



Transit Safety and Oversight Spotlight

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Office of Transit Safety and Oversight

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Dear Transit Colleagues,

Last month, I had the honor of being a keynote speaker at the Fire in Vehicles Conference in Baltimore, Maryland, where participants gathered from around the world to address fire safety for road and rail vehicles. The audience represented transit agencies, vehicle manufacturers, fire suppression system manufacturers, researchers, and others from across the transportation industry. It was energizing to be part of this varied group of transportation professionals who shared a common commitment to safety.

During my remarks, I explained the Office of Transit Safety and Oversight's (TSO's) history and highlighted our recent [rulemaking progress](#), our [safety standards project](#), and our work with the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA). However, there's an important part to TSO's story that I did not have a chance to discuss—what's next for our organization.

Going forward, one of TSO's major focuses will be on safety and oversight data—collecting it, analyzing it, and using it to determine our priorities. The FTA officially adopted a [Safety Management System \(SMS\)](#) approach to managing safety risk with the publication of the [Public Transportation Safety Program Final Rule](#) in August. Good data is crucial to the success of SMS, which uses data to proactively identify, avoid, and mitigate safety risks. The better data we collect, the better equipped we will be to help our nation's transit systems become even safer. You'll hear more about this topic in the coming months, and I'd love to hear from you about how you're already using data to monitor and improve safety.

Looking at the immediate future, we have some personnel shifts in TSO. Angela Dluger, the TSO Deputy Associate Administrator, is now serving as the Director of the WMATA Safety Oversight Office (FWSO), as the previous FWSO Director, Sean Thompson, has taken a position outside the Federal government. Kimberly Burtch, Director of the Office of Safety Review, is stepping up to serve as the Acting Deputy Associate Administrator. Of course, these shifts result in additional leadership changes in TSO, and I welcome anyone who interacts with our TSO leadership team to [contact me](#) with questions or concerns. I look forward to seeing what our team accomplishes in their new roles.

Sincerely,

Thomas Littleton, Ph.D.



Thomas Littleton speaking at the 2016 Fire in Vehicles Conference in Baltimore, MD

FTA Marks One Year of Safety Oversight at WMATA

One year ago, the FTA temporarily assumed direct safety oversight over the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) Metrorail system. In that short time, the FTA has provided more thorough safety oversight over WMATA than it has ever received.

The FTA is exercising its authority and using enforcement tools that Congress has provided to aid WMATA in addressing systemic safety deficiencies and building a strong safety culture. The FTA has conducted inspections resulting in remedial actions, issued investigation reports with findings, and issued safety directives with required corrective actions. These reports and safety directives can be found on the [FTA WMATA Safety Oversight page](#).

A few examples of FTA-identified safety concerns where WMATA has made improvements include the Rail Operations Control Center, where for the first time since 2012 all rail traffic controllers have completed annual certifications, and the Roadway Worker Protection (RWP)



FTA Lead Safety Investigator Troy Lloyd checks track gauge along the WMATA Metrorail track.



FTA investigators Phil Herbert (left) and Troy Lloyd (right) examine a section of WMATA Metrorail track.

program, where nearly 2,000 employees with expired RWP Safety Training cards have been retrained and certified.

In addition, FTA has worked with WMATA to ensure SafeTrack plans give first priority to track locations where urgent repairs are required to reduce the risk of smoke and fire events, and WMATA has corrected numerous instances of degraded fire and life safety equipment in tunnels that impact emergency passenger evacuations.

The WMATA Metrorail system delivers tremendous benefits to the Washington, D.C. region and is vital to the area's residents, businesses, and visitors, as well as to the federal government. All users of Metrorail deserve a reliable and safe system. This is why FTA will continue to temporarily provide effective safety oversight, and help WMATA build on the improvements made in the last year, until there is a new State Safety Oversight Agency in place that is capable of performing its oversight responsibilities. We are committed to working with WMATA and the new agency to ensure a safer, more reliable ride for WMATA customers throughout the National Capital Region.

Read more about the FTA's safety oversight activity at WMATA on the [Fast Lane Blog](#) and view a [timeline of events](#).

TSO Profile

Q&A with Joe Powell, Program Analyst, Office of Safety Review



Joe Powell, Program Analyst

How would you explain your job to someone you've never met before? I work with State Safety Oversight (SSO) Program Managers from nine states to make sure their programs comply with Federal standards. The SSO Agencies (SSOAs) that they lead are the principal safety oversight authorities for rail transit. The FTA performs audits and provides outreach and guidance to the SSO Programs.

What were you doing prior to this role? I served as the program manager for the FTA's Bus Safety Program, now located in the TSO Office of Safety Review. The Bus Safety Program provides resources and outreach to improve safety, frequently for small and rural providers where there are unique challenges to providing public transportation. Rural residents may not have access to a car or the types of transit available in urban areas, but they still need to get to work, visit the doctor, and run errands. The FTA provides financial assistance to rural areas to help people get to where they need to be, and my office helped to ensure that bus services are provided safely.

Prior to joining the FTA, I was a Safety Investigator with the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration. I conducted onsite safety investigations at bus and trucking companies to make sure they were in compliance with Federal safety regulations. I would sometimes have to get my hands dirty physically inspecting motor-coaches and tractor-trailers—an aspect of the job that I really enjoyed and still miss. I met so many interesting people in the industry, and I developed a lot of respect for the drivers and the individuals running the companies. Most of them were very small “mom and pop” operations who had often put everything they owned into starting their businesses.

What are some current projects or initiatives you or your team are working on? I'm working with three states that are preparing new transit projects for passenger service: the Second Avenue Subway extension in New York City, scheduled to open this winter, and the Delmar Loop Trolley in St. Louis, Missouri, and M-1 streetcar in Detroit, Michigan, both scheduled to open in the spring. I'm overseeing the FTA's Safety and Security Readiness Reviews of these systems to make sure they are ready to launch safely.

I'm working with the SSO Program Managers on becoming compliant with the new SSO Rule that took effect in April and strengthens SSOAs' safety enforcement authority. The FTA is working on technical guidance to help SSO Program Managers understand the new regulations, apply them to the rail systems under their jurisdictions, and certify that they're compliant with those regulations.

How do you work with people outside of the FTA? How would you like to be working with them in the future? Within the SSO Program, I have monthly group calls with the SSO Program Managers where we discuss program updates and issues unique to their states. I've started more frequent one-on-one meetings with them and want to increase the frequency of this type of communication. It has helped me to better understand what it's like to run an SSO Program from the states' perspectives and what kind of support they need from the FTA.

What is something you wish people knew about FTA or TSO? I'm frequently impressed by the level of commitment to the American public that my coworkers demonstrate. TSO is comprised of a lot of military veterans and committed civil servants who have the best interests of the American people at heart. I've been with the FTA and TSO for two and a half years, and even though I know this about my coworkers by now, I continue to be impressed by it.

Reminder: TRACS Meeting Scheduled November 29-30

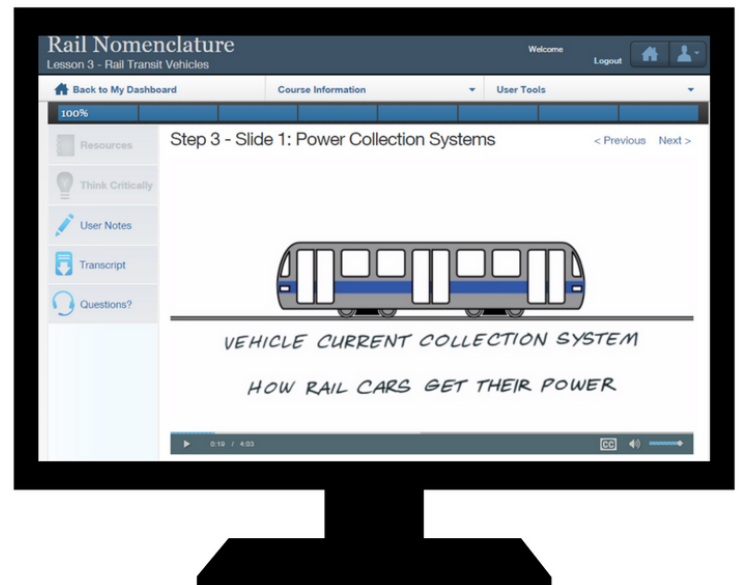


The [next Transit Advisory Committee for Safety \(TRACS\) meeting](#) is scheduled for November 29-30, 2016, at the National Association of Home Builders headquarters in Washington, DC. During the two-day meeting, FTA Acting Administrator Carolyn Flowers will address the committee; Associate Administrator for Research, Demonstration and Innovation Vincent Valdes will discuss FTA's five-year research strategic plan and the results of a recently concluded online dialogue on the topic; and TRACS work groups will present their recommendations about improving safety culture and safety data to the full committee. For more information, please contact FTA's [Adrienne Malasky](#).

A March 2016 TRACS meeting in Washington, DC

Five Reasons to take the FTA's New Rail Nomenclature e-Learning

1. **You don't need a background in rail transit in order to take it...** The course was designed for a wide audience, including State Safety Oversight employees and contractors, personnel responsible for safety oversight at rail transit systems, FTA employees, researchers, and the general public with an interest in understanding rail terminology—but anyone can take it. There are no prerequisites.
2. **...But you'll be knowledgeable when you're finished.** The course teaches participants to identify the major terms and components used in rail transit systems. Topic areas include rail transit modes and vehicles, track, special track work, traction power, signal systems, rail grade crossings, operations control centers, and vehicle maintenance facilities.
3. **It's web-based.** No travel required.
4. **You can take it at your own pace.** The course includes about two hours of video instruction, plus quizzes and resources to review. Participants are urged to complete the training in multiple sittings.
5. **It's free!**



Visit the [FTA's website](#) to register and take the course. Questions? Contact FTA's [Dakisha Spratling](#).

Upcoming Training

The FTA sponsors several safety-related training courses, including those listed below. Descriptions, prerequisites, fees, and registration information can be found on the [FTA's website](#). Additionally, there are two on-demand e-learning courses, [SMS Awareness](#) and [Rail Nomenclature](#).

SMS Safety Assurance	Virtual-Live	November 22
SMS Principles for Transit	Cleveland, OH	November 30-December 2
Transit Rail System Safety	Washington, DC	December 5-9
SMS Principles for Transit	Tampa, FL	December 7-9
SMS Safety Assurance	Virtual-Live	December 13
Effectively Managing Transit Emergencies	Landover, MD	December 13-16

Upcoming TSO Speaking Events

Office of Transit Safety and Oversight (TSO) personnel will speak at the following industry events. Visit the FTA's [event calendar](#) to view additional upcoming events. If you would like to schedule a TSO speaker for a future event, please contact [Donna Aggazio](#).

APTA 2016 Safety Committees Joint Mid-Year Meeting	Miami, FL	December 5-7
Florida Public Transportation Association Annual Conference	Jacksonville, FL	December 12
Transportation Research Board 96th Annual Meeting	Washington, DC	January 9-10

FTA Hosts Triennial and State Management Review Workshops for Transit Agencies through December 2016

The FTA is hosting a series of [Triennial Review Workshops](#) and [State Management Review Workshops](#) for transit agencies through December 2016. The workshops are designed to assist transit agency grantees in preparing for [Triennial](#) and [State Management Reviews](#) by reviewing statutory and program requirements and providing grantees with training materials, procedural guides, and other supporting materials. Attendees include transit agency staff, FTA Regional Office staff members, and the FTA's Triennial and State Management Review contractors. For locations, registration, and related information, click on the links at right.

QUICK LINKS

- [Triennial Review workshop dates, locations, and registration](#)
- [State Management Review workshop dates, locations, and registration](#)
- [Comprehensive Review Guide for Fiscal Year 2017](#)
- [Triennial Review web page](#)
- [State Management Review web page](#)

Deputy's Corner

Safety Management System Resources

As the current Acting Deputy Associate Administrator my goals are to continue sharing important transit safety and oversight resources with our newsletter readers. In the coming months, this column will address some of the questions that the FTA is hearing about Safety Management System (SMS) implementation. To start, I want to highlight some existing resources:

SMS Awareness eLearning: This one-hour e-learning course can be taken on-demand on the FTA's website. The course introduces the participant to SMS and the FTA's SMS Framework, and it identifies the importance of employee safety reporting systems to the success of SMS. You can register for this and other training on the [FTA's website](#).

FTA's SMS Resource Site: This web page houses FTA's SMS resources including our [SMS Framework](#), [frequently asked questions](#), and archived webinars. We will add to it as resources become available.

We are also conducting an SMS implementation pilot programs at various sized rail and bus agencies. The FTA will apply lessons learned and identify best practices from these pilot programs to develop guidance materials and technical assistance for transit systems of all sizes and modes. We will keep you informed as these materials become available. You can read brief updates on the pilot programs in our [June](#) and [October](#) newsletters.

If you have SMS questions that you would like to see addressed here, please email them to FTASafetyStakeholder@dot.gov.



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



TAKE OUR SURVEY by November 30

Visit <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/62VVRTD> and let us know what you think of our newsletter! Your input will help us deliver news and information that matter to you. The survey is anonymous and only takes a few minutes to complete. Your participation and feedback are greatly appreciated.