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**Bus Operator Safety –
Issues Examination and Model Practices**

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Presentation Outline

- Project Overview
- Research Topic Areas
- Findings by Research Topic Area
- Recommendations by Research Topic Area

Project Overview

- Multi-topic examination of bus operator-related critical safety and security issues
 - Literature Review
 - National Transit Safety Survey
 - Florida Transit Safety Survey
 - National Transit Database Analysis
 - Follow-up with Survey Respondents



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Four Research Topic Areas

1. Safety Function: Organizational Structure and Reporting
2. Bus Operator Assaults – Return to Duty Model Practices
3. Model Policies and Procedures for Driver's License and Criminal History Background Checks
4. Safety Training for Bus Operators – Improving the Training Process and Model Programs



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Presentation of Findings



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Safety Function: Organizational Structure and Reporting

- The majority of agencies (63.5%) indicated single safety department within their agency
- Slight majority reported safety department reports to Exec. Dir./CEO (44.1%)
- Slightly fewer have safety function report to department director
- Only 23.7% reported the safety department leader was “on-par” with other members of executive team
- Average number of FTEs assigned to safety functions – 10 or fewer



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Agency Safety Functions (in order of prevalence)

- Compliance with state and federal regulations
- Establishment of corrective action plans and providing feedback to management
- Event and incident reporting
- Development and enforcement of safety-related rules and policies
- Training
- Event and incident analysis
- Accident review board*



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Safety Function – Conclusion

- There was insufficient evidence that could lead to recommended minimum statewide standards for safety functions within Florida's transit agencies
 - Number of positions
 - Reporting structure
 - Safety function emphasis areas
- Safety functions are critical to the safe performance of a transit agency



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Bus Operator Assaults - Findings

- Examined return-to-work procedures when assaults or traumatic events occurred
 - Employee assistance
 - Continued employment options
 - Summary of industry leading practices



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Bus Operator Assaults - Conclusions

- Total assaults/state of industry cannot be effectively quantified under current NTD report structure
- Impacts of assaults characterized as “minor incidents”
- Influence of larger transit systems should be recognized
- Significant increases in assaults on transit vehicle riders requires additional study and response



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Model Policies and Procedures: Driver's License and Criminal History Background Checks

- Objectives:
 - Identify current practices
 - Identify commonalities in:
 - Type of record searches performed
 - Frequency
 - Events that would initiate out-of-cycle review
 - Develop recommendations for driver's license and criminal history background checks



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Driver's License and Criminal History Background Checks - Findings

- Transit agencies use a variety of policies and procedures related to driver's license and background checks
- All systems perform some level of driver's license and background checks for new employees
- Great variation in record inquiries made after an operator has been hired
- Found precedents for criminal history background checks in Florida law – especially in programs providing services to seniors, persons with disabilities, and children



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Recommendations

Driver's License Checks

- Establish a statewide policy for conducting driver's license record and criminal history background for pre- and post-employment checks
- Use the authority established in Section 341.061, F.S. to accomplish a statewide policy for conducting driver's license record and criminal history background checks for pre- and post-employment.



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Recommendations

Driver's License Checks *(continued)*

- Pursue the amendment of the safety standards for bus transit systems provided by Rule Chapter 14-90, to detail specific requirements related to driver's license record and criminal history background checks for pre- and post-employment – including:
 - Division of Motor Vehicles (DMV)/Motor Vehicle Record (MVR) checks for all new employees operating buses
 - Minimum annual DMV/MVR check for all existing employees operating buses
 - Require agencies to develop policies to permit out-of-cycle DMV/MVR checks for all employees operating buses
- Explore working with the FDHSMV or private contractors to negotiate a statewide contract for a consortium of public transit operators covered by Rule 14-90 to obtain DMV/MVR driver's license checks.



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Recommendations

Criminal History Background Checks

- Within the amended language to Rule 14-90, specifically detail the following minimum requirements in regard to criminal history background checks:
 - Conduct criminal history background checks for all new employees operating buses
 - Require a minimum criminal history background check for all existing bus operators on a five-year-cycle
 - Require agencies to develop policies to permit out-of-cycle criminal history background checks for all bus operators
 - Mandate the use of the employee screening requirements indicated in Chapter 435, Florida Statutes (F.S.) for criminal history background checks
 - Establish Level 2 background screenings, as defined in Chapter 435, F.S., as the mandated screening standard for Florida's transit bus operators



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Recommendations

Criminal History Background Checks *(continued)*

- Pursue having the Florida Department of Transportation join the Florida "Care Provider Background Screening Clearinghouse" and allow all agencies covered by Rule 14-90 to access their criminal history background checks through the Clearinghouse. This would provide potential cost savings and easier access for the checks.



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Safety Training for Bus Operators

- Objectives:
 - Examine current public transit operator training programs
 - Identify recommendations to improve or mitigate safety-related incidents based on safety risk factors and lagging safety trends indicated by national transit safety data as reported in FTA NTD reporting system



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Safety Training for Bus Operators Observations

- Observation 1: Content
 - 96.5% of survey respondents provide ongoing safety training
 - Topics most prevalent:
 - Safety policies and procedures
 - Defensive driving
 - Distracted driving
 - Note: causal factor in most incidents – “human factor error **not following policy/procedure**”
- Observation 1: Recommendation
 - Minimum training curriculum – specific content and minimum training hours by topic



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Safety Training for Bus Operators Observations

- Observation 2: Delivery Methods
 - Classroom still the most predominant
 - Most respondents also conduct behind-the-wheel training
 - Very few use computer-based/online training (14 out of 47 respondents)
 - Even fewer – simulator training (7/42)
- Observation 2: Recommendation
 - Safety training should be provided across multiple platforms, recognizing the variability in learning styles, allowing most consistent retention



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Safety Training for Bus Operators Observations

- Observation 3: Areas of Concern to Address in Training/Mitigate through Training
 - Collisions with pedestrians and bicyclists
 - Sideswipe and rear-end collisions
 - Passenger injuries and injuries/fatalities of other vehicle occupants
- Observation 3: Recommendation

More focus on safety policies/procedures:

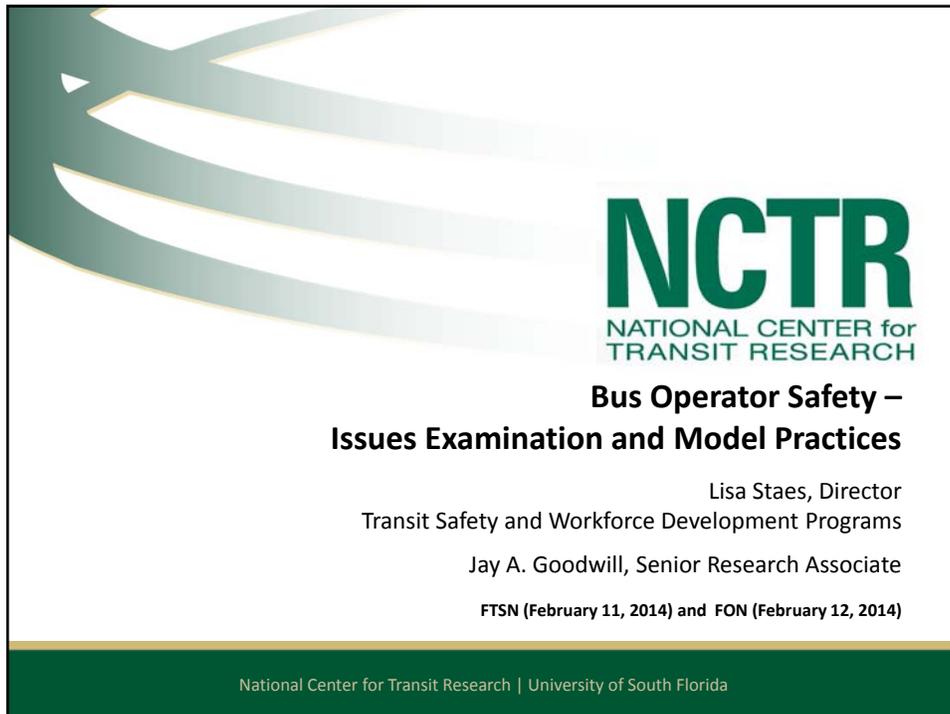
 - Fatigue (driver hours, use of over-the-counter medications), and outside employment
 - Distractions
 - Operating procedures specific to the safe operation of buses at stops, transfer locations, pulling into traffic, use of signals, proper lift utilization, and loading/alighting passengers



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Safety Training for Bus Operators Observations

- Observation 3: Recommendations (*continued*)
Training to mitigate risks and prevent collisions – minimum suggested topics:
 - Proper use of signals
 - Proper use of mirrors
 - Improved situational awareness
 - Defensive driving
 - Remedial training for bus operators who have been involved in vehicle to vehicle or vehicle to pedestrian/bicyclist collisions

The slide features a large, abstract graphic of overlapping, curved lines in shades of green and white on the left side. On the right, the NCTR logo is displayed in a bold, green, sans-serif font, with the full name 'NATIONAL CENTER for TRANSIT RESEARCH' underneath in a smaller, green, sans-serif font. Below the logo, the title 'Bus Operator Safety – Issues Examination and Model Practices' is centered in a bold, black, sans-serif font. Underneath the title, the names and titles of the presenters are listed: Lisa Staes, Director of Transit Safety and Workforce Development Programs; and Jay A. Goodwill, Senior Research Associate. The dates of the presentations, 'FTSN (February 11, 2014) and FON (February 12, 2014)', are listed at the bottom of the text block. At the very bottom of the slide, a dark green horizontal bar contains the text 'National Center for Transit Research | University of South Florida' in a white, sans-serif font.