



## Transit Safety and Oversight Spotlight

**Federal Transit Administration  
Office of Transit Safety and Oversight**

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## INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Upcoming Training	2-3
Sign Up for FTA's Bus Safety Updates through GovDelivery	3
Employee Safety Reporting: The FAA/NATCA Relationship Model	3-5
FTA Announces Program Oversight Review Activities for FY17	5
TSO Participates in APTA Rail Conference	5
Upcoming TSO Speaking Events	6
Register for July 19 Webinar about Latest Research on Improving Transit Safety	6
How a Proactive Approach Helps SEPTA Lay the Groundwork for SMS	7-8
Drug and Alcohol Program Updates	9
Deputy's Corner: Save the Date for October SSO Workshop	9
TSO Profile	10

## Message from the Associate Administrator

Dear Transit Colleagues,

The American Public Transportation Association's (APTA) 2017 Rail Conference that took place in Baltimore, Maryland earlier this month was a great opportunity for my FTA colleagues to meet with some of you in person and discuss important safety topics affecting the rail transit industry. Slides from the Office of Transit Safety and Oversight can be found on our [conference presentation website](#).

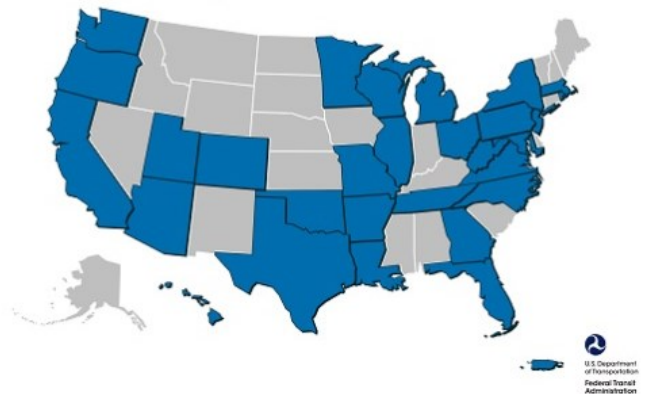
During the conference, we mentioned some FTA resources that I also want to share with our bus transit colleagues and those who were unable to attend the event.

The FTA continues to work with states on their efforts to attain federal certification of their State Safety Oversight (SSO) programs before April 15, 2019. A new [SSO Certification Status Table](#) on our [website](#) allows you to check your state's progress toward meeting this important deadline. The table breaks down the certification process into stages for easy tracking, and we will update the table quarterly to reflect each state's progress. If a state fails to meet the April 2019 deadline, the FTA cannot obligate funding to *any* recipient in that state until the SSO program attains certification. Because of this, we know that transit stakeholders across the 30 affected states are interested in tracking their SSO programs' certification progress, and we hope this tool will help you do so.

Additionally, a new [video](#) on our website offers a three-minute overview of the certification process and why it's important. I encourage you to give it a quick watch and share it with your colleagues.

Sincerely,  
Thomas Littleton, PhD

### States with Rail Transit Required to Meet State Safety Oversight Program Certification Deadline



A map of states required to meet the SSO certification deadline, available on the FTA's [SSO program certification status 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 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	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

### Transit Crime Prevention and Emergency Management Courses

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

Cont. on pg. 3

Training, cont. from pg. 2

### Bus Transit Courses

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

### Rail Transit Courses

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

## Sign Up for FTA's Bus Safety Updates through GovDelivery

Want to receive more updates from FTA's Bus Safety Program? Visit [FTA's GovDelivery website](#) and register to receive notifications about Bus Safety, located under the "Safety & Oversight" category. If you have questions about the Bus Safety Program, please contact FTA's [Paulina Orchard](#).



A Montgomery County, Maryland Ride On bus

## Employee Safety Reporting: The FAA/NATCA Relationship Model

Voluntary, confidential employee safety reporting is relatively new to the transit industry. The aviation industry, however, has made significant progress in implementing this type of reporting, offering the transit industry an opportunity to learn from their experiences. Recently, the [Federal Aviation Administration's \(FAA\) Air Traffic Organization \(ATO\)](#) has provided the transit industry with valuable lessons learned from their

implementation of a voluntary safety reporting program called the Air Traffic Safety Action Program (ATSAP).

ATSAP allows air traffic controllers and their managers to confidentially report safety issues they encounter and suggest solutions. According to the [ATO's 2015 Safety Report](#), ATSAP has become the aviation industry's largest voluntary safety reporting program in the world in terms of volume of reports submitted. (cont. on pg. 4)



From left to right: NATCA's Mike Blake, FAA's Ernesto Lasen, and FTA's Mike Coplen and Aloha Ley discuss employee reporting programs at the 2017 APTA Rail Conference in Baltimore, MD

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(FAA/NATCA, *cont. from pg. 3*) Even so, this represents about 40 percent of controllers and less than 10 percent of management currently participating, so there is still room for growth.

The path to ATSAP adoption was challenging. Before the advent of this program, the FAA was aware that top management was often isolated from the problems observed by frontline employees. Additionally, tensions existed between ATO management and the controllers: lack of trust and a blame culture prevailed. Management reacted to safety events after they happened rather than looking for root causes and taking a proactive approach to preventing events. Management also lacked the supporting data needed to determine why events were occurring, which impeded analysis. Controllers doubted the viability of this kind of safety reporting program because there simply was not much trust between management and controllers. These challenges made the creation of a confidential and non-punitive safety reporting system that employees could trust an enormous undertaking, and employees were very slow to start to voluntarily report safety concerns.

Several factors paved the way for the successful implementation of this program and may be applicable to the transit industry as well. Most importantly, there were program champions among FAA and labor leadership, both willing to set differences aside and work together toward a common safety goal. These champions were committed to change and improving the safety culture. Two current champions of the program are Ernesto Lasen from the FAA and Michael Blake from the National Air Traffic Controllers Association (NATCA), a union that represents air traffic controllers and other aviation professionals.

“We value employee input using ATSAP,” said Ernesto Lasen, FAA’s Safety Program Manager. “However, since this voluntary reporting safety program relies on air traffic controllers reporting what they see and hear, we encourage honesty in the responses to identify the safety issues we must address. Then we use technology to augment the data gathered from controllers, and critically analyze it. We embrace change to mitigate risk in order to make the National Airspace System safer.”

“ATSAP was developed during a very contentious labor/management period within the FAA,” said Mike Blake of NATCA. “Both NATCA and the FAA knew the workplace culture needed to change. Leadership from both sides took a leap of faith and agreed to a demonstration period to deploy ATSAP. ATSAP was the first step in repairing a broken labor/management relationship and creating a new workplace culture of collaboration.”

According to Blake and Lasen, organizations with positive safety cultures are also characterized by communication founded on mutual trust, shared perceptions of the importance of safety, and confidence in the effectiveness of preventive measures.

The FAA Event Review Committee (ERC), a technical working group made up of labor, management, and technical experts, reviews and discusses ATSAP reports and analyzes the hazards to evaluate risk. Together, the ERC must reach a consensus on how to best mitigate the risk. The committee also ensures reports accepted into ATSAP are unintentional mistakes or behaviors where the risk was unrecognized. Reports of gross negligence or reckless conduct are not accepted into ATSAP.

Thanks in part to the successful implementation of voluntary safety reporting systems such as ATSAP, the FAA is embracing a proactive approach to address safety.

The FAA and NATCA recently shared their experiences implementing risk-based employee reporting with the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) and the Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU), Local 689, one of WMATA’s labor unions. The FAA and NATCA also invited WMATA and the ATU to attend its ERC meeting in May. (*cont. on pg. 5*)

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(FAA/NATCA, *cont. from pg. 4*) The FTA was joined by Blake and Lasen at the American Public Transportation Association Rail Conference on June 11-14 in Baltimore, Maryland, to discuss employee safety reporting, the need for a strong transit safety culture, and the ATSAP program. Additionally, the FAA and NATCA presented with the FTA at the 2017 Transportation Research Board Annual Meeting on the role of employee safety reporting in a transit safety management system. The FTA's slides from both events are [available online](#).

If you have questions about employee safety reporting in transit, please contact FTA's [Lynn Spencer](#), Director, Office of System Safety.

## FTA Announces Program Oversight Review Activities for FY17

The FTA has developed a National Program Oversight Plan that reduces the number of grantees undergoing more than one oversight review in a year from 45 to 7 since 2005. Multiple reviews will always be necessary for some recipients to help them maintain compliance with federal funding requirements. However, we hope that the new plan will reduce the burden of oversight for many grantees by decreasing the likelihood that they need to participate in more than one oversight review per year.

Some of the FTA's review activities are defined below, and the image at right summarizes the number of review activities planned for FY17.

**Comprehensive Reviews:** Includes [Triennial](#) and [State Management Reviews](#). Takes a broad look at grantee management practices and compliance with program and administrative requirements in accordance with federal public transportation law.

**Enhanced Review Modules:** Used to review specific areas in greater depth than a Comprehensive Review.

**Specialized Reviews:** Occurring at the FTA's discretion, provides a deeper dive into specific compliance areas including procurement, financial management, and civil rights.

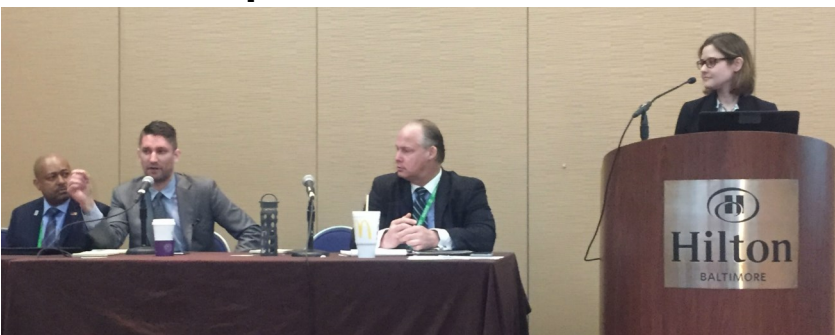
**Technical Assistance:** Provided by FTA to address complex compliance scenarios.

Questions? Contact [Scott Giering](#), Acting Director, Office of Program Oversight.



A summary of FTA's fiscal year 2017 oversight review activities

## TSO Participates in APTA's 2017 Rail Conference



From left to right: Elmer Coppage, Jr., Maryland Transit Administration; John Ekblad, Chicago Transit Authority; Hilary Konczal, Metra; and Paulina Orchard, FTA

The FTA's Office of Transit Safety and Oversight (TSO) participated in the American Public Transportation Association (APTA) 2017 Rail Conference in Baltimore, MD, June 11-14. Speakers included Paulina Orchard (pictured here), Safety Management System Implementation Pilot Program Manager and Bus Safety Program Manager, who was joined by representatives from transit systems and private industry to discuss transit safety management. TSO's presentations are [available online](#).

## Upcoming TSO Speaking Events

Event	Speaker	Location	Date	Time
<a href="#">American Public Transportation Association 2017 Transit Board Members &amp; Board Support Seminar</a>	Scott Giering, Acting Director, Office of Program Oversight	Chicago, IL	July 25	8:30 am

## Learn about the Latest Research on Improving Safety in Transit at July 19 Webinar

Improving safety is a top priority for transit agencies. In a [webinar](#) to be held **2–3:30 p.m. ET on Wednesday, July 19**, Lisa Staes and Jodi Godfrey of the Center for Urban Transportation Research will discuss their work to collect current practices and document effective training initiatives, including bus operator training programs.

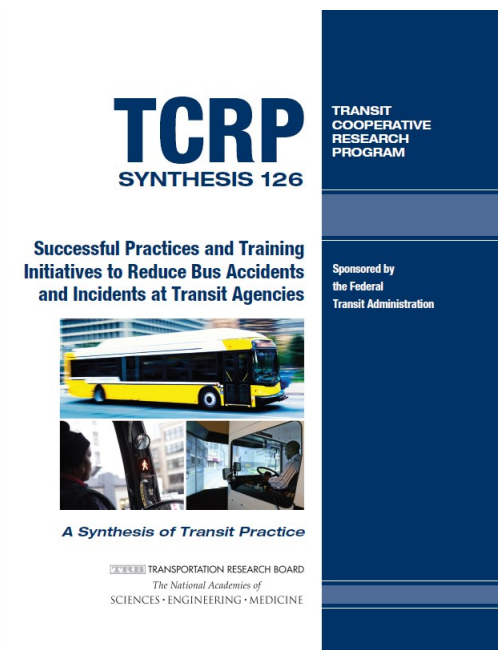
Their work is documented in [Transit Cooperative Research Program \(TCRP\) Synthesis 126: Successful Practices and Training Initiatives to Reduce Accidents and Incidents at Transit Agencies](#).

A number of successful safety programs are attributed to a commitment to safety throughout the organization, including operators, maintenance, management, and supervisory staff. The report includes the following case studies:

- Charlotte Area Transit
- City of Madison Metro Transit
- Greater Bridgeport Transit
- Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority
- Jacksonville Transportation Authority
- Kansas City Area Transportation Authority
- King County Metro
- Solano County Transit
- Tri-County Metropolitan Transportation District of Oregon
- Utah Transit Authority

The webinar will focus on approaches that address safety hazards, including technology applications, infrastructure modifications, and programs and initiatives such as driver incentive programs and close call/near miss reporting. Registration is [available online](#), and there is no fee to attend.

This webinar is hosted through the National Transit Institute (NTI). FTA sponsors both NTI and TCRP to develop and apply innovative solutions and adapt technologies and approaches that help meet the demands placed on the nation's public transit systems.



The TCRP Synthesis Report is available on [TRB's website](#)

# How a Proactive Approach Helps SEPTA Lay the Groundwork for SMS

Scott A. Sauer, CSP, WSO-CSSD, SEPTA's Assistant General Manager, System Safety

Federal safety regulations provide needed structure to the way our nation's public transportation agencies approach safety. However, figuring out how to implement a new regulation can be a daunting task for a transit agency.

At the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA), we try to proactively adopt industry best practices before we are required to do so by federal regulations. It is significantly easier to meet compliance deadlines and adapt our safety programs when we have anticipated these requirements ahead of time.

A prime example of our proactive approach involves Safety Management Systems (SMS). The FTA has not yet mandated industry adoption of SMS, but SEPTA has taken steps toward SMS implementation, not just out of concern for future regulation compliance, but in the interest of improving the safety of our transit system. I want to share some of the actions that have helped us start adopting SMS, prepare for a potential federal regulation regarding SMS, and improve our transit agency's safety practices.

## We've already started speaking the language of SMS.

Before SEPTA started planning for SMS implementation, our agency was already carrying out many SMS activities—we just didn't use the term "SMS" to describe them. We had safety communication and safety training programs in place, which happen to be part of the "Safety Promotion" component of SMS and are critical to demonstrating management's commitment to safety and improving safety performance. It's important to note that we are incorporating SMS *into the work we already do*; we are not reinventing our organization. In anticipation that SMS becomes a federally mandated requirement, we want all SEPTA employees to share a common understanding of what our SMS is and have a common vocabulary to communicate about it.

## We continue to develop existing safety initiatives to further support SMS.

Our twice-yearly internal Safety Day event has become an important Safety Promotion activity. Simply put, it's a day for managers and employees to get together and discuss safety. SEPTA's Safety Department chooses (*cont. on pg. 7*)



A SEPTA bus with safety messaging for riders (image courtesy of SEPTA)

(SEPTA, cont. from pg. 6) an overarching theme—for example, cell phone use, roadway worker protection, use of tools or ladders—to shape the day’s conversations. Individual teams may have specific areas of concern in which they choose to focus the day’s activities as well. Additionally, we’ve branded our safety program with its own logo and slogan, “Never too busy for safety.” The branding appears on all our printed safety materials, on hard hats, and on staff shirts. We make sure it appears on all our Safety Day materials to demonstrate SEPTA’s commitment to safety and to promote a culture where safety is the number one priority. Safety Day makes staff aware of safety priorities and concerns at the organizational level and as they relate to their own duties and responsibilities. Safety communication is part of the Safety Promotion pillar of SMS, and Safety Day supports this pillar by connecting frontline employees and management to communicate about safety information and establish a positive safety culture. Consistent with the Safety Risk Management component of SMS, we’ve completed numerous risk assessments to measure safety risks and established corrective actions to address them. For example, SEPTA’s Rail Engineering department has a written procedure for how engineering changes are made to rail cars. The Engineering Department sends the proposed change to stakeholders to solicit comments. The System Safety Department assesses the change using its risk modeling tools and, if necessary, sends feedback to the Rail Engineering Department if modifications should be made to the change proposal.

Our internal safety audit program fits nicely into the Safety Assurance component of SMS, which ensures that safety risk mitigations are effective. Continual monitoring of operations and maintenance activity by the respective department managers provides SEPTA with plenty of opportunity to identify safety hazards before they become incidents. The System Safety Department follows up on the work of the individual departments with observations of its own. SEPTA’s efficiency testing program of operators is a perfect example of that. Transportation Managers monitor operators on a daily basis through the performance of efficiency tests. System Safety replicates that process on a smaller scale to determine where problems may surface.

### **We’re eager to learn from our peers’ experiences.**

Employee safety reporting is an important data source for an organization’s SMS. SEPTA has not yet implemented a formal, close-call reporting system for transit. However, SEPTA’s commuter rail system, which is subject to Federal Railroad Administration oversight, recently introduced close-call reporting. We hope that our commuter rail colleagues’ experiences will lead to and encourage the creation of best practices that will be applicable to our transit systems when we are ready to implement our own close-call reporting systems.

An effective SMS takes time to implement correctly. Our safety programs are not completely under the SMS umbrella yet, nor is a transit agency’s SMS ever “finished.” However, we’ve made substantial progress in making our safety programs and activities SMS-compliant. If a federal regulation were to be issued tomorrow requiring us to fully implement SMS, I’m confident that the steps we’ve already taken would simplify an otherwise substantial undertaking.

*In his nearly 27 years with SEPTA, Scott Sauer has served as a transit operator, transportation manager, and fulfilled various roles in SEPTA’s System Safety division before becoming Assistant General Manager in 2015. He is also a member of the FTA’s Transit Advisory Committee for Safety (TRACS).*

*Do you have a story about how your transit agency has addressed a safety issue that you would like to share in the newsletter? Contact us at [FTASafetyStakeholder@dot.gov](mailto:FTASafetyStakeholder@dot.gov).*



## FTA Drug and Alcohol REGULATION UPDATES

April 2017  
ISSUE 62

### DOT Publishes Notice of Proposed Rulemaking

The Department of Transportation is proposing to amend its drug-testing program regulation to add four opioids (hydrocodone, hydromorphone, oxycodone, and oxycodone) to its drug-testing panel; add methylenedioxymphetamine (MDA) as an initial test analyte; and remove methylenedioxymphetamine (MDEA), as a confirmatory test analyte. The proposed

**"The DOT is proposing to amend its drug-testing program to add four opioids."**

revision of the drug testing panel is intended to harmonize with the revised Mandatory Guidelines established by the

#### The Federal Register NPRM

Available at <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2017-01-23/pdf/2017-011131.pdf>

and on the **Office of the Secretary's Office of Drug and Alcohol Policy and Compliance website.**

<https://www.transportation.gov/odapc/frpubs>

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services for federal drug-testing programs for urine testing. This proposal also adds clarification to certain drug-testing program provisions where necessary, removes

outdated information in the regulations that is no longer needed, and proposes to remove the requirement for employers and Consortium/Third Party Administrators to submit blind specimens. ●

### FTA Drug and Alcohol Management Information System (DAMIS) Reporting

DAMIS reports with 2016 testing results were to be submitted by all FTA-covered employers by March 15th of this year. Late letters will be sent out shortly to all FTA grantees who did not complete their submissions or who have contractors/subrecipients who did not report.

Should you have any questions, please call the FTA Drug and Alcohol Project Office at 617-494-6336 or email [fta.damis@dot.gov](mailto:fta.damis@dot.gov). ●

#### IN THIS ISSUE

- 2. Alere Records Drug Tests Times in CT Zones
- 4. Policies and the Term "Substance Abuse Professionals"



U.S. Department of Transportation  
Federal Transit Administration

## Drug and Alcohol Program Newsletter and National Conference Presentations Available

Presentations from the 12th Annual FTA Drug and Alcohol Program's National Conference, which took place April 18-20 in New Orleans, LA, are now available on the FTA's [website](#). Whether you attended this year's conference or want to see what you missed, you may visit the site to download slides and read session descriptions and speaker bios.

Additionally, the [April 2017 issue](#) of the Drug and Alcohol Regulation Updates Newsletter is now available. Topics include drug and alcohol training and resources, guidelines for providing substance abuse provider referrals to employees, and information about the US Department of Transportation's recent notice of proposed rulemaking (NPRM) to amend its drug testing program (please note that the NPRM comment period has now ended).

If you have questions about the FTA's Drug and Alcohol Program, please contact [Lyon Rosario](#).

FTA Drug and Alcohol Regulation Updates newsletter, available on the [FTA's website](#)

## Deputy's Corner

### Save the Date: State Safety Oversight and Rail Transit Agency Training Workshop, October 23-27

Kimberly Burtch, Acting Deputy Associate Administrator

The week of October 23-27, 2017, rail transit agency safety personnel are invited to join State Safety Oversight (SSO) Program Managers, staff and contractors in Washington, DC, for a week of training on the SSO certification process and other important safety topics. We're excited to have our rail transit agency colleagues join us at this event as we progress toward the April 15, 2019 SSO program certification deadline, as coordination and communication between RTAs and SSO agencies is especially critical.

Please look for additional communications from FTA regarding the workshop schedule and logistics in the coming months. If you have training or agenda topics you would like to see covered at the workshop, please email [FTASafetyStakeholder@dot.gov](mailto:FTASafetyStakeholder@dot.gov). SSO Program Managers may also contact their FTA SSO Program Managers with questions.



Kimberly Burtch, Acting  
Deputy Associate  
Administrator

## TSO Profile

Q&A with Winslow Powell, Deputy Director, WMATA Safety Oversight



Winslow Powell, Deputy Director,  
WMATA Safety Oversight

**How would you explain your job to someone you've never met before?** I oversee the inspection program and administrative requirements for the FTA's Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) Safety Oversight team. Since October 2015, the FTA has been providing temporary and direct safety oversight of the WMATA Metrorail system. I ensure that FTA inspection teams verify WMATA's conformance with its safety standards, rules, and procedures; document mitigations put in place to address safety concerns; and follow up to verify that mitigations are working effectively.

**What were you doing prior to this role?** Since joining FTA in 2010, I've served as a Safety Program Manager, Emergency Coordinator, and Security Liaison. Prior to that, I was a Senior Watch Officer for the US Department of Transportation's (USDOT) Crisis Management Center and the USDOT Liaison to the Department of Homeland Security. I'm also retired from the US Army.

**What led you to work in transit or safety?** Safety protects life; I think it's one of the most admirable career fields. After working for over 30 years as a public servant in emergency management, security, and law enforcement and operations, it was only fitting to add safety to my career. Safety overlaps these fields in many areas.

**What are some current projects or initiatives that you or your team are working on?** My team is focused on a single initiative: providing direct, effective safety oversight of WMATA. This includes daily announced and unannounced inspections, verification of safety repairs, and observations of safety training and special events. We are also monitoring the research and rollout of two WMATA projects intended to enhance their roadway worker protection efforts: the use of mobile technology to alert workers of approaching trains; and the use of advanced mobile flaggers, a practice in which an individual with a flag is placed in a place of safety to alert train operators of workgroups on the right of way.

**How do you work with people outside of the FTA? How would you like to be working with them in the future?** In addition to working with WMATA, I have had the opportunity to work with many talented people from several different USDOT agencies such as the Federal Railroad Administration and Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration. They have been an invaluable resource in providing expertise in a myriad of support roles. I look forward to seeing this interagency coordination continue with other FTA safety activities.



**Federal Transit  
Administration**

Federal Transit Administration  
Office of Transit Safety and Oversight  
1200 New Jersey Avenue SE  
Washington, DC 20590

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