

Transit Advisory Committee for Safety (TRACS) Kick-Off Meeting Minutes

Conference Date and Time:

January 31, 2023 (1:00 PM EST – 4:00 PM EST)

Conference Location:

Virtual Conference conducted via Zoom for Government Webinar

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Attendance

TRACS Members	
Name	Organization
Edward Abel	Director of Operational Safety, <i>Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority</i>
Brian Alberts	Senior Director of Safety and Advisory Services, <i>American Public Transportation Association (APTA)</i>
Johanna Cockburn	Director of Transportation, <i>City of Greensboro (NC)</i>
Beverly Edwards	Chief Operating Officer, <i>First Transit</i>
Rebecca Frankhouser	Director of Safety, Security, and Quality Assurance, <i>King County Metro (WA)</i>
David Harris	Transit and Rail Division Director, <i>New Mexico Department of Transportation (DOT)</i>
Molly Hughes	Public Transportation Safety Administrator, <i>Washington State DOT</i>
Donna Johnson	Vice President and Chief Strategy Officer, <i>Dallas Area Rapid Transit</i>
Laura Karr	Associate General Counsel, <i>Amalgamated Transit Union</i>
Jim Keane	General Manager of Operations Safety, <i>Port Authority of New York and New Jersey</i>
Thomas Lamb	Chief of Innovation and Technology, <i>Metropolitan Transportation Authority, New York City Transit</i>
Brian Lapp	Chief Health and Safety Officer, <i>Port Authority of New York and New Jersey</i>
Raymond Lopez	Deputy Executive Officer of Corporate Safety, <i>Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority</i>
Rachel Maleh	Executive Director, <i>Operation Lifesaver, Inc.</i>
Santiago Osorio	Chief Safety Officer, <i>Metropolitan Transit Authority of Harris County (TX)</i>
Karen Philbrick	Executive Director, <i>Mineta Transportation Institute, San Jose State University</i>
Ashley Porter	Transit Safety Programs Manager, <i>Florida DOT</i>
Patrick Preusser	Director of Rapid Transit, <i>Department of Transportation Services City and County of Honolulu</i>
Reggie Reese	Chief Safety Officer, <i>Pierce Transit (WA)</i>
Adam Sharkey	Deputy Director, <i>River Cities Public Transit (SD)</i>
Justin Sobeck	State Safety Oversight Manager and Passenger Rail Safety Specialist, <i>Missouri DOT</i>
Lisa Staes	Associate Director of Transit Safety and Director of Workforce Development Programs, <i>Center for Urban Transportation Research, University of South Florida</i>
Gardner Tabon	Executive Vice President of Systemwide Accessibility and Chief Safety Officer, <i>Capital Metropolitan Transportation Authority (TX)</i>
Curtis Tate	International Administrative Vice President, <i>Transport Workers Union of America</i>

U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) Support	
Name	Organization
Nuria Fernandez	Administrator, <i>Federal Transit Administration (FTA)</i>
Veronica Vanterpool	Deputy Administrator, <i>FTA</i>
Joe DeLorenzo	Associate Administrator and Chief Safety Officer, <i>FTA Office of Transit Safety and Oversight (TSO)</i>
Jeremy Furrer	Division Chief, Safety Policy and Promotion, <i>FTA TSO Office of System Safety (TSO-10)</i>
Donna Aggazio	<i>FTA TSO</i>
Bridget Zamperini	<i>FTA TSO-10, TRACS Program Manager</i>
Sara Richmond	<i>FTA TSO</i>
Vanaaisha Pamnani	<i>FTA TSO-10</i>
Michael Green	<i>USDOT Volpe National Transportation Systems Center (Volpe Center)</i>
Sarah Husain	<i>USDOT Volpe Center</i>
Richard Wong	<i>FTA TCC-10 – Legislation and Regulations Division</i>
Heather Ueyama	<i>FTA TCC-10 – Legislation and Regulations Division</i>

Conference Kick-Off

Bridget Zamperini, TRACS Program Manager, opened the Kick-Off Meeting by delivering welcoming remarks. Additionally, Zamperini explained the meeting protocols for TRACS members and public attendees.

FTA Welcoming Remarks

TSO Associate Administrator Joe DeLorenzo, the TRACS Designated Federal Officer (DFO), served as the meeting’s main facilitator, including the introductions of the FTA Administrator and Deputy Administrator.

Nuria Fernandez, FTA Administrator, thanked the TRACS members for their efforts to improve transit safety. Administrator Fernandez noted USDOT and FTA’s focus on the expansion, modernization, and innovation of public transit. Administrator Fernandez noted that the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) authorized \$108 billion for public transportation, the largest Federal investment in transit in the Nation’s history.

In addition, Administrator Fernandez noted that TRACS helps FTA understand how safety concerns intersect with FTA’s programs and oversight work. She cited TRACS’s eight roadway worker protection recommendations from 2020, which FTA is considering as it develops a forthcoming Notice of Proposed Rulemaking on rail transit roadway worker protection. Finally, Administrator Fernandez highlighted that FTA will solicit input from TRACS to ensure that its policies and programs are reflective of the important areas that guide transportation safety, FTA’s greatest priority.

Deputy Administrator Veronica Vanterpool then thanked TRACS members for their support, and echoed Administrator Fernandez's comments on TRACS members' contributions to transit safety. Deputy Administrator Vanterpool noted her involvement in the selection of TRACS members and the topics that the committee will address. Deputy Administrator Vanterpool also expressed FTA's appreciation for the expertise and experience that TRACS members will bring to transit safety issues over the next two years.

Following the remarks from the Administrator and the Deputy Administrator, Joe DeLorenzo shared an outline of the Conference's agenda including:

- TRACS member introductions,
- Introduction to FTA and TRACS role,
- FTA's tasking for TRACS,
- Chairperson and Vice Chairperson announcement,
- Public comments, and
- Summary of next steps, deliverables, and concluding remarks.

TRACS Members Introductions

Joe DeLorenzo facilitated the introduction of the TRACS members. All 24 members were present, and each gave a short introduction of their title, organization, and their history in the transportation industry.

Joe DeLorenzo introduced Jim Keane, General Manager of Operations Safety for the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, and Lisa Staes, Associate Director of Transit Safety and Director of Workforce Development Programs for the University of South Florida's Center for Urban Transportation Research, as the TRACS Chairperson and Vice Chairperson, respectively. Jim Keane and Lisa Staes briefly addressed TRACS members and thanked them for the opportunity to serve in their respective capacities and thanked the members for their willingness to serve on the committee.

TRACS 2022-2024 Charter Overview

Joe DeLorenzo provided an overview of the TRACS 2022-2024 Charter, including member expectations, meetings, FTA and TRACS's roles, and voting procedures. DeLorenzo reiterated that the FTA Administrator and the DFO work together to assign TRACS with taskings relating to the safety of U.S. public transportation systems. TRACS then completes its research and analysis and provides recommendations addressed to USDOT and FTA, not to the industry at large. FTA's goal is for TRACS to compile research, analysis, and recommendations into one report per year for each task.

FTA's Tasking for TRACS

Joe DeLorenzo announced FTA's task for TRACS to research mitigations and best practices regarding the following three safety focus areas:

- Advancing Rider and Worker Safety
- Reducing Bus Collisions
- Cyber and Data Security Systems

TRACS members will divide into subcommittees to address these three safety focus areas. The subcommittees will meet monthly to collaborate on this work, with support from FTA and Volpe Center personnel. In addition, the full committee will meet twice annually in either a hybrid or virtual format.

Public Comments and Questions

Joe DeLorenzo opened the floor for questions from TRACS members and public attendees. Questions and comments are summarized below:

Person Who Asked Question	Question/Comment
Robert Maniuszko	How will original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) be involved in the discussion around reducing bus collisions?
Kevin Jones	Will there be additional meetings for the public to attend?
Benjamin St. Amand	Regarding operator assaults—what is the efficacy of barrier installation on verbal and physical operator assaults?
Mike Smith	How did we arrive at or choose on these three proposed focus areas?
Anonymous	What is the email point of contact?
Brad Long	Are there any safety standards or trainings in place, or in the process of being developed, for electric vehicle (EV) buses and transit vehicles?

Robert Maniuszko asked how the dialogue regarding original equipment manufacturer (OEM) involvement for reducing bus collisions would occur. Joe DeLorenzo responded that the engagement with OEMs will be determined through the appropriate subcommittee discussion on mitigations for reducing bus collisions.

Kevin Jones asked whether there will be additional meetings that the public will be able to attend. Bridget Zamperini answered that monthly subcommittee meetings are generally held with only TRACS members. Public participation in subcommittee meetings is contingent on subject matter expertise and approval from the subcommittee. Zamperini noted that interested individuals may reach out to her or to TRACS members to lend this expertise.

Benjamin St. Amand asked if FTA has received feedback from transit systems regarding the efficacy of barrier installation on verbal and physical operator assaults. Data reported to the National Transit Database indicate increased transit operator assaults. DeLorenzo noted that some transit agencies mentioned the need for and importance of operator training as a de-escalation strategy.

Mike Smith inquired about the selection of committee focus areas. Smith also noted that many transit agencies have structured their safety departments to align with the PTASP Rule (49 CFR part 673).

Joe DeLorenzo acknowledged a question in the chat regarding communication and confirmed the best way to connect with the committee is through the TRACS email address, which is TRACS@dot.gov, an account that is monitored daily.

In the webinar chat, Brad Long mentioned EV safety and the quick influx of high voltage transit vehicles. This question noted that EV technology appears to move faster than the knowledge of technicians and drivers within the transit industry and asked whether there are any safety standards or training in place or being developed for EV transit vehicles. Joe DeLorenzo responded that FTA has had many discussions with APTA and other stakeholders regarding this issue, and that it is being looked at regularly within FTA and other organizations. FTA will continue to monitor the developments and impact of this new technology.

TRACS Next Steps and Subcommittee Workplans

Joe DeLorenzo summarized TRACS members' next steps, including immediate steps such as commencing monthly subcommittee meetings, developing subcommittee workplans, and beginning to address subcommittee taskings. DeLorenzo also noted that FTA aims to conduct hybrid TRACS meetings in late spring and fall of 2023.

Close of Business

Joe DeLorenzo closed the Kick-Off Meeting by thanking TRACS members and public participants for their participation and engagement. He also reiterated next steps and contact information (TRACS@dot.gov) for the members.