

Transit Safety and Oversight Spotlight

U.S. Department of Transportation
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Message from the Associate Administrator

Dear Transit Colleagues,

As the year concludes and we turn the corner to 2020, we must look towards the work ahead to ensure that applicable transit operators are receiving the assistance needed to meet the upcoming compliance date for Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan (PTASP) regulation.

Ten percent of respondents to FTA’s recent safety survey have some level of concern about meeting the July 20, 2020 PTASP deadline. Half of the 359 respondents are in the development phase of their plans, while 45 agencies have completed drafts and 11 have not yet started. Most respondents have taken advantage of FTA’s technical assistance, including participating in webinars and attending training workshops. While this is good news, our work is not done and we are contacting stakeholders who are unsure of their process or have not started to draft their Agency Safety Plan (ASP).

Our PTASP [Technical Assistance Center \(TAC\)](#) will be contacting all 795 applicable agencies by December 31, 2019. When you receive a call, please know that this is an introductory communication to make sure that you are aware of the TAC’s available services and identify ways that the TAC can support your agency. Our goal is to ensure that each PTASP stakeholder successfully moves through the ASP development process. In the coming months, FTA will continue to provide support through webinars, [workshops](#), and other resources to meet that goal.

Early in the New Year, we are pleased to offer a session at the transportation industry’s largest meeting, the [Transportation Research Board \(TRB\) Annual Meeting](#), which attracts more than 13,000 transportation professionals from around the world. FTA will discuss “Improving Transit Safety Performance Through Safety Risk Management.” Join us on Monday, January 13, 2020, for an informative safety presentation on FTA’s safety risk management process and hear from transit agencies on how they are managing safety risk. For those who can’t be present, we’ll make the presentation available online.

Best wishes for a safe and prosperous New Year.

Sincerely,
Henrika Buchanan



Henrika Buchanan, Associate Administrator for Transit Safety and Oversight

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Upcoming Safety Training

FTA sponsors several safety training courses, including those listed below. The [complete schedule](#) of training courses offered through September 2020 is available on FTA's safety website. Please contact the FTA-sponsored [Transportation Safety Institute \(TSI\)](#) at (405) 954-3682 for safety training registration and course information. Individuals may contact FTA's Safety Promotion Team at FTASafetyPromotion@dot.gov to request an [Individual Training Plan](#) (ITP). Participants in the Public Transportation Safety Certification Training Program have three years to complete their ITP requirements.

Courses Required by the Public Transportation Safety Certification Training Program (RAIL)*		
Effectively Managing Transit Emergencies	Baton Rouge, LA	Jan. 13-16
	Newark, NJ	Feb. 3-6
	Chicago, IL	Feb. 24-27
	San Jose, CA	Mar. 23-26
Safety Management System (SMS) Awareness (eLearning)	On demand at tsi.dot.gov	Available 24/7
SMS Principles for State Safety Oversight (SSO) Programs	Seattle, WA	Mar. 13
SMS Principles for Transit	Tucson, AZ	Jan. 22-24
	Memphis, TN	Feb. 19-21
	Harrisburg, PA	Mar. 4-6
	Seattle, WA	Mar. 10-12
	San Antonio, TX	Mar. 25-27
SMS Safety Assurance	Virtual-Live Training at tsi.dot.gov	Jan. 15
		Feb. 19
		Mar. 25
Transit Rail Incident Investigation	Kansas City, MO	Mar. 16-20
Transit Rail System Safety	Landover, MD	Feb. 10-14
Voluntary Courses for the Public Transportation Safety Certification Training Program (BUS)**		
Fundamentals of Bus Collision Investigation	Monterey, CA	Jan. 13-17
	Orlando, FL	Jan. 27-31
Transit Bus System Safety	Garden City, NY	Jan. 27-31
	Orange, CA	Mar. 16-20
	Tampa, FL	Mar. 30-Apr. 3

*Applies to SSOA personnel and contractors who conduct safety audits and examinations of public transportation systems not subject to Federal Railroad Administration regulation, as well as rail fixed guideway public transportation system personnel and contractors who are directly responsible for safety oversight. Other safety personnel, including those from bus agencies, are encouraged to participate in the voluntary program.

**The voluntary bus program also includes Effectively Managing Transit Emergencies, SMS Awareness, SMS Safety Assurance, and SMS Principles for Transit. If you would like to participate in the voluntary program please contact FTASafetyPromotion@dot.gov to request an ITP and see the rail schedule above for course availability.

Training, cont. from pg. 2

ADDITIONAL COURSES: Bus and Rail Courses (In Person)

Advanced Problems in Bus Collision Investigation	Phoenix, AZ	Feb. 3-7
Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design	Tampa, FL	Feb. 24-25
Instructor's Course for Transit Trainers	Fresno, CA Hilton Head, SC Sacramento, CA	Jan. 6-10 Feb. 24-28 Mar. 9-13
Reasonable Suspicion and Post-Accident Testing Determination Seminar	Irvine, CA	Feb. 7
Safety, Security, and Emergency Management Considerations for FTA Capital Projects	Oakland, CA	Mar. 24-26
Substance Abuse Management and Program Compliance	Irvine, CA	Feb. 2-4
Transit Industrial Safety Management	Austin, TX	Feb. 6-10
Transit Safety and Security Audit Course	Pomona, CA	Jan. 29-31
Transit Supervisor Certification Course	Los Angeles, CA Orlando, FL	Jan. 6-10 Feb. 3-7
Transit System Security	Phoenix, AZ Atlanta, GA	Jan. 13-17 Feb. 10-14
Transit System Security: Design Review	Tampa, FL	Feb. 26-28

ADDITIONAL COURSES: eLearning Courses (Web Based)

Roadmap to Drafting an Agency Safety Plan for Bus Agencies	On demand at tsi.dot.gov	Available 24/7
Curbing Transit Employee Distracted Driving	On demand at tsi.dot.gov	Available 24/7
Fatigue and Sleep Apnea Awareness for Transit Employees	On demand at tsi.dot.gov	Available 24/7
Rail Nomenclature	On demand at tsi.dot.gov	Available 24/7
Bus Nomenclature	On demand at tsi.dot.gov	Available 24/7

FTA Shares Rail Transit Safety Information at DOT Grade Crossing Symposium

On November 20, 2019, FTA participated at a Grade Crossing Symposium hosted by the Federal Railroad Administration. The symposium shared grade crossing safety and technology advancements gleaned from listening sessions with railroads, signal equipment manufacturers and trade and advocacy groups.

Transit rail grade crossing fatalities are on the rise, increasing almost eight percent each year. The FTA safety team shared data on rail transit grade crossing trends, FTA regulations, DOT-sponsored grants, and research to support rail transit grade crossing countermeasures. Attendees included state Departments of Transportation, local governments, and highway and railroad organizations.

The cross-modal symposium kicked off a discussion that will continue next year with additional trespasser and grade crossing summits across the country. Read more about safety considerations for rail transit grade crossings in FTA’s recently published [Safety Bulletin](#). For questions, please contact Candace Key, FTA’s Director of the Office of System Safety.



From left to right, FTA’s George Good from FTA’s Office of Safety Review, and Jeff Thompson and Kara Waldrup from the Office of System Safety provide information and resources to attendees at the DOT Rail Symposium.

NOW AVAILABLE: Rail Suicide Prevention and Messaging Resource

Operation Lifesaver, Inc. (OLI), an FTA partner, works to prevent collisions, injuries, and fatalities on and around railroad tracks and highway-rail grade crossings across the U.S. Recently, OLI released a new resource that addresses messaging related to suicide prevention and tips for interacting with the media following a rail suicide or trespass incident.

The [Safe and Effective Messaging on Rail Incidents](#) resource provides tips rail transit agencies can leverage when communicating after a suicide or trespassing incident, including information to help reduce copycat suicide attempts and reporting language best practices. The document can be customized for your agency by inserting related local organization information and resources.

For more information, please visit OLI’s [website](#) or contact [Rachel Maleh](#), OLI’s Executive Director.

SAFE AND EFFECTIVE MESSAGING ON RAIL INCIDENTS
Helpful Tips for Effective Reporting on Rail Suicide

WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT
 Irresponsible reporting and messaging following a suicide death may result in 'copycat' suicide attempts, also referred to as suicide contagion. This phenomenon, known as the Werther Effect, is known to contribute to elevated suicide rates (see <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4321173/> from the World Health Organization). This effect has been demonstrated for many methods of suicide, including those that occur on the railway system. Details that are associated with increased risk of contagion may seem critical to the story and are thus included in this resource. However, the inclusion of such details may also have ways to inform the public while still way that reduces the likelihood of emul.

The media can also be a tremendous source to seek help, changing public perceptions. Media can inspire hope and provide practices, the media can play a positive role in reducing the likelihood of emul.

OFFER RESOURCES AND INSPIRE HOPE
 Consider crafting content that inspires hope and highlights individuals overcoming suicidal thoughts. These articles can help provide a counterpoint to more common reports of individuals dying by suicide. These types of stories have been shown to reduce suicide rates (referred to as the Papageno Effect, also discussed in <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4321173/>).

CONCEPTS

PERCEIVING SUICIDE AS COMMON
 Including "suicide" in the headline (e.g. "epidemic", "skyrocketing") has common than it actually is, and the especially important as they allow influence public perceptions.

IDENTIFYING WITH SOMEONE
 Elements of an article that glorify the reader to identify with the deceased, approachability. Similarly, attributing the complexities of suicide in a way that more salient following similar life events.

VISUALIZING A PARTICULAR MESSAGE
 Providing details about the location of a train may prompt individuals, happening, possibly leading them to the tracks.

PROMOTING MYTHS THAT RAIL IS SAFE
 Emphasis on lethality or the confirmation that the rail system is a safe mode of transportation.

WHEN REPORTING ABOUT A RAILWAY SUICIDE
 There is always a choice about whether to discuss an incident as a suicide or simply as a fatality on the railway. If a decision is made to report on the incident as a suicide, consider offering helpful information or resources for vulnerable individuals who may read this story. Consider including information about warning signs for those at risk (e.g., see www.oli.org) as well as resources where vulnerable individuals may seek help (see below).

Also consider the impact of the story on train crews. Train operators are powerless to quickly stop a train if a person is on the tracks. Language that implies fault, such as "train kills person", may add stress to an already challenging time in that train crew's life.

NATIONAL RESOURCES

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline Free 24/7 Helpline 877-273-TALK (8255)	24/7 Text Line Free 24/7 Support Text HOME to 741741
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LOCAL RESOURCES
 Samaritans (Example)
Free 24/7 Helpline
Call or Text 877-870-HOPE (4673)
(or website address)

SPECIFIC REPORTING LANGUAGE: DOS AND DON'TS

INSTEAD OF...	CONSIDER...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local Man Commits Suicide at Broadway Station Suicide on Springfield Line of General Railroad 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local Man Died on Tuesday Afternoon Woman Trespassing on General Railroad Tracks Struck and Killed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The death occurred after the man jumped from the south end of the platform as the train entered Broadway station She found the train with her head looking up and her arms outstretched as the train struck and killed her Train kills person 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The man was struck and killed near Broadway Station. After trespassing onto the railroad tracks the woman was struck and killed by the train. It appears that the actions of the individual were intentional.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Images of memorials or grieving friends Images of trains or train platforms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School photo or work photo No photo or stock photos (e.g., caution tape)

Resource for Writing about a Rail Trespass or Suicide Fatality

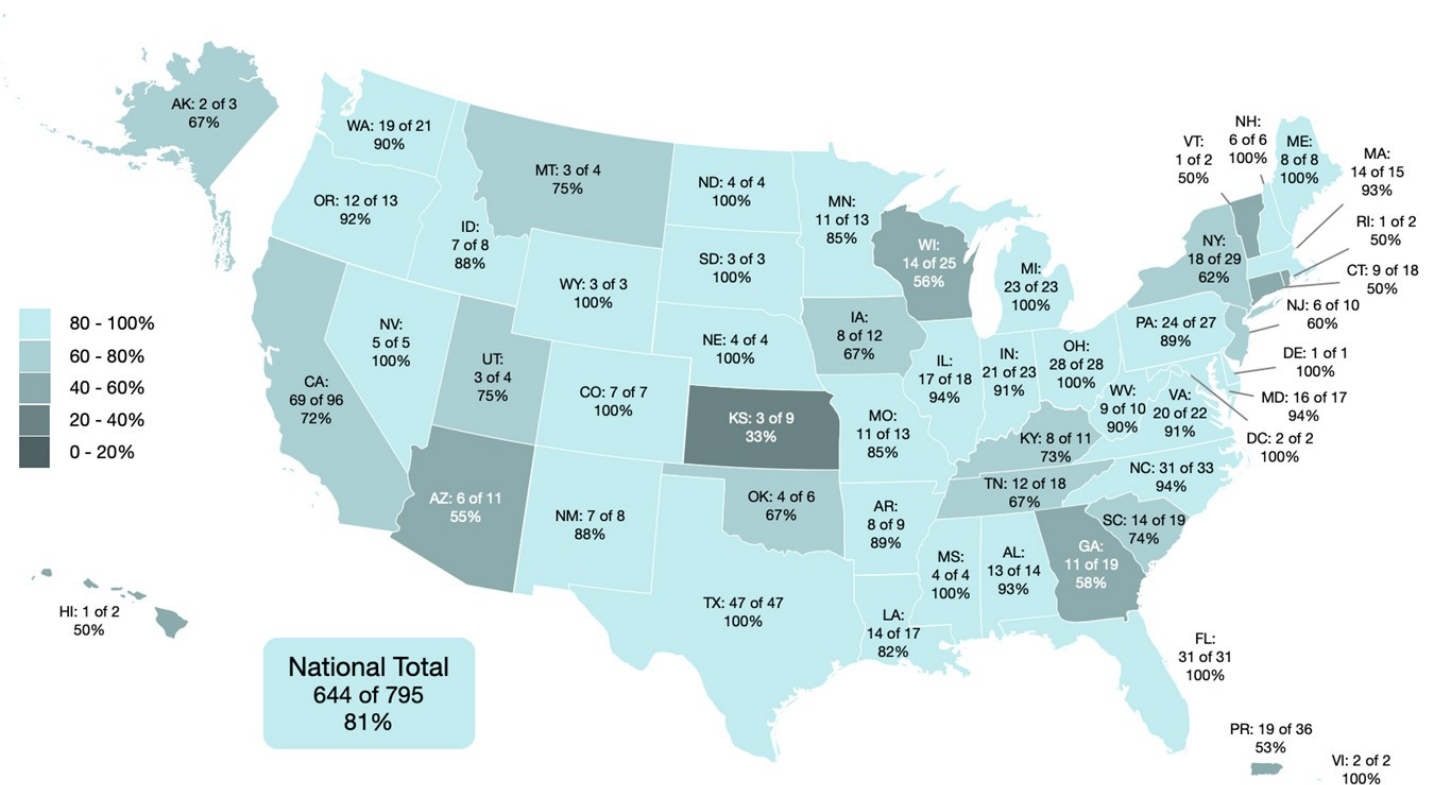
OLI’s Safe and Effective Messaging on Rail Incidents resource

What's New with the PTASP Technical Assistance Center?

As the July 20, 2020 deadline quickly approaches, FTA is conducting multiple forms of outreach to applicable transit agencies on the Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan (PTASP) regulation requirements. Central to these efforts, FTA recently launched a designated PTASP [Technical Assistance Center \(TAC\)](#) to bolster outreach and technical support to all agencies in meeting the compliance deadline.

As of December 5, 2019, 81 percent of all applicable transit agencies and states have engaged with FTA about PTASP regulation requirements, Agency Safety Plan (ASP) development, and related topics. Engagement includes participating in FTA-hosted webinars and workshops or the safety stakeholder survey; communicating with the TAC via email, forum post, or call; and requesting review of an ASP or onsite technical assistance.

While the preliminary data indicates strong engagement and progress to date, FTA is striving for one hundred percent of applicable agencies to have an ASP in place by July 20, 2020.



PTASP Agency Engagement by State

Recently, FTA hosted a PTASP Agency Highlights webinar to share experiences and approaches on developing ASPs from the Chicago Transit Authority, the Illinois Department of Transportation, and the Maryland Department of Transportation/Maryland Transit Authority. Review the [webinar slides](#) and [recording](#) for great information and insights from your agency peers on the ASP development process.

Further, FTA encourages agencies and states to engage with their peers in the PTASP [Community of Practice](#) forums. For example, share what [ASP development milestones](#) your transit agency has developed and learn from your peers to support in your ASP progress. We also encourage you to sign up for [updates](#) on the latest TAC activities and resources, and submit your PTASP questions to PTASP-TAC@dot.gov.

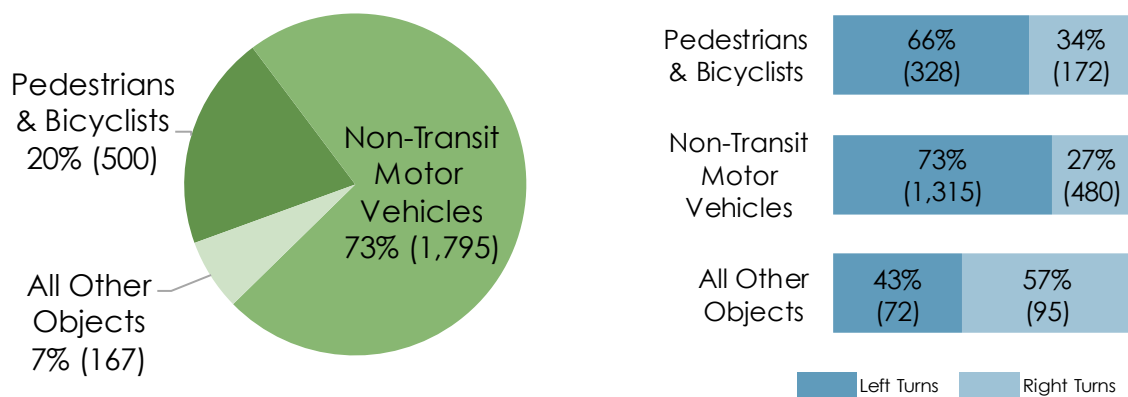
Data Spotlight: Turning-Bus Collisions

The Transit Safety and Oversight Spotlight includes a “Data Spotlight” to share safety data trends and highlight data sets that may help the industry identify safety performance targets for their [Agency Safety Plans](#).

This month, we focus on National Transit Database (NTD) reporting of bus collisions¹ that occurred while buses made turns between January 2016 and August 2019.² Questions? Please contact FTA’s [Dharm Guruswamy](#).

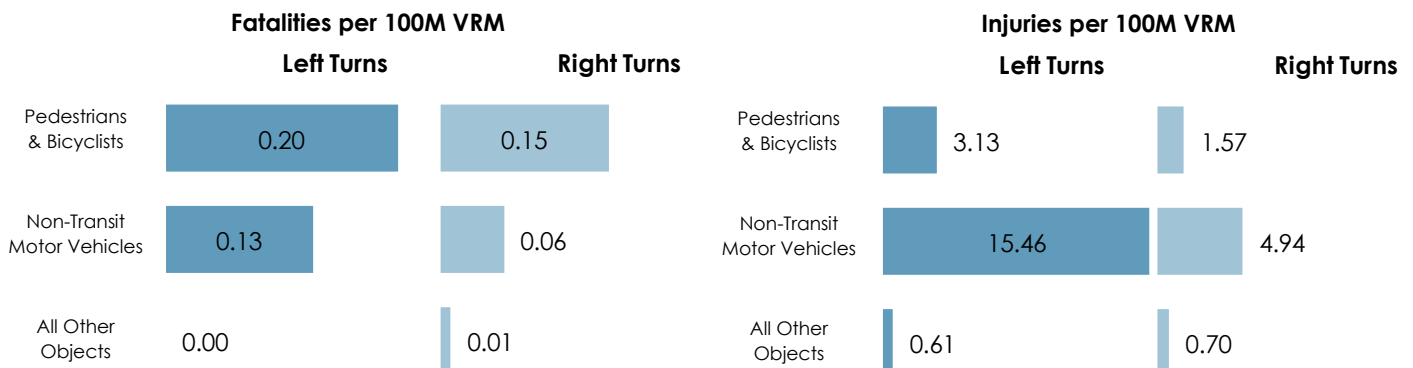
In 2016, the NTD began asking transit agencies to specify if a bus was taking a left or right turn during a collision. Since then, agencies have reported 2,462 collisions where buses were making turns, including 59 fatalities and 2,880 injuries. Most of these collisions (73 percent) involved a turning bus and a **Non-Transit Motor Vehicle**, while 20 percent involved either a **Pedestrian or Bicyclist**.

Turning-Bus Collision by Object Collided With, Jan 2016 - Aug 2019²



Most turning-bus collisions with **Non-Transit Motor Vehicles** (73 percent) and with **Pedestrians or Bicyclists** (66 percent) happened while a bus turned left. However, in most turning collisions with **Other Objects** (57 percent), the bus turned right. Related fatalities and injuries follow the same pattern—agencies more commonly reported left-turn collisions with **Non-Transit Motor Vehicles** and **Pedestrians or Bicyclists**, and right-turn collisions with **Other Objects**.

Turning-Bus Collision Fatalities and Injuries by Direction and Object Collided With, Jan 2016 - Aug 2019²



Since 2016, most turning collision fatalities and injuries resulted from left turns. Agencies reported more turning collision fatalities per 100 million vehicle revenue miles (100M VRM) from collisions with **Pedestrians or Bicyclists** than from more common collisions with **Non-Transit Motor Vehicles**.

Note: All graphs not to scale

¹Data includes reporting from NTD full reporters and excludes all collisions involving suicides.

²Data submitted to the NTD for years 2018 and 2019 is preliminary and subject to revision.

TSO Profile

This month's profile includes a Q&A with Myesha Stephney, Program Analyst, Office of Safety Review



Myesha Stephney, Program Analyst,
Office of Safety Review

How would you explain your job to someone you've never met? I work as a Program Analyst in the Office of Safety Review. I analyze rail data, conduct trends analysis for State Safety Oversight (SSO) audits, and provide technical assistance for the SSO Reporting (SSOR) tool, Oversight Tracking System (OTrak), and the Transit Award Management System (TrAMS).

What is your favorite part of your job? My favorite part of my job is knowing that I am helping to make public transit safer and more accessible to the communities I serve.

What were you doing prior to this role? Prior to joining the Office of Safety Review, I worked as a Correspondence Analyst during FTA's safety oversight of the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority Metrorail system. I managed correspondence review and ensured timely concurrence for corrective action plans, inspection reports, and Freedom of Information Act requests.

What led you to work in transit? My personal mission is to deliver government resources to the community, including the disabled, low-income, elderly, and under-served. Working in the Office of Transit Safety and Oversight has allowed me to do just that. I love knowing that my work will help provide safe and reliable transportation for communities across the United States.

What are some current projects or initiatives that you or your team are working on? I am currently assisting in the implementation and roll out of the SSOR tool which allows SSO Agencies to report safety data to FTA. I am also working on modernizing the FTA's OTrak database, which will help FTA recipients complete key oversight tasks, track reviews, and access historical data.

What is your favorite form of transportation and why? Riding the DC Metro train—it is safe, reliable, and I can read a good book while I leave the driving to the professionals.

What are your hobbies and interest outside of work? I enjoy trying out new recipes, taking long nature walks, and exploring the many the historic sites throughout D.C.



Upcoming Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan (PTASP) One-Day Bus Workshops

January 28 or January 29, 2020 | Washington, DC

Location: USDOT Headquarters

The Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan (PTASP) Bus Workshops will focus on the requirements needed for agencies to comply with the PTASP rule (49 C.F.R. Part 673) and provide Safety Management Systems implementation strategies. Additionally, the workshops will discuss how to begin creating Agency Safety Plans, including the identification of key stakeholders to coordinate Agency Safety Plan development. [Register now!](#)



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**Federal Transit
Administration**

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

Upcoming TSO Speaking Events

Transportation Research Board (TRB)

Annual Meeting

January 13, 2020

Washington, DC

