenance facility, I saw how their personnel are working on creative solutions to the challenges of operating a streetcar in mixed traffic. These new, impressive-looking streetcars complement the existing train and bus options that serve Atlanta's daily commuters.

It was an engaging and productive visit and I hope to visit other FTA regions and their nearby transit agencies soon.

This month marks the sixth issue of the Transit Safety and Oversight Spotlight newsletter and we need your feedback. Whether you're a regular reader of the newsletter or have never looked at it before today, please take a few minutes to complete a [brief survey](#) by November 30 and tell us what topics you'd like to learn about. We want to be sure that the information we're providing is timely and useful.

Sincerely,
Thomas Littleton, PhD

FTA Receives Industry Feedback on Transit Worker Assault Issue

Earlier this summer, the FTA launched a [National Online Dialogue on Transit Worker Assault](#) (Dialogue). The Dialogue provided a publicly-accessible platform from which industry leaders, transit workers, and concerned citizens could share valuable ideas on how the FTA and transit agencies can prevent and mitigate transit worker assault.

When the Dialogue concluded on August 31, more than 130 participants had contributed to the Dialogue. While some contributions reflected individual views, others represented the shared concerns of entire organizations or transit agencies.

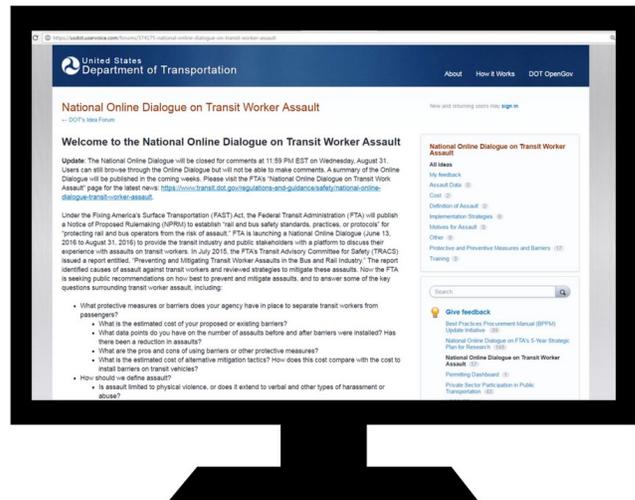
Of the nearly 60 ideas that addressed transit worker safety concerns and proposed mitigations, one topic stood out above all others: passenger fare disputes.

The most widely-supported idea in the Dialogue concerned enhancing fare policy, enforcing fare evasion, and improving fare enforcement. Participants also supported related topics including automated fare collection and removing the burden of fare enforcement from the drivers.

The Dialogue feedback on passenger fare disputes also supports the findings of a 2011 [FTA-sponsored survey](#) in which 67 percent of respondents cited fare issues as a contributing factor to operator assault. Similarly, a 2015 Transit Advisory Committee for Safety (TRACS) [report](#) examining how to prevent and mitigate transit worker assault referenced data from the National Transit Database that found “Most assaults against bus operators occur during fare disputes.”

Dialogue users also remarked about the need for fully-functional, modern technology such as radios, protective barriers, and video surveillance equipment to ensure the safety of transit workers. Other proposed mitigations included de-escalation training for transit workers, passenger education campaigns, legal remedies, and increased police presence or a dedicated transit police force.

The Dialogue captured advice and ideas that will inform a comprehensive notice of proposed rulemaking (NPRM) expected to be issued in early 2017 to address assaults on transit workers. Be on the lookout for continued updates on the NPRM’s progress and a future invitation to provide feedback during the NPRM’s notice and comment period. For more information, contact FTA’s [Adrienne Malasky](#).



Deputy's Corner

Stay in the Know—Subscribe to FTA Updates through GovDelivery

Want to be first to receive safety and program oversight news as well as other important updates from the FTA? Visit [GovDelivery](#) and sign up to receive news tailored to your interests. Topics include FTA’s Drug and Alcohol Program, State Safety Oversight Program, grants and financing, and legislation, just to name a few. You can also sign up to receive the TSO Spotlight newsletter as soon as it’s published each month—just check the “TSO-Newsletter” box under “Safety.” We want you to be informed and stay up to date!



Angela Dluger, Deputy Associate Administrator

TSO Profile

Q&A with Christopher Der, Transportation Program Analyst, Office of Program Oversight



Christopher Der, Transportation Program Analyst

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

When public transportation agencies request Federal financial assistance, they are subject to program oversight reviews to make sure they are good stewards of that money. The Office of Program Oversight administers those reviews through our Triennial, State Management, Procurement System, and Financial Management Oversight review programs.

There is a lot of data that comes out of reviews concerning grantees' compliance with federal requirements. I monitor that data and discover and analyze compliance trends that originate from these reviews. I also organize and present data in different ways so we can see how grantees are performing in various review areas.

I am also the system owner for our oversight tracking database, OTrak. I lead system development, so I look at what the database can do, what it cannot do yet, and what system users want it to do. I bring all of that together so we can push out updates that make the system easier to use.

What were you doing prior to this role? I was a Transit Planner with Central Maryland Regional Transit. I conducted performance management of their operations contractor, and I developed routes and schedules. Prior to that,

I was a transit planning fellow at the Potomac and Rappahannock Transportation Commission in Northern Virginia, where I analyzed bus overcrowding, fare box usage, and bus stop placement and usage data.

What are some current projects or initiatives you or your team are working on? I analyze and evaluate the progression of program oversight reviews from pre-site visit work through site visits and report issuance. This analysis also shows how deficiency finding close-outs are progressing—how many deficiency findings are open and unresolved and how timely findings are closed.

Our team's latest project is to develop new performance indicators. We are looking at trends—good and bad—in how often findings of deficiency occur in two consecutive reviews in our two largest grantee oversight review programs, the Triennial Reviews and State Management Reviews. This will let us see how well FTA is doing at helping grantees comply with federal requirements.

How do you work with people outside of the FTA? We have contractors who work as system developers and engineers for OTrak, and I work with them to choose the correct types of updates to make at the right time of year so that the system works as efficiently as possible. By continuously improving the system, we can conduct more thorough analyses of oversight review data, which helps us improve our technical assistance offerings to grantees, and we increase the transparency of our review programs for the industry.

What is something you wish people knew about FTA or TSO? Every day is a different challenge. It is a very dynamic environment we work in that requires you to be quick on your feet, confident in your knowledge, and able to pitch in at a moment's notice on something new. I have seen lots of hard work and ingenuity in my two years with the Office of Transit Safety and Oversight.

Upcoming Training

The FTA sponsors several safety-related training courses, including those listed below. Descriptions, prerequisites, fees, and registration information can be found on the [FTA's website](#). Additionally, there are two on-demand e-learning courses, [SMS Awareness](#) and [Rail Nomenclature](#).

SMS Principles for Transit	Brooklyn, NY	October 26—28
Transit System Security	St. Louis, MO	October 31—November 4
SMS Safety Assurance	Virtual—Live Training	November 3
Effectively Managing Transit Emergencies	Washington, DC	November 15—18
SMS Safety Assurance	Virtual—Live Training	November 22

Upcoming TSO Speaking Events

Office of Transit Safety and Oversight (TSO) personnel will speak at the following industry events. Visit the FTA's [event calendar](#) to view additional upcoming events. If you would like to schedule a TSO speaker for a future event, please contact [Donna Aggazio](#).

APTA 2016 Safety Committees Joint Mid-Year Meeting	Miami, FL	December 5—7
Florida Public Transportation Association Annual Conference	Jacksonville, FL	December 12

Reminder: TRACS Meeting Scheduled November 29-30

The next Transit Advisory Committee for Safety (TRACS) meeting is scheduled for November 29-30, 2016, at the National Association of Home Builders headquarters in Washington, DC.

TRACS is a Federal advisory committee comprised of transit leaders from across the country. The US Transportation Secretary chartered the committee in 2009 to advise the FTA on public transportation safety matters.

TRACS meetings are open to the public. Members of the public wishing to attend must contact FTA's [Adrienne Malasky](#) by November 15.



TRACS members at the March 2016 committee meeting in Washington, DC

FTA Expands SMS Implementation Pilot Program to Include Three Maryland Bus Agencies



Montgomery County Ride On buses

Last month, the FTA expanded its Safety Management System (SMS) Implementation Pilot Program by launching pilots with three small to mid-sized bus agencies in Maryland: Charles County VanGO, TransIT Services of Frederick County, and Montgomery County Ride On. Working in partnership with the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA), the FTA will provide technical assistance to the participating bus agencies on developing and operating an SMS, while the bus agencies will provide opportunities for the FTA to test the effectiveness of SMS implementation tools across the various sized agencies.

Complementing the FTA's ongoing work

with the Chicago Transit Authority Pilot Program, the bus pilots will assist the FTA to develop better guidance in implementing SMS at small to mid-sized bus agencies and also address rural transit operations and contractor-operated transit services. The FTA adopted the SMS approach to safety because of its proven effectiveness in other industries. SMS is also adaptable and scalable, and can be incorporated across the diverse and unique environments of the transit industry. The FTA will apply lessons learned and identify best practices from these pilot programs to develop guidance materials and technical assistance for transit systems of all sizes and types.

The MTA's participation is also a critical element of this new pilot effort, as Maryland is learning how to support SMS implementation at the state's transit agencies and will develop insights on how other states could do the same.

Stay tuned for more updates from the SMS Implementation Pilot Program, and in the meantime visit the [FTA's website](#) for SMS resources.



Top: Charles County VanGO bus

Bottom: TransIT Services of Frederick County buses



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<https://www.fta.dot.gov/regulations-and-guidance/safety/transit-safety-oversight-tso>