



## Transit Safety and Oversight Spotlight

Federal Transit Administration  
Office of Transit Safety and Oversight

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## Note from the Associate Administrator

May 2016

Dear Transit Stakeholder,

Welcome to the first issue of the transit safety newsletter to be published quarterly by the Federal Transit Administration's (FTA's) Office of Transit Safety and Oversight (TSO).

TSO was established in July 2013 in response to the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21) Act. Since then, we've been working to make transit even safer through policy development, hazard investigations, oversight programs, and other activities. Many of you who work in the transit industry are still learning about who we are and what we do, and I hope this newsletter will help make some of those connections. With recent events like the publication of the State Safety Oversight Final Rule and our new oversight responsibilities for the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority, we've realized a need to communicate more often with those who work with or have an interest in public transportation safety. We plan to use this newsletter to keep you informed of FTA's safety news and initiatives, rulemaking progress, training, events, and more.

I hope you find the newsletter informative and worth sharing with colleagues. If you have feedback or ideas for a future topic, please email us at [FTASafetyStakeholder@dot.gov](mailto:FTASafetyStakeholder@dot.gov).

Thomas Littleton



## FTA Moves Forward with WMATA Safety Oversight

In October 2015, Secretary of Transportation Anthony Foxx directed the FTA to assume temporary and direct safety oversight of the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) Metrorail system. In response, the FTA stood up the WMATA Safety Oversight (FWSO) Team, comprised of multidisciplinary staff from the FTA as well as inspectors, auditors, and investigators from other Department of Transportation agencies. *(cont. on pg. 2)*

## WMATA

(cont. from pg. 1) FWSO is on the ground at WMATA daily. In seven months of oversight, the team has conducted nearly 150 inspections, both scheduled and unscheduled. If FWSO inspectors or investigators find a pattern in safety issues, the FTA can issue Safety Directives with required actions for WMATA to carry out. For each required action, WMATA must create and submit a corrective action plan (CAP) detailing the actions they will take to improve safety. CAPs are subject to FTA approval. Every CAP status and estimated closure date is publically available on the [FTA's WMATA CAP Tracking Table](#).



FTA's role at WMATA is temporary. The FWSO team will continue its safety oversight until Maryland, Virginia, and DC replace the Tri-State Oversight Committee (TOC) with a State Safety Oversight Agency that is compliant with current federal law and capable of performing its safety responsibilities. This is the first time that FTA has assumed direct safety oversight of a public transit system.

The FWSO team recently launched a three-part safety inspection blitz focusing on key areas of concern: red signal overruns, track integrity, and rail vehicle securement. Safety blitz inspections will continue for several weeks with final reports complete in early summer. The final reports will include findings which may lead to FTA issuing new safety directives to WMATA with additional corrective actions.

To learn more about FTA's role and ongoing activities at WMATA, visit [FTA's website](#).

## Deputy's Corner

*Angela Dluger, Deputy Associate Administrator for the Office of Transit Safety and Oversight*

Thank you for taking the time to learn more about TSO's safety and oversight activities, guidance, and programs. I want to share with you a few things we have in the pipeline:

### **Rulemaking**

After publishing the State Safety Oversight (SSO) Final Rule in March, the FTA is developing two more final rules and anticipates their publication within the next several months:

The **Public Transportation Safety Program** will formally establish the principles and practices of Safety Management Systems as the foundation of the FTA's new safety oversight authority. FTA published the Noticed of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) in August 2015 and accepted comments through October 13, 2015.

The **Safety Certification Training Program** will set training requirements for public transportation industry personnel who are responsible for safety oversight. The FTA published the NPRM in December 2015 and accepted comments through February 1, 2016. (cont. on pg. 3)



## Deputy's Corner

(cont. from pg. 2)

### SSO Workshop

The FTA is hosting an SSO Agency Workshop in Washington, DC, July 18-22. For more information, contact your FTA SSO Program Coordinator.

### Training

The FTA offers classroom-based and virtual safety training courses to transit industry personnel, including courses that follow the FTA's [Interim Safety Certification Training Provisions](#). You can search the [course catalog](#) by agency role (e.g., bus staff, SSOA Program Manager), or you can visit the [training calendar](#) to find courses by date and location. The table below lists some of the courses offered this month. Follow the links to read more about the course, prerequisites, fees, and registration.

<a href="#">Transit Safety and Security Audit Course</a>	San Francisco, CA	May 11 - 13
<a href="#">SMS Principles For Transit</a>	Minneapolis, MN	May 11 - 13
<a href="#">SMS Principles For Transit</a>	Arlington, VA	May 16-18
<a href="#">Fundamentals of Bus Collision Investigation</a>	Knoxville, TN	May 16-20
<a href="#">Advanced Rail Incident Investigation</a>	Boston, MA	May 16-20

### Safety Advisory 16-1

Last month, the FTA issued [Safety Advisory 16-1](#) requesting SSO agencies to submit information about stop signal overruns within the rail transit systems they oversee. SSO agencies have 90 days to provide the FTA with the number of stop signal overruns that occurred during calendar year 2015, definitions of a stop signal overrun and stop signal or aspect, and a description of the processes used to detect and report overruns.

Safety Advisories request information from SSO and transit agencies in response to potential safety risks. The FTA uses the data collected from Safety Advisories to analyze safety issues, inform rulemaking, and determine if further action is required.

## State Safety Oversight Final Rule

The FTA published the [State Safety Oversight Final Rule](#), effective April 15, 2016, to help ensure that State Safety Oversight Agencies have the authority and resources they need to enforce safety rules and prevent and mitigate accidents and incidents within their rail transit agencies. For a summary of the rule, read the FTA's [press release](#) and [fact sheet](#).

Office of Program Oversight

## STATS OF THE MONTH

FTA's Office of Program Oversight manages approximately 300 grantee reviews each year, including Triennial, State Management, Financial Management Oversight, and Procurement System Reviews. Here are some stats from the 2013-2015 Triennial Review cycle.

**7.89**

Average number of findings of deficiency. The median was 6.

**2 in 3**

reviews resulted in a procurement-related finding.

The most common finding was

**"Lacking independent cost estimate"**

and was found in about 1 in 4 reviews.

**8%**

of reviews (49 out of 596) had zero findings of deficiency.

**5%**

of reviews (30 out of 596) had 20 or more findings of deficiency.

### SSO Final Rule Key Dates

3/16/16: SSO Final Rule published

4/15/16: SSO Final Rule effective

4/15/19: SSOAs must be compliant



## TRACS Kicks Off 2016 at Washington, DC Meeting

The Transit Advisory Committee for Safety (TRACS) met on March 29-30 in Washington, DC to kick off two new safety tasks that will be the committee's focus for 2016. TRACS is a federal advisory committee comprised of transit leaders from across the country that was chartered in 2009 by the US Transportation Secretary to advise the FTA on public transportation safety matters.

For the first task, the committee will advise the FTA on how transit agencies can establish strong safety cultures. TRACS will develop practical recommendations detailing processes, practices, tasks, and individual employee responsibilities that support a strong safety culture. They also will define "safety culture" and examine how other organizations and industries address safety culture.

For the second task, the FTA asked the committee to help define the functional requirements and data elements of a comprehensive safety data collection and analysis framework. The FTA has adopted a Safety Management System (SMS) approach to developing and implementing the Public Transportation Safety Program, and data collection and analysis are critical to the success of an SMS. TRACS plans to spend the weeks following the meeting researching what data other industries collect and evaluating what types of data should be collected by whom for rail and bus transit. The team will focus on value and benefit for the FTA and transit agencies.

### New Members

TRACS welcomed eight new members and one reappointed member:

**Herman R. Bernal** – Arizona Department of Transportation

**Toby L. Fauver** – Pennsylvania Department of Transportation

**David H. Goeres** – Utah Transit Authority

**David Hahn** – American Public Transportation Association

**Jeanne Krieg** – Eastern Contra Costa Transit Authority

**Jeffrey T. Lau** – Bay Area Rapid Transit System

**Eric J. Muntan** – Miami-Dade Transit

**John Samuelson** – Transport Workers Union of America

**Alvin H. Pearson** (reappointed member) – Memphis Area Transit Authority



## TSO Profiles

### Q&A with Kimberly Burtch, Acting Director, Office of Safety Review

We'd like to take this opportunity to introduce ourselves! In each newsletter, we'll interview a member of the TSO team. This month features Kimberly Burtch, Acting Director of the Office of Safety Review. Her office's primary function is to perform conformance oversight activities for the State Safety Oversight (SSO) Program per Title 49 CFR Part 659 State Safety Oversight and Title 49 CFR Part 674, and the Drug and Alcohol program, Title 49 CFR Part 655 Prevention of Alcohol Misuse and Prohibited Drug Use in Transit Operations. Additionally, they provide Continuity of Operations (COOP) activities for the FTA.



**How long have you been in this role?** Since October 2015. Coming from TSO's Office of System Safety, I had a basic awareness of the SSO program and its function. Since taking on the role of Acting Director, I've become heavily involved in the details of our functions and appreciate the exceptional work performance by the Office of Safety Review staff and our State Safety Oversight Agency partners.

**What were you doing prior to this role?** I was the Division Chief for the Safety Assurance and Risk Management Division in FTA's Office of System Safety, where I oversaw development of new safety policies and procedures. I've been at the FTA since January 2014. Before that I was with Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA) Office of Accident Investigation and Prevention.

**Have you always worked in the transportation industry?**

Yes, I started my career with the US Coast Guard, which was actually part of DOT at the time. And from there I moved to the FAA.

**What are some of your office's current priorities or activities?** The office staff continues to work directly with our SSO program managers to address upcoming and ongoing SSO Audits, Safety and Security Readiness Review (SSRR) activities, and State Certification Work Plans (CWP). We are also preparing for our next SSO Workshop scheduled for July 2016. In addition to these activities, we recently held our 11<sup>th</sup> Annual FTA Drug and Alcohol Program National Conference in Sacramento, CA.

**What is something you wish people knew about FTA or TSO?** When I was at FAA, they became ISO 9001 certified, meaning that they met quality management system standards set by the International Organization for Standardization. I was a member of a small team of staff that established the program for my office. What it helped me understand was that the certification process wasn't about focusing on what we did wrong—it was a matter of finding out what we could improve. I think that when the FTA conducts audits, people think we're looking to find fault with them or their program processes. But that's not what we're doing. We're reviewing processes and procedures to determine if the program is adhering to established standards and offering opportunities for improvement.

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

## New Website

The FTA recently updated its website to make content more searchable, remove outdated information, and adopt a design consistent with the rest of the Department of Transportation. [FTA's](#) and [TSO's](#) sites still contain the latest agency and safety news, rulemaking updates, training, and events. Trouble finding something? Email [ftasafetystakeholder@dot.gov](mailto:ftasafetystakeholder@dot.gov) with your transit safety-related website requests and comments.

## Upcoming TSO Speaking Events

For details about events listed below and to learn about more upcoming events, visit the [event calendar](#) on FTA's website.

May 3	Amalgamated Transit Union Legislative Conference	Silver Spring, MD
May 15-16	<a href="#">2016 APTA Bus and Paratransit Conference</a>	Charlotte, NC
May 24	<a href="#">Virginia Transit Association's 2016 Transit Conference and Bus Expo</a>	Fredericksburg, VA
May 25-26	<a href="#">2016 CTAA EXPO</a>	Portland, OR
June 19-22	<a href="#">2016 APTA Rail Conference</a>	Phoenix, AZ
July 18-22	FTA SSOA Workshop	Washington, DC
August 14-16	<a href="#">State Public Transportation Partnerships/Transit Midwest Conference</a>	Kansas City, MO

## Rulemaking Timeline

TSO is leading a number of safety-related rulemaking activities. Look for further communications as Final Rules are published.

MAP-21/FAST Act Requirements	Federal Register Publication
Public Transportation Safety Program NPRM	Published 8/14/15 Final Rule under development
National Public Transportation Safety Plan	Published 2/5/16 Comment period closed 4/5/16
Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan NPRM	Published 2/5/16 Comment period closed 4/5/16
Interim Provisions Safety Certification Training Program NPRM	Effective 5/28/15 Published 12/3/15, Closed 2/1/16 Final Rule under development
State Safety Oversight Final Rule	Published 3/16/16
Operator Assault NPRM	Under development Statutory due date 3/17