

Transit Safety and Oversight Spotlight

U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Transit Administration

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Message from the Acting Associate Administrator

Mar. 2019
Vol. 4 No. 2

Dear Transit Colleagues,

In March, FTA [announced](#) that the Washington Metrorail Safety Commission’s State Safety Oversight (SSO) Program achieved certification. Additionally, FTA [announced](#) in late February that Florida, New Jersey and New York’s SSO Programs obtained certification in advance of the April 15, 2019 deadline. With these new certifications, FTA has successfully worked with the 30 states with rail transit systems to strengthen and certify all 31 SSO Programs in advance of the safety deadline.

Certification is an important safety achievement for our nation’s rail transit systems. Certification shows that a state’s SSO program has the authority, resources and structure to oversee the safety of rail transit systems within its jurisdiction. The achievement would not have occurred without each state’s diligence in meeting each requirement and devoting the necessary resources to strengthen rail transit safety oversight. Congratulations to our SSO Agencies and FTA staff for achieving 100 percent certification. Their hard work will contribute to keeping rail transit safe for years to come.

The implementation of the Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan — or PTASP — rule began when we issued the final rule in July 2018. Since that time, we have held [16 webinars](#) on the PTASP rule and have responded to hundreds of questions through webinars, at conferences, and our PTASP email account.

We have more outreach planned in the coming months to prepare the transit industry to meet the requirements in advance of the compliance date of July 20, 2020. In the spring, we will continue to host monthly webinars, publish fact sheets, FAQs, and more. FTA staff will be speaking at major industry conferences such as the APTA Mobility Conference in May and the APTA Rail Conference in June.

If you have a suggestion on how we can better inform you of PTASP requirements, please reach out to me directly.

Sincerely,
Henrika Buchanan



Henrika Buchanan, Acting Associate Administrator for Transit Safety and Oversight

Upcoming Safety Training

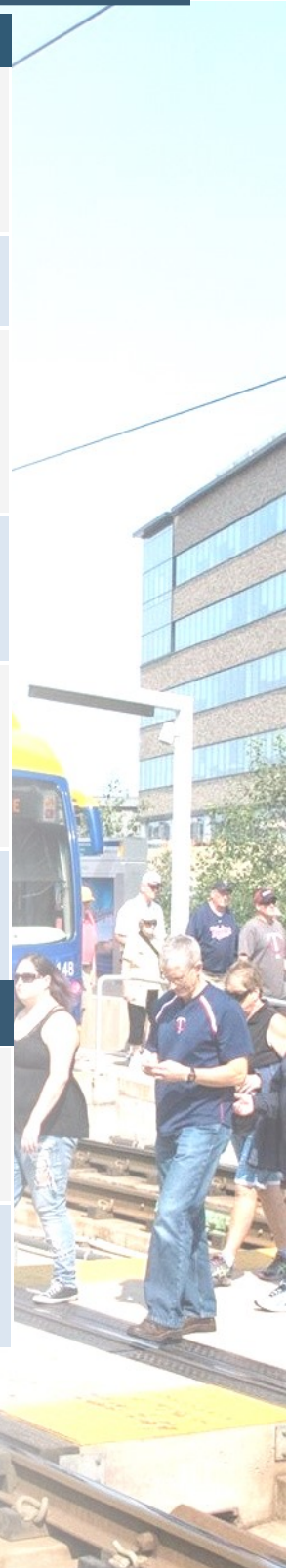
FTA sponsors several safety training courses, including those listed below. The [complete schedule](#) of training courses offered through September 2019 is available on FTA's Safety Training webpage. Please contact the FTA-sponsored [Transportation Safety Institute \(TSI\)](#) at (405) 954-3682 for 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

Courses Required by the Public Transportation Safety Certification Training Program (RAIL)*		
Effectively Managing Transit Emergencies	Seattle, WA Charlotte, NC Los Angeles, CA	Apr. 9-12 May 7-10 July 9-12
SMS Awareness (eLearning)	On demand at tsi.dot.gov	Available 24/7
SMS Principles for Transit	Harrisburg, PA Ft. Myers, FL Pittsburgh, PA San Francisco, CA	Apr. 15-17 May 20-22 June 12-14 June 19-21
SMS Safety Assurance	Virtual live training	Apr. 30 June 5
Transit Rail Incident Investigation	Landover, MD San Carlos, CA Philadelphia, PA Seattle, WA	Apr. 1-5 May 6-10 June 3-7 August 26-30
Transit Rail System Safety	New York, NY San Francisco, CA	Apr. 15-19 Apr. 29-May 3
Voluntary Courses for the Public Transportation Safety Certification Training Program (BUS)**		
Fundamentals of Bus Collision Investigation	Phoenix, AZ Landover, MD Indianapolis, IN	Apr. 8-12 Apr. 29-May 3 June 3-7
Transit Bus System Safety	San Jose, CA Oklahoma City, OK	May 20-24 June 3-7

*Applies to SSOA and rail transit agency personnel/contractors who conduct safety audits and examinations of public transportation systems not subject to Federal Railroad Administration regulation, as well as rail transit system employees who are directly responsible for safety oversight. Other safety personnel, including those from bus agencies, are encouraged to participate in training voluntarily.

**The voluntary bus program also includes Effectively Managing Transit Emergencies, SMS Awareness, SMS Safety Assurance, and SMS Principles for Transit. Please see the rail schedule above for course availability.



Training, cont. from pg. 2

Additional Courses		
Bus & Rail Courses (In Person)		
Crime Prevention through Environmental Design	Phoenix, AZ	July 15-16
Instructor's Course for Transit Trainers	Fort Worth, TX Boston, MA Orange, CA	Apr. 1-5 Apr. 29-May 3 June 17-21
Reasonable Suspicion and Post-Accident Testing Determination Seminar	Culpeper, VA Clemson, SC	May 10 June 21
Safety, Security, and Emergency Management Considerations for FTA Capital Projects	Boston, MA	Apr. 8-9
Substance Abuse Management and Program Compliance	Culpeper, VA Clemson, SC	May 7-9 June 18-20
Transit Industrial Safety Management	Atlanta, GA	May 13-17
Transit Safety & Security Audit Course	San Jose, CA Orlando, FL	Apr. 17-19 June 26-28
Transit Supervisor Certification Course	Grand Rapids, MI San Luis Obispo, CA	Apr. 8-12 May 13-17
Transit System Security	Portland, OR Chicago, IL Everett, WA	Apr. 15-19 May 6-10 July 15-19
Transit System Security: Design Review	Salt Lake City, UT	May 21-23
eLearning Courses (Web Based)		
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

TRACS Meeting Announced for March 26-27, 2019

FTA announced that the next [Transit Advisory Committee for Safety \(TRACS\)](#) meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, March 26 through Wednesday, March 27 at the National Highway Institute, located at 1310 North Courthouse Road, Suite 300, Arlington, VA. TRACS is FTA's federal advisory committee that provides information, advice, and recommendations on transit safety to the agency.

This is the group's first meeting since FTA [re-established the committee](#) through a [new charter](#) and announced [new membership](#). The committee will be reviewing emerging technologies and recommending innovations in safety technologies that FTA can implement in support of the public transportation sector.

FTA Certifies All Rail Transit State Safety Oversight Programs Before Deadline

On March 18, FTA [announced](#) it has successfully worked with the 30 states with rail transit systems to strengthen and certify all 31 State Safety Oversight (SSO) Programs in advance of the April 15, 2019 statutory safety deadline.

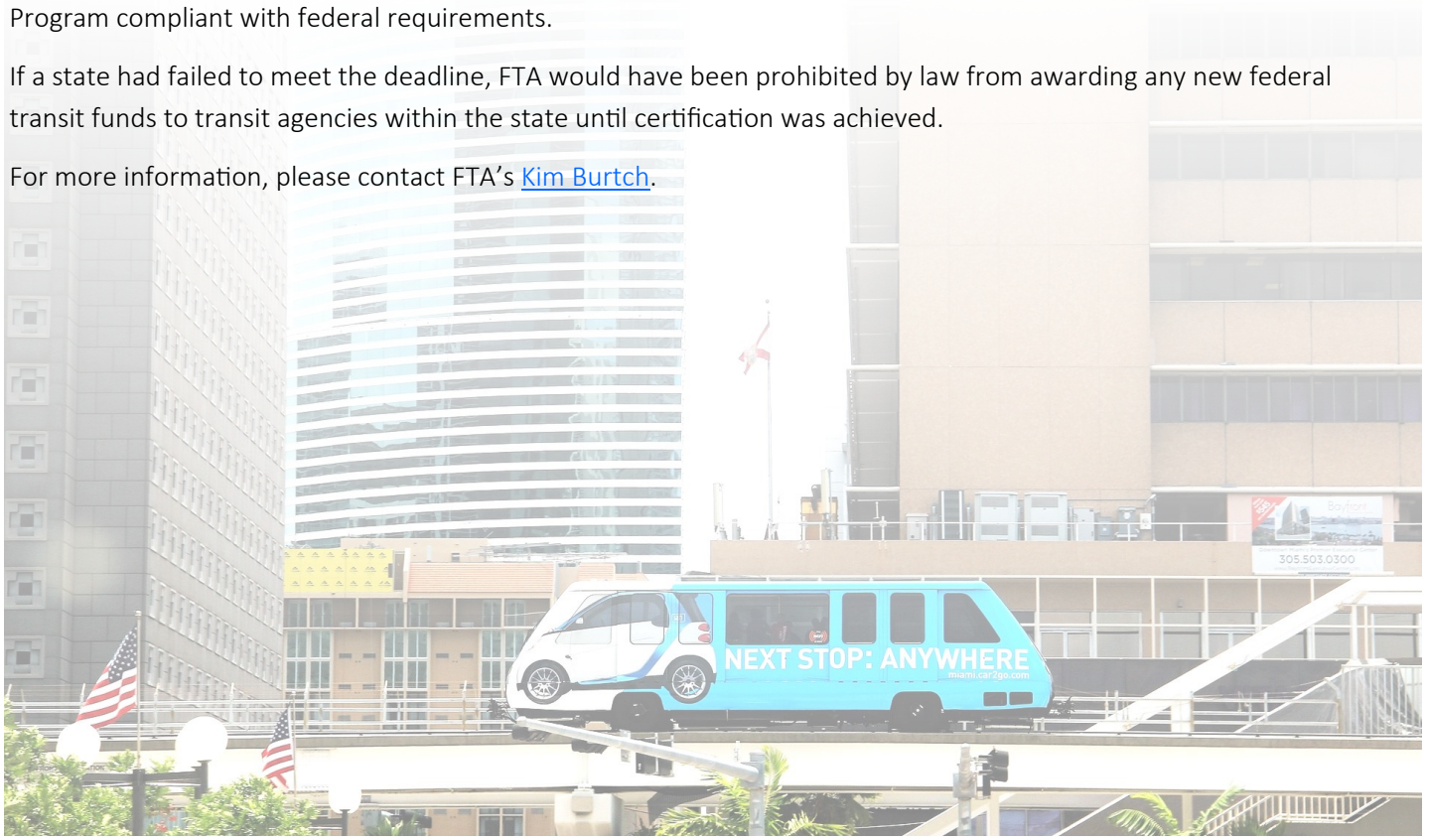
"I am proud of our partnership with state agencies and our shared commitment to improving the safety of our nation's rail transit systems which has been a driving force to establish stronger state safety oversight," said FTA Acting Administrator K. Jane Williams.

Congress required FTA to strengthen the federal SSO Program as part of federal law enacted in 2012 and 2015. The FTA SSO Program final rule became effective in April 2016, and included the statutorily required three-year compliance deadline. The rule applies to rail fixed guideway public transportation such as heavy rail, light rail, monorail, streetcar, and other systems.

To assist states in complying with the federal law and SSO rule, Congress authorized a stable source of formula grant funding. Since 2013, FTA has provided approximately \$136.1 million to eligible states to develop and implement a SSO Program compliant with federal requirements.

If a state had failed to meet the deadline, FTA would have been prohibited by law from awarding any new federal transit funds to transit agencies within the state until certification was achieved.

For more information, please contact FTA's [Kim Burtch](#).



FTA Issues Safety Bulletin on L.B. Foster Trackside Friction Management System

On March 8, 2019, FTA issued a [Safety Bulletin](#) to inform State Safety Oversight Agencies (SSOAs) and Rail Transit Agencies (RTAs) of a known hazard with the L.B. Foster Protector® IV Trackside Friction Management System (P-IV). The safety bulletin provides situational awareness of the potential hazard—the manufacturer, L.B. Foster, has taken the appropriate actions to address the potential hazard and has cooperated with FTA’s requests for information.

On September 20, 2018, FTA became aware of an explosion hazard with the L.B. Foster P-IV units manufactured prior to 2016. The P-IV unit controls friction to an intermediate level on the railhead in order to reduce rail wear and the onset of corrugations, reduce wheel noise and limit the initiation of rolling contact fatigue and gauge corner cracking. FTA obtained more details from L.B. Foster regarding the units affected, potential hazard, and actions taken to provide notice and mitigate the issue.

There have been five confirmed incidents involving P-IV units over the past 14 years. No person has been injured and no property, other than the tank itself, were damaged. Accumulation of hydrogen gas from an overcharged battery may have caused previous incidents where the lids of units separated from their hinges, and in a few cases, were thrown some distance from the tank.

FTA encourages SSOAs to confirm whether the RTAs that are subject to their oversight are utilizing the affected units, and that the manufacturer’s recommendations or other appropriate mitigations are implemented by the RTA. L.B. Foster also is distributing vent kits that will mitigate or eliminate the potential hazard.

The [Safety Bulletin and guidance documents](#) are available on FTA’s Safety Guidance webpage. Please direct all technical questions regarding this issue to [Patrick Tully](#), Director of Technical Sales at L.B. Foster.

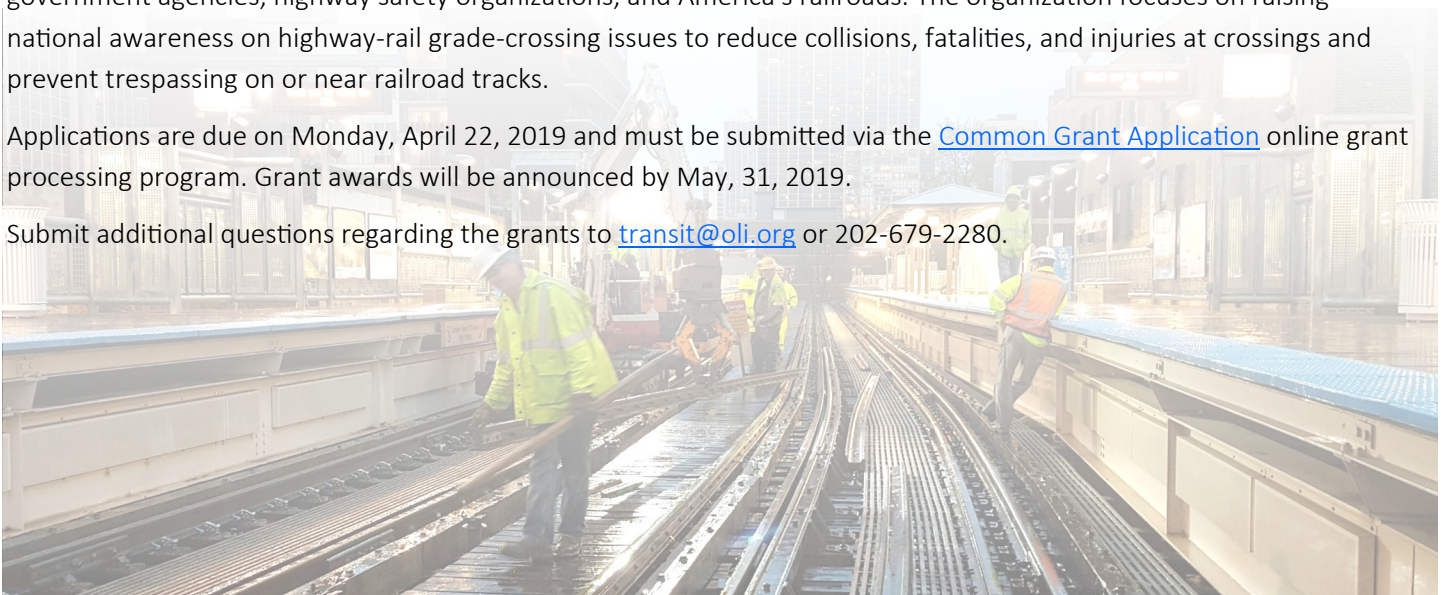
Applications Open for Rail Transit Safety Education Grants

On March 13, 2019, Operation Lifesaver, Inc. (OLI), in partnership with FTA, [announced](#) the availability of \$175,000 in competitive grant funding to conduct rail transit safety education and public awareness initiatives. The FTA-funded Rail Transit Safety Education Grants are available to transit agencies, other government entities that provide transit service, and state Operation Lifesaver programs.

OLI is a nonprofit public safety education and awareness organization that partners with federal, state and local government agencies, highway safety organizations, and America's railroads. The organization focuses on raising national awareness on highway-rail grade-crossing issues to reduce collisions, fatalities, and injuries at crossings and prevent trespassing on or near railroad tracks.

Applications are due on Monday, April 22, 2019 and must be submitted via the [Common Grant Application](#) online grant processing program. Grant awards will be announced by May, 31, 2019.

Submit additional questions regarding the grants to transit@oli.org or 202-679-2280.



FTA Hires New Accident Investigator



Joe Tebo , Accident Investigator ,
Office of System Safety

In early February, FTA welcomed Joseph Tebo Jr. as an Accident Investigator for TSO's Office of System Safety. Joe joins the team working closely with the transit industry and other DOT agencies nationwide to promote transit safety and develop recommended practices and procedures to continue to improve transit safety.

When there is a safety event, Joe will work alongside the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) and other DOT agencies to ensure standards and procedures are followed, and provide recommendations to prevent similar incidents in the future.

TSO Accident Investigators play a critical role in FTA's safety oversight function, providing accident investigation information to TSO leadership and analyzing information gained across accidents. TSO's Office of System Safety uses information gathered during investigations to proactively address incidents in the future by sharing best practices and improving safety protocols at transit systems nationwide.

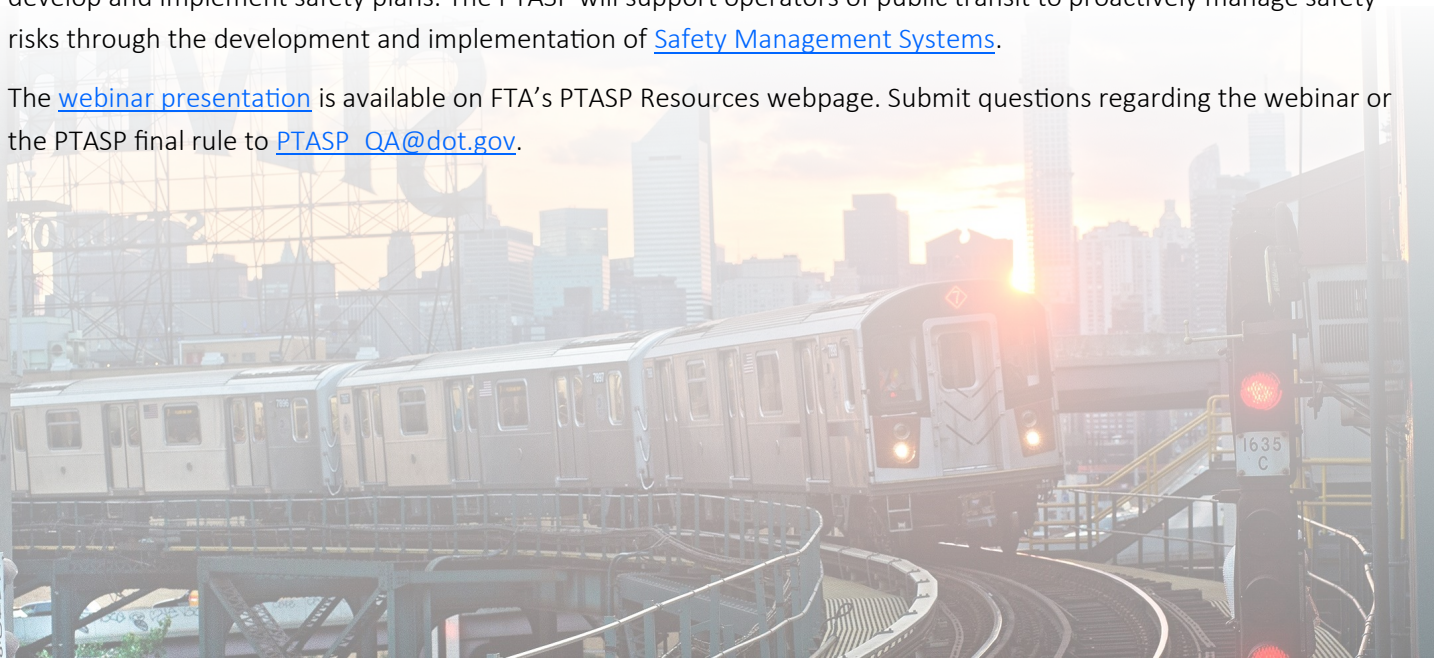
Joe brings a wealth of transit safety knowledge and experience to FTA, including his most recent position within the DC Fire and EMS Department's State Safety Oversight (SSO) office providing safety and security oversight of DC's Streetcar system. Previously, Joe served as SSO Program Manager for the Maryland Department of Transportation overseeing the WMATA Metrorail and the Maryland Transit Administration's Light and Heavy Rail Systems.

FTA Hosts Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan Webinar

On March 13, 2019, FTA hosted a webinar to discuss Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan (PTASP) Final Rule [Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQs\)](#). During this webinar, FTA discussed two new FAQs regarding FTA funding sources available to develop safety plans and clarification on whether the Accountable Executive can be a contractor.

The PTASP final rule requires certain recipients and sub-recipients of FTA grants that operate public transportation to develop and implement safety plans. The PTASP will support operators of public transit to proactively manage safety risks through the development and implementation of [Safety Management Systems](#).

The [webinar presentation](#) is available on FTA's PTASP Resources webpage. Submit questions regarding the webinar or the PTASP final rule to PTASP_QA@dot.gov.



FTA TSO People on the Move

Candace Key has been named Director of the Office of System Safety. Candace will be directing the writing of regulations related to FTA's safety authority, overseeing an accident investigation group, developing industry safety management systems training, and leading the development of a first-of-its-kind risk-based oversight structure for the FTA. Candace served as the Acting Director since 2018. Previously, she served as an attorney in the Legislation and Regulations Division within FTA's Office of Chief Counsel, where she provided advice and counsel to the Office of Transit Safety and Oversight and authored safety and transit asset management rules.

Timothy Braxton, has been selected to serve as a State Safety Oversight (SSO) Program Manager with the Office of Safety Review providing technical help, research, and oversight direction to regulatory-based safety oversight programs, and developing and implementing transit safety programs designed to strengthen the capacity of state agencies. Previously, Tim worked as a Program Analyst in the Office of System Safety for more than 10 years focusing on Data Management projects, rulemakings, and most recently safety certification efforts.

Lauren Tuzikow has been selected to serve as a SSO Program Manager with the Office of Safety Review. She will be responsible for providing technical assistance and oversight direction to regulatory-based safety oversight programs, and research, develop, and implement transit safety programs designed to strengthen the capacity of SSO agencies. Previously, Lauren served as the Corrective Action Plan (CAP) program manager for the Office of FTA WMATA Safety Oversight (FWSO).

Scott Giering has been named Director of the Office of Program Oversight. In his new role, Scott is responsible for administering an effective national oversight program to ensure FTA recipients comply with statutory, regulatory, and funding program requirements as well ensuring strong stewardship of federal funds. Scott served as the Acting Director since 2017. Previously, he was the Division Chief for Compliance Programs.

Hope Jensen has been selected to serve as the Division Chief for Compliance Programs within the Office of Program Oversight. Hope is responsible for overseeing the management and execution of the Triennial, State Management, Procurement System, and Financial Management Oversight reviews. She will also be responsible for facilitating the provision of training and technical assistance to promote compliance nationwide. Hope served as the Acting Chief since 2017. Previously, Hope was the Program Manager for the Triennial Review Program.



Data Spotlight: Rail Transit Grade-Crossing Accidents

In the coming months, the Transit Safety and Oversight Spotlight will include 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](#) required by the PTASP rule.

This month, we focus on rail transit grade-crossing accident data taken from State Safety Oversight Agency (SSOA) annual reporting. Grade-crossings are locations where a roadway and a rail right-of-way intersect, including street intersections where rail transit is running at street level. Additional data is available in FTA’s [Rail Safety Data Report](#).

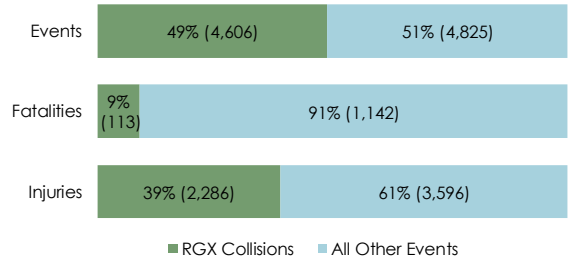
Questions? Please contact FTA’s [Paulina Orchard](#).

Between 2007 and 2015, SSOAs were required to report all collisions at grade-crossings. During this nine-year period, SSOAs reported 4,606 rail grade-crossing (RGX) collisions, resulting in 113 fatalities and 2,286 injuries.¹

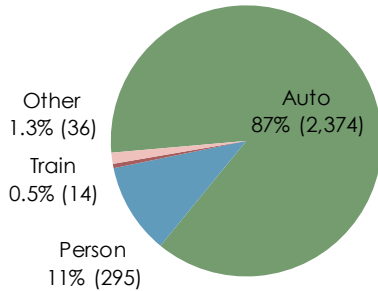
Almost half (49 percent) of SSOA-reported events were RGX collisions. These collisions resulted in 9 percent of all reported fatalities and 39 percent of all reported injuries.

From 2011 to 2015, 98 percent of reported RGX collisions were between trains and either pedestrians or bicyclists (“Person”) or non-transit motor vehicles (“Auto”).² Nearly all RGX collision fatalities (97 percent) and injuries (97 percent) resulted from these types of collisions.

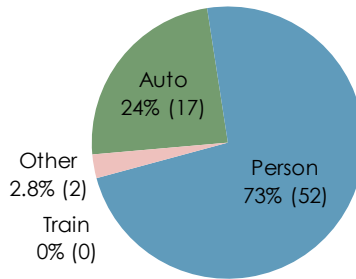
RGX Collision Data as a Proportion of All Reported Data, 2007-2015



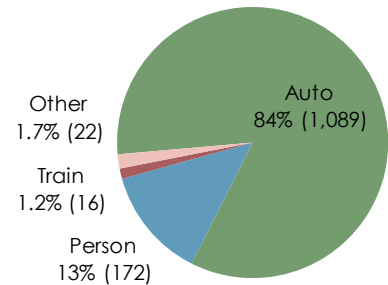
RGX Collisions by Type, 2011-2015



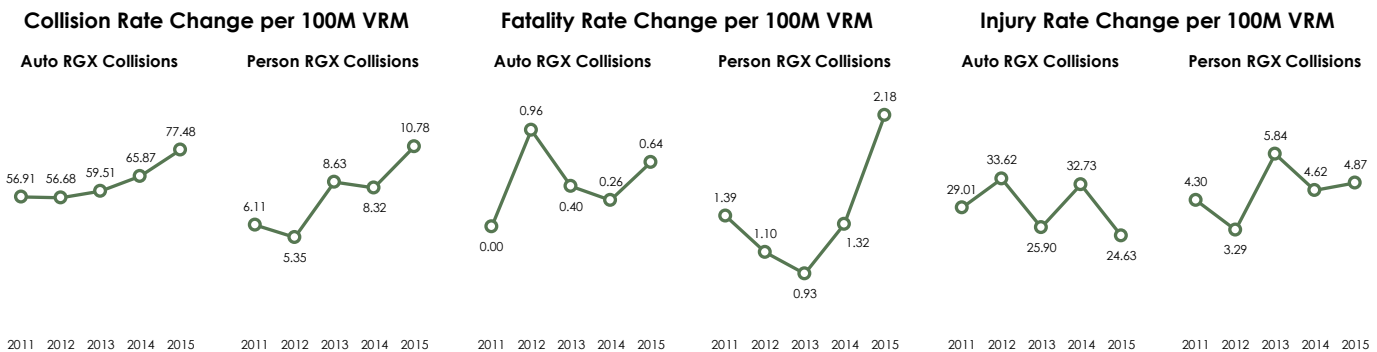
RGX Collision Fatalities by Type, 2011-2015



RGX Collision Injuries by Type, 2011-2015



Below are the collision, fatality, and injury rates per 100 million vehicle revenue miles (100M VRM) for both train-to-auto and train-to-person RGX collisions from 2011 to 2015.



Note: Graphs not to scale

¹ RGX Collision data cited here do not include collisions resulting from suicide attempts or trespassing.

² SSOAs did not report collision type prior to reporting year 2011.

TSO Profile

This month's profile includes a special Q&A with Rick Gerhart, a Program Manager in the Office of System Safety. Rick is retiring this spring after 17 years of service at FTA.



Rick Gerhart , Program Manager,
Office of System Safety

What were you doing prior to joining FTA? I worked for TriMet in Portland, Oregon. I served as the Director of Operations Planning and Analysis where I oversaw a team responsible for service planning, scheduling, and operations IT capital projects.

How did your prior transit experience influence or prepare you for your FTA career? I've relied a lot on my public transportation experience to help guide and inform my work at FTA. I bring a transit operations perspective to the FTA's Transit Safety and Oversight Office's strategies, plans, and programs. The public transportation industry is a highly people-oriented enterprise so being part of the TriMet team really helped me transition when I joined the FTA team.

How would you explain your current job to someone you've never met? A Program Manager responsible for two primary initiatives: developing a safety risk management program and overseeing a safety data management working group. I also get to provide input on some of TSO's other important efforts, such as innovative safety research projects, new safety standards, and issuing safety bulletins and advisories to the industry.

What are some memorable projects or initiatives you've been involved with at FTA? After 9/11, FTA provided on-site [security and emergency management technical assistance for the fifty largest transit agencies](#) across the nation. Our team provided guidance on how to conduct threat and vulnerability assessments, and conducted security readiness assessments. In addition, we provided technical assistance to develop security documents and training, counterterrorism tools, materials for security awareness, emergency tabletop exercises, and planning for actual drills.

Do you have any observations about how transit safety or FTA have evolved over the course of your career? Starting with the leadership team, FTA puts a great value on continuous improvement—not only in creating a stronger transit safety program, but in many areas, such as launching new transit programs for groups that need transportation mobility help (like returning Veterans seeking employment), and the Rides to Wellness and Emergency Relief Grant Programs, to name just a few.

What do you hope the future holds for FTA, or transit safety more broadly? FTA's new Safety Management Systems (SMS) foundation is ushering in a more robust approach to make transit an even safer mode of transportation. I'm also really looking forward to the application of innovative technologies—such as collision avoidance and autonomous, self-driving vehicles—to significantly improve transit safety.

What is your advice to others in the field? Be a sponge for knowledge—take advantage of the diverse resources and opportunities to absorb everything you can learn about transportation safety and transit operations. Network with the FTA team, other DOT modes, and across the entire industry.

What has been your favorite part of your job? The opportunity to collaborate with talented, inspiring colleagues working to achieve our mission: Improve public transportation for America's communities. One of my most satisfying moments occurs frequently during my transit commute, when I see firsthand how transit provides accessibility and freedom for people with disabilities.

What are your plans after you retire? I plan to shift gears a bit and explore part-time transit-related work, travel (on trains and buses, of course), and teach the grandkids how to use transit.

Upcoming Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan (PTASP) Webinars

[Contractors and Other External Service Providers](#)

April 24, 2019
2:00 PM ET

[Performance Based Planning, Transit Asset Management, and PTASP](#)

April 30, 2019
2:00 PM ET

Registration is required to join the webinars.

Upcoming TSO Speaking Events

[2019 Mobility Conference: APTA's Bus & Paratransit Conference](#)

May 19-22
Louisville, KY

[2019 APTA Rail Conference](#)

June 23-26
Toronto, ON



**U.S. Department
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Office of Transit Safety and Oversight
1200 New Jersey Avenue SE
Washington, DC 20590

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

[FTA's 14th Annual Drug and Alcohol Program National Conference](#)

April 2-4, 2019

Hyatt Regency Milwaukee
333 West Kilbourn Avenue
Milwaukee, WI 53203

[Register now](#)

