

Transit Advisory Committee for Safety (TRACS) June 2024 Meeting Minutes

Conference Date and Time:

June 24, 2023 (10:00 AM EDT – 4:30 PM EDT)

June 25, 2023 (9:00 AM EDT – 2:00 PM EDT)

Hybrid Conference Location:

Virtual Conference conducted via Zoom for Government Webinar

In-Person at the U.S. Department of Transportation Event Center (Washington, D.C.)

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Day One

TRACS Member Attendance:

Committee Members		
Edward Abel (virtual)	Donna Johnson (virtual)	Reggie Reese (virtual)
Brian Alberts	Laura Karr	Adam Sharkey (virtual)
Johanna Cockburn	Jim Keane	Justin Sobeck (virtual)
Beverly Edwards	Thomas Lamb (virtual)	Lisa Staes
Rebecca Frankhouser	Rachel Maleh (virtual)	Gardner Tabon
David Harris	Karen Philbrick	
Molly Hughes	Ashley Porter (virtual)	

Federal Support Attendance:

FTA	Contract Support	Volpe National Transportation Systems Center (Volpe Center)
Selene Dalton-Kumins	Justin Bouyer	Meghan Boydston
Joe DeLorenzo	Sam Deck (virtual)	Don Fisher
Jeremy Furrer	Kim Devilla	Maggie Harger
Toby Rao (virtual)	Stephanie Rhoades	Sean Laffey
Sara Richmond	Reid Unison	
Richard Wong	Abigail Wolfgram (virtual)	
Bridget Zamperini		

Public Attendance:

Public Attendees		
Robert Bradway (virtual)	Ronald Ester	Thomas Limber (virtual)
Stig Oliver Buch (virtual)	Chris Geraci (virtual)	Christopher McKay (virtual)
Daniel Colbert (virtual)	Karen Harris (virtual)	Diana Palmer (virtual)
Fred Damron (virtual)	Jeff Hughes (virtual)	Monte Rodriguez (virtual)
Joseph D'Elia (virtual)	Jayme Johnson	Jim Smith (virtual)
Timothy Doddo (virtual)	Kevin Jones (virtual)	Paul Townsend (virtual)
Megan Dorroh (virtual)	Veronica Herrota	
Isoe Doza (virtual)	Christopher Lott	

Day One – Introduction

The goal of the meeting was to bring together Transit Advisory Committee for Safety (TRACS) members in person and virtually to discuss subcommittee goals, hear formal presentations, conduct working sessions, and receive feedback from all members on each subcommittee's progress.

Bridget Zamperini, TRACS Program Manager, initiated the meeting with welcoming remarks, a safety briefing, and roll call. Following Bridget, Joe DeLorenzo, Associate Administrator for Transit Safety and Oversight (TSO) and Designated Federal Officer for TRACS, discussed the priorities for TSO and how they link with the ongoing work of TRACS, the Federal Transit Administration's (FTA) actions in support of TRACS recommendations, as well as updates to the regulatory agenda. The subcommittee members asked questions regarding timelines associated with rulemaking updates and inquired about the Safety Management Systems Training.

Jim Keane and Lisa Staes, the TRACS Chairperson and Vice Chairperson, respectively, provided an update on TRACS activities to date and the committee's overall progress. Following Jim Keane and Lisa Staes, each subcommittee presented an update of their specific subcommittee's activities (Gardner Tabon for Advancing Rider and Worker Safety, Brian Alberts for Cyber and Data Security Systems, and Bridget Zamperini for Reducing Bus Collisions).

Public Comments

Following the break for lunch, each of the public attendees introduced themselves to the audience and had an opportunity to ask questions of the members.

FTA Mobility NeXt and Transit Bus Automation Research Presentation

Gwo-Wei Torng, Director of Mobility Innovation in the Office of Research, Demonstration, and Innovation at the Federal Transportation Administration (FTA), described the holistic view of mobility ecosystems and the desire to work towards equilibrium for supply and demand, matching travelers demand to the available operations. The research pipeline and how FTA chooses where to invest for their research was also discussed. Two research programs were addressed in the presentation. The research program, Mobility NeXt, includes the following:

- Envisioning Carefree Mobility
 - Ability to move easily and freely without worry or anxiety
 - Differs for everyone
- Intelligent Transportation System-enhanced Mobility
 - Smart Operations – making transit better and delivering the right solution at the right time
 - Smart Travelers – making climate-smart decisions that meet their mobility needs
- Mobility NeXt will research, test, and share new models for mobility; this will assess where resources should be spent to understand next steps

The research program, Strategic Transit Automation Research (STAR), includes the following:

- Focuses on driving automation in context of transit bus operations, including systems with automated control of functions
- Developed with heavy stakeholder input from the transit industry
- STAR Plan 2.0, announced at the APTA Mobility Conference in May 2024, shared roadmap for the next 3+ years for upcoming research and engagement opportunities

Following the presentation, there was an open discussion centered around best practices and lessons learned.

Accessibility and Transit Safety Presentation

Selene Dalton-Kumins, Associate Administrator of the Office of Civil Rights at the FTA, shared her background and experiences with transit accessibility and how it shapes the work she does today. The presentation provided examples of gaps in public transit services, the implications of user error and equipment failure, the challenges that are experienced by people with disabilities, and how efforts to promote safety often miss the inclusion of the voices of those who are impacted the most. The discussion centered around six points:

- Tie downs pose a challenge for evacuation during a thermal event, high floors and evacuating cutaways are also a challenge
- There is a push to install less lighting or low lighting at transit stops and stations, which may pose challenges for persons with visual impairments
- Standard securement equipment is unable to accommodate the wide range of mobility devices, and redesign of securement equipment is something that needs to be examined
- Bus stops are sometimes located where operators cannot see a person in a wheelchair waiting for the bus
- Wheelchairs do not always fit on transit vehicles, WC-19 Certified Transport Wheelchairs are costly and not prevalent
- Accessibility perspectives are not always brought into planning for capital projects

Following the presentation, there was an open discussion centered around the correlation between safety and accessibility and the fact that the Americans with Disabilities Act is a civil rights law intersecting with safety laws.

WC-19 is a voluntary industry standard that establishes minimum design and performance requirements for wheelchairs that are designed to be transported aboard motor vehicles. A wheelchair that complies with this standard's requirements is considered to provide a reasonable measure of safe and effective seating during vehicle ingress/egress during normal transportation and is capable of being secured using the vehicle's standardized securement equipment in the event of a collision.

Subcommittee Breakout Sessions

Following the Accessibility and Transit Safety presentation, the three subcommittees moved into breakout sessions to discuss initial sub-topic areas of interest. These breakout sessions involved discussion of each subcommittee's potential recommendations to FTA and the possible actions that FTA could take to implement such recommendations.

The Volpe Center support team will incorporate updates from these breakout sessions into each subcommittee's report to FTA prior to TRACS members' approval and submission of reports.

Closing Remarks

Bridget concluded the Day One session and thanked the members for their contributions during the working sessions. She then reminded committee members that Day Two begins at 9:00 AM EDT.

Day Two

TRACS Member Attendance:

Committee Members		
Edward Abel (virtual)	Donna Johnson (virtual)	Reggie Reese (virtual)
Brian Alberts	Laura Karr	Adam Sharkey (virtual)
Johanna Cockburn	Jim Keane	Justin Sobeck (virtual)
Beverly Edwards	Thomas Lamb (virtual)	Lisa Staes
Rebecca Frankhouser	Rachel Maleh (virtual)	Gardner Tabon
David Harris	Karen Philbrick	
Molly Hughes	Ashley Porter (virtual)	

Federal Support Attendance:

FTA	Contract Support	Volpe National Transportation Systems Center (Volpe Center)
Joe DeLorenzo	Justin Bouyer	Meghan Boydston
Jeremy Furrer	Sam Deck (virtual)	Don Fisher
Toby Rao (virtual)	Kim Devilla	Maggie Harger
Sara Richmond	Stephanie Rhoades	Sean Laffey
Veronica Vanterpool	Abigail Wolfgram (virtual)	
Matt Welbes	Reid Unison	
Richard Wong		
Bridget Zamperini		

Public Attendance:

Public Attendees		
Robert Bradway (virtual)	Ronald Ester	Christopher McKay (virtual)
Daniel Colbert (virtual)	Chris Geraci (virtual)	Chris Medlin (virtual)
Joseph D'Elia (virtual)	Karen Harris (virtual)	Diana Palmer (virtual)
Timothy Doddo (virtual)	Veronica Herrota	Monte Rodriquez (virtual)
Megan Dorroh (virtual)	Kevin Jones (virtual)	Jason Snyder
Isoe Doza (virtual)	Christopher Lott	

Day Two – Introduction

Bridget Zamperini, TRACS Program Manager, started Day Two of the meeting with welcoming remarks.

Veronica Vanterpool, FTA Acting Administrator, shared remarks with the TRACS members, highlighting the important work that TRACS has done and how it influences FTA’s work. She mentioned that the work from this group has influenced the Rail Transit Roadway Worker Protection Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM), Proposed General Directive 24-1: Required Actions Regarding Assaults on Transit Workers, and other key initiatives.

Innovation and Technology in Transportation Safety Presentation

Thomas Lamb, retired Chief of Innovation and Technology at New York City Transit and Director of Energy at Metropolitan Transportation Authority, presented lessons learned from experiences pursuing improved transportation safety through innovation. His presentation included:

- TRACS duties and USDOT’s goals
- Articulation of a transportation safety “need”
- Stages of the innovation and technology development process, including:
 - Idea
 - Incubation
 - Assessment
 - Conceptual design
 - Final design
 - Implementation

Tom stated that the proof-of-concept for a new idea occurs in the Assessment state to validate fit, form, and function and calculate the value proposition. He referenced FTA Report #0145, “Integrated Wheel/Rail Characterization Through Advanced Monitoring and Analytics,” as a proof-of-concept activity as an example.

Advancing Rider and Worker Safety Presentation and Discussion

TRACS member Gardner Tabon, Executive Vice President of Systemwide Accessibility & Chief Safety Officer at Capital Metropolitan Transportation Authority, began with an overview of past subcommittee meetings before leading a discussion of the subcommittee’s recommendation themes. The main discussion points among the TRACS members were:

- Precautions for thermal events
- Bus stop design criteria
- Lighting standards
- Bus vehicle design standards
- Access to safe mobility devices
- Transit agency safety culture

TRACS members also discussed next steps, including:

- Incorporating perspectives of people with disabilities into TRACS recommendation development

- Reviewing various bus stop design standards and recommending one
- Researching existing lighting standards
- Considering a recommendation to FTA that would lead to improved lighting at bus stops not operated by the transit agencies
- Determining how FTA can promote a top-down safety culture while also considering perspectives of frontline workers

Reducing Bus Collisions Presentation and Discussion

TRACS member Reggie Reese, Chief Safety Officer at Pierce Transit, began with an overview of past subcommittee meetings before leading a discussion of the subcommittee's recommendation themes. The main discussion points among the TRACS members were:

- Minimum training requirements
- Strategies to highlight the value proposition of safety initiatives for upper-level management
- Risk level quantification
- Fatigue risk management and the impact of scheduling
- Planned acclimation to the job for new operators
- Technology and proof-of-concept
- Procurement standards
- Transit safety marketing to the public

TRACS members also discussed next steps, including:

- Researching voluntary close call reporting addressed in TRACS Working Group Report 11-01: Establishing a Confidential, Non-Punitive, Close Call Safety Reporting System for the Rail Transit Industry
- Discussing regulatory actions for fatigue risk management and minimum training
- Considering methods for including safety considerations in the procurement process
- Identifying best practices for FTA to research and communicate broadly

Cyber and Data Security Systems Presentation and Discussion

TRACS member Brian Alberts, Senior Director of Safety and Advisory Services at the American Public Transportation Association (APTA), began with an overview of past subcommittee meetings before leading a discussion of the subcommittee's recommendation themes. The main discussion points among the TRACS members were:

- Best practices toolkit based on existing autonomous systems
- Presentation materials to communicate the benefits and challenges of autonomous shuttles to decision-makers
- Safety vulnerabilities of autonomous vehicle (AV) systems and mitigations
- Implications of conversion from a human-operated system to an autonomous system
- Reporting of cybersecurity events to the National Transit Database (NTD), Department of Homeland Security (DHS), and Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA)

TRACS members also discussed next steps, including:

- Reaching out to additional autonomous system operators to compile best practices
- Interviewing vehicle operators to identify challenges
- Categorizing recommendations based on timeline and system mode

Subcommittee Breakout Sessions

Following the subcommittee presentations and discussions, the three subcommittees moved into breakout sessions to continue discussing initial subtopic areas and build upon the feedback each subcommittee received from the full committee. These breakout sessions involved discussion of each subcommittee's potential recommendations to FTA and the possible actions that FTA could take to implement such recommendations.

The Volpe Center support team will incorporate updates from these breakout sessions into each subcommittee's report to FTA prior to TRACS members' approval and submission of reports.

Public Comments

Following the subcommittee breakout sessions, members of the public were given the opportunity to share their comments. The following summarizes the public comments:

- Christopher Lott, International Brotherhood of Teamsters: Chris sat in on the Reducing Bus Collisions Subcommittee and urged the subcommittee to explore minimum safety training requirements for both middle and upper-level management. He also encouraged the subcommittee to consider the day-to-day impact of scheduling on workers to ensure that they are protected. They should have safe places to stop and eat lunch.

Closing Remarks

Bridget Zamperini concluded the Day 2 session and reminded the members that the subcommittees will not meet during the month of July but will resume again in August. Joe DeLorenzo shared his appreciation for the work from the group. The committee will meet one more time in a hybrid setting later this year prior to submitting a final report to FTA by February 1, 2025.