



Your Ride is Here

Amalgamated Transit Union's Proposal for
the Reauthorization of the Transit Provisions
of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law

Amalgamated Transit Union, AFL-CIO / CLC

www.atu.org





The Amalgamated Transit Union – the largest labor union representing transit and allied workers in the U.S. and Canada – fights for the interests of its hard-working members and promotes mass transit.

Founded in 1892, the ATU today is comprised of over 200,000 members, including: metropolitan, interstate, and school bus drivers; paratransit, light rail, subway, streetcar, and ferry boat operators; mechanics and other maintenance workers; clerks, baggage handlers, municipal employees, and others. ATU can be found in 44 U.S. states and the District of Columbia, and nine Canadian provinces.

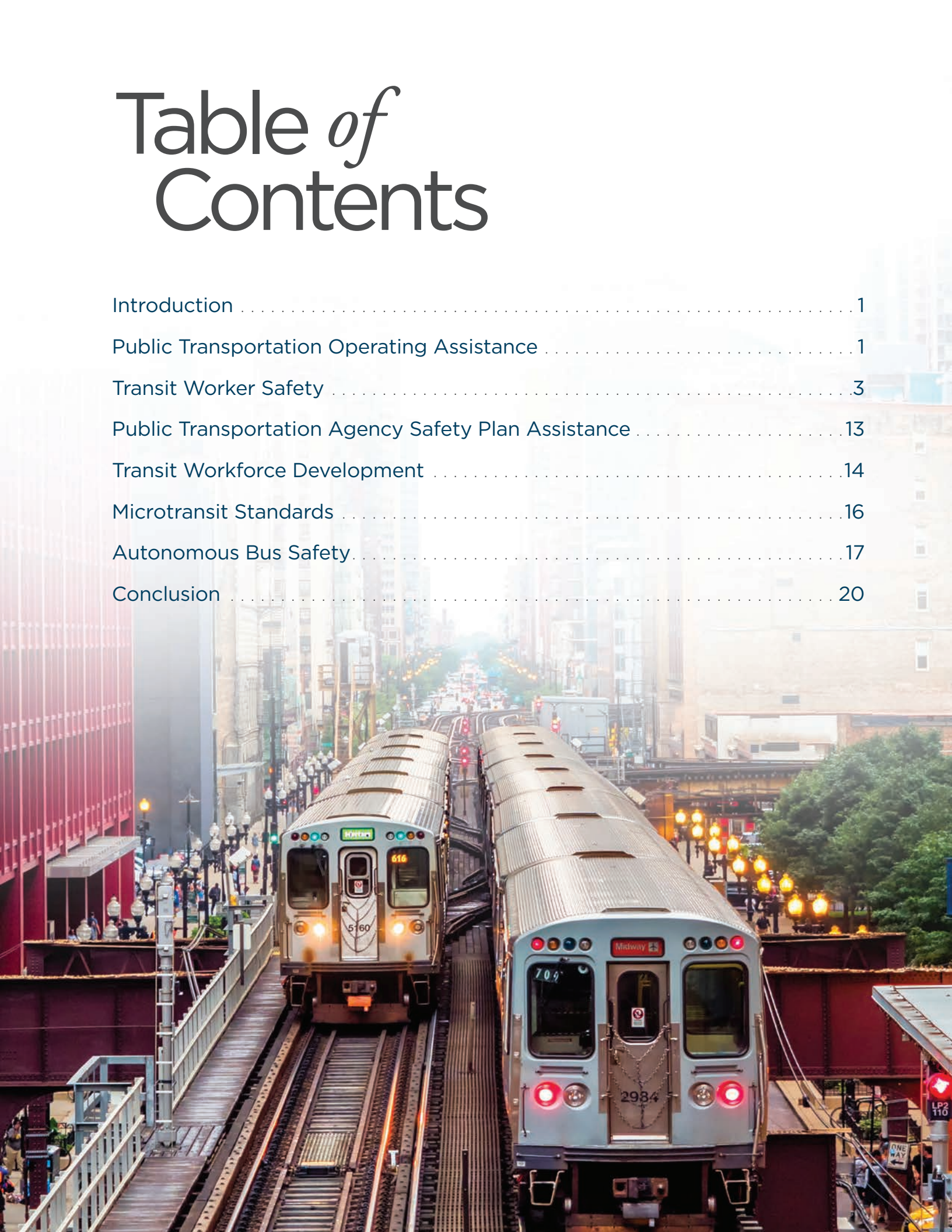
The Union fights for transit workers by helping them organize local unions, negotiating collective bargaining contracts between its members and their employers, representing members in disputes with management, and making sure that employers adhere to the provisions of their collective bargaining agreement.

The Union also represents the interests of its members at all levels of government, in courts, and in legislatures. ATU is a member the AFL-CIO, and the CLC – the national labor organizations of the United States and Canada, respectively.



Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Public Transportation Operating Assistance	1
Transit Worker Safety	3
Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan Assistance	13
Transit Workforce Development	14
Microtransit Standards	16
Autonomous Bus Safety	17
Conclusion	20



February 2025

If you have any questions about this proposal, please contact Jeff Rosenberg in the ATU Government Affairs Department at jrosenberg@atu.org.

Amalgamated Transit Union
10,000 New Hampshire Avenue
Silver Spring, MD 20903

For more information and updates regarding transit workers and riders please visit www.atu.org

INTRODUCTION

Following decades of neglect, public transit finally received the funding necessary to modernize our bus and rail systems in the 2021 *Bipartisan Infrastructure Law* (BIL). The bill reauthorized the federal transit program and provided significant increases in investment to put public transit agencies on a path to meeting the growing and evolving demands of our nation.

However, work-from-home policies during the COVID-19 pandemic reduced the number of Americans commuting to their jobs. Although ridership has recovered some since the depths of the pandemic, current overall ridership is only 74% of 2019 levels, resulting in fare revenue losses that transit agencies will have to replace with other funding sources.¹

What does this mean for essential workers, the men and women who heroically got us through the pandemic? Employees in industries that require in-person interaction continue to rely on transit - especially bus service - to travel to work and other key destinations.

Congress stepped up and provided our transit systems with billions of dollars in emergency funding to keep America moving during the pandemic. Essential workers, individuals who are transit dependent, and people returning to in-person work will be forever grateful for the overwhelming bipartisan support of our industry.

But now, as the COVID funds dry up, transit agencies are staring out over a fiscal cliff. While some had the foresight to save their money for a rainy day, in all corners of America, it is now pouring. In addition, the time is now for the federal government to address some of the most serious issues facing the transit industry, including safety, workforce development, and new and emerging technology that is quickly changing the way we commute.

As we have done since Congress created the federal transit program in 1964, ATU stands ready to work with lawmakers and keep America moving.

ISSUE #1:

Public Transportation Operating Assistance

The BIL was a game changer, authorizing \$106.9 billion for public transit, an increase of \$41.1 billion (63%) from previous levels. It increased each of the formula and competitive grant programs by 35-37 percent. It also provided \$15 billion of General Fund authorizations for Capital Investment Grants (CIG) which have gone a long way toward addressing the industry's transit backlog.

As a result of this historic investment, most agencies are now well equipped with modern, state-of-the-art vehicles. However, under 49 USC § 5307, with a few exceptions, transit systems in urbanized areas above 200,000 in population may only use their Federal Transit Administration (FTA) funds for capital projects. Operating assistance (including wages and benefits to provide service or even pay for fuel) is not an eligible expense. As a result, despite being flush with capital funds, some transit systems ironically do not have the resources to put their full fleets into revenue service.

The prohibition on transit operating assistance has been in place since 1998, and like many of the dilapidated buses of that era, this outdated statute has outlived its useful lifespan.

For example, in June of 2023, FTA announced a \$150 million construction grant award to Pittsburgh Regional Transit for the new Downtown-Uptown-Oakland bus rapid transit (BRT) line. Funded by the BIL, the Downtown-Uptown-Oakland BRT project is intended to provide fast, convenient transit for

1 Ridership levels as of September 2023. *Effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Transit Ridership and Accessibility*. FTA Report No. 0268, August 2024.

residents and commuters along a heavily congested corridor from Downtown Pittsburgh to Oakland. Yet, without operating funding to close budget gaps, Pittsburgh Regional Transit will begin planning severe service cutbacks for the new fiscal year. “The only things to do are to raise fares or make severe service cuts,” says their CEO.²

In July of 2024, FTA announced that the Transit Authority of River City (TARC) in Louisville, KY would receive funding to buy zero-emission battery-electric buses to replace vehicles that have exceeded their useful life. TARC hoped this grant would improve its fleet’s state of good repair and provide more environmentally friendly transportation for riders to jobs, school, healthcare and more. However, in January of 2025, TARC announced that it would permanently cut stops on eleven bus routes. “I literally cried walking because I’m so cold,” said one rider, adding that she relies on TARC for trips to visit her elderly parents in Louisville or to run errands. “I catch at least four to six buses a day.”³

While the so-called “100 Bus” Rule, which allows certain transit systems to flex a portion of their Section 5307 funds for operating assistance if they run less than 100 buses during peak service hours, has provided relief to some struggling agencies over the past 13 years since it was enacted, the rule is still too restrictive. Post-pandemic, it is our nation’s largest transit systems (which run far more than 100 buses) that are feeling the pinch. All transit systems,



regardless of size or urbanized area, should have the discretion to use their Formula funds as they see fit when budgets are tight.

And while flexibility would be helpful, it is not the only solution. A new FTA program dedicated exclusively to keeping critical transit service on the street and expanding bus routes is sorely needed. This, combined with incentives for states to increase their investment in public transit, can help agencies to not only survive during the tough times but also plan for future growth.

Transit agencies nationwide are now approaching a fiscal cliff - the steep drop in fare revenue that resulted from ridership losses during the COVID-19 pandemic and the looming expiration of federal relief funds that were provided to temporarily fill the gap. Farebox revenue is way down, and transit-dependent people are about to pay the price through deep service cuts and steep fare increases. Layoffs are a strong possibility. Only federal funds can help agencies from falling over the cliff.



2 <https://www.unionprogress.com/2025/01/02/pittsburgh-regional-transits-potential-big-year-of-changes-hinges-on-state-funding-increase/>

3 https://www.wdrb.com/news/tarc-permanently-cutting-service-to-11-louisville-area-bus-routes-later-this-month/article_3e45f864-ce00-11ef-8377-dbf818754fe.html

ATU SUPPORTS:

1. **Providing transit systems (regardless of urbanized area size) the flexibility to use their Section 5307 funds for operations, without limitation.**
2. ***The Stronger Communities Through Better Transit Act* (Rep. Hank Johnson), and *The Moving Transit Forward Act*, (Sens. Van Hollen and Fetterman), which establish grant programs to **support operating assistance for public transportation** and related service improvements, particularly in underserved communities and areas of persistent poverty. These bills will ensure that transit service is maintained for transit-dependent riders who rely on the bus or train to get where they need to go.**

ISSUE #2:

Transit Worker Safety



King County (Seattle) Metro Bus Operator Shawn Yim, a member of ATU Local 587, was beloved by his family and friends. He was funny, warm and thoughtful to his riders. A mentor to many colleagues and a person with high moral character, Shawn believed in right and wrong. He took extra care in making sure every child going to school caught the bus safely, encouraging them not to run, assuring them he would wait. He always took time to assist older passengers needing directions or help transferring to

their next bus. He loved fishing and the outdoors and always stopped to talk to people.



Leroy Ramos (ATU Local 732) wasn't just a bus driver for MARTA (Atlanta). He was a loving husband and father, a kind-hearted person who came from humble beginnings, experienced all types of adversity at a young age, and still prevailed. He was the type of man that would show up for anyone and everyone, even if he didn't know them. Leroy truly valued life itself; just the little things made him feel whole.



ATU Local 1593 Member Thomas Dunn tells a Hillsborough Area Regional Transit Authority meeting in December of 2018 that he feared for his life driving a bus. He was murdered behind the wheel five months later.

Forty-six-year-old Thomas Dunn (ATU Local 1593) drove a bus in Tampa for HART. He was an Air Force veteran. Tom's family and friends were of the utmost importance to him. He enjoyed history, politics, Sci-Fi, video games, and shooting pool. He had a passion for helping others and anyone in need. Thomas was married and had six children.

MASS TRANSIT

"A CTA passenger pushed the train operator off the platform."

— October, 2024



"Two MARTA bus drivers were threatened with a gun in separate incidents."

— January 6, 2025



"A METRO driver was stabbed during an altercation."

— November 8, 2024



“An MBTA bus driver was assaulted
by two young males”

— August 7, 2024

Shawn, Leroy, and Thomas are all dead. Each of them was murdered while they were on the job.

In December of 2024, Shawn was stabbed - over and over again.

In January of 2025, Leroy was shot over a \$2.50 fare.

Thomas had his throat slit from behind as he drove a bus just months after he spoke out at a hearing, warning the public about threats to bus drivers’ security. “God bless you,” said the mentally ill person as he murdered Dunn. The bus drivers’ response as he bled to death? “God bless you too.”

Dunn’s senseless murder occurred in May of 2019, and ATU had hoped that this would be the last time. “Not one more!” we said in a press release.

Sadly, there have been many, many more incidents since then. Every year, thousands of transit employees throughout the U.S. - mostly bus operators - are attacked in the course of performing their duties. Considering the fact that many of these brutal assaults occur while massive buses are rolling down the street, it is actually amazing that more pedestrians, bicyclists, and other motorists are not killed. People don’t like paying increased fares for less frequent service, so quite often they take out their frustrations on the drivers - the neighborhood tax collectors. Other disputes occur when operators simply enforce safety regulations. Mental illness is also an issue in many cases. Some incidents happen for no reason at all, as juveniles act out on the bus just for laughs. There is no excuse for any of it.



“A Metro bus became a crime scene after a passenger
grabbed the driver by the neck and choked her.”

— August 22, 2024



“A WeGo bus driver was stabbed by a
passenger with a kitchen knife.”

— May 20, 2024

Weapons vary. Some drivers get punched or kicked. Others are stabbed or strangled from behind. Some offenders spit or throw steaming hot coffee or urine⁴ in the face of the operator. Transit workers continue to get pummeled every day. They are sitting ducks. Some vehicles are hijacked and driven off the side of the road due to these brazen attacks.

The long-term psychological impacts of being brutally assaulted behind the wheel are extensive. Many people are never able to drive a bus again. Absenteeism becomes a real issue. To understand this, just think what it would be like if you had to look around your desk every few seconds, worrying that someone in your office might strike you in the face. It is not normal behavior and should not be accepted as just another day at the office in the transit world either.

BIL Progress

According to data from the National Transit Database (NTD) released in January of 2025, **assaults on transit workers increased more than 232 percent between 2014 and 2024**. This astonishing number is a direct result of the important change in the BIL which required agencies to report all incidences of worker assault to NTD, regardless of severity, providing a true picture of what ATU has known for years: we have an epidemic of violence against bus drivers in the transit industry.

A New Bus Operator Workstation

Although about 30 states have passed legislation enhancing the penalties for assaulting transit operators and the federal *Patriot Act* actually allows for a 20-year prison sentence for interfering with a transit operator in the line of duty, criminal penalties alone have not stopped these heinous acts from occurring. Most violators are able to flee the scene of the crime, escape justice, and

⁴ <https://www.nbcwashington.com/news/local/woman-poured-urine-on-metrobus-drivers-head-police-say/26027/>



ride the bus once again soon after. The logical next step is structural changes to the buses – specifically the bus operator workstation – to ensure that these incidents don’t happen in the first place. It is well past the time to redesign the bus operator workstation through the provision of physical barriers and escape routes.

Following the terrorist attacks of 2001, legislation was passed and regulations were adopted to address flightdeck security. Now, passenger planes may not operate unless “the airplane is equipped with a door between the passenger and pilot compartment that incorporates features to restrict the unwanted entry of persons into the flightdeck.” Notably, the doors must meet certain strength requirements. They must be able to resist forcible intrusion by unauthorized persons and be capable of withstanding



impacts.⁵ **This is essentially what has long been needed in public transit: restricting the unwanted entry of persons (and fluids and articles) into the bus operator workstation.** FTA for the first time acknowledged this in 2025 upon release of data from its General Directive

that required more than 700 transit agencies to complete a safety risk assessment and provide information on how they are working to prevent assaults, noting that the agency’s findings could support the development of “federal minimum safety standards” for bus design.

In 2015, Congress took action by directing FTA to address the transit worker safety crisis through two provisions in the *FAST Act*. Section 3020 was crystal clear, requiring FTA to assess the need for minimum safety standards where current standards may be determined to be insufficient. FTA was required to review bus safety standards, practices, or protocols as they relate to bus design with the goal of protecting bus operators from the risk of assault. Using this information, Section 3022 required FTA to issue a notice of proposed rulemaking (NPRM) on protecting transit operators from assault. **Ten years later, this rulemaking is still not done.**

According to FTA, assaults on transit workers increased more than 232 percent between 2014 and 2024.

Subway Worker Attacks

Unfortunately, these attacks are not limited to bus operators. Transit workers on the rail side have also seen an uptick in senseless violence. Robert Cunningham, a 64-year-old mechanic in the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) power department, was shot and killed while trying to stop a shooter at the Potomac Avenue Metro Station in February 2023. Robert was just days from retirement.⁶ In September of 2024, a Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) employee was seriously wounded in a drive by shooting outside the Red Line. In October, a New York MTA train operator was stabbed in the leg and abdomen on a platform.

5 [eCFR :: 14 CFR 129.28 -- Flightdeck security. \(FAR 129.28\)](#)

6 <https://www.cnn.com/2023/02/02/us/dc-metro-employee-killed-stop-gunman-shooting/index.html>

RECENT ATTACKS AGAINST TRANSIT WORKERS IN THE U.S.

CITY	DATE	INCIDENT
Atlanta, GA	1/6/25	Two MARTA bus drivers were threatened with a gun in separate incidents. https://www.11alive.com/article/news/crime/marta-drivers-death-sparks-outcry-safety-reforms-among-marta-operators/85-bc130f0e-93b3-4878-a3fa-c6e78f9f4c45
Atlanta, GA	1/3/25	A MARTA bus driver was shot and killed after police said he got into a fight over a \$2.50 fare with three other people. https://www.wsbtv.com/news/local/dekalb-county/marta-bus-driver-decatur-shot-death-over-fare-dispute-1-3-suspects-run/6WT2MU5NEFGQDKZQVIWGTNYLGE/
Seattle, WA	12/18/24	A metro bus driver was stabbed and killed near Seattle's University of Washington campus. https://www.king5.com/article/news/crime/seattle-bus-driver-fatally-stabbed/281-4ee8c92b-8089-405e-9cb3-11c793fab572
New York, NY	12/14/24	An irate rider spat at an operator and then snarled, "I'm going to break your jaw," then slugged him in the left eye. https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/crime/mta-driver-stabs-rider-who-slugged-him-in-chaos-on-bus-cops-sources/ar-AA1vPHMG
New Orleans, LA	12/12/24	A man attacked an RTA bus driver after he attempted to board without paying fare. https://www.fox8live.com/2024/12/26/man-accused-striking-rta-bus-driver-after-trying-board-without-paying-police-say/
New York, NY	11/26/24	A Brooklyn man stormed onto an MTA bus in a fit of rage and choked the driver over a minor fender-bender. https://abc7ny.com/post/man-charged-allegedly-strangling-mta-bus-driver-after-crash-brooklyn-officials-say/15595840/
Kansas City, MO	11/18/24	A passenger assaulted a KCATA bus driver and tried to take control of the bus. https://www.kctv5.com/2024/11/20/man-charged-after-alleged-attack-kcata-bus-driver/
Rockville, MD	11/14/24	A passenger spat on the bus driver. http://www.rockvillenights.com/2024/11/bus-driver-assaulted-by-passenger-in.html
Houston, TX	11/8/24	A METRO driver was stabbed during an altercation. https://abc13.com/post/metro-bus-driver-stabbed-altercation-highway-249-gessner-northwest-side-houston-police-say/15526922/
Honolulu, HI	11/4/24	A 61-year-old man was arrested after he assaulted a bus driver and yanked on the steering wheel. https://www.staradvertiser.com/2024/11/05/breaking-news/man-61-arrested-for-allegedly-attacking-bus-driver-in-waikiki/

CITY	DATE	INCIDENT
Hillsborough Count, FL	10/29/24	A woman was arrested for assaulting two HART bus employees after she was denied entry onto an overcrowded bus. https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/crime/rider-attacks-hart-employees-after-being-denied-entry-to-full-bus-in-tampa/ar-AA1th8oC
White Center, WA	10/23/24	A King County Metro Bus driver was injured after being assaulted. https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/metro-bus-driver-injured-after-being-assaulted-with-suspect-white-center/7JVR4NDGTFBURBQXP5DIXDE5VY/
Chicago, IL	October 2024	A CTA passenger pushed the train operator off the platform. https://www.masstransitmag.com/safety-security/news/55240815/il-decades-long-uptick-in-attacks-on-chicago-transit-workers-carries-implications-for-employees-and-riders
Chicago, IL	10/22/24	A CTA bus driver was attacked by a passenger who wouldn't pay the fare. The passenger punched the driver several times, then dragged her off the bus, and struck the driver several more times before running away. https://www.cbsnews.com/chicago/news/cta-bus-driver-attacked-greater-grand-crossing/
New York, NY	10/18/24	A bus driver was approached by an unidentified man who started arguing with her. During the argument, the man then bent the windshield wiper on the driver's side, attempted to break the bus mirror, and repeatedly slammed the bus window against the victim's left arm. https://www.newsbreak.com/1010wins-560919/3672898239376-man-attacks-mta-bus-driver-repeatedly-slams-her-arm-in-bus-window-in-harlem-police
New York, NY	10/8/24	A train operator was stabbed in the leg and abdomen on a southbound platform. https://pix11.com/news/local-news/brooklyn/train-operator-stabbed-at-nyc-subway-station-police/
Austin, TX	10/7/24	A CapMetro bus operator was assaulted and robbed by a passenger while on the job in East Austin. https://www.fox7austin.com/news/capmetro-bus-operator-assault-robbery-east-austin
Los Angeles, CA	9/25/24	A gunman hijacked a Los Angeles bus. The hijacker shot at least one person before holding the driver at gunpoint and forcing him to drive. https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2024-09-25/metro-bus-dtla-hijacking
Paterson, NJ	9/25/24	A New Jersey Transit bus driver was beaten up by seven juveniles. https://www.northjersey.com/story/news/paterson-press/2024/09/19/nj-transit-bus-driver-beaten-by-7-juveniles-in-paterson/75292239007/
New York, NY	9/17/24	A man walked onto a parked bus in the Bronx, grabbed the driver and repeatedly hit her head against the bus partition. https://abc7ny.com/post/police-searching-man-attacked-female-mta-bus-driver-bronx/15317463/

CITY	DATE	INCIDENT
Chicago, IL	9/3/24	An on-duty CTA employee was seriously wounded in a drive-by shooting outside the Red Line. https://www.nbcchicago.com/news/local/cta-employee-shot-injured-while-working-outside-red-line-howard-station/3538741/
San Pedro, CA	8/22/24	A Metro bus became a crime scene after a passenger grabbed the driver by the neck and choked her. https://www.cbsnews.com/losangeles/news/metro-bus-driver-choked-by-passenger-in-san-pedro-lapd-says/
Boston, MA	8/7/24	An MBTA bus driver was assaulted by two young males. https://whdh.com/news/mbta-bus-driver-assaulted-in-bostons-south-end/
Escondido, CA	8/7/24	An MTS bus driver was brutally stabbed multiple times by a man demanding a free ride. https://www.10news.com/news/local-news/mts-bus-driver-describes-stabbing-attack-at-escondido-transit-center
Los Angeles, CA	7/17/24	A Metro bus driver was assaulted in downtown Los Angeles. https://www.yahoo.com/news/woman-large-another-metro-bus-155017081.html?guccounter=1&guce_referrer=aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuZ29vZ2xILmNvbS8&guce_referrer_sig=AQAAAlfrxUygT43nk1-yotnAkdRgnJa3zTya1TensESMYcUMk9pOriNvIE-WtfKBO24YgxH_1v9RRMkeLZCD_W4MxMXDihtuk5BjMQmsL9KowhuPQ0NUZePFGCie_0hqz8J0r-PHqv_RSalgE5bN2LDXrgmCeX8hO2pbJMibMiz5XJp
Los Angeles, CA	7/8/24	A woman struck a bus driver and spit on him before leaving the scene. https://www.nbclosangeles.com/news/local/metro-bus-driver-attack-la-south-central/3454787/
New York, NY	7/6/24	A man punched and spat on a bus driver. https://abc7ny.com/post/bronx-assault-suspect-accused-punching-spitting-mta-bus-driver-university-heights-nyc/15039631/
Delaware County, PA	7/6/24	A SEPTA bus driver sustained slash wounds to his face and abdomen when he was attacked by a passenger in Delaware County. https://www.inquirer.com/news/septa-bud-driver-slashed-yeadon-20240706.html
Los Angeles, CA	7/5/24	A Metro bus driver was pepper-sprayed by two women. https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/us/metro-bus-driver-pepper-sprayed-by-two-women-in-downtown-la/ar-BB1og2Cd?recoid=traffic
Oklahoma City, OK	6/22/24	A man who was told he could not bring alcohol onto a bus stabbed the driver. https://www.boston25news.com/news/trending/oklahoma-city-bus-driver-critical-after-stabbing-over-booze-bus/LSHEDVON5ZBIVENHTLNMXFAMHA/
Rochester, NY	6/18/24	A man shot a Regional Transit Service bus driver with a BB gun. https://13wham.com/news/local/reward-offered-as-search-continues-for-man-accused-of-shooting-rts-bus-driver-with-bb-gun-bay-street-rochester-transit-union

CITY	DATE	INCIDENT
Atlanta, GA	6/11/24	One person is dead after a gunman hijacked a Gwinnett County Transit bus in Atlanta, leading police on a chase through multiple Georgia counties. https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2024/06/12/atlanta-police-bus-chase-arrest/
New York, NY	6/8/24	An MTA bus driver was stabbed after getting into an argument with another man while he was on duty. https://abc7ny.com/post/east-new-york-stabbing-mta-bus-driver-attacked-dispute-with-man-brooklyn-nyc/14925894/
New York, NY	6/7/24	A Brooklyn bus driver was punched in the face in East New York after a passenger missed his stop. https://abc7ny.com/post/mta-bus-driver-says-she-was-viciously-attacked/14937991/
Los Angeles, CA	5/28/24	A woman attacked and robbed a Metro bus driver. https://sanfernandosun.com/2024/05/28/metro-bus-driver-attacked-on-memorial-day-suspect-at-large/
Nashville, TN	5/20/24	A WeGo bus driver was stabbed by a passenger with a kitchen knife. https://www.wkrn.com/news/local-news/nashville/woman-arrested-for-allegedly-stabbing-wego-bus-driver/
Santa Clara County, CA	May 2022	A VTA bus driver was threatened by a passenger with a 17-inch blade machete; his panic button alert did not go straight to law enforcement. https://www.nbcbayarea.com/investigation/vta-bus-hijacking-video-fragmented-transit-emergency-response/3545724/
Los Angeles, CA	5/5/24	A bus driver was brutally attacked and dragged off the bus onto the sidewalk. https://ktla.com/news/local-news/bus-driver-violently-attacked-by-homeless-woman-in-los-angeles/
Indianapolis, IN	4/24/24	A passenger set an IndyGo bus on fire. There were four people on the bus, including the driver. All passengers evacuated through the middle door of the vehicle. https://www.indystar.com/story/news/crime/2024/04/30/indy-go-bus-fire-arson-arrest-indianapolis/73517860007/
Oklahoma City, OK	4/20/24	A passenger asked to be let off the bus at a location that was not a designated bus stop and when the driver refused, the passenger assaulted the bus driver, removing him from the driver's seat leading to a crash into a building. https://www.oklahoman.com/story/news/crime/2024/04/20/okc-bus-hits-building-after-passenger-attacks-bus-driver-suspect-arrested/73399251007/
New York, NY	4/20/24	An MTA bus driver was pepper-sprayed in the face by a disorderly passenger who refused to pay the fare. https://nypost.com/2024/04/20/us-news/mta-bus-driver-pepper-sprayed-in-the-face-by-disorderly-passenger-who-refused-to-pay-fare-sources/

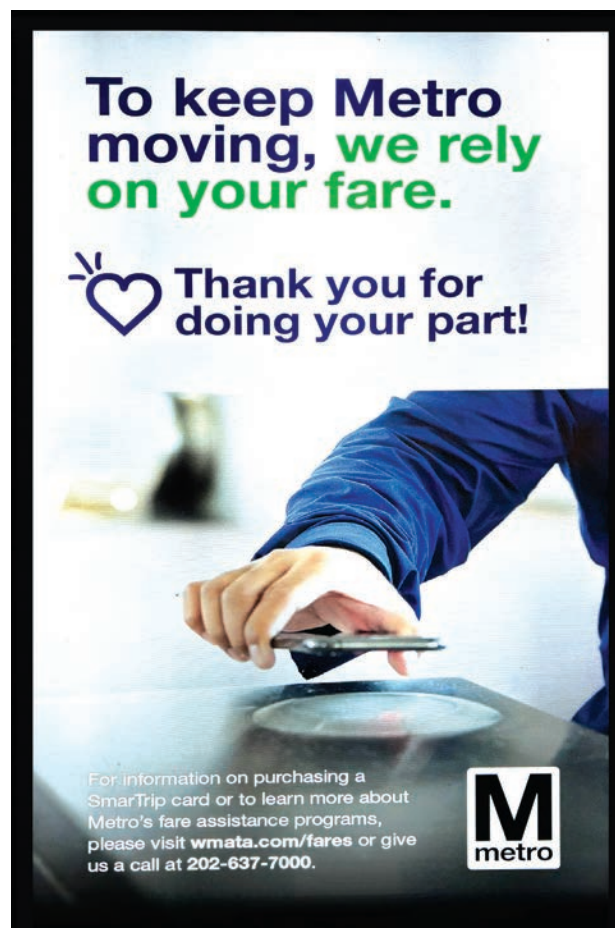
CITY	DATE	INCIDENT
Santa Monica, CA	4/18/24	A man approached the bus and wanted to get on. He kicked in the glass door, which was closed, and then attacked the driver and fled. https://www.foxla.com/news/santa-monica-bus-driver-attacked
Los Angeles, CA	4/13/24	A bus driver was punched in the face with brass knuckles and then stabbed in the chest. https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2024-04-19/help-me-help-me-metro-bus-driver-stabbed-reviving-fears-about-safety
Boston, MA	4/2/24	A man spat in the face of a bus driver without provocation. https://www.universalhub.com/crime/20240419/man-sought-charges-he-spit-bus-drivers-face#:~:text=Transit%20Police%20report%20they%20are,at%20617%2D222%2D1050 .
Peoria, IL	3/30/24	A CityLink bus driver was punched in the eye by a passenger. https://www.25newsnow.com/2024/04/01/police-citylink-bus-driver-assaulted-by-passenger/
Los Angeles, CA	3/20/24	An armed man took control of a Metro bus, kidnapping the operator at gun point before crashing into The Ritz Carlton hotel. https://www.nbclosangeles.com/news/local/hijacked-metro-bus-downtown-la-ritz-carlton-hotel-crash/3368995/
Fort Lauderdale, FL	3/20/24	A passenger on a Broward County Transit bus faces assault charges for spitting on the driver. https://coconutcreektalk.com/news/broward-transit-bus-passenger-spit-driver/
New York, NY	2/29/24	A subway conductor slashed in neck in Brooklyn. https://www.nbcnewyork.com/news/local/subway-conductor-slashing-brooklyn-rockaway-avenue/5181115/
New York, NY	2/14/24	A station agent's eye socket was fractured when a man who had followed her down a platform punched her. https://www.nytimes.com/2024/02/29/nyregion/subway-slashing-mta-protest.html?unlocked_article_code=1.ZE0.K8_k.NWQwQ5ININ5W&smid=em-share
New York, NY	2/10/24	A knife-wielding MTA rider attacked a Manhattan bus driver for not speeding up. https://www.nydailynews.com/2024/02/10/knife-wielding-mta-rider-attacks-manhattan-bus-driver-for-not-speeding-up/
New York, NY	2/10/24	An MTA bus driver was punched repeatedly by an unruly rider. https://www.fox5ny.com/news/mta-bus-driver-suspect-punched

CITY	DATE	INCIDENT
New York, NY	2/2/24	An MTA bus driver was struck with an umbrella. https://www.amny.com/new-york/bronx/man-smacked-mta-bus-driver-umbrella-bronx/
Nashville, TN	January 2024	A WeGo Bus driver was punched multiple times in the face. The suspect then picked up a large blunt object and threw it at the window, damaging the glass. https://www.newschannel5.com/news/wego-bus-driver-assaulted-behind-the-wheel-by-passenger
Washington, DC	1/23/24	A bus operator/training instructor on board the bus got into an argument with the passenger. The argument escalated and the suspect threw a beverage at the training instructor, then physically assaulted them. https://www.wusa9.com/article/traffic/mission-metro/metreobus-operator-assaulted-tenleytown-station/65-4c71d058-94b2-4089-877c-e9f3ef7fa4a1

Eyes and Ears

Moreover, the overwhelming majority of assaults come about over fare disputes. Fare evasion is now rampant across the country. Every weekday in New York City, close to one million bus riders - roughly one out of every two passengers - board without paying,⁷ and transit officials have been forced to spend their scarce resources (ironically caused by fare evasion) to deploy a new crew of enforcers to catch fare evaders. The Metropolitan Transportation Authority's unarmed "fare inspectors" are stationed in buses and at bus stops after fare evasion skyrocketed from 21% in 2020 to roughly 50% in the first quarter of 2024 - costing millions in lost revenue every year.⁸

Bus operators are discouraged from calling out fare beaters because of concerns that the drivers could be harassed or assaulted. Avoiding confrontation is critical, but if the transit system does not work and nobody plays by the rules, it feels lawless, tearing at the social compact of our cities. Transit systems need more eyes and ears. Bus operators cannot and should not be sitting ducks who ride alone. Additional staff is needed on specified lines at designated times to monitor activities and deter disruptive behavior from occurring within the system.



⁷ <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/08/26/nyregion/nyc-bus-subway-fare-evasion.html>

⁸ <https://nypost.com/2024/08/26/us-news/mta-deploys-crew-of-enforcers-to-stomp-out-fare-beating-as-neary-half-of-nyc-bus-riders-dont-pay/>

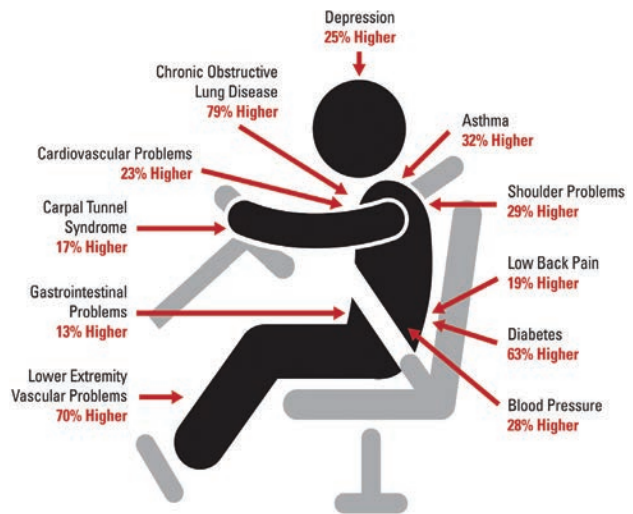
These transit ambassadors, or fare investigators, can report any type of suspicious activity and/or behavior to the appropriate personnel, summoning assistance as necessary and as appropriate.

Air Flow Issues

It is no surprise that nationwide, thousands of transit workers tested positive for COVID-19, and hundreds died, just weeks after the pandemic. Transit workers got infected at a rate that was much higher than the general population because they were continuously exposed to large crowds of riders at close range. With current bus designs, when a bus is moving forward, it creates reverse airflow in the cabin, bringing unhealthy air from the rear of the bus into the driver's workstation. Most bus designs have inadequate fresh air intake from outside of the bus and have filters and air sterilization systems which do little to mitigate the spread of infectious diseases among drivers and riders. Safe and secure transit requires addressing twin hazards of operator assaults and unsafe air quality. Current barriers are ineffective at blocking either and create visual obstructions putting the public at risk. The cockpits of rail and commercial aviation are needed along with separate fresh and filtered ventilation blocking emerging respiratory hazards.

Ergonomic Issues

Bus drivers are at risk of developing musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) due to long hours of sitting, exposure to vibrations, and repetitive motions. These issues can affect the back, neck, shoulders, tendons, and joints. Long periods of sitting and repetitive motions can lead to MSDs. Vibrations from the road are transferred through the seat and floor into the driver's body. Many operators typically experience lower back pain, tendonitis, Carpal Tunnel Syndrome, aches and pains, and weakness in the upper extremities. Vehicle design can impact a driver's exposure to vibrations. Electric steering columns can automatically adjust to the driver's optimal position, and the type of driver's seat, including suspension and seat cushions, can affect exposure to vibrations.



ATU SUPPORTS:

1. **Mandating minimum vehicle design safety standards for transit buses. No fixed-route or paratransit bus should be operated in revenue service unless the vehicle is equipped with a barrier between the passenger and driver compartments that fully encloses the operator's workstation, and prevents the unwanted entry of persons, fluids, and articles into the workstation. The design of the bus operator's workstation also must be ergonomically sound and must provide for positive airflow, which reduces the operator's exposure to viruses and other airborne pathogens.**
2. **Establishing a new program to fund unarmed transit ambassadors and fare enforcement inspectors to interact with and engage transit workers, members of the public, and others for the purpose of establishing an official presence and deterring disruptive behavior within transit systems.**

ISSUE #3:

Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan Assistance

Transit workers and riders could soon be much safer on the bus thanks to game-changing, life-saving regulations published in April of 2024 by the FTA regarding Public Transportation Agency Safety Plans (PTASPs).

The new regulations, authorized by the BIL, finally ensure that decisions and actions on safety issues are not made exclusively by transit management - whose perspective has all too frequently shown a clear disregard for workers' health and safety - and instead take into account the knowledge and experience of frontline workers, who are often far better equipped to deal with such matters.

The PTASP regulations require labor-management safety committees, with equal numbers on each side, to develop strategies and solutions to protect workers from assault as well as other safety hazards. As required by the BIL, the regulations require PTASPs to be developed by a committee of managers and front-line workers, and they require agencies to carry out safety risk reduction programs for transit operations by reducing the number and rates of safety events, injuries, and assaults on transit workers. Now, workers will have the opportunity, based on sound data, to make the case in safety plans that barriers or other protections are needed to keep them safe. And according to the regulations, if agency safety plans call for barriers, management may no longer say no. Under previous regulations, the PTASPs were developed and approved solely by management.

However, since passage of the BIL in 2021, transit management at certain agencies has strongly resisted sharing decision-making authority on safety matters with their frontline workers, and FTA has struggled with enforcement. Nearly four years since the BIL was signed, management in many places continues to hamstring the labor-management committees. Local union efforts to establish committees with equal numbers on both the labor and management side have been exhausting, and that work is not complete at some systems. Remarkably, we have seen transit agencies falsely claiming that they are not covered by the BIL, or managers attempting to appoint union-side committee

members. ATU has also witnessed claims from management that pre-existing joint committees are BIL-compliant despite the clear absence of basic statutorily mandated features, including equal representation from frontline workers and management.

FTA appears to have no regularized process for verifying PTASP compliance or for enforcing the law. The agency does not review safety plans submitted by transit systems. In fact, FTA doesn't even collect them.

The final rule is likewise silent on the issue, thereby providing transit systems with no predictability or guidance on the system of penalties that Congress has made applicable to noncompliant transit systems. It is evident that some transit systems need assistance with BIL compliance. Some transit managers might even require the threat or application of penalties in order to be convinced to follow the law. So far, FTA has often relied on ATU-provided data to understand the scope of the noncompliance problem. The ATU cannot continue to carry the weight of tracking noncompliance, and transit workers – going every day to dangerous jobs – can no longer wait for management to do what the law requires.

ATU SUPPORTS:

- 1. Establishing a complaint portal for FTA to receive claims from workers and unions that transit systems are not in compliance with the BIL and/or with 49 CFR Part 673; to investigate, issue, and publish findings; and to refer any transit systems found to be noncompliant to the Department of Transportation for the penalties provided under the BIL.**
- 2. Requiring FTA to collect and review agency safety plans as they are updated; to determine whether such plans are in compliance with the BIL and 49 CFR Part 673; to demand prompt remedial action from any transit agency whose plan FTA determines to be noncompliant; and to refer any transit agency that fails to come into prompt compliance to the Department of Transportation for the penalties provided under the BIL.**

3. **Mandating that transit agencies – via joint labor-management safety committees, where they exist - certify compliance with the 49 USC § 5329 PTASP provisions and with 49 CFR Part 673 on a quarterly basis.**
4. **Allocating additional resources to the FTA’s Office of Transit Safety and Oversight to establish a formal process for items 1 through 3, above.**

ISSUE #4:

Transit Workforce Development

Green Jobs

The BIL authorized more than \$5 billion for §5339 Low or No Emission (Lo-No) Bus Competitive grants, and many states have passed legislation requiring a quick transition to zero emission bus fleets. ATU fully supports this revolutionary change in the transit industry. We take pride in performing some of the greenest jobs on the planet, driving and maintaining state-of-the-art vehicles with minimal tailpipe emissions while taking dozens of commuters off our crowded roads at a time. With each mile we drive, ATU members are playing a key role in lowering greenhouse gas emissions.

However, the successful deployment of zero-emission buses, which include battery electric buses and hydrogen fuel cell electric buses, depends, in part, on



transit agencies having skilled and qualified workers to operate and maintain them. A 2021 report on transit training needs identified changing bus technologies as a challenge for transit agencies, including training on battery electric buses that requires a different set of skills than diesel or gasoline engine vehicles.⁹ According to GAO, transitioning to zero-emission buses will most significantly change the traditional mechanic role, making it more of a technician role that requires the use of electronic equipment to diagnose and address engine error codes. Unfortunately, U.S. transit workers have not been given the training necessary to maintain these new vehicles. Their safety is in jeopardy and jobs are on the chopping block as transit system managers throw up their hands. According to a 2023 American Public Transportation Association (APTA) report, many transit agencies face ongoing shortages of frontline and skilled workers.¹⁰ This shortage stems from factors such as agencies’ aging workforce and high retirement rates, as well as increased competition for drivers and mechanics. Other factors include low starting pay, split shifts, and dangerous working conditions.

New Skills Needed

Bus mechanics now require new skills and knowledge, including electric motor repair, computer literacy, and diagnostic troubleshooting. The new skillset has changed the bus maintenance role from that of a traditional mechanic to a technician role, using software and electronic equipment to diagnose and address bus engine error codes. In addition to these skills, mechanics and technicians need to learn high-voltage safety procedures to protect employees from the new safety risks presented by battery electric and hydrogen fuel cell electric bus technology. High-voltage training typically includes the proper use of personal protective equipment and procedures to quickly and safely shut off power to equipment.

New skills are also needed on the operations side. Additional training is needed for positions such as bus

9 TRANSIT WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT. Actions to Support Transition to Zero Emission Buses. GAO-25-106921, November 2024. [GAO-25-106921, TRANSIT WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT: Actions to Support Transition to Zero- Emission Buses](#)

10 American Public Transportation Association (APTA), Transit Workforce Shortage Synthesis Report (March 2023).

operators driving such buses, depot staff who use battery chargers, dispatchers who monitor bus charge and reroute buses to meet service needs, and route planners who configure bus routes to accommodate range limitations.¹¹ Moreover, traditional bus driver training has focused on the safe operation of the vehicle, with less attention paid to enhancing and valuing drivers' day-to-day relationships with passengers, even though it is these interactions and issues which often elevate drivers' stress, lead to related health problems; and undermine their commitment to the job.

and dedicate significant resources to labor-management apprenticeship training tend to operate more efficiently than those that contract out.

BIL: A Good Start, but More Resources and Oversight are Needed

The BIL, which authorized more than \$5 billion for \$5339 Low or No Emission (Lo-No) Bus Competitive grants, included several workforce development provisions:

This is money from the U.S. Federal Transit Program being used to line the pockets of multi-billion-dollar foreign corporations at the expense of American transit workers. Haven't enough American Workers lost their jobs to foreigners in recent decades?

Despite this looming workforce crisis, few programs provide workforce development specifically for frontline transit workers like bus drivers and train operators. Retention issues have caused service disruptions all across the nation, and not just at the nation's largest transit operators. Indeed, small city, rural and tribal transit systems are also dealing with these matters.

Sending More U.S. Jobs to Foreign Companies

Privatization is an ever-growing threat. According to GAO, some transit agencies have reduced the need for training on zero-emission buses by contracting out maintenance services to international transit contractors, which are calling for an expansion of this arrangement, claiming that "contractors can leverage their existing expertise to run the operation with fewer resources."¹²

Workforce development is not just good for workers. Transit agencies that prioritize workforce development

- 5% of this funding must be used by transit systems to fund workforce development training, including registered apprenticeships and other labor-management training programs. According to GAO, since the inception of this new program, FTA has provided workforce development funding directly to transit agencies, estimated at \$43 million in 2022, \$49 million in 2023, and \$41 million in 2024. While this set aside for workforce training is certainly a breakthrough, multiple ATU locals report that their employers do not actually enter into labor-management training programs as required by the BIL. Some agencies falsely certify that they have such programs in place, and that workforce funds are not needed. FTA needs resources to ensure that their grantees are using Lo-No funds as required by law.
- In awarding competitive bus grants for projects related to zero-emission vehicles, the bill requires transit systems to submit a zero-emission transition plan that demonstrates a long-term

11 GAO Report 25-106921.

12 GAO Report 25-106921.

fleet management plan with a strategy for how they intend to use their funds.

- Transit systems must examine the impact of the transition to zero emission buses on the current workforce and avoid the displacement of the existing workforce.

In addition, in 2021, FTA established the **Transit Workforce Center (TWC)** to provide direct technical assistance to transit agencies to advance workforce development. This center aims to assist agencies in addressing the ongoing national transit worker shortage broadly, as well as workforce issues related to the transition to zero-emission buses. TWC assists transit agencies to train and retain frontline transit workers and provides recruitment-focused activities.

While FTA sends all transit agency requests for support related to workforce development to TWC, the Center has some capacity limitations. Due to a small budget, they do not have the capacity and resources to individually help each transit agency address their specific workforce gaps and training needs. TWC receives more requests for assistance than their 15-member staff can handle.¹³

ATU SUPPORTS:

- 1. The continued funding and official establishment of the Transit Workforce Center (TWC) in Title 49, funded at least at the level of the National Transit Institute (NTI), targeted to both rural and urban transit systems, dedicated to the needs of the frontline workforce through standards-based training in the maintenance and operations occupations.**
- 2. Increasing the amount that transit systems must set aside for workforce development training (including registered apprenticeships and other labor-management training programs) under the Zero Emissions Bus Facilities Grants Program from 5% to 10%.**
- 3. Prohibition on use of Lo-No Bus funds to contract out maintenance work.**

- 4. Additional resources for FTA's Office of Transit Programs to ensure grantee compliance with the statutory requirements of the Lo-No Bus Program.**

ISSUE #5:

Microtransit Standards

As transit systems across North America work to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, many have struggled with funding shortfalls, decreased ridership, changed commuter patterns, and operator shortages. In response to these challenges, transit agencies and government leaders have increasingly turned to microtransit as a quick fix to keep service on the road and attract new riders.

Microtransit is an app-based, on-demand service that operates like transportation network companies (TNCs) such as Uber and Lyft. It typically offers passengers on-demand, point-to-point service within a defined geographic boundary using sedans, vans, or cutaway buses. Microtransit fares tend to be comparable to bus fares despite the substantial subsidies the service requires to cover operating costs. While it can be used to connect to existing fixed routes or to expand service coverage, microtransit sometimes competes with, or replaces, existing fixed routes.

Unfortunately, microtransit has failed to deliver. Like other technology fads, the reality is less impressive and more expensive than marketing suggests. Most projects have not lived up to their promises. As transit agencies and policymakers evaluate microtransit service, it is critical that they understand its shortcomings:

- Microtransit cannot efficiently scale to meet increased customer demand.
- It has been shown to serve a younger, more affluent, and less diverse ridership than fixed route service.
- Its environmental benefit is doubtful.
- It encourages cost cutting through privatization and the degradation of transit jobs.

Transit agencies need to address the challenges of the post-pandemic landscape with long-term solutions.

13 GAO Report 25-106921.

Rather than throwing good money after bad with microtransit, agencies should take real steps to address the operator shortage and invest in good careers for transit workers. A stable and reliable workforce is the foundation of dependable service.

Attack on Workers, Wages

Transit systems generally choose to use independent contractors to perform microtransit service because agencies know that they cannot be organized into traditional unions, classified as self-employed under U.S. Labor Law. These workers lack the legal framework to collectively bargain with an employer as a group and are not generally covered by minimum wage laws, workers compensation insurance, or unemployment insurance. And if independent contractors are not used, privatization is usually the next step. Private transit companies operate only on the profit motive with no incentives to provide high quality service, and they have no accountability. Workers that are employed by the private companies see their standard of living reduced, and over time, transportation services provided to the communities are diminished. Turnover is common, raising real safety issues. Cities that contract out find that they have lost control of their transit system, leaving them powerless when residents raise real concerns.

Instead of wasting grant money on the latest tech fad, agencies should invest in reducing headways, improving pedestrian connections to stops, building better bus shelters, and prioritizing real-time scheduling upgrades for paratransit riders.

As Congressional offices are pursuing discretionary U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) grants for their communities, including *Strengthening Mobility and Revolutionizing Transportation* (SMART) Grants, *Advanced Transportation Technology and Innovative* (ATTAIN) Grants, *Congestion Relief Program Grants*, and other competitive programs set up to provide so-called “innovative” transportation solutions, they should know that if such grants include microtransit features, they could have an unintended negative impact on transit service and transit workers.

Rather than pursuing microtransit service, transit agencies and government leaders should prioritize

efforts to improve the quality of existing fixed route bus and ADA paratransit service. However, if microtransit service is implemented:

ATU SUPPORTS:

- 1. Requiring that microtransit service not be used to replace or compete with existing fixed route and ADA paratransit and school bus services. No existing fixed route bus or paratransit employees, whether employed in-house or by a contractor, should be dismissed or displaced because of the establishment of microtransit service.**
- 2. Requiring that microtransit service be performed in-house by existing, experienced public transit employees, unless fixed route is performed by a contractor, in which case the contractor should directly hire all microtransit operators.**
- 3. Requiring microtransit operators to hold a commercial driver’s license (CDL).**

ISSUE #6:

Autonomous Bus Safety

Safety First

As Congress considers legislation authorizing autonomous vehicles (AVs), transit buses should be off the table. Autonomous buses are simply not even remotely road worthy today. The current state of pedestrian-detection technology for driverless vehicles in general is quite weak. People should not be used as crash dummies in the development of AV buses, whether they are on board a vehicle or in harm’s way on the street. Transit workers also play an enormous role in transit safety as the eyes and ears of our communities and should remain on the bus.

Autonomous buses are unsafe, vulnerable to accidents, software malfunctions, and criminal activity. Software glitches can cause autonomous vehicles to make mistakes, and with dozens of people on board the bus, these mishaps can be catastrophic.

Toronto suspends self-driving bus pilot after disastrous Whitby crash

Laura Harrahan | Dec 22 2021, 9:50 am



City of Toronto

According to FTA, “Transit bus automation technologies are nascent and still emerging (unlike automation for passenger rail operations, which is relatively mature in comparison). The domestic transit bus industry lags behind both light-duty vehicles and heavy-duty commercial trucks in terms of developing, testing, and commercializing automated driving systems.”¹⁴

Public transportation is already one of the safest ways to travel. It is ten times safer per mile than traveling by car because it has less than a tenth the per-mile traffic casualty (injury or death) rate as automobile travel.¹⁵ Why would Congress now turn over the keys of U.S. public transportation vehicles to robots constructed with unproven technology?

Autonomous buses may not be able to detect pedestrians or cyclists. There is no substitution for the human eye.

Bus drivers who see pedestrians preparing to enter a crosswalk are able to make eye contact with that person, waving them on safely. That type of interaction will likely never be able to be replicated by an AV bus.

Autonomous buses may be vulnerable to hacking and hijacking. There are huge network security considerations involved with autonomous buses. Are we prepared for hijackings of buses carrying 50-100 people by evil people operating from remote locations?

Moreover, people may not trust the technology and might be hesitant to use autonomous buses. At a time when the transit industry is struggling to attract commuters, do we really want to unleash unproven technology that will cause ridership levels to plummet even more?

Taken for a Ride

Transit agencies dabbling in risky AV technology are being taken for a ride (at a time when transit dollars are scarce) by companies that only care about bagging government contracts and leveraging marketing for their next round of private investment. According to FTA, “In general, transit agencies’ core expertise is in transit planning and operations, not research design or evaluation. Working with an emerging technology adds significant complexity. For example, procurement of innovative technologies can be an unfamiliar, slow process for public sector agencies. Many vendors active in this space are start-ups, and demonstrations have been delayed by staff turnover at vendors, and companies changing strategic direction or going out of business. This adds risk and time. In addition, sharing operational and system data can be a sensitive issue, as private sector companies often have a strong business interest in keeping certain information confidential and who may be motivated to participate in demonstrations to further prove out their systems and attract investors.”¹⁶

¹⁴ Strategic Transit Automation Research (STAR) Plan 2.0: 2023-2028. FTA Report No. 0264, May, 2024.

¹⁵ American Public Transportation Association (APTA) <https://www.apta.com/research-technical-resources/research-reports/public-transit-is-key-strategy-in-advancing-vision-zero/>

¹⁶ STAR Plan 2.0.



“Kansas City bus driver honored for keeping passengers safe amid gun battle”

— March 28, 2018

The Providence Journal

“Hero’ bus driver subdued man who showed BB gun while refusing to wear mask, union says”

— April 6, 2022



“Sexual assault on TheBus leaves Oahu teen shaken, father thanks bus driver for stepping in”

— April 29, 2021

Crime Fighters

This is an extremely risky time to consider taking transit workers off of our buses. We are in the midst of an unprecedented spike in crime on transit all across the country.¹⁷ There is an opioid epidemic and a housing crisis, so the issues that we’ve been seeing in the cities have migrated into our public transit systems. The most effective way to reduce violence on public transit systems is to get more people back to riding them. Having people from all different incomes riding mass transit is the best way to suppress crime. Obviously, the police have a major role to play, but it really comes down to having people, lots of eyes, on different people. This of course includes transit workers, who play an enormous role in transit safety, going way above and beyond their traditional driving duties. Bus drivers have been known to save their passengers from crazed gunmen,¹⁸ or from unprovoked physical attacks¹⁹ and sexual assaults.²⁰

Do we really want to eliminate transit’s last line of defense and allow these heinous criminals to roam free on our buses?

Community Heroes

Bus operators, the eyes and ears of our communities, also routinely perform heroic acts that impact all of us. They alert 911 about the existence of house fires and talk suicidal people off of bridges.²¹ Taking potential heroes off the bus will result in tragedies that could have been averted.



Dayton RTA bus driver praised as hero for helping passengers to safety during tornadoes.



“HRT bus driver called ‘guardian angel’ for his heroic actions”

— September 9, 2021

THE BUFFALO NEWS

“Buffalo bus driver saves woman from jumping off bridge”

— October 30, 2020

17 *Cities Want to Return to Prepandemic Life. One Obstacle: Transit Crime.* New York Times, April 25, 2022.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/25/us/public-transit-crime.html>

18 *Florida bus driver hailed as hero after gunman opened fire.* Florida Times-Union (Jacksonville), March 19, 2022.

19 *Man was punched, kicked by 4 suspects in assault on Pierce Transit bus, deputies say.* The News Tribune (Tacoma, Washington), December 7, 2022.

20 *Police: Bus driver stops attempted sex assault.* News-Journal (Daytona Beach, Florida), July 24, 2018.

21 https://www.pennlive.com/midstate/2013/10/buffalo_ny_bus_driver_hailed_a.html

Beyond the headlines, many bus drivers amass millions of accident-free miles over their careers, winning the trust and respect of their riders. They engage with customers while providing a safe and comfortable ride. This requires special skills and an ability to communicate.

ATU members have been driving Americans of all ages safely to their destinations since 1892. AV buses are an existential threat to our members' unbreakable bond with the travelling public. We transport precious cargo: vulnerable school bus children and transit riders who heavily rely on the bus for their mobility needs. They deserve peace of mind knowing that if they step on that bus, they will come home in one piece.

ATU SUPPORTS:

- ***The Safe Regulation of Autonomous Bus Driving Systems Act (Safe ROADS Act)***, (Rep. Chuy Garcia) which places certain restrictions and preconditions on the use of highly automated vehicles for use in public transit operations. The legislation sets up a framework to ensure safe operation of automated transit which shall remain in effect until the Secretary of Transportation certifies that standards are in place which provide at least an equivalent level of safety to non-highly automated vehicles.

CONCLUSION

As Yogi Berra famously said, "When you come to a fork in the road, take it." Public transportation in America is now at a crossroads. As the BIL nears expiration, Congress now has a choice to make. Should lawmakers simply accept the fact that fewer people are riding transit at this moment, and cut the program accordingly? Do we abandon the people who rely on the bus every day to get to work, school, church, and the doctor? Do we risk not being ready for workers as they prepare to return to their offices? Millions of working families across the U.S. would argue that Congress needs to step up to the plate once again and invest in safe, affordable, and reliable public transit services for those who need it as well as others who choose to leave their cars at home.



In the late 19th Century, ATU members drove horse-drawn vehicles, such as carriages, carts, and omnibuses. Workers were told they would be replaced until our members started operating electric-powered streetcars. Then motor buses came along, and somehow, we still survived, eventually partnering with our riders to save transit in the 1960s when many said transit was no longer needed because automobiles had taken over American culture.

Today, transit is changing once again, with new electric vehicles and others that purport to be able to drive themselves safely. Time will tell. Regardless, ATU will continue to push for intelligent public policies to ensure that the American public will continue to get where they need to go. We look forward to the ride.

John A. Costa, International President
Yvette Trujillo, International Executive Vice President
Kenneth R. Kirk, International Secretary-Treasurer

AMALGAMATED TRANSIT UNION

10000 New Hampshire Avenue, Silver Spring, MD 20903
Tel: 301-431-7100 • Toll Free: 1-888-240-1196 • Fax: 301-431-7117
www.atu.org