



U.S. Department
of Transportation

**Federal Transit
Administration**

Headquarters

1200 New Jersey Avenue, S.E.
Washington, D.C. 20590

February 2, 2026

Mr. Brent Cagle
Interim Chief Executive Officer
Charlotte Area Transit System
300 East Trade Street
Charlotte, N.C. 28202

Dear Mr. Cagle:

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) conducted a Focused Agency Safety Plan Audit of the Charlotte Area Transit System (CATS) pursuant to its authority under 49 U.S.C. § 5329(f)(1) and 49 CFR Part 670. FTA notified CATS of this audit by letter dated September 10, 2025.

The audit assessed CATS's implementation of its Agency Safety Plan, with particular attention to Safety Risk Management and safety risk reduction practices related to assaults on transit workers and overall system safety. FTA conducted this audit using a combination of virtual activities, on-site activities, and an extensive review of documentation provided by CATS.

Enclosed with this letter is FTA's Focused Agency Safety Plan Audit Final Report for CATS. The report identifies findings and associated corrective actions that CATS must take to demonstrate compliance with applicable Federal safety requirements.

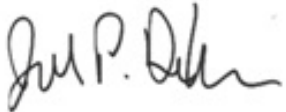
Pursuant to 49 U.S.C. § 5329(f) and 49 CFR § 670.21(c), within 30 days of this letter, CATS must develop and submit corrective action plans to FTA that address all findings listed in the attached report. FTA will review and approve (with revisions as necessary) CATS's corrective action plans and will monitor CATS's progress in resolving each finding and required action. FTA will conduct scheduled meetings with CATS to review its progress until such time as FTA determines that these meetings are no longer needed or may be conducted with less frequency.

Corrective action plans must include primary points of contact and expected timelines for implementation and completion. Failure to satisfactorily resolve the corrective actions may result in additional oversight or enforcement action, up to and including the withholding of Federal transit funds, as authorized by law.

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Mr. Brent Cagle

If you have any questions regarding the audit or the requested documentation, please contact Jeremy Furrer, Division Chief for Safety Policy and Promotion, Office of Safety Management, at jeremy.furrer@dot.gov, or me at (202) 366-5080 or via email at joseph.delorenzo@dot.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joe P. DeLorenzo".

Joe DeLorenzo
Associate Administrator for Transit Safety and Oversight and
Chief Safety Officer

Enclosure

cc: Vi Lyles, Mayor of Charlotte
Lamar Brown Jr., Safety Enforcement & Oversight Manager, Rail Division, NCDOT

Focused Agency Safety Plan Audit Final Report: Charlotte Area Transit System

Office of Transit Safety and Oversight
Federal Transit Administration
February 2, 2026

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Executive Summary

In October and November 2025, the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) conducted an audit of the Charlotte Area Transit System's (CATS) implementation of its Agency Safety Plan (ASP), focusing on requirements for preventing assaults on transit workers. This audit was conducted pursuant to FTA's authority under 49 U.S.C. 5329(f)(1) and implementing regulations at 49 CFR Part 670.

In a letter to Mr. Brent Cagle, Interim Chief Executive Officer, dated September 10, 2025, FTA informed CATS of the initiation of this audit to address the ongoing risk to CATS operators of being assaulted and the general safety and security of the system. FTA notes the rate of assault on transit workers at CATS has jumped to five times the national average in 2025 after being below the national average the prior two years. In addition, the rate of crimes against passengers on the CATS system is three times the national average.¹

The intent of this audit is to assess CATS's compliance with 49 CFR Part 673 (Part 673), Public Transportation Agency Safety Plans (PTASP). The audit also includes evaluation of the sufficiency of the agency's responses to FTA's directives implemented to mitigate the safety risk associated with assaults on transit workers.

The PTASP regulation at Part 673 establishes requirements for transit agencies to address safety concerns, including the risk of assaults on transit workers:

- The PTASP regulation requires transit agencies to establish and implement Safety Management System (SMS) processes to regularly and continually identify hazards and their potential consequences, assess the level of safety risk, implement appropriate safety risk mitigations to lower that safety risk, and assess the effectiveness of the safety risk mitigations over time. Hazards include those associated with assaults on transit workers and personal safety events.
- The PTASP regulation also establishes specific requirements focused on addressing assaults on transit workers, including the role of the joint labor-management safety committee, the implementation of the safety risk reduction program, and the setting of annual performance targets for the number and rate of assaults on transit workers.

Taken together, these regulatory requirements help ensure that transit agencies are effectively mitigating these risks and continually assessing their actions to improve the safety of their systems for workers, passengers, and the general public.

As part of this review, FTA examined materials provided by CATS, including the ASP required under the PTASP regulation, documentation regarding CATS's implementation of the ASP as it relates to assaults on transit workers and personal safety, and documentation regarding the role

¹ Data source: National Transit Database

and actions of CATS's safety committee and safety risk reduction program. In addition, FTA conducted virtual and on-site interviews to further understand CATS's implementation of its ASP and the safety risk reduction program.

As a result of its review, FTA has determined that CATS is non-compliant with certain Part 673 requirements related to Safety Risk Management (SRM), Safety Assurance, the joint labor-management safety committee, the safety risk reduction program, and de-escalation training. With this report, FTA is issuing 18 findings of non-compliance. [Appendix A](#) of this report lists each finding and the corrective actions required for closeout. In addition, this report provides six recommendations for CATS's consideration. Adoption of these recommendations is not mandatory.

Introduction

Federal Requirements and Relevant FTA Actions

FTA has adopted the principles and methods of Safety Management Systems (SMS) as the basis for enhancing the safety of public transportation in the United States. FTA follows the principles and methods of SMS under the authority of 49 U.S.C. 5329 and as established in FTA's Public Transportation Safety Program. *See* 49 CFR § 673.3.

[Part 673](#) requires operators of public transportation systems that receive Federal funds under the FTA [Urbanized Area Formula Grants \(Section 5307\)](#) and rail transit agencies subject to the FTA [State Safety Oversight \(SSO\) Program](#) to develop an ASP that includes the processes and procedures to implement an SMS, which is a comprehensive, collaborative, and systematic approach to managing safety. SMS brings management and labor together to better control risk, detect and correct safety problems earlier, share and analyze safety data more effectively, and measure safety performance more precisely.

Since no two public transportation systems are alike, the regulation sets scalable and flexible minimum standards for ASPs, including requirements for the identification, assessment, and mitigation of risk and strategies to minimize exposure to hazards; a comprehensive safety training program; safety performance targets; and a process and timeline for conducting an annual review and update of the ASP.

In 2019, FTA published a [Federal Register Notice](#) that highlighted that in cases where a transit agency identifies hazards associated with assaults on transit operators, the PTASP regulation requires the agency to use the SMS SRM processes documented in its ASP to assess the associated safety risk and, based on the results of the safety risk assessment, identify safety risk mitigations or strategies as necessary to address the safety risk. In 2024, FTA issued General Directive 24-1 to all transit agencies subject to the PTASP regulation, requiring each to conduct a safety risk assessment, identify safety risk mitigations or strategies, and provide information to

FTA on how it is assessing, mitigating, and monitoring the safety risk associated with assaults on transit workers.

Beginning in 2023, FTA implemented the new National Transit Database (NTD) requirements of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), which expanded NTD reporting for assaults on transit workers. In April 2024, FTA updated the PTASP regulation to incorporate statutory changes in the IIJA, such as joint labor-management safety committees and safety risk reduction programs, and revised the National Public Transportation Safety Plan (National Safety Plan) to establish new safety performance measures to support required PTASP safety performance target setting, including for the number and rates of assaults on transit workers.

CATS System Overview

CATS provides public transportation services in a large urbanized area that includes fixed-route buses, rail fixed guideway (light rail and streetcar), special transportation services, and vanpool.

The CATS Bus Operations Division (BOD) provides the CATS fixed-route bus service. CATS operates 70 fixed routes: local buses, express buses, and neighborhood shuttles. Express routes provide service to and from outlying areas of Mecklenburg County as well as neighboring counties.

The LYNX Blue Line is an 18.9-mile light rail system with 26 stations that operates seven days a week between I-485/South Boulevard Station and the University of North Carolina - Charlotte Main Campus in University City.

The CityLYNX Gold Line is a four-mile streetcar service with 17 stops/platforms. It returned to revenue service in August 2021. The CityLYNX Gold Line is a conventional, in-street running fixed-guideway with a mix of center and side platforms.

CATS provides a demand-response paratransit service called Special Transportation Service (STS). STS provides service during the same hours as fixed routes using approximately 84 lift-equipped buses maintained by the BOD.

The CATS vanpool program is contracted out through Enterprise, which provides vehicles, gas cards, insurance, and maintenance. Vans are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Mecklenburg County Sales Tax and Transition to a Regional Transit Authority

On November 4, 2025, Mecklenburg County voters approved a 1 percent transportation sales tax referendum that will fund a range of transit projects on the CATS system and initiates the establishment of a regional transit authority that will assume operational control of CATS and the Metropolitan Transit Commission (MTC). The new regional transit authority will include appointments from every municipality within Mecklenburg County, as well as state-level representation.

During on-site interviews, CATS representatives noted that this news foretells significant increases in existing CATS transit services and the establishment of new CATS service. CATS representatives also noted that within this new regional transit authority model, CATS will tackle a range of strategic organizational decision-making activities related to this transition, including the potential establishment of a dedicated transit police force. The FTA findings and recommendations presented in this audit report will help inform CATS actions related to its SMS under the new regional authority, ensure that CATS will build processes and program components compliant with the requirements of Part 673, and ensure the mitigation of risk associated with assaults on transit workers.

Audit Approach

FTA's Focused Agency Safety Plan Audit of CATS verifies compliance with Federal PTASP requirements by auditing CATS policy and related documentation required by Part 673 and CATS implementation of that policy: FTA received and reviewed the CATS ASP, as well as documentation related to activities for SRM, Safety Assurance, the joint labor-management safety committee, the safety risk reduction program, the transit worker safety reporting program, safety risk mitigations, and funding prioritization. For a detailed list of materials reviewed, see [Appendix B](#). Of particular note are the following:

- **Agency Policy:** FTA reviewed agency SMS processes and policies (as defined in the ASP and referenced documents) to confirm compliance with the process requirements established by Part 673.
- **Policy Implementation:** FTA reviewed a range of agency records and documentation to verify that the agency is carrying out SMS activities as defined in the agency's approved ASP and to confirm how the agency is implementing the SMS processes as they relate to assaults on transit workers.

Following a review of the agency's document submission, FTA used virtual and on-site audit interviews with key agency personnel to verify SMS implementation activity.

Findings and Recommendations

The findings established in this report identify areas of non-compliance with Part 673 requirements related to hazard identification, safety risk assessment, safety risk mitigation, safety performance measurement, continuous improvement, and the integration of a joint labor-management safety committee into these processes through the required safety risk reduction program. Compliance with these requirements is essential to CATS's ability to ensure the effectiveness of its safety efforts.

To achieve compliance, CATS must implement the required corrective actions identified for each finding.

In addition to the 18 findings noted, FTA is also making six recommendations in this report. Recommendations suggest actions that may support and improve CATS's SMS, but these actions are not mandatory. CATS may choose whether to implement any of these recommendations. These recommendations are listed in the report below and in [Appendix A](#).

Finding 1: CATS is not implementing the safety risk assessment processes established in its ASP when assessing the risk of assaults on transit workers, as required by § 673.25(c).

Finding 2: CATS is not implementing the process established in its ASP to monitor its operations to identify any safety risk mitigations that were not implemented as intended, as required by § 673.27(b)(2).

Finding 3: CATS has not established or implemented a process to monitor its operations to identify any safety risk mitigations that may be ineffective, as required at § 673.27(b)(2).

Finding 4: CATS has not met the requirements at § 673.11(a)(3) regarding general PTASP safety performance targets.

Finding 5: CATS has not established a process to assess its safety performance annually, as required at § 673.27(d)(1).

Finding 6: CATS has not developed or carried out, under the direction of the Accountable Executive, a plan to address any deficiencies identified through the annual safety performance assessment, as required at § 673.27(d)(4).

Finding 7: CATS is not compliant with requirements related to establishment of the joint labor-management safety committee at § 673.19(a).

Finding 8: CATS is not compliant with § 673.19(b), which requires the joint labor-management safety committee to consist of an equal number of frontline transit worker representatives and management representatives.

Finding 9: CATS has not addressed the requirements for joint labor-management safety committee procedures established at § 673.19(c).

Finding 10: CATS has not met the requirement for the joint labor-management safety committee to review and approve the CATS ASP, as required at §§ 673.11(a)(1)(i) and 673.19(d)(1).

Finding 11: CATS has not met requirements for the joint labor-management safety committee to identify and recommend safety risk mitigations as required at § 673.19(d)(3)(i).

Finding 12: CATS has not met requirements for the joint labor-management safety committee to identify safety risk mitigations that may be ineffective, inappropriate, or were not implemented as intended, as required at § 673.19(d)(3)(ii).

Finding 13: CATS has not met requirements for the joint labor-management safety committee to identify safety deficiencies for purposes of continuous improvement, as required at § 673.19(d)(3)(iii).

Finding 14: CATS has not established a safety risk reduction program required at § 673.11(a)(7) for its bus transit services.

Finding 15: CATS has not met requirements at §§ 673.11(a)(7)(iii) and 673.19(d)(2) for the joint labor-management safety committee to set safety performance targets for the safety risk reduction program.

Finding 16: CATS has not met the requirement for the safety risk reduction program safety performance targets to be set for all of modes of public transportation, as required by § 673.11(a)(7)(iii)(B).

Finding 17: CATS has not met the requirement for the safety risk reduction program to include safety performance targets for both the rates and counts of events, collisions, and injuries as required by §§ 673.11(a)(3) and (a)(7), and defined through the National Safety Plan.

Finding 18: CATS has not met the requirement for the de-escalation training established at § 673.29(a).

Audit Observations and Findings

Safety Risk Management

SRM is a process within a transit agency's ASP for identifying hazards and analyzing, assessing, and mitigating the safety risk of their potential consequences (§ 673.5). The PTASP regulation defines requirements for SRM processes at § 673.25, including requirements for hazard identification ((§ 673.25(b)), safety risk assessment (§ 673.25(c)), and safety risk mitigation (§ 673.25(d)). Transit agencies must develop and implement an SRM process for all elements of their public transportation system (§ 673.25(a)).

Hazard Identification

Key Takeaway: FTA issues no findings or recommendations in this area. FTA's review confirms that CATS is identifying safety hazards within the CATS system and their potential consequences, as required by § 673.25(b).

Applicable Requirement: The PTASP regulation defines requirements for hazard identification at § 673.25(b).

Audit Observations: CATS defines its methods for identifying hazards in Section 2.2.1 of its ASP, including identifying hazards through Safety Assurance activities; investigations; inspections; audits; transit worker reporting; operational data; complaints; information and data from the North Carolina Department of Transportation, FTA, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and State health authority; and asset condition assessments.

Interviews with CATS personnel confirmed that, in practice, CATS is using the sources identified in its ASP to identify hazards. Examples reviewed with CATS representatives include concerns raised through the CATS Rail Safety and Security Committee (RSSC) and Bus Safety and Security Committee (BSSC) by committee members, hazards captured through ongoing safety "town halls" where workers can bring up safety and security issues, review of camera footage as part of specific investigations and ongoing monitoring activities, concerns submitted by workers via email, issues identified at departmental safety meetings, and reports left in suggestion boxes.

FTA reviewed hazard logs and confirmed that CATS is identifying and recording hazards for its bus and rail operations. Examples of recorded hazards in CATS documentation include concerns related to "driver barrier protection" on buses, "passenger pickup locations" for demand response operations, "insufficient lighting" for certain parking lots, "open access to alignment" at certain rail platforms, and observed increases in "RWP non-compliance."

Safety Risk Assessment

Key Takeaway: FTA’s review of CATS’s safety risk assessment policies and implementation identified non-compliance with the safety risk assessment requirements established at § 673.25(c). Currently, CATS is not implementing the safety risk assessment process established in its ASP (e.g., safety risk assessment matrices) to assess the safety risk associated with assaults on transit workers and to support the prioritization of associated safety risk mitigations. To achieve compliance, CATS must follow the safety risk assessment process documented in its ASP when assessing the risk associated with assaults on transit workers.

Applicable Requirement: At § 673.25(c), FTA requires a transit agency to “establish methods or processes to assess the safety risk associated with identified hazards” and requires that “a safety risk assessment includes an assessment of the likelihood and severity of the potential consequences of identified hazards, taking into account existing safety risk mitigations, to determine if safety risk mitigation is necessary and to inform prioritization of safety risk mitigations.”

Audit Observations: FTA’s review confirms that CATS has established a safety risk assessment process in its ASP. CATS uses hazard logs that document hazards, safety risk assessment results, and safety risk mitigations. FTA reviewed the CATS “Rail Safety Hazard Tracking Log” and “Bus Hazard Log” that demonstrate CATS has established a process for documentation and tracking of hazards for the transit system. The logs confirm CATS’s establishment of an initial risk rating for identified hazards and the final (expected) risk rating after implementation of identified safety risk mitigations. Through on-site interviews, FTA confirmed that the CATS rail and bus safety departments typically assess safety risk and assign hazard risk ratings in collaboration with relevant agency departments. CATS has adopted the Department of Defense Standard Practice for System Safety (MIL-STD-882E) to assess hazards. CATS has adopted a hazard risk index that defines agency action protocol in response to assessed risk levels.

FTA has determined that CATS is not implementing its established safety risk assessment process when assessing the risk associated with assaults on transit workers. CATS submitted exports from a CATS database that list individual assault on transit worker events that have occurred on the CATS system. This documentation indicates that when carrying out risk assessments for assaults on transit workers, CATS has assigned a risk rating for each past assault event. During on-site interviews, CATS representatives conceded that this practice does not follow the processes established in the CATS ASP, which states that the “safety risk assessment includes an assessment of the likelihood and severity of the potential consequences of identified hazards, taking into account existing safety risk mitigations, to determine if safety risk mitigation is necessary and to inform prioritization of safety risk mitigations.”

Further, this approach does not align with the safety risk assessment processes required under the PTASP regulation. Section 673.25(c)(2) requires transit agencies to assess the likelihood and severity of the potential consequences of the hazard. Per § 673.5, hazards are defined as “any

real or potential condition that can cause injury, illness, or death; damage to or loss of the facilities, equipment, rolling stock, or infrastructure of a public transportation system; or damage to the environment.” By applying a risk rating to individual assault events, as opposed to the potential consequences of an underlying hazard, the CATS safety risk assessment activity for assaults on transit workers does not address hazards (real or potential conditions) that may result in assault events.

FTA has found that CATS has not properly implemented its established risk assessment matrices to inform the prioritization of safety risk mitigations with respect to assaults on transit workers. At § 673.25(c)(2), FTA requires that a transit agency’s safety risk assessment “determine if safety risk mitigation is necessary” and “inform prioritization of safety risk mitigations.” The CATS ASP states that when CATS conducts a safety risk assessment and categorizes the associated risk using CATS’s risk assessment matrix as 1A (Catastrophic-Frequent), 1B (Catastrophic-Probable), 1C (Catastrophic-Occasional), 2A (Critical-Frequent), or 2B (Critical-Probable), “the hazard must be mitigated in the most expedient manner possible before normal service may resume.” However, in its December 2024 response to General Directive 24-1, CATS provided safety risk assessment documentation showing that CATS assessed the safety risk of assaults on transit workers to be 1C (Catastrophic-Occasional). Based on risk assessment matrices defined in the CATS ASP, it was necessary for CATS to take additional steps in the most expedient manner to mitigate the hazards before normal service resumed. However, CATS did not do so.

CATS’s documentation indicates that the agency is following its safety risk assessment processes for other safety concerns.

FTA notes that during on-site interviews, CATS stated that its safety risk assessment process as written has proven insufficient to support the prioritization of safety risk mitigations to address safety risk related to assaults on transit workers, as required at § 673.25(c)(2). Specifically, CATS described difficulty in prioritizing safety risk mitigations to address assessed risk of a hazard that includes factors beyond the agency’s control. CATS representatives noted that the agency is considering revising its approach to assessing safety risk in the ASP to ensure its defined safety risk matrices and associated risk categories and prescribed actions are appropriate for application to all hazards, including hazards related to assault on transit workers, to support the prioritization of safety risk mitigations.

Recommendation 1:

As a best practice, FTA recommends that CATS revise its safety risk assessment matrices it will use for safety risk assessment of hazards that address the prioritization of safety risk mitigations for all hazards, including hazards that may be related to factors outside of CATS’s control.

Finding 1: CATS is not implementing the safety risk assessment processes established in its ASP when assessing the risk of assaults on transit workers, as required by § 673.25(c).

Actions required for closeout:

- CATS must submit an updated safety risk assessment for assaults on transit worker risk that considers all current and planned safety risk mitigations and that demonstrates the agency is following the current (or revised) safety risk assessment process established in the CATS ASP, and must submit documentation demonstrating final risk ratings to support safety risk mitigation prioritization.
- If CATS revises its safety risk assessment matrices (see Recommendation 1), CATS must submit a revised ASP that includes these matrices.

Safety Risk Mitigation

Key Takeaway: FTA issues no findings or recommendations in this area. FTA’s review confirms CATS is developing safety risk mitigations to address safety risk associated with assaults on transit workers.

Applicable Requirement: At § 673.25(d)(1) FTA requires transit agencies to “establish methods or processes to identify safety risk mitigations or strategies necessary as a result of the transit agency's safety risk assessment to reduce the likelihood and severity of the potential consequences.”

Audit Observations: CATS provided FTA with the CATS Integrated Security and Public Safety Plan, finalized in November 2025 and developed in response to the August 22, 2025, murder on the CATS Blue Line. This document represents a compilation of safety risk mitigations (implemented, ongoing, and planned efforts) regarding the safety and security of passengers, employees, and surrounding communities. Based on on-site interviews, FTA confirmed agency commitment to carrying out the safety risk mitigations outlined in the document.

The FTA audit team performed field verification activities and interviews with frontline personnel to capture information and feedback related to the safety risk mitigations identified in the CATS Integrated Security and Public Safety Plan. During these sessions, FTA confirmed CATS’s implementation of a significant number of these mitigations. The following table identifies a range of these mitigations and observations made by the FTA team on-site as well as feedback collected from CATS personnel regarding the impact these mitigations are having on assault risk.

Safety Risk Mitigations	Observations
Partnership with Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department (CMPD) to schedule off-duty uniformed police officers to patrol	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FTA observed the presence of the additional uniformed officers on and off the light rail vehicles. • CATS management coordinates regularly with the CMPD to refine deployment schedules and routes to address emerging “hot spots” based on the latest available security incident data.

Safety Risk Mitigations	Observations
the Blue Line light rail system.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CATS noted that through ongoing coordination with CMPD, it has been able to add approximately 1,000 weekly hours of uniformed CMPD officers to the Blue Line system. • Rail operators noted that the increased patrols have had a positive impact on the security of operators and riders and provided anecdotal accounts of officers intervening to eject unruly patrons from vehicles in a timely manner.
Mutual Aid Agreement and fare enforcement sweeps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CATS and the City of Charlotte have recently contracted and established a Mutual Aid Agreement with Professional Security Services (PSS) to provide security service for transit-related purposes. • The agreement grants PSS the authority to provide police services in designated areas near transit facilities with full law enforcement authority and jurisdiction when on duty. • PSS provides fare enforcement sweep services to ensure riders are ticketed. • FTA observed these sweep activities and noted the deterrent impact of the personnel coupled with the reduction in fare evasion activity. • FTA observed indicators of the “paid fare zones” at Blue Line rail stations, including signs, pavement markings (i.e., blue lines marking the border of the paid fare zones and “fare zone” labels on the platform concrete). All written fare zone information was included in Spanish as well as English. • FTA observed fare evasion signs inside Blue Line train cars notifying passengers of the potential consequences of a failure to possess a valid ticket/pass (i.e., a \$50 citation and Class 3 misdemeanor charge). • Rail operations staff provided anecdotal information regarding the positive impact the contracted security presence and fare sweeps have had on deterring crime and improving response time, including positive feedback received from local businesses along transit routes. • CATS shared anecdotal information regarding positive feedback received from businesses along transit routes regarding the improvements related to security concerns.
Coordination with the Transportation Security Administration (TSA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CATS partnered with the TSA on various assessments and exercises, including the Baseline Assessment for Security Enhancement (BASE) assessment and Threat Vulnerability Assessment at key Light Rail stations. • CATS received TSA’s Gold Standard award in April 2023 in recognition of its score on the BASE assessment and CATS transit security and emergency preparedness. • In response to the 2022 murder of a CATS bus operator, TSA deployed a Visible Intermodal Prevention and Response (VIPR) team to support local law enforcement and CATS transit security efforts.

Safety Risk Mitigations	Observations
Charlotte Transit Center fare zone policy changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CATS recently closed all the concessions in the Charlotte Transit Center and established the entire facility as a fare zone. All concessions were vacated as of October 2025 following approximately six months of relocation activity. • This action resulted from conversations with security personnel that reported it is increasingly difficult to maintain safety and security within the transit center because it was being treated as a public space with an increasing amount of non-transit related activities. Incidents such as assaults occurred that had nothing to do with passengers, but rather, outside criminal activity coming onto the transit center property. • Based on current trends, CATS representatives told FTA it was necessary to convert the entire center to a fare zone to limit access to ticketed transit customers. • CATS representatives also informed FTA the agency is planning additional painting to more clearly mark the fare zone and will install ticket vending machines outside of the fare zone.
Fare enforcement policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CATS has revised its fare enforcement policy to prohibit bus and rail operators from enforcing fare policy. • Fare violations on buses are reported to the Bus Operations Control Center, which in turn notifies security personnel of violations on buses for immediate response. • CATS management reported that while the agency has not documented the effect of this change, they have received anecdotal information from operators that it has been effective. • CATS representatives informed FTA this change led to an unintended consequence of more people not paying the bus fare, which CATS is addressing through other strategies such as fare zone changes, additional fare enforcement sweeps led by contracted security personnel, and increased presence of uniformed CMPD officers.
Urban-Terrain Vehicle (UTV)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CATS has implemented a security UTV patrol that increases security officer presence, provides greater security officer access and mobility, and improved response time to incidents throughout the CATS transit system. • CATS staff provided anecdotal information regarding the additional visual presence of security personnel this offers and the additional deterrence this program has provided.
Efforts to deter problem behavior through awareness of security cameras	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FTA observed security camera coverage on light rail vehicles and stations. Signs inside rail cars notified passengers that the interior may be under surveillance. Signs were in English and Spanish.

Safety Risk Mitigations	Observations
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FTA observed security camera coverage inside a bus and at a bus facility. Interior bus signs notified passengers that there was video surveillance with audio recording as well. • FTA observed a video monitor mounted toward the front interior of a bus that displayed real-time footage recorded by cameras on the bus. CATS shared that approximately one-fourth to one-third of buses have these on-bus displays.
Updated Exclusion/Banning Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As a result of the rise in violence occurring in the transit system, CATS has recently updated its Exclusion/Banning Policy to increase the penalty for egregious violations on the system and to hold accountable those who commit these acts. • CATS has adopted a zero-tolerance policy toward violent acts in the transit system and will utilize indefinite exclusions/bans for such actions. • CATS uses its extensive camera network to gather forensic information to support regional law enforcement partners with the identification, arrest, and conviction of perpetrators. • FTA consistently heard from CATS personnel that increased accountability for violators is needed and would be an effective deterrent.
Passenger Code of Conduct	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FTA observed the Rider's Code of Conduct posted inside a Blue Line rail car. In addition to listing prohibited acts, it also stated expectations regarding proper fare and proof of payment.

Safety Assurance

Safety Assurance is a set of processes within a transit agency's SMS that functions to ensure the implementation and effectiveness of safety risk mitigation and to ensure that the transit agency meets or exceeds its safety objectives through the collection, analysis, and assessment of information (§ 673.5). The PTASP regulation defines requirements for Safety Assurance processes at § 673.27, including requirements for safety performance monitoring and measurement (§ 673.27(b)), management of change (§ 673.27(c)), and continuous improvement (§ 673.27(d)). Safety Assurance activities serve as a check on the SRM of a transit agency.

Monitoring the Implementation of Safety Risk Mitigations

Key Takeaway: FTA's review of CATS's documentation and implementation identified non-compliance with the requirement to monitor the implementation of safety risk mitigations at § 673.27(b)(2). CATS is not implementing the process established in its ASP for monitoring the implementation of safety risk mitigations. To meet regulatory requirements, CATS must monitor safety risk mitigation implementation according to the process defined in its ASP.

Applicable Requirement: At § 673.27(b)(2), FTA requires each transit agency to “monitor its operations to identify any safety risk mitigations that ... were not implemented as intended.”

Audit Observations: CATS states in section 2.4.3 of the ASP that mitigations are tracked in hazard management logs “by the Division/Section and/or the Safety Risk Register.” The ASP states that the person assigned the mitigation is responsible for tracking and reporting on the status of the mitigation through closure. However, CATS safety risk mitigation documentation confirms that CATS is not following this process formally or in a documented manner.

As mentioned above (see “Safety Risk Assessment”), CATS provided an Excel workbook that documents the results of a safety risk assessment it conducted in December 2024, in response to General Directive 24-1. This workbook identified 27 individual safety risk mitigations to address the risk associated with assaults on transit workers. However, CATS was unable to demonstrate formal tracking of the included mitigations to determine if these safety risk mitigations have been implemented as intended, as required at § 673.27(b)(2), including seven mitigations that were planned at the time of the General Directive 24-1 submission in December 2024.

FTA notes that while the CATS Integrated Security and Public Safety Plan discussed earlier (see “Safety Risk Mitigation”) identifies a range of safety risk mitigations aimed at reducing the risk associated with assaults on transit workers and the public, the document does not include details to support implementation monitoring of each individual safety risk mitigation, such as implementation plans, implementation responsibility, implementation milestones and deadlines, and monitoring responsibility. Further, according to the CATS ASP, the agency states it will track all safety risk mitigations through hazard management logs and/or a safety risk register. However, a review of CATS hazard management logs confirmed that CATS is not formally tracking all identified safety risk mitigations in this manner. In addition, FTA notes that the hazard management logs do not consistently record sufficient detail to track mitigation implementation, such as implementation responsibility, implementation milestones and deadlines, and monitoring responsibility.

Finding 2: CATS is not implementing the process established in its ASP to monitor its operations to identify any safety risk mitigations that were not implemented as intended, as required by § 673.27(b)(2).

Actions required for closeout:

- CATS must submit documentation related to the safety risk mitigations identified in the CATS Integrated Security and Public Safety Plan demonstrating CATS is monitoring the implementation of each mitigation using the process established in its ASP.

Monitoring the Effectiveness of Safety Risk Mitigations

Key Takeaway: FTA’s review of CATS’s policies and implementation identified non-compliance with the requirement to monitor the effectiveness of safety risk mitigations established at

§ 673.27(b)(2). While CATS has taken actions to mitigate safety risk associated with assaults on transit workers, as evidenced in the CATS Integrated Security and Public Safety Plan, CATS has not established or implemented a process for monitoring the effectiveness of its safety risk mitigations. To achieve compliance with § 673.27(b)(2), CATS must define in its ASP a clear process for monitoring the effectiveness of its safety risk mitigations and implement these processes.

Applicable Requirement: At § 673.27(b)(2), FTA requires each transit agency to “monitor its operations to identify any safety risk mitigations that may be ineffective.”

Audit Observations: Section 2.2.5 of the CATS ASP states that the Risk Register will document mitigation monitoring activities and responsibilities for monitoring. Further, the ASP states CATS will use the Internal Safety Review (ISR) to verify mitigation implementation and effectiveness. FTA notes the ISR process alone is not a sufficient means to monitor the effectiveness of safety risk mitigations, as the ISR process reviews individual elements of the CATS ASP once over a three-year period. The CATS ISR process is a distinct Part 673 regulatory requirement (§ 673.27(d)(1)(iii)) and is a process through which, over a three-year period, CATS assesses its implementation of its ASP. This process does not include ongoing processes to monitor the effectiveness of CATS’s safety risk mitigations.

As discussed in the previous section, CATS states in section 2.4.3 of the ASP that mitigations are tracked in hazard management logs by the Division/Section and/or the Safety Risk Register. The ASP states the person assigned the mitigation is responsible for tracking and reporting on the status of the mitigation through closure. However, CATS’s ASP does not define a process for monitoring the effectiveness of safety risk mitigations. On-site interviews with CATS personnel confirmed CATS is not implementing a formalized process to evaluate the effectiveness of safety risk mitigations. Further, CATS provided no documentation that confirms it is monitoring the effectiveness of safety risk mitigations in practice.

Finding 3: CATS has not established or implemented a process to monitor its operations to identify any safety risk mitigations that may be ineffective, as required at § 673.27(b)(2).

Actions required for closeout:

- CATS must submit a revised ASP that defines a process to monitor the effectiveness of safety risk mitigations.
- CATS must submit documentation for the safety risk mitigations defined in the CATS Integrated Security and Public Safety Plan that documents how CATS will monitor the effectiveness of each safety risk mitigation.

Continuous Improvement

Key Takeaway: FTA’s review of CATS’s policies and implementation identified non-compliance with Part 673 requirements related to continuous improvement, including safety performance

target setting (§ 673.11(a)(3)), the annual safety performance assessment (§ 673.27(d)(1)), and plan to address identified deficiencies (§ 673.27(d)(4)). CATS has set safety performance targets for a significant portion of transit service and has included these in its ASP, but the agency has not set safety performance targets for all 14 required general safety performance measures defined by the National Safety Plan. To achieve compliance, CATS must revise the ASP to include safety performance targets by modal category for each of the 14 required general safety performance measures established in the National Safety Plan. In addition, CATS must revise the ASP to define a process to assess its safety performance annually, as required at § 673.27(d)(1), and to develop and carry out a plan to address any deficiencies identified through the annual safety performance assessment, as required by § 673.27(d)(4).

Safety Performance Targets

Applicable Requirement: Section 673.11(a)(3) requires a transit agency’s ASP “must include annual safety performance targets based on the safety performance measures established under the National Public Transportation Safety Plan.”

The National Safety Plan establishes 14 general safety performance measures for which transit agencies must set safety performance targets. Transit agencies must set targets for the different modes of transit service they provide. When setting targets, the National Safety Plan states that agencies should use the following high-level modal groups: rail, fixed-route bus, and non-fixed-route bus. However, transit agencies may set targets using more granular modal groups (e.g. individual service lines or operational divisions) if they choose to do so.

Audit Observations: CATS lists its general safety performance targets in Appendix G of its ASP, for specific transit services provided by CATS. The ASP lists 14 safety performance targets for Blue Line Light Rail, Bus Operations, Gold Line Light Rail, and STS. However, the ASP does not include performance targets for the CATS vanpool service. Accordingly, CATS is not setting targets covering all the modes of transit service it provides.

FTA also notes that some of the safety performance measures established in the National Safety Plan are expressed as counts and others are expressed as rates. However, all CATS safety performance targets are expressed as rates. CATS has not established targets for the following required safety performance measures: (1) count of major events; (2) count of fatalities; (3) count of injuries; and (4) count of assaults on transit workers.

Finding 4: CATS has not met the requirements at § 673.11(a)(3) regarding general PTASP safety performance targets.

Actions required for closeout:

- CATS must submit a revised ASP that includes safety performance targets for each of the 14 required general safety performance measures established by the National Safety Plan.

- The safety performance targets must cover all modes of transit service provided by CATS, including vanpool.

Audit Observations: In the CATS ASP, when referring to required safety performance targets, CATS uses various terms such as *safety performance targets*, *performance metric objectives*, and *safety performance goals*. These terminology shifts make it unclear what CATS is specifically referring to and can be confusing for implementation purposes.

Recommendation 2:

As a best practice, FTA recommends CATS use consistent terminology within the ASP when referring to the safety performance targets established under Part 673.

Annual Performance Assessment – General Requirements

Applicable Requirements: Section 673.27(d)(1) requires transit agencies to “establish a process to assess its safety performance annually.” This annual performance assessment must include the identification of: (1) deficiencies in the transit agency’s SMS; and (2) deficiencies in the transit agency’s performance against required safety performance targets. (§ 673.27(d)(1)(i))

For large urbanized area providers, the process “must also address the role of the transit agency's Safety Committee, and include the identification of deficiencies in the transit agency's performance against annual safety performance targets set by the Safety Committee . . . for the safety risk reduction program.” (§ 673.27(d)(1)(ii))

For rail transit agencies, the process “must also address any specific internal safety review requirements established by their State Safety Oversight Agency.” (§ 673.27(d)(1)(iii)) Additionally, § 673.27(d)(4) requires transit agencies to “develop and carry out, under the direction of the Accountable Executive, a plan to address any deficiencies identified through the safety performance assessment.”

Audit Observations: The CATS ASP does not define a process for performing this required annual assessment or to develop and carry out a plan for addressing any deficiencies identified through the assessment. On-site verification activities, including interviews with CATS personnel, confirmed that CATS is not currently conducting this required annual performance assessment or developing a plan to address identified deficiencies.

Annual Performance Assessment – Deficiencies in the Agency’s SMS

Audit Observations: Section 673.27(d)(1)(i) requires the transit agency’s annual performance assessment to identify any deficiencies in the transit agency’s SMS.

FTA document reviews and on-site interviews and observations confirm that CATS has not documented a formal process to perform this annual assessment to identify deficiencies in the CATS SMS. CATS also has not demonstrated that it conducts such an annual assessment. FTA interviews with frontline workers and other CATS representatives noted concerns related to potential deficiencies in the CATS SMS, including concerns associated with CATS’s Safety

Promotion efforts. More specifically, these concerns relate to the requirements at § 673.29(a) for a comprehensive safety training program. Through document reviews and on-site interviews, FTA has determined CATS has not met regulatory requirements regarding de-escalation training. Further, feedback from CATS staff indicates that CATS's transit worker safety reporting program training may be ineffective. This report discusses these issues in greater detail in subsequent sections devoted to de-escalation training (See Finding 18) and the transit worker safety reporting program (See Recommendations 4 and 5), respectively. FTA expects that CATS's annual performance assessment would identify any deficiencies related to these SMS requirements.

Annual Performance Assessment – Deficiencies in Performance against Safety Performance Targets

Audit Observations: Section 673.27(d)(1)(i) also requires that the annual performance assessment process must include the identification of deficiencies in the transit agency's performance against safety performance targets required in § 673.11(a)(3).

The CATS ASP states that the CATS Office of Safety and Security will review and analyze data related to targets and provide a report analyzing CATS's performance against the 14 required safety performance targets to CATS leadership, the MTC, NCDOT, and the Charlotte Regional Transportation Planning Organization quarterly. The ASP also states that CATS updates the performance data in Appendix G of its ASP. However, the CATS ASP does not describe a formal annual performance assessment process that identifies deficiencies in the agency's performance against its safety performance targets.

Finding 5: CATS has not established a process to assess its safety performance annually, as required at § 673.27(d)(1).

Actions required for closeout:

- CATS must document a process in its ASP for conducting an annual performance assessment as required at § 673.27(d)(1).
- CATS must submit documentation that confirms it has conducted the annual performance assessment required at § 673.27(d)(1), including the identification of deficiencies in its SMS and any deficiencies in the agency's performance against its annual safety performance targets.
- The annual performance assessment must identify any deficiencies in CATS's comprehensive safety training program established pursuant to § 673.29(a), including requirements related to training for safety concern reporting and de-escalation training for all operations transit workers, transit workers directly responsible for safety in the transit agency's public transportation system, and all maintenance transit workers (§ 673.29(a)).

Annual Performance Assessment – Plan to Address Deficiencies

Audit Observations: Section 673.27(d)(4) requires a transit agency to develop and carry out, under the direction of the Accountable Executive, a plan to address any deficiencies identified through the annual safety performance assessment required at § 673.27(d)(1).

The CATS ASP does not define a process by which CATS will develop and carry out this plan. FTA has confirmed that, to date, CATS has not developed a plan to address deficiencies identified through the annual performance assessment.

Finding 6: CATS has not developed or carried out, under the direction of the Accountable Executive, a plan to address any deficiencies identified through the annual safety performance assessment, as required at § 673.27(d)(4).

Actions required for closeout:

- CATS must submit a revised ASP that defines a process to develop and carry out, under the direction of the Accountable Executive, a plan to address any deficiencies identified through the annual safety performance assessment required at § 673.27(d)(1).
- CATS must submit a plan to address any deficiencies identified through the annual safety performance assessment, including any deficiencies associated with the comprehensive safety training program required under § 673.29(a).

Safety Committee and the Safety Risk Reduction Program

Applicable Requirements: Transit agencies that serve an urbanized area with a population of 200,000 or more (large urbanized area providers) must establish a safety committee that is appropriately scaled to the size, scope, and complexity of the transit agency, and is convened by a joint labor-management process. (§ 673.19(a))

The Safety Committee must consist of an equal number of frontline transit worker representatives and management representatives. The labor organization that represents the plurality of the transit agency's frontline transit workers must select frontline transit worker representatives for the Safety Committee. (§ 673.19(b))

Each large urbanized area provider must include or incorporate by reference in its ASP procedures regarding the composition, responsibilities, and operations of the Safety Committee. (§ 673.19(c))

The Safety Committee must undertake the following activities to oversee the transit agency's safety performance: (1) review and approve the ASP and any updates to the ASP; (2) set annual safety performance targets for the safety risk reduction program; and (3) support the transit agency's SMS by identifying and recommending safety risk mitigations necessary to reduce the likelihood and severity of potential consequences identified through the transit agency's safety risk assessment; identifying safety risk mitigations that may be ineffective, inappropriate, or

were not implemented as intended; and identifying safety deficiencies for purposes of continuous improvement. (§ 673.19(d))

Establishment/Membership

Key Takeaway: FTA’s review of CATS’s policies and implementation identified non-compliance with the requirements at § 673.19(a) related to the establishment of a joint labor-management safety committee. Because CATS uses a single ASP that covers both rail and bus operations, CATS must establish a single joint labor-management safety committee. Additionally, CATS has not met the safety committee membership requirement at § 673.19(b), which requires an equal number of frontline transit worker representatives and management representatives.

Audit Observations: At § 673.19(a), FTA requires “each large urbanized area provider [to] establish and operate a Safety Committee that is: (1) Appropriately scaled to the size, scope, and complexity of the transit agency; and (2) Convened by a joint labor-management process.”

CATS has established two joint labor-management safety committees: the RSSC and the BSSC. CATS describes both committees in its ASP and has established bylaws for both committees. The RSSC and BSSC both convene monthly. Interviews with CATS management confirmed that both the RSSC and BSSC existed within CATS prior to the establishment of the IIJA and Part 673 requirements for safety committees. CATS confirmed that it leveraged these two existing committees to address the requirements for a joint labor-management safety committee.

During interviews, CATS indicated the agency was hesitant to establish a single joint labor-management safety committee because of the contractual differences between rail and bus personnel. Municipal governments in North Carolina are prohibited from collective bargaining. Rail and demand-response operations and maintenance staff are employees of the City of Charlotte and, therefore, may not collectively bargain. Bus mechanics and operators are employees of a corporation – Transit Management of Charlotte, Inc. (TMOC) – so those employees may be part of a union. The TMOC is ultimately managed by a team at CATS. Due to potential challenges associated with this distinction, CATS decided to address the new safety committee-related requirements through its existing RSSC and BSSC.

Regarding CATS’s concern, FTA notes that if an agency has a mix of union and non-union frontline transit workers, the labor organization that represents the plurality (greatest number) of frontline transit workers employed by the agency or contractor selects frontline transit worker representatives to serve on the safety committee. This labor organization may select frontline transit worker representatives for the safety committee from throughout the organization, not just from within their membership. To the extent practicable, the safety committee must include frontline transit worker representatives from major transit service functions, such as operations and maintenance, across the transit system.

CATS established a single ASP that covers both rail and bus operations. CATS is using two safety committees (RSSC and BSSC) to attempt to address the requirements of § 673.19. Transit

agencies operating under two ASPs may establish one safety committee for each ASP, so long as both committees are compliant with the PTASP requirements. However, an agency operating under one ASP must have a single safety committee. Because CATS uses a single ASP that covers both rail and bus operations, CATS must establish a single joint labor-management safety committee. Alternatively, multimodal agencies like CATS may elect to establish two ASPs (one for bus and one for rail) and designate a joint labor-management safety committee for each ASP.

Finding 7: CATS is not compliant with requirements related to establishment of the joint labor-management safety committee at § 673.19(a).

Actions required for closeout:

- CATS must establish a single joint labor-management safety committee or establish separate ASPs for its bus and rail operations.
- CATS must submit revised ASP documentation to confirm compliance.

Audit Observations: Section 673.19(b) requires that the joint labor-management safety committee “must consist of an equal number of frontline transit worker representatives and management representatives.”

The bylaws for both the RSSC and BSSC state that membership of each committee will consist of 50 percent management and 50 percent frontline employees. However, interviews with CATS personnel and RSSC and BSSC committee members confirmed neither the RSSC nor BSSC maintain this membership balance. FTA confirmed the frontline employee representation of both the RSSC and BSSC is lower than 50 percent. In addition, interviews with committee members confirmed that members were not aware of this membership balance requirement.

Finding 8: CATS is not compliant with § 673.19(b), which requires the joint labor-management safety committee to consist of an equal number of frontline transit worker representatives and management representatives.

Actions required for closeout:

- CATS must ensure that its joint labor-management safety committee consists of an equal number of frontline transit worker representatives and management representatives.
- CATS must submit a roster of its safety committee membership that confirms the required membership proportion of 50 percent frontline transit worker and 50 percent management representation.

Safety Committee Procedures

Key Takeaway: FTA’s review of CATS’s policy and implementation identified non-compliance with requirements related to joint labor-management safety committee procedures at § 673.19(c). To achieve compliance, CATS must revise its ASP and/or revise its safety committee bylaws to address the procedural requirements of § 673.19(c). Further, FTA recommends CATS require

training for joint labor-management safety committee members on the required duties of the safety committee.

Audit Observations: Section 673.19(c) requires “each large urbanized area provider must include or incorporate by reference in its [ASP] procedures regarding the composition, responsibilities, and operations of the Safety Committee.” These procedures must, at a minimum, address nine enumerated items.

The CATS ASP establishes processes specific to the operation of the RSSC, including annual review of the ASP, training, a compensation policy, access to technical experts and safety reporting program reports, how decisions are reached and recorded, how disputes are managed, and coordination and communication with the Board of Directors and the Accountable Executive.

Section § 673.19(c)(9) requires safety committee procedures include how the safety committee will carry out its responsibilities identified in § 673.19(d). While section 1.6.1 of the CATS ASP restates the required safety committee responsibilities, it does not define the procedures the RSSC will use to carry out these responsibilities. The RSSC bylaws also do not discuss these procedures. This includes procedures for carrying out the responsibilities related to supporting operation of the transit agency's SMS by: identifying and recommending safety risk mitigations necessary to reduce the likelihood and severity of potential consequences identified through the transit agency's safety risk assessment, including safety risk mitigations associated with any instance where the transit agency did not meet an annual safety performance target in the safety risk reduction program (§ 673.19(d)(3)(i)); identifying safety risk mitigations that may be ineffective, inappropriate, or were not implemented as intended, including safety risk mitigations associated with any instance where the transit agency did not meet an annual safety performance target in the safety risk reduction program (§ 673.19(d)(3)(ii)); and identifying safety deficiencies for purposes of continuous improvement as required at § 673.27(d), including any instance where the transit agency did not meet an annual safety performance target in the safety risk reduction program. (§ 673.19(d)(3)(iii)).

The CATS ASP does not include any procedures for the BSSC. While CATS has established bylaws for the BSSC, these bylaws do not define the following required procedures: the compensation policy established by the agency for participation in safety committee meetings (§ 673.19(c)(4)); how the safety committee will access technical experts, including other transit workers, to serve in an advisory capacity as needed (§ 673.19(c)(5)); how the safety committee will reach and record decisions (§ 673.19(c)(6)); how the safety committee will coordinate and communicate with the Board of Directors, or equivalent entity, and the Accountable Executive (§ 673.19(c)(7)); how the safety committee will manage disputes to ensure it carries out its operations (§ 673.19(c)(8)); and how the safety committee will carry out its responsibilities identified in § 673.19(d) (§ 673.19(c)(9)). If CATS requires training for the members of its joint

labor-management safety committee (see Recommendation 3), it must document this training in its joint labor-management safety committee procedures as required at § 673.19(c)(3).

Taken together, the ASP, RSSC bylaws, and BSSC bylaws do not meet the requirements of § 673.19(c). To achieve compliance, CATS must revise its ASP and/or revise its bylaws to address all required procedures in § 673.19(c).

Finding 9: CATS has not addressed the requirements for joint labor-management safety committee procedures established at § 673.19(c).

Actions required for closeout:

- CATS must revise its ASP and/or safety committee bylaws to clearly define the procedures it will use to address the procedural requirements of § 673.19(c).

Audit Observations: Section 673.19(c)(3) requires transit agencies to include in the ASP procedures related to “any required training for safety committee members related to the transit agency's Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan and the processes, activities, and tools used to support the transit agency's SMS.” The CATS ASP notes the RSSC participates in required training but does not define what specific training is required.

FTA interviews with BSSC and RSSC members confirmed members had not received any type of formal training related to safety committee duties. Members confirmed they were not familiar with the safety committee’s required duties, including review and approval of the CATS ASP, setting annual safety performance targets for the safety risk reduction program, identifying safety risk mitigations, monitoring the effectiveness of safety risk mitigations, and identifying deficiencies for purposes of continuous improvement.

Recommendation 3:

As a best practice, FTA recommends CATS define training for joint labor-management safety committee members regarding the required duties of the safety committee.

Safety Committee Responsibilities and the Safety Risk Reduction Program

Review and Approval of the ASP (§§ 673.11(a)(1)(i) and 673.19(d)(1))

Applicable Requirements: The joint labor-management safety committee must review and approve the transit agency's ASP before approval by the Board of Directors (§§ 673.11(a)(1)(i) and 673.19(d)(1)).

Audit Observations: The CATS ASP states that both the RSSC and the BSSC are responsible for reviewing and approving the CATS ASP. However, FTA confirmed through review of ASP update documentation, and interviews with representatives from both the RSSC and the BSSC, that joint labor-management safety committee members had not reviewed and approved the CATS ASP. Further, few if any of the members of the committees were familiar with the ASP or the requirement to review and approve it.

FTA notes that, as discussed earlier in this report, having two joint labor-management safety committees for a single ASP is non-compliant with regulatory requirements. As such, simply having both current safety committees review and approve the ASP will not adequately address CATS non-compliance related to safety committee review and approval of the ASP. To achieve compliance, CATS must first establish a joint labor-management safety committee that meets the requirements at §§ 673.19(a)-(b) and then the compliant joint labor-management safety committee must review and approve the ASP.

Finding 10: CATS has not met the requirement for the joint labor-management safety committee to review and approve the CATS ASP, as required at §§ 673.11(a)(1)(i) and 673.19(d)(1).

Actions required for closeout:

- CATS must submit documentation that confirms that the CATS ASP has been reviewed and approved by a safety committee that meets the joint labor-management safety committee requirements at §§ 673.19(a)-(b).

Supporting the Transit Agency's SMS and the Safety Risk Reduction Program (§§ 673.11(a)(7) and 673.19(d))

Key Takeaway: FTA's review of CATS's policies and implementation identified non-compliance with Part 673 requirements related to the safety committee's role in supporting SMS and the safety risk reduction program. Specifically, FTA has determined that:

- CATS has not met requirements for the joint labor-management safety committee to support the transit agency's SMS by identifying and recommending safety risk mitigations (§ 673.19(d)(3)(i)); identifying safety risk mitigations that may be ineffective, inappropriate, or were not implemented as intended (§ 673.19(d)(3)(ii)); and identifying safety deficiencies for purposes of continuous improvement (§ 673.19(d)(3)(iii)).
- The CATS safety risk reduction program fails to cover all modes of transit service CATS operates.
- The safety risk reduction program safety performance targets documented in the ASP do not meet the requirements defined at § 673.11(a)(7).

To achieve compliance with these requirements, CATS must submit documentation demonstrating its joint labor-management safety committee is performing its required responsibilities related to SMS implementation. CATS also must revise its ASP to include safety performance targets for the safety risk reduction program that meet FTA requirements.

Applicable Requirement: Section 673.19(d)(3)(i) requires joint labor-management safety committees to support the operation of the transit agency's SMS by "identifying and recommending safety risk mitigations necessary to reduce the likelihood and severity of potential consequences identified through the transit agency's safety risk assessment, including safety risk

mitigations associated with any instance where the transit agency did not meet an annual safety performance target in the safety risk reduction program.”

Further, § 673.25(d)(5) requires that when the joint labor-management safety committee, “as part of the transit agency's safety risk reduction program, identifies and recommends under § 673.19(c)(6) safety risk mitigations, including mitigations relating to vehicular and pedestrian safety events involving transit vehicles or assaults on transit workers, based on a safety risk assessment conducted under § 673.25(c), the transit agency must include or incorporate by reference these safety risk mitigations in its ASP pursuant to § 673.11(a)(7)(iv).”

Audit Observations: Interviews with RSSC and BSSC members confirmed the committee members of both the RSSC and BSSC play active roles in identifying hazards for discussion in committee meetings and the committees work collaboratively with represented departments to identify recommended safety risk mitigations based on input from all participants. However, through on-site interviews and document reviews, FTA confirmed the CATS joint labor-management safety committees are not identifying and recommending safety risk mitigations necessary to reduce the likelihood and severity of potential consequences identified through the transit agency's safety risk assessment, including safety risk mitigations associated with any instance where the transit agency did not meet an annual safety performance target in the safety risk reduction program, as required at § 673.19(d)(3)(i). Additionally, FTA has confirmed that to date, CATS has not incorporated any safety risk mitigations from the safety risk reduction program into the ASP.

FTA notes that through General Directive 24-1, FTA required CATS to conduct a safety risk assessment related to assaults on transit workers. CATS provided results of this safety risk assessment to FTA as discussed earlier in this report. However, CATS did not provide any documentation of the RSSC or BSSC identification and recommendation of safety risk mitigations based on this safety risk assessment.

FTA notes the CATS Integrated Security and Public Safety Plan (discussed at length above) identifies a series of safety risk mitigations related to assaults on transit workers. However, during interviews with the RSSC and BSSC members, FTA confirmed the committees did not play a role in the development, review, or approval of this plan and committee members were not aware of it. Neither committee played a role in the identification and development of the safety risk mitigations identified in the CATS Integrated Security and Public Safety Plan.

Finding 11: CATS has not met requirements for the joint labor-management safety committee to identify and recommend safety risk mitigations as required at § 673.19(d)(3)(i).

Actions required for closeout:

- CATS must submit documentation of joint labor-management safety committee identification and recommendation of safety risk mitigations to address the results of the safety risk

assessment required in Finding 1. This may include the review and approval of safety risk mitigations developed by CATS and documented in the CATS Integrated Security and Public Safety Plan.

- CATS must submit a revised ASP that includes or incorporates by reference any safety risk mitigations identified and recommended by the joint labor-management safety committee as part of the safety risk reduction program, as required by §§ 673.11(a)(7)(iv) and 673.25(d)(5).

Applicable Requirement: Section 673.19(d)(3)(ii) requires joint labor-management safety committees to support the operation of the transit agency's SMS by "identifying safety risk mitigations that may be ineffective, inappropriate, or were not implemented as intended, including safety risk mitigations associated with any instance where the transit agency did not meet an annual safety performance target in the safety risk reduction program."

Audit Observations: The CATS ASP does not define a process for the RSSC or BSSC to monitor the effectiveness of safety risk mitigations as required by § 673.27(b)(2). Further, document reviews and on-site interviews with RSSC and BSSC members confirmed that CATS and its joint labor-management safety committee are not identifying safety risk mitigations that may be ineffective, inappropriate, or were not implemented as intended, including safety risk mitigations associated with any instance where the transit agency did not meet an annual safety performance target in the safety risk reduction program § 673.19(d)(3)(ii).

Finding 12: CATS has not met requirements for the joint labor-management safety committee to identify safety risk mitigations that may be ineffective, inappropriate, or were not implemented as intended, as required at § 673.19(d)(3)(ii).

Actions required for closeout:

- CATS must submit documentation that indicates how the safety committee(s) will support operation of the transit agency's SMS by identifying safety risk mitigations that may be ineffective, inappropriate, or were not implemented as intended.

Applicable Requirement: Section 673.19(d)(3)(iii) requires joint labor-management safety committees to support the operation of the transit agency's SMS by "identifying safety deficiencies for purposes of continuous improvement as required at § 673.27(d), including any instance where the transit agency did not meet an annual safety performance target in the safety risk reduction program."

Audit Observations: The CATS ASP states that the RSSC is responsible for identifying safety deficiencies for purposes of continuous improvement as required at § 673.27(d), including any instance where CATS did not meet an annual safety performance target in the safety risk reduction program. However, the ASP does not discuss the role of the BSSC. In addition, the CATS ASP does not define a process for either the RSSC or BSSC to identify any instance where

the transit agency did not meet an annual safety performance target in the safety risk reduction program as required at § 673.19(d)(3)(iii).

Further, review of CATS documentation and on-site interviews with RSSC and BSSC members confirmed that, in practice, the RSSC and are not identifying instances where the transit agency did not meet an annual safety performance target in the safety risk reduction program and had no knowledge of the CATS safety risk reduction program safety performance targets.

Finding 13: CATS has not met requirements for the joint labor-management safety committee to identify safety deficiencies for purposes of continuous improvement, as required at § 673.19(d)(3)(iii).

Actions required for closeout:

- CATS must submit documentation that confirms the joint labor-management safety committee is performing its required role to identify safety deficiencies for purposes of continuous improvement, including any instance where CATS has not met an annual safety performance target set for the safety risk reduction program.

Applicable Requirements: Section 673.11(a)(7) requires the transit agency's ASP to include a safety risk reduction program for transit operations to improve safety performance by reducing the number and rates of safety events, injuries, and assaults on transit workers.

Audit Observations: CATS outlines components of its safety risk reduction program in section 2.2.5 of its ASP. The CATS safety risk reduction program (as described in section 2.2.5) explicitly refers to the RSSC and does not describe any BSSC role related to the safety risk reduction program. Under this arrangement, the safety risk reduction program would only apply to rail concerns and would not address bus issues such as assaults on bus operators.

Finding 14: CATS has not established a safety risk reduction program required at § 673.11(a)(7) for its bus transit services.

Actions required for closeout:

- CATS must revise its ASP to ensure it addresses safety risk reduction program requirements for all CATS public transportation service.

*Setting Annual Safety Performance Targets for the Safety Risk Reduction Program
(§§ 673.11(a)(7)(iii) and 673.19(d)(2))*

Key Takeaway: FTA's review of CATS's policies and implementation identified non-compliance with Part 673 requirements related to safety performance targets for the safety risk reduction program. Specifically, CATS has not ensured that the joint labor-management safety committee sets the safety performance targets for the safety risk reduction program (§§ 673.11(a)(7)(iii) and 673.19(d)(2)); the ASP does not include any safety risk reduction program safety performance targets related to CATS's vanpool operations (§ 673.11(a)(7)(iii)(B)); and the ASP does not include risk reduction program targets for all performance measures defined in FTA's National

Safety Plan ((§ 673.11(a)(3)). To achieve compliance with these requirements, CATS must have its joint labor-management safety committee set safety performance targets for the safety risk reduction program, and these targets must be set for all required performance measures and for modes of CATS public transportation service.

Applicable Requirements: PTASP regulation requires safety committees to set annual safety performance targets for the eight safety risk reduction program performance measures established in the National Safety Plan. (§§ 673.19(d)(2); 673.11(a)(7)(iii)).

In addition, targets must be “based on the level of detail the large urbanized area provider is required to report to the NTD. The safety committee is not required to set a target for a performance measure until the large urbanized area provider has been required to report three years of data to the NTD corresponding to such performance measure.” (§ 673.11(a)(7)(iii)(C)).

Audit Observations: The CATS ASP states that the CATS safety risk reduction program includes targets for the 14 general safety performance measures established by the National Safety Plan and not just the eight safety performance measures required by FTA for the safety risk reduction program. CATS has included these targets in the ASP. Further, the CATS ASP states that targets are set based on a three-year rolling average of data reported to the NTD. In instances where CATS has not reported three years of data to the NTD, CATS calculates the current targets based on data reported beginning in January 2024. The CATS ASP also states that the RSSC reviews and adjusts all safety performance targets as necessary based on the results of the calendar year prior to the annual review and approval of the ASP.

Although the ASP states that both committees are responsible for setting annual safety performance targets for the safety risk reduction program, the ASP does not define the process by which they will carry out this required role under §§ 673.11(a)(7)(iii) and 673.19(d)(2). Further, FTA interviews with representatives from both the RSSC and the BSSC confirmed that members had not set CATS’s safety performance targets for the safety risk reduction program. Further, interviews confirmed that committee members were not familiar, or in most cases not aware, of the required safety performance targets.

Finding 15: CATS has not met requirements at §§ 673.11(a)(7)(iii) and 673.19(d)(2) for the joint labor-management safety committee to set safety performance targets for the safety risk reduction program.

Actions required for closeout:

- CATS must submit documentation that demonstrates the joint labor-management safety committee has set CATS’s safety performance targets for the safety risk reduction program.

Applicable Requirements: Section 673.11(a)(7)(iii)(B) requires joint labor management safety committees to set safety performance targets for the safety risk reduction program “for all modes of public transportation.”

The National Safety Plan establishes eight safety performance measures for the safety risk reduction program for which joint labor-management safety committees must set safety performance targets. When setting targets, the National Safety Plan states that safety committees should use the following high-level modal groups: rail, fixed-route bus, and non-fixed-route bus. However, safety committees may set targets using more granular modal groups (e.g. individual service lines or operational divisions) if they choose to do so.

Audit Observations: During document reviews and interviews, FTA confirmed that CATS does not have safety performance targets for the safety risk reduction program for its vanpool service.

Finding 16: CATS has not met the requirement for the safety risk reduction program safety performance targets to be set for all of modes of public transportation, as required by § 673.11(a)(7)(iii)(B).

Actions required for closeout:

- CATS must include in its ASP safety performance targets for the safety risk reduction program that include its vanpool service.

Applicable Requirements: A transit agency's ASP must include annual safety performance targets based on the safety performance measures established under the National Public Transportation Safety Plan. (§ 673.11(a)(3)). Targets for the safety risk reduction program must be "based on a three-year rolling average of the data submitted by the large urbanized area provider to the National Transit Database (NTD)" (§ 673.11(a)(7)(iii)(A)).

At § 673.11(a)(7), the PTASP regulation states the safety risk reduction program is intended to "improve safety performance by reducing the number and rates of safety events, injuries, and assaults on transit workers." In the preamble to Part 673, FTA clarifies expectations about how safety committees should set these safety performance targets, stating "to reflect an annual reduction, the safety performance target must be set below the three-year rolling average. However, Safety Committees have flexibility regarding the amount of annual reduction defined by their targets, as long as the methodology uses a three-year rolling average of data reported to the NTD and the targets reflect an annual reduction."

Audit Observations: FTA conducted a data analysis of the CATS safety performance data reported to the NTD to determine CATS's three-year rolling average of historic data to confirm whether the CATS 2024 ASP contains all required safety risk reduction program safety performance targets. Note: FTA did not evaluate target setting for counts and rates of assaults on transit workers because CATS has not yet been required to report three years of data to the NTD corresponding to these performance measures.

FTA's analysis considered 24 safety risk reduction program safety performance targets defined in the ASP, including six required safety performance targets for four modes of CATS transportation services: fixed-route bus, demand response, light rail (Blue Line), and streetcar (Gold Line). FTA determined that 12 of the 24 safety risk reduction program safety performance

targets did not meet FTA requirements because they were expressed as rates when they should have been counts, per the performance measures established in FTA's National Safety Plan. Further, FTA notes that seven of the 24 targets did not represent a reduction from the three-year rolling average.

Finding 17: CATS has not met the requirement for the safety risk reduction program to include safety performance targets for both the rates and counts of events, collisions, and injuries as required by §§ 673.11(a)(3) and (a)(7), and defined through the National Safety Plan.

Actions required for closeout:

- CATS must include in its ASP safety performance targets for the safety risk reduction program that include events, event rate, collisions, collision rate, injuries, and injury rate.

Recommendation 4:

As a best practice, FTA recommends that the CATS joint labor-management safety committee set safety performance targets for the safety risk reduction program that reflect an annual reduction by setting the safety performance target below the three-year rolling average of associated data reported to the NTD.

Transit Worker Safety Reporting Program

Key Takeaway: FTA did not identify non-compliance with the regulatory requirements for transit worker safety reporting programs established at § 673.23(b). However, of the CATS personnel interviewed, FTA noted a general lack of awareness of this program and the associated reporting mechanisms and has recommended two actions to support the effectiveness of the CATS transit worker safety reporting program.

Applicable Requirement: The PTASP regulation at § 673.23(b) requires transit agencies to “establish and implement a process that allows transit workers to report safety concerns, including assaults on transit workers, near-misses, and unsafe acts and conditions to senior management.” The process must include “protections for transit workers who report” and “a description of transit worker behaviors that may result in disciplinary action.”

Audit Observations: CATS has established a comprehensive safety reporting program for employees and contractors (documented in Section 1.7 of the ASP). The program ensures no disciplinary action will be taken against any employee who communicates a safety concern through the program unless such disclosure indicates an illegal act, gross misconduct and/or negligence, or a deliberate or willful disregard of CATS rules, policies, and procedures.

Through the program, CATS management encourages employees to report safety concerns (“including assaults on transit workers, near-misses, unsafe acts, and hazards”) with no fear of

reprisal and explicitly expresses no tolerance for any retaliation against employees, contractors, or the public who report safety concerns.

The CATS ASP defines multiple mechanisms for reporting safety concerns, including:

- escalating unsafe issues to a safety committee representative;
- completing the S&SF48 Safety Issues Reporting Form available to employees via city intranet;
- sending an email to a designated email address;
- calling an employee hotline; and
- using the NCDOT Direct Reporting process (rail only).

CATS tracks reported safety concerns through its hazard tracking processes. The ASP states that the RSSC and BSSC track reported concerns using safety concerns tracking logs. The Office of Safety and Security reviews concerns to identify potential hazards that need to be mitigated.

In Section 4.6.2 of its ASP, CATS establishes a process for periodic training throughout the year to present new content to transit workers, including safety concern identification and reporting training. FTA also collected and reviewed training materials for frontline personnel and supervisors that include step-by-step instructions on how transit workers report safety concerns, including notifying lead/supervisor or management, completing the CATS Safety Issues Reporting Form, and emailing safety concerns to a designated email address. Additionally, CATS has developed and distributed flyers that promote CATS channels for transit workers to submit safety concerns.

The CATS personnel interviewed by FTA were generally unaware of any formal transit worker safety reporting program. Employees noted that they are aware of suggestion boxes that can be used to collect employee concerns but noted that they are not often used because employees do not feel like they will receive any response based on their submission. In general, employees stated they felt that they could bring concerns to their supervisor, but that they were not made aware of any formal CATS employee safety reporting program other than reporting a concern to a supervisor. Additionally, FTA interviews also found that frontline workers were not aware that they had frontline worker representatives on the CATS safety committees. Some employees believed that emails could be an effective way to communicate, but only if certain individuals were also copied on the email.

FTA's review of reports submitted to the reporting program shows that no reports have been made since 2022 related to assaults on transit workers. Transit worker safety reporting programs can be an extremely valuable source of information about hazards that can allow an agency to act before a negative outcome is experienced. However, submitted documentation indicates that CATS workers are not using the reporting program to report assault-related concerns.

Recommendation 5:

FTA recommends CATS evaluate its current transit worker safety reporting program as defined in its ASP to ensure that it accurately reflects current CATS transit worker reporting mechanisms and make any revisions as needed.

Recommendation 6:

CATS should evaluate the effectiveness of its transit worker safety concern reporting training required at § 673.29(a)(1) to increase awareness of reporting mechanisms and should ensure that CATS transit workers understand that the transit worker safety reporting program should be used to report concerns related to assaults on transit workers.

De-Escalation Training

Key Takeaway: FTA’s review of CATS’s policies and implementation identified non-compliance with § 673.29(a) requirements related to de-escalation training. CATS has not demonstrated that its de-escalation training program includes all required transit workers, and that CATS is implementing the de-escalation training program it has established. To achieve compliance CATS must submit documentation confirming that its training program includes all applicable workers and that it is implementing its de-escalation training program.

Applicable Requirements: At § 673.29(a)(1), FTA requires a transit agency to “establish and implement a comprehensive safety training program that includes de-escalation training, safety concern identification and reporting training, and refresher training for all operations transit workers and transit workers directly responsible for safety in the transit agency's public transportation system. The training program must include refresher training, as necessary.” At § 673.29(a)(2), FTA further requires that “large urbanized area providers must include maintenance transit workers in the safety training program.”

Audit Observations: In CATS’s September 25, 2025, letter to FTA, the agency notes that the CATS de-escalation training program consists of three different trainings and that nearly 600 CATS staff members (CATS and TMOC) have participated in one or more of the trainings since the enhanced de-escalation training program was launched in 2024. However, CATS was unable to identify a list of all transit workers required to take the de-escalation training. Accordingly, CATS has not demonstrated that the training program includes all operations transit workers, transit workers directly responsible for safety, and maintenance transit workers as required by the PTASP regulation.

FTA also reviewed CATS “Training Operations” documentation which describes the current CATS de-escalation training program, which includes three elements: the National Transit Institute’s Assault Awareness curriculum, Crisis Intervention Training through a collaboration with Mecklenburg County, and training through a partnership with the Red Kite Project. The documentation also references refresher training requirements.

CATS has not demonstrated it is implementing the de-escalation training program it has established. In December 2024, CATS indicated that a majority of its applicable transit workers had not completed the required de-escalation training. Ten months later, CATS informed FTA that a majority of its applicable transit workers has still not taken the required training.

CATS provided tracking documentation that indicates as of October 2025, 250 CATS employees (41 percent) and 345 TMOC employees (48 percent) have completed one or more of the de-escalation training courses. FTA notes that these percentages reflect little change from the completion percentages submitted to FTA in December 2024, ten months earlier. Further, the documentation provided does not include tracking information necessary for CATS to ensure implementation of its comprehensive training program. Accordingly, CATS has not demonstrated that it is implementing its de-escalation training program as required by § 673.29(a).

Finding 18: CATS has not met the requirement for the de-escalation training established at § 673.29(a).

Actions required for closeout:

- CATS must submit documentation that the agency is implementing the comprehensive safety training program with respect to de-escalation training for all applicable transit workers as required by § 673.29(a). Documentation may include items such as identification of all transit workers who are required to take the de-escalation training, including all operations transit workers, all maintenance transit workers, and all transit workers directly responsible for safety, and data that clearly records the training status of each required participant and timelines for training completion.
- To support confirmation of compliance, CATS must submit documentation of the specific de-escalation training courses each transit worker is required to take under the CATS program, including refresher requirements.

Use of Funds for Safety and Security Program and Improvements

Key Takeaway: FTA's review confirmed compliance with safety set-aside process requirements established at 49 U.S.C. 5329(d)(4)(B) and 49 CFR 673.27(d)(3)(iii). However, FTA recommends CATS revise its ASP to describe how the safety risk reduction program and related safety performance target processes interface with the CATS budget and Federal grants processes.

Applicable Requirement:

Security Set-aside: A recipient of Section 5307 funds must certify that it either: (1) will expend for each fiscal year for public transportation security projects ... at least 1 percent of the amount the recipient receives for each fiscal year under [49 U.S.C. 5336]; or (2) has decided that the expenditure for security projects is not necessary. (49 U.S.C. 5307(c)(1)(J)).

Safety Set-aside: Large urbanized area providers must allocate at least 0.75 percent of their 5307 funds to safety-related projects eligible under 49 U.S.C. 5307. (49 U.S.C. 5329(d)(4)(B))

Section 673.27(d)(3)(iii) requires a large urbanized area provider that does not meet an established annual safety performance target set by the safety committee for the safety risk reduction program to “allocate its safety set-aside in the following fiscal year to safety-related projects eligible under 49 U.S.C. 5307 that are reasonably likely to assist the transit agency in meeting the safety performance target in the future.”

Audit Observations: FTA regional staff reviewed grant and funding documentation to determine if CATS is setting aside these funds as required. During interviews CATS officials described their approach for addressing these set-asides. In the past, CATS would craft grants for either safety or security. CATS has historically set-aside the minimum percentage required but may have not always spent the grant money as fast as originally intended due to project slowdowns. In the past, CATS would attempt to engage the frontline workforce in these decisions to make sure that what they are using the grants for is truly what is most needed. On-site interviews confirmed that current CATS activity ensures that CATS safety and security functions engage with this process to inform the development of associated grants. FTA notes that CATS recently decided to allocate a total of two percent of its 5307 funds to safety and security projects in the future and documented this decision in an agency memorandum.

The current CATS process involves confirming with safety and security departments all items that would be addressed by and comprise the set-asides. The process starts with the CATS safety and security function defining budgetary needs based on input from the safety and security teams. The CATS Chief Safety and Security Officer then brings this information to the CATS financial department to support development of the CATS budget. CATS representatives described increased focus on strategic planning to support a “bottom-up” process to define CATS’s safety and security needs for operating and capital budgets based on 1-year and 5-year outlooks. As part of discussions with FTA’s Region 4 office, CATS has also worked to identify items that were locally funded in the past but that are eligible for Federal financial support. CATS is planning to use this information to support realignment, allowing CATS to draw down Federal funds to support initiatives that were self-funded previously. CATS representatives confirmed that this new approach began in 2023.

Interviews also confirmed CATS’s approach for using the safety set-aside to address missed safety performance targets for the safety risk reduction program set by the safety committee. CATS described the flexibility built into their approach, which allows them to address these needs through the CATS budgeting process. Typically, CATS crafts these grants in a way which does not strictly tie CATS to a specific intervention, strategy, or mitigation. This approach allows them to use its drawdowns to implement targeted mitigations to address emergent needs.

Recommendation 7:

FTA recommends CATS revise its ASP to address how the safety set-aside process and the safety risk reduction program interface with the CATS budget and Federal grants processes.

Appendix A: Findings and Recommendations

Findings and Actions Required for Closeout

FTA issues the following 18 findings of non-compliance and the associated actions required for the closeout of each finding.

Finding 1: CATS is not implementing the safety risk assessment processes established in its ASP when assessing the risk of assaults on transit workers, as required by § 673.25(c).

Actions required for closeout:

- CATS must submit an updated safety risk assessment for assaults on transit worker risk that considers all current and planned safety risk mitigations and that demonstrates the agency is following the current (or revised) safety risk assessment process established in the CATS ASP and must submit documentation demonstrating final risk ratings to support safety risk mitigation prioritization.
- If CATS revises its safety risk assessment matrices (see Recommendation 1), CATS must submit a revised ASP that includes these matrices.

Finding 2: CATS is not implementing the process established in its ASP to monitor its operations to identify any safety risk mitigations that were not implemented as intended, as required by § 673.27(b)(2).

Actions required for closeout:

- CATS must submit documentation related to the safety risk mitigations identified in the CATS Integrated Security and Public Safety Plan demonstrating CATS is monitoring the implementation of each mitigation using the process established in its ASP.

Finding 3: CATS has not established or implemented a process to monitor its operations to identify any safety risk mitigations that may be ineffective, as required at § 673.27(b)(2).

Actions required for closeout:

- CATS must submit a revised ASP that defines a process to monitor the effectiveness of safety risk mitigations.
- CATS must submit documentation for the safety risk mitigations defined in the CATS Integrated Security and Public Safety Plan that documents how CATS will monitor the effectiveness of each safety risk mitigation.

Finding 4: CATS has not met the requirements at § 673.11(a)(3) regarding general PTASP safety performance targets.

Actions required for closeout:

- CATS must submit a revised ASP that includes safety performance targets for each of the 14 required general safety performance measures established by the National Safety Plan.

Appendix A

- The safety performance targets must cover all modes of transit service provided by CATS, including vanpool.

Finding 5: CATS has not established a process to assess its safety performance annually, as required at § 673.27(d)(1).

Actions required for closeout:

- CATS must document a process in its ASP for conducting an annual performance assessment as required at § 673.27(d)(1).
- CATS must submit documentation that confirms it has conducted the annual performance assessment required at § 673.27(d)(1), including the identification of deficiencies in its SMS and any deficiencies in the agency's performance against its annual safety performance targets.
- The annual performance assessment must identify any deficiencies in CATS's comprehensive safety training program established pursuant to § 673.29(a), including requirements related to training for safety concern reporting and de-escalation training for all operations transit workers, transit workers directly responsible for safety in the transit agency's public transportation system, and all maintenance transit workers (§ 673.29(a)).

Finding 6: CATS has not developed or carried out, under the direction of the Accountable Executive, a plan to address any deficiencies identified through the annual safety performance assessment, as required at § 673.27(d)(4).

Actions required for closeout:

- CATS must submit a revised ASP that defines a process to develop and carry out, under the direction of the Accountable Executive, a plan to address any deficiencies identified through the annual safety performance assessment required at § 673.27(d)(1).
- CATS must submit a plan to address any deficiencies identified through the annual safety performance assessment, including any deficiencies associated with the comprehensive safety training program required under § 673.29(a).

Finding 7: CATS is not compliant with requirements related to establishment of the joint labor-management safety committee at § 673.19(a).

Actions required for closeout:

- CATS must establish a single joint labor-management safety committee or establish separate ASPs for its bus and rail operations.
- CATS must submit revised ASP documentation to confirm compliance.

Finding 8: CATS is not compliant with § 673.19(b), which requires the joint labor-management safety committee to consist of an equal number of frontline transit worker representatives and management representatives.

Actions required for closeout:

- CATS must ensure that its joint labor-management safety committee consists of an equal number of frontline transit worker representatives and management representatives.

- CATS must submit a roster of its safety committee membership that confirms the required membership proportion of 50 percent frontline transit worker and 50 percent management representation.

Finding 9: CATS has not addressed the requirements for joint labor-management safety committee procedures established at § 673.19(c).

Actions required for closeout:

- CATS must revise its ASP and/or safety committee bylaws to clearly define the procedures it will use to address the procedural requirements of § 673.19(c).

Finding 10: CATS has not met the requirement for the joint labor-management safety committee to review and approve the CATS ASP, as required at §§ 673.11(a)(1)(i) and 673.19(d)(1).

Actions required for closeout:

- CATS must submit documentation that confirms that the CATS ASP has been reviewed and approved by a safety committee that meets the joint labor-management safety committee requirements at §§ 673.19(a)-(b).

Finding 11: CATS has not met requirements for the joint labor-management safety committee to identify and recommend safety risk mitigations as required at § 673.19(d)(3)(i).

Actions required for closeout:

- CATS must submit documentation of joint labor-management safety committee identification and recommendation of safety risk mitigations to address the results of the safety risk assessment required in Finding 1. This may include the review and approval of safety risk mitigations developed by CATS and documented in the CATS Integrated Security and Public Safety Plan.
- CATS must submit a revised ASP that includes or incorporates by reference any safety risk mitigations identified and recommended by the joint labor-management safety committee as part of the safety risk reduction program, as required by §§ 673.11(a)(7)(iv) and 673.25(d)(5).

Finding 12: CATS has not met requirements for the joint labor-management safety committee to identify safety risk mitigations that may be ineffective, inappropriate, or were not implemented as intended, as required at § 673.19(d)(3)(ii).

Actions required for closeout:

- CATS must submit documentation that indicates how the safety committee(s) will support operation of the transit agency's SMS by identifying safety risk mitigations that may be ineffective, inappropriate, or were not implemented as intended.

Finding 13: CATS has not met requirements for the joint labor-management safety committee to identify safety deficiencies for purposes of continuous improvement, as required at § 673.19(d)(3)(iii).

Actions required for closeout:

- CATS must submit documentation that confirms the joint labor-management safety committee is performing its required role to identify safety deficiencies for purposes of continuous improvement, including any instance where CATS has not met an annual safety performance target set for the safety risk reduction program.

Finding 14: CATS has not established a safety risk reduction program required at § 673.11(a)(7) for its bus transit services.

Actions required for closeout:

- CATS must revise its ASP to ensure it addresses safety risk reduction program requirements for all CATS public transportation service.

Finding 15: CATS has not met requirements at §§ 673.11(a)(7)(iii) and 673.19(d)(2) for the joint labor-management safety committee to set safety performance targets for the safety risk reduction program.

Actions required for closeout:

- CATS must submit documentation that demonstrates the joint labor-management safety committee has set CATS's safety performance targets for the safety risk reduction program.

Finding 16: CATS has not met the requirement for the safety risk reduction program safety performance targets to be set for all of modes of public transportation, as required by § 673.11(a)(7)(iii)(B).

Actions required for closeout:

- CATS must include in its ASP safety performance targets for the safety risk reduction program that include its vanpool service.

Finding 17: CATS has not met the requirement for the safety risk reduction program to include safety performance targets for both the rates and counts of events, collisions, and injuries as required by §§ 673.11(a)(3) and (a)(7), and defined through the National Safety Plan.

Actions required for closeout:

- CATS must include in its ASP safety performance targets for the safety risk reduction program that include events, event rate, collisions, collision rate, injuries, and injury rate.

Finding 18: CATS has not met the requirement for the de-escalation training established at § 673.29(a).

Actions required for closeout:

- CATS must submit documentation that the agency is implementing the comprehensive safety training program with respect to de-escalation training for all applicable transit workers as required by § 673.29(a). Documentation may include items such as identification of all transit workers who are required to take the de-escalation training, including all operations transit workers, all maintenance transit workers, and all transit workers directly responsible for safety, and data that clearly records the training status of each required participant and timelines for training completion.
- To support confirmation of compliance, CATS must submit documentation of the specific de-escalation training courses each transit worker is required to take under the CATS program, including refresher requirements.

Recommendations

FTA also issues the following six recommendations to CATS. These suggestions, based on audit observations, would enhance and strengthen CATS's current SMS processes. CATS may decide whether to implement these recommendations.

Recommendation 1:

As a best practice, FTA recommends that CATS revise its safety risk assessment matrices it will use for safety risk assessment of hazards that address the prioritization of safety risk mitigations for all hazards, including hazards that may be related to factors outside of CATS's control.

Recommendation 2:

As a best practice, FTA recommends CATS use consistent terminology within the ASP when referring to the safety performance targets established under Part 673.

Recommendation 3:

As a best practice, FTA recommends CATS define training for joint labor-management safety committee members regarding the required duties of the safety committee.

Recommendation 4:

As a best practice, FTA recommends that the CATS joint labor-management safety committee set safety performance targets for the safety risk reduction program that reflect an annual reduction by setting the safety performance target below the three-year rolling average of associated data reported to the NTD.

Recommendation 5:

FTA recommends CATS evaluate its current transit worker safety reporting program as defined in its ASP to ensure that it accurately reflects current CATS transit worker reporting mechanisms and make any revisions as needed.

Recommendation 6:

CATS should evaluate the effectiveness of its transit worker safety concern reporting training required at § 673.29(a)(1) to increase awareness of reporting mechanisms and should ensure that CATS transit workers understand that the transit worker safety reporting program should be used to report concerns related to assaults on transit workers.

Recommendation 7:

FTA recommends CATS revise its ASP to address how the safety set-aside process and the safety risk reduction program interface with the CATS budget and Federal grants processes.

Appendix B: Materials Reviewed

As part of this audit, FTA received and reviewed the following documentation:

- 2025.09.25 - CATS Letter TSO - Response to 2025.09.10 TSO Letter.pdf¹
- Organizational Charts:
 - 2025.09.25 - CATS Org Chart_7-2025 FINAL v1.pdf
 - 2025.09.25 - S&S Org Chart Aug 2025 (2).pdf
- Agency Safety Plan and Safety Performance Targets:
 - 2025.09.25-Email-Safety Goals_SPT.pdf
 - 2025.09.25-Nov.2024-Agency-Safety-Plan-Rev4.pdf
 - 2025.09.29_20250908-ASPREv5.0-Final Draft-CATS Review-NCDOT-Review.docx
 - 2025.09.29-SPTs-Transit Worker Assaults-All Modes(2022-Present).xlsx
- Safety Risk Reduction Program:
 - 2025.09.25_20241220-SMS-Report.xlsx
 - RSSC-Rail Safety and Security Committee Bylaws_Revision 2.doc
 - 2025.09.25_20241203-TW-Assault-Hazard-Analysis.xlsx
- Safety Risk Assessment:
 - 2025.09.25-Assault-Risk-Analysis-2022-2024.pdf
 - 2025.09.25-Worker-Assault-Hazard-Analysis-12-18-2024 (1).XLS
- Safety Committee:
 - 2025.09.25-7.ALL-Safety-Committees-mtg-minutes- (folder)
 - Bus SC (subfolder)
 - Rail SC (subfolder)
 - S&S Committee (subfolder)
 - TMOB Bulletins (subfolder)
 - 2025.09.25-8.RSSC-by-laws-rail-hazard-log-MiscFiles (folder contains memos, charts, posters, etc.)
 - 2025.09.25-Worker-Assault-Hazard-Analysis-12-18-2024.XLS
 - 2025.09.25_20250918-Rail-S-and-S-Committee-Safety-Log.pdf
 - 2025.09.25-Rail-Safety-Hazard-Tracking-Log.xlsx
 - rail safety committee poster.url
- Transit Worker Safety Reporting Program:
 - 2025.09.25-Employee-Reporting-Logs (folder)
 - Bus Ops (subfolder)
 - Individual Messages Related to Assaults (subfolder)
 - 9.18.2025 Rail Safety and Security Committee Safety Log
 - Bus Hazard Log
 - Bus Stop & Operator Safety Issues

Appendix B

- Fw_ Safety Concern at Sunnyside Pocket Track – Vehicle and Streetcar Conflict
 - Rail Safety Hazard Tracking Log
- 2025.09.25-Reports-re-Worker-Assaults (folder)
 - Bus (subfolder)
 - Rail (subfolder)
- 2025.09.25-Safety-Reporting-Promotion (folder includes subfolders and assorted safety promotion bulletins, presentations, etc.):
 - Bus Tool Box Talks (subfolder)
 - Newsletters (subfolder)
 - Rail Safety Week (subfolder)
 - Rail Tool Box Talks (subfolder)
 - Safety Blitz (subfolder)
- 2025.09.25-Training-Materials (folder includes assorted files related to ASP training for frontline employees, managers and supervisors, senior leadership, etc.)
- Safety Plan Safety Card_Final.pdf
- sms_how-to-report_safety_2023.pdf
- 2025.09.25-Nov.2024-Agency-Safety-Plan-Rev4.pdf
- SSF48 Safety Issue Reporting Form.pdf
- De-escalation Training:
 - 2025.09.25_250219-Red-Kite-Project-Report.docx
 - 2025.09.25-Deescalation-Prgm-Writeup-2025.docx
 - 2025.09.25-De-Escalation-Matrix-9.24.25_THupdates.xlsx
- General Directive 24-1 Mitigations:
 - 2025.09.25_241220-SMS-GD24-1.xlsx
 - 2025.09.25-Worker-Assault-Hazard-Analysis-12-18-2024.XLS
- Crime Reduction and Fare Evasion:
 - 2025.09.29-MTC-04-Transit-Rules-Regulations-20180822.pdf
 - 2025.09.25_240102-SS21-Security-Policy.pdf
 - 2025.09.25_240102-SS20-Safety-Policy.pdf
 - 2025.09.25_221003-SS19-Fare-Enforcement-Policy.pdf
 - 2025.09.25_241112-SS16-Exclusion-Policy.pdf
 - 2025.09.29_20250731-SS14-Surveillance-Audio-Video-Policy.pdf
 - 2025.09.25_231103-SS12-CATS-Issued-Citations.pdf
 - 2025.09.25_231107-SS11-Access-Control-Policy.pdf
 - 2025.09.25_230223-SS07-Two-Way-Radio-Protocol.pdf
 - 2025.09.29_20230828-SS06-Suspicious-Dangerous-HOT-Object.pdf
 - 2025.09.29_20250307-SS05-Hazard-Communication-Prgm.pdf
 - 2025.09.29_20250529-SS03-Safety-Event-Investigation-Rpting.pdf

Appendix B

- 2025.09.25_250820-CTC-Security-Strategy-Briefing.pdf
- 2025.09.25_25.09.25-Mayor-Ltr-to-Molinaro-15-03-27.pdf
- 2025.09.25_250924-CATS_Security-Plan.pdf
- 2025.09.25_250925-CATS_Response-Ltr-FTA-FINAL.pdf
- 2025.09.25_20240228-Ops-Notice-GoldLine-Unruly-Customers.docx
- 2025.09.25_20250203-Safety-Bulletin-Back-to-Basics.pdf
- 2025.09.29_20250723-Bulletin25-002-Cab Security-Opening-Door.pdf
- 2025.09.29_20250528-AN-25-002-Emergency-Procedure-Enabling Doors-CMPD-Security-Access.pdf
- Security Funding Expenditures:
 - 2025.09.25-Security-Expenses-FY23-FY26.xlsx
- Additional Files (from later document request; received via email):
 - 2025.09.29_2023000735 Final-Professional-Security-Services.pdf
 - 2025.09.29_2023000735-Amend1-Final-Professional-Security-Services.pdf
 - 2025.09.29_2023000735-Amend2-Final-Professional-Security-Services.pdf
 - 2025.09.29 - CATS SS16 Exclusion Policy.pdf
 - 2025.09.29_20230322-MOU-Police-Dept-Final-Executed.pdf
 - 2025.09.29_20250922-Agreement-Professional-Security-Services.pdf
 - Bus Safety and Security Committee Bylaws 9-24-2025.doc
 - Rail Safety Committee Bylaws_Revision 2.doc
 - BUS-STS Hazard Log.xlsx
- Virtual Meeting Document Requests:
 - 11.13.25_Annual Certification Letter 2023_Revised Final.pdf
 - 11.13.25_Annual Certification Letter 2024_final.pdf
 - 11.13.25_NCDOT SSO_Annual_Status_of_Safety_Report_2022_Final.pdf
 - 11.10.25_CATS BOD104 Configuration Change Control.pdf
 - 11.10.25_CATS QA02 Control and Distribution of Plans Manuals Policies and Procedures.pdf
 - 11.10.25_CATS ROD801 Configuration Change Control.pdf
 - 11.10.25_ChangeControlEmail-LauraJohnson.pdf
 - 11.13.25_CATS BOD104 Configuration Change Control.pdf
 - 11.13.25_CATS QA02 Control & Distribution of Plans Policies & Procedures.pdf
 - 11.13.25_CATS ROD801 Configuration Change Control.pdf
 - 11.13.25_Rail Configuration Change Board Cases.png
 - 11.13.25_Case 80.png
 - 11.13.25_Case 83.png
 - 11.13.25_Case 88.png
 - 11.13.25_Drivers Barriers.docx
 - 11.13.25_CY2025 NCDOT Quarterly Metrics_Q3_All Modes.pdf