



## Transit Safety and Oversight Spotlight

Federal Transit Administration  
Office of Transit Safety and Oversight

May 2017  
Vol. 2, No. 5

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## Message from the Associate Administrator

Dear Transit Colleagues,

In May, our monthly newsletter marks its one-year anniversary. In the past year, our readership has grown to seven times its original number. Whether you subscribed from the very first issue or just discovered the TSO Spotlight this month, I want to thank you for reading and sharing it with your colleagues.

Your input over the last year has helped us fine tune our newsletter content. For example, we've continued to highlight training opportunities, and we've started sharing success stories from transit agencies and safety experts across the country. We know that you're eager to learn about new safety regulations as they're proposed and finalized, and we will keep sharing new information as it becomes available. We want to continue to improve the newsletter, and we always welcome your feedback at [FTASafetyStakeholder@dot.gov](mailto:FTASafetyStakeholder@dot.gov).

I also want to update you on our communications with the industry and public regarding the April 2019 deadline for State Safety Oversight (SSO) Programs to become certified under the SSO final rule. The FTA's Executive Director, Matthew Welbes, recently sent letters to the National Conference of State Legislatures, National Governors Association, and Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations, explaining the importance of meeting the April 2019 certification deadline and requesting the support of their respective state programs. We have also added a [certification fact sheet](#) to our website. As we emphasized at the 2017 SSO Program Managers' Training Workshop last month, the FTA is committed to supporting states through the certification process, and to communicating with states' legislatures, governors, and the transit community at-large about this important task. If you're part of an SSO Program, please continue to contact us with your certification questions and concerns as they arise.

Sincerely,

Thomas Littleton, Ph.D.

### State Safety Oversight (SSO) Certification

#### Fact Sheet

Deadline: April 15, 2019



#### Background

The Federal Transit Administration's (FTA) safety program has changed how the Federal government and States work together to keep rail transit agencies (RTAs) safe. By law, FTA is required to certify whether each State Safety Oversight (SSO) Program meets Federal requirements for safety oversight of RTAs.

#### Certification Deadline

By April 15, 2019, each eligible State with an RTA must have an FTA-approved and FTA-certified SSO program.

By law, FTA is not permitted to grant extensions to the April 2019 deadline. FTA strongly recommends that SSO Agencies (SSOA) submit certification applications as soon as possible to allow time for review.

If a State fails to meet the certification deadline, FTA must withhold all FTA funds from all recipients of FTA funding within the entire State. This means that new FTA grants can be awarded in the State, whether for urbanized areas, rural areas, or specialized transit.

#### Why Must States Be Certified?

The SSO final rule, which took effect April 15, 2016, requires States to obtain certification of their SSO programs. The rule strengthens an SSOA's authority to conduct inspections and investigate accidents, approve corrective action plans, and oversee an RTA's implementation of its safety plan. The rule also gives FTA the authority to take enforcement actions against those States with non-existent or non-compliant safety oversight programs.



U.S. Department of Transportation  
Federal Transit Administration

#### Funding

Congress has authorized grant funds for States to use to develop, implement, and operate an SSO Program.

#### SSOA Requirements for Compliance

Every eligible State must establish an SSO program with an SSOA that:

- Is financially and legally independent from any RTA it oversees;
- Does not directly provide public transportation services in an area with an RTA that the SSOA oversees;
- Does not employ any individual responsible for administering an RTA;
- Has authority to review, approve, oversee, and enforce a safety plan for an RTA;
- Has investigative and enforcement authority with respect to the safety of the RTA;
- Audits every RTA's compliance with safety plan requirements at least once every three years; and
- Reports the status of RTA safety to the Governor, the FTA, and the RTA board of directors or equivalent entity at least once a year.

#### Additional Resources

**Certification Toolkit and Application**  
FTA's [Certification Toolkit](#) provides guidance to States in managing the new SSO certification process. The toolkit guides States through each section of the certification application.

#### SSO Program Page

For more information on the SSO rule, safety training, SSO Formula Grant Program, SSO certification, and advisories and technical assistance, please visit the [SSO Program page](#) on FTA's website.

#### Check Status: Dashboard

FTA will make available on its website a dashboard to show the status of States' progress toward certification.

#### Contact

States and RTAs should contact their SSOA regarding their State's certification progress. For questions on the FTA certification process, contact [FTASafetyStakeholder@dot.gov](mailto:FTASafetyStakeholder@dot.gov).

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The SSO certification fact sheet can be downloaded from the [FTA's website](#)

## Upcoming Training

The FTA sponsors several safety training courses, including those listed below. 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 <a href="http://tsi.dot.gov">tsi.dot.gov</a>
Fatigue and Sleep Apnea Awareness for Transit Employees	Go to <a href="http://tsi.dot.gov">tsi.dot.gov</a>
SMS Awareness	Go to <a href="http://tsi.dot.gov">tsi.dot.gov</a>

### General Transit Safety Courses

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
SMS Safety Assurance	Virtual-Live Training	July 13
Substance Abuse Management and Program Compliance	Santa Maria, CA	July 18-20
Reasonable Suspicion and Post-Accident Testing Determination Seminar	Santa Maria, CA	July 21
Transit Supervisor Certification Course	Tampa, FL	July 24-28
SMS Principles for Transit	Oakland, CA	July 26-28
Transit Safety and Security Audit Course	Boston, MA	August 2-4
Substance Abuse Management and Program Compliance	Baltimore, MD	August 15-17
Reasonable Suspicion and Post-Accident Testing Determination Seminar	Baltimore, MD	August 18
SMS Safety Assurance	Virtual-Live Training	August 22
SMS Principles for Transit	Washington, DC	August 23-25
Transit Industrial Safety Management	Landover, MD	August 28-September 1
Transit Supervisor Certification Course	Rochester, NY	August 28-September 1
SMS Safety Assurance	Virtual-Live Training	September 14

Cont. on pg. 3

Training, cont. from pg. 2

Bus Transit Courses		
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
Fundamentals of Bus Collision Investigation	Boston, MA	July 10-14
Transit Bus System Safety	Birmingham, AL	July 10-14
Fundamentals of Bus Collision Investigation	Denver, CO	July 24-28
Instructors Course for Transit Trainers	Grand Rapids, MI	July 24-28
Transit Bus System Safety	Chicago, IL	August 14-18
Fundamentals of Bus Collision Investigation	San Jose, CA	August 21-25
Instructors Course for Transit Trainers	Park City, UT	August 21-25
Instructors Course for Transit Trainers	Atlanta, GA	September 11-15
Fundamentals of Bus Collision Investigation	Baltimore, MD	September 18-22

Transit Crime Prevention and Emergency Management Courses		
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
Transit System Security	Philadelphia, PA	July 10-14
Effectively Managing Transit Emergencies	Everett, WA	July 18-21
Transit System Security	Landover, MD	July 31-August 4
Effectively Managing Transit Emergencies	Oceanside, CA	August 15-18
Transit System Security	Dallas, TX	August 28-September 1
Crime Prevention through Environmental Design	Boston, MA	September 7-8
Transit System Security	Denver, CO	September 11-15
Effectively Managing Transit Emergencies	Philadelphia, PA	September 12-15

Rail Transit Courses		
Transit Rail Incident Investigation	Baltimore, MD	June 5-9
Transit Rail System Safety	Dallas, TX	June 19-23
Advanced Rail Accident Investigation	Seattle, WA	July 10-14
Transit Rail System Safety	New York, NY	July 17-21
Transit Rail Incident Investigation	Jamaica, NY	August 7-11
Transit Rail Incident Investigation	Boston, MA	August 21-25



## FTA Hosts Comprehensive SSO Training Workshop

State Safety Oversight (SSO) Program Managers, staff, and contractors gathered in Baltimore, Maryland, April 24-28 for the 2017 SSO Program Managers' Training Workshop. This year's workshop stressed the importance of states meeting the April 15, 2019 deadline for FTA certification of their SSO Programs. Other topics included rulemaking, training requirements, security, and the SSO grant cycle. Presenters included FTA staff, SSO Program Managers, and other guest speakers. Attendees participated in a site visit hosted by the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA). Thank you to all who made time to participate, present, and host events at this year's workshop!

Clockwise from top: MTA provides a continuous welded rail demonstration; California SSO Program Manager Daren Gilbert, FTA's George Good, and the National Transportation Safety Board's Georgetta Gregory speak on hazard management (not pictured: TriMet's Kurt Wilkinson); the Transportation Security Administration's Chris McKay discusses transit security; workshop participants; FTA Executive Director Matt Welbes welcomes attendees; participants learn about an overhauled MTA Light Rail vehicle.



## Interested in Conducting a Safety Culture Survey? CTA Shares their Recent Experience

When Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) President Dorval Carter wanted a better understanding of what managers and frontline employees thought about the organization's safety culture, CTA's Safety Management System (SMS) Implementation Team decided to find out by conducting a safety culture survey. Understanding real and perceived weaknesses in safety culture, they believed, would be critical in building the foundation for a Safety Management System (SMS) that works at every level of the organization.



CTA employees complete the safety culture survey (photo courtesy of CTA)

The anonymous survey consisted of three demographic questions and thirteen safety culture questions and took approximately three to five minutes to complete. Questions centered on safety compliance, safety communication, and perceptions of safety accountability. For example, questions included:

- Do you believe that safety concerns identified by front line employees are shared with senior management?
- Have you ever experienced a situation where the pressure to provide service or get a job done quickly might have negatively impacted safety?
- Are you comfortable speaking to your direct supervisor or manager about safety issues or concerns?

A key area of interest for CTA was the differences in responses between managers and frontline employees. CTA leadership understood that management could often make assumptions about how employees felt, and that those assumptions could be off the mark. By going directly to the source, they hoped to find out where they might be making inaccurate assumptions about employees' perceptions of safety. Another key point of interest was the effect of on-site management on employees' perception of safety. CTA wanted to know if there were differences in how employees responded when comparing those who work on a bus or train without management present versus those who work at the same location as their managers.

To administer the survey, CTA used an online survey tool for all employees who use the agency's email system. For other employees, CTA deployed volunteers and safety personnel to work as survey administrators at each work location. Survey administrators brought iPads, laptops, and paper surveys. Paper surveys were inserted into a locked box to ensure respondents' anonymity.

CTA administered the survey within a two-week time frame to minimize the amount of time safety personnel and volunteers were away from their normal duties. They collected over 2,600 responses, which is more than a quarter of CTA's workforce. For future surveys, CTA hopes to find a way to expand the timeframe for conducting the survey to allow for even more participation without further disrupting survey administrators' schedules. (*cont. on pg. 6*)



(cont. from pg. 5) CTA attributes the strong response rate to a few factors. They believe that having a representative on-site to administer the surveys, answer questions, and simply talk with personnel boosted participation. Keeping the survey short and explaining the steps taken to ensure respondents' anonymity also helped.

They also learned that having a well-trained group of survey administrators is crucial, as is carefully explaining survey instructions. They noticed mistakes when respondents didn't fully understand how to complete the survey—for example, some respondents did not appropriately select their department because the official department names appeared differently on the survey than employees are used to identifying them by in every day practice.

CTA also found that many employees used the margins of the survey to write about a specific safety concern, and sifting through the surveys and consolidating that information was time consuming. Next year, CTA hopes to provide a separate means of collecting specific concerns reported by employees to the survey team while they are on site conducting the surveys.

The feedback from these surveys will help CTA understand how they can leverage their SMS implementation efforts to include improvements in areas that directly relate to employee perception. For example, if a group of employees indicated that they felt that senior management was not hearing their concerns, the SMS Implementation Team will work to identify the contributing factors behind this perception. Are the concerns expressed by employees not being moved up the chain of command fast enough or are some not at all? Are the decisions made by management in response to the concerns not being communicated down to employees? Whatever the case may be, instilling confidence in employees that their safety concerns are being heard and acted on is a top priority under the CTA's SMS.

For questions regarding the FTA's SMS implementation pilot program at CTA, contact [Paulina Orchard](#).

Thank you to CTA for sharing their survey story this month! If your organization has a story to share with TSO Spotlight readers, please email [FTASafetyStakeholder@dot.gov](mailto:FTASafetyStakeholder@dot.gov).



CTA employees complete the safety culture survey (photo courtesy of CTA)

## DART and Other Transit Agencies Bolster Anti-Trafficking Initiatives through Safe Place Program

As the US Department of Transportation (USDOT) continues to collaborate with transportation stakeholders across the country to [stop human trafficking](#), Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART) has expanded its anti-trafficking initiatives throughout its public transportation system.

In 2015, DART trained all employees on how to recognize the signs of human trafficking. Additionally, DART promoted awareness of the issue utilizing posters and other initiatives. In 2016, [DART became involved with Safe Place](#), a national youth outreach and prevention program for young people in need of immediate help and safety. Through the program, a rider can approach any DART employee and ask for help. The employee will contact a transit supervisor who arranges for the



DART buses are designated "safe places" (photo courtesy of DART)

individual to get a free ride to the nearest QuikTrip convenience store—a designated safe place—for further assistance from police, a shelter, or youth service agency. DART and QuikTrip are part of a Safe Place network that includes other transit agencies, social agencies, and legislative advocacy groups in the region.

Many transit organizations across the country participate in the Safe Place program, including the [Kansas City Area Transportation Authority](#), [Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority](#), [Metropolitan Tulsa Transit Authority](#), and Arizona's [Valley Metro](#). Public transportation is a natural fit for the Safe Place network, as it allows communities to take advantage of an existing resource and gets youth to the places, people, and services that can help. In addition to combatting human trafficking, the [Safe Place program](#) assists youth facing a number of difficult situations including family troubles, homelessness, dangerous dating situations, and abuse.

For more information about the national Safe Place network, visit the [Safe Place website](#). To learn more about USDOT's anti-trafficking activities and resources, visit USDOT's [Human Trafficking and the Department of Transportation web page](#).

*Does your organization have a success story or best practices that reflect FTA/USDOT policies that you would like to share with TSO Spotlight readers? Email [FTASafetyStakeholder@dot.gov](mailto:FTASafetyStakeholder@dot.gov).*

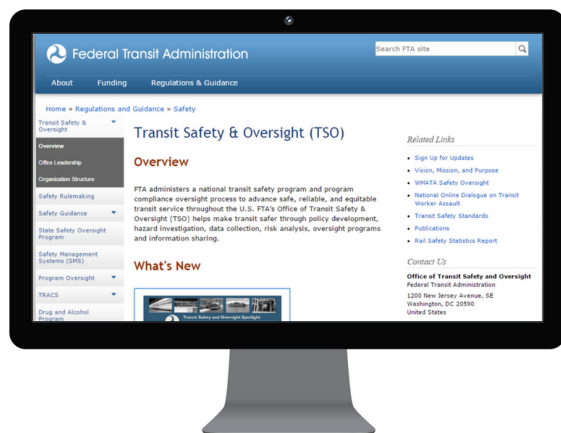
## Program Oversight Stat of the Month: FY16's Most Commonly Occurring Triennial Review Findings

In federal fiscal year 2016 (FY16), the top ten most common [Triennial Review](#) findings made up just over a quarter of total findings. Those findings were:

Finding	Percentage of FY16 Findings	Review Area
Insufficient no-show policy	3.6%	ADA
Lacking required cost/price analysis	2.9%	Procurement
Disadvantaged business enterprise (DBE) goal achievement analysis not completed or not submitted	2.9%	DBE
Limits or capacity constraints on Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) complementary paratransit service	2.9%	ADA
Facility/equipment maintenance plan lacking or inadequate	2.8%	Maintenance
DBE uniform reports not submitted semi-annually	2.8%	DBE
ADA complementary paratransit service deficiencies	2.4%	ADA
Lacking independent cost estimate	2.1%	Procurement
ADA service provisions deficiencies	2.0%	ADA
Drug and alcohol policy lacking required elements	2.0%	Drug Free Workplace/Drug and Alcohol Program

Questions? Contact FTA's [Christopher Der](#) or [Scott Giering](#).

## TSO Website Updated for Easier Navigation



FTA recently updated the [Office of Transit Safety and Oversight website](#) to make navigation more intuitive. Now, you can find information organized by topic such as [safety rulemaking](#), [program oversight](#), the [State Safety Oversight Program](#), or the [Drug and Alcohol Program](#). As always, you can find resources such as TSO's conference [presentations](#) and the link to register for [GovDelivery updates](#). We hope that the new layout makes locating these items easier.

If you have questions or comments on the website, please contact [FTASafetyStakeholder@dot.gov](mailto:FTASafetyStakeholder@dot.gov).

Visit TSO's website at <https://www.transit.dot.gov/regulations-and-guidance/>



## TSO Profile

Q&A with Nathan Smedley, Program Analyst, Office of Program Oversight



Nathan Smedley, Program Analyst

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

The Office of Program Oversight conducts compliance reviews of organizations that receive FTA funding to ensure that they are fulfilling program and administrative requirements. I help the FTA organize reviews and other program oversight activities, evaluate the outcomes of those reviews, and evaluate and update the procedures for reviews and information sharing within the FTA and the transit industry.

**What were you doing prior to this role?** I supported the US Air Force and Marines Corps as a management consultant, working with cost savings initiatives and internal controls reviews. Prior to that, I was a Marine Corps Captain, managing the budget and accounting for the First Marine Division.

### What are some projects you or your team are currently working on?

My team and I are evaluating the conditions that lead to repeat findings. When a grantee cannot demonstrate compliance with federal requirements during a review, we issue a finding and we recommend corrective actions to improve compliance. Occasionally, the grantee completes a corrective action but the FTA finds the same or significantly similar condition during a subsequent review. We want to understand why that happens and how we can help prevent findings from being repeated.

**What is something you wish people knew about FTA or TSO?** We are constantly seeking to improve our operations. We do this by listening to critiques of our current processes, learning more about a grantee's experience with our programs, and integrating those insights into our program oversight procedures.

## Upcoming TSO Speaking Events

<a href="#">American Public Transportation Association Rail Conference</a>	Baltimore, MD	June 10-14
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## Personnel News: Office of Program Oversight

Scott Giering, who previously served as Compliance Programs Division Chief in the Office of Program Oversight, has assumed the role of Acting Director, Office of Program Oversight. You may contact Scott at [scott.giering@dot.gov](mailto:scott.giering@dot.gov).

Selene Dalton-Kumins, who formerly served as Director, has joined the FTA's Office of Civil Rights as Acting Associate Administrator. Selene can be reached at [selene.dalton-kumins@dot.gov](mailto:selene.dalton-kumins@dot.gov).

Congratulations to Scott and Selene on your new roles!



Scott Giering, Acting Director,  
Office of Program Oversight



## Federal Transit Administration

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