

Oregon Department of
Transportation
State Safety Oversight Agency
2024 Annual Safety Status Report



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Summary

The State Safety Oversight Agency (SSOA), housed within the Oregon Department of Transportation's (ODOT) Commerce and Compliance Division (CCD), is responsible for safety oversight of the light rail, streetcar, and trolley systems within Oregon, all of which are termed Rail Fixed Guideway Public Transportation Systems (RFGPTS). Each RFGPTS is managed by a Rail Transit Agency (RTA) with whom the SSOA communicates. These are regulated separately and distinctly from heavy rail, such as Amtrak or the Westside Express Service (WES) Commuter Rail. Currently, there are two RTAs that receive federal funding, placing them under federally mandated state oversight, as well as under state regulations. There are two smaller systems that do not receive federal funding, and therefore are subject only to state regulations. The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) provides funding for RTAs and for the SSOA and has promulgated regulations that require each SSOA to provide a written report about its activities throughout the previous calendar year to the Governor of its state and to the Boards or related positions at the rail transit agencies, along with FTA.

Overview

Oregon is one of 31 states, including the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico, with a designated SSOA program. Through inspections, audits, investigations, attendance at various meetings, and document review, the Oregon SSOA program oversees the safety of RFGPTS for compliance with 49 United States Code 5329(e), the code of federal regulations (CFR) found in 49 CFR Parts §§ 40, 655, 670, 671, 672, 673, and 674, as well as Oregon Statutes (*i.e.*, ORS 824.045) and Oregon Administrative Rules (OAR), Division 741, Chapter 60 (and Chapter 65, applicable only to the Astoria Riverfront Trolley (ART) and the Willamette Shore Trolley (WST), located in Lake Oswego). The Tri-County Metropolitan Transportation District of Oregon (TriMet) light rail system, commonly referred to as MAX, and the Portland Streetcar (PSC), receive federal financial assistance, thereby placing them under federal and state jurisdiction and subject to both federal and state regulations. ART and WST do not receive federal financial assistance; they are subject to state (but not federal) oversight.

This report focuses on those systems subject to federal regulations, pursuant to 49 CFR 674.13(a)(7), which requires that, at least once a year, the SSOA reports the status of the safety of each RFGPTS to the Governor, the FTA, and the board of directors, or equivalent entity, of each RFGPTS. The Oregon SSOA Program Standard further requires that Oregon SSOA summarize the oversight activities for the preceding 12 months, describing the causal and contributing factors of accidents identified through investigation, identifying the status of corrective action plans (CAPs) changes to each RTA's Public Transportation Agency Safety Plans (PTASP), and the level of effort by Oregon SSOA in carrying out its oversight activities.

Current Regulatory Environment

On November 15, 2021, President Biden signed into law the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, (BIL) which amended FTA's safety program found at 49 U.S.C. 5329. Changes to 49 U.S.C. 5329(d), as codified in 49 CFR Parts 673 and 674, required minor to moderate changes to each RTA's PTASP, including the establishment of a safety committee convened by a joint-labor management process consisting of an equal number of frontline employee representatives and managers. The safety committee's responsibilities include a) reviewing and approving the PTASP each year; b) identifying and recommending risk-based mitigations or strategies necessary to reduce the likelihood and severity of identified risks; c) developing strategies to

minimize employees and riders to exposure of hazards and unsafe conditions as recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention or a State health authority and d) establishing performance safety targets in alignment with the National Public Transportation Safety Plan.

The law also requires additional training covering mitigations of assaults on transit workers and de-escalation training and establishes additional training requirements to be considered for operations and maintenance personnel responsible for safety.

In late 2022, FTA issued a special directive to each of the 31 SSOAs that oversee RFGPTS. Special Directive No. 22-43, issued to Oregon SSOA on October 21, 2022, requires it to develop and implement a risk-based inspection program (RBI) as required by 49 U.S.C. 5329(k). Oregon SSOA already conducts inspections and has for many years. The primary driver of an RBI is to focus oversight energies on the areas of highest risk at an RFGPTS by using data provided, collected, and observed. Oregon SSOA does employ an RBI approach to its current inspections, but there are adjustments being made to the inspection process to satisfy the RBI requirements.

A primary component of the new special directive is data sharing between the RTAs and SSOA; the FTA directive requires the SSOA to have unfettered access to RTA data needed to direct the SSOA to areas where safety risk is highest. The state of Oregon currently has Oregon Administrative Rules (OARs) that provide for the level of access necessary, so the SSOA has used its time to develop other protocols to the current inspection program to align it fully with FTA's RBI requirements.

Another major component and requirement by FTA is an SSOA data storage system robust enough to store and analyze data submitted by the RFGPTS or collected by the Oregon SSOA. In December 2024, SSOA implemented its new application called SSOA Rail Online. The new application, called SSOA Rail Online, is a cloud-based application that stores safety event data, CAPs, inspection reports, and hazard information. SSOA Rail Online allows SSOA to generate customizable reports that will direct RBI activities toward areas of highest safety risk at each RFGPTS. Field inspection reports can be generated via tablets and sent to the each RFGPTS immediately upon completion.

Oregon SSOA's RBI program proposal was submitted to FTA over several months and was approved and certified by FTA on March 5, 2025. Implementation of the program is now in its beginning stages.

All the regulations that FTA proposed in 2023 (as noted above) have since been promulgated and are now in effect. Oregon SSOA is currently in the process of revising its administrative rules and its Program Standard to comply with the new federal regulations. The SSOA expects the changes and updates to be substantially complete by the end of 2025. Below is a summary of the rule updates issued by FTA.

[49 CFR Part 672](#)

The initial Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) was published in the Federal Register in October 2023; the rules became final in August 2024, with an effective date of November 1, 2024. The changes refined the Public Transportation Safety Certification Program (PTSCTP), added administrative and reporting requirements and clarified voluntary PTSCTP participation and refresher training requirements.

[49 CFR Part 670 and 49 CFR Part 673](#)

In April 2024, FTA finalized its first major update to the PTASP regulation (49 CFR Part 673), concurrent with the National Public Transportation Safety Plan (49 CFR Part 670). These updates are a part of a continuing effort to improve transit safety performance on federally supported transit systems; the PTASP rule was

promulgated and updated by FTA to make transit safer for both transit workers and passengers alike. At a high level, the PTASP rule updates incorporate Bipartisan Infrastructure Law requirements, advance Safety Management System (SMS) processes, increase frontline transit worker involvement, expand de-escalation training, and address safety risk, including assaults on transit workers, transit vehicle-pedestrian collisions and infectious disease exposure.

The National Public Transportation Safety Plan is FTA's primary guidance document to improve transit safety performance on all federally supported public transportation systems and includes best practices, tools, technical assistance, voluntary standards, and other resources. The updates incorporate Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) requirements for PTASP safety performance measures and lay out a performance-based approach to reduce injuries and fatalities on transit systems under FTA's safety jurisdiction. While the National Public Transportation Safety Plan itself is not a regulation and does not impose mandatory requirements, 49 CFR 673 requires that RTAs must address in their PTASPs all applicable rules and standards found in the national plan.

[49 CFR Part 674](#)

In November 2023, FTA published its NPRM for the State Safety Oversight regulations at 49 CFR Part 674. The final rule was published on October 18, 2024, and became effective January 1, 2025. The rule adds new requirements reflecting the mandates in 49 U.S.C. 5329(k) that SSOAs must conduct RBIs of each RTA that it oversees. Oregon SSOA has these authorities within its current OARs. Nonetheless, Oregon SSOA is in the process of revising the current OARs and the Oregon SSOA Program Standard to align with the new requirements, including definition changes of safety events and changes in SSOA requirements, in addition to adding a new section that includes all requirements mandated by FTA's risk-based inspection program (RBI), which was outlined in Special Directive 22-43 issued by FTA on October 21, 2022. The FTA has approved the SSOA's RBI program proposal, something all SSOAs are required to submit to FTA prior to beginning their own formal RBI program. Work is currently underway to implement the requirements of the program, with a report due to FTA following the first six months of implementation.

[49 CFR Part 675 Advanced Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, Hours of Service and Fatigue Management](#)

In October 2023, the FTA issued an advance notice of proposed rulemaking (ANPRM) proposing minimum safety standards to provide protections for transit workers to obtain adequate rest, thereby reducing the risk of fatigue-related safety incidents. FTA received comments through January 29, 2024, but will continue to receive any submitted even this late. There has not yet been a formal notice that rulemaking is continuing. Currently, neither TriMet or PSC have a formal fatigue management program, although both have hours of service policies (in accordance with the applicable OARs) and agreements with the Amalgamated Transit Union that are codified within the Working and Wage Agreement.

Program Function

The Oregon SSOA program is structured to maximize RFGPTS safety and to fulfill all FTA requirements found in 49 CFR Parts 673 and 674. Towards that end, in July 2021, Oregon SSOA updated its OARs to reflect the changes in the federal regulations related to 49 CFR 673 and 674. Thereafter, Oregon SSOA updated and revised its federally required program standard, which identifies RTA/RFGPTS responsibilities for safety functions and explains how the SSOA interprets the regulations and what is expected of the RFGPTS to comply. The revised version of the program standard was issued to each RFGPTS in November 2021 and a follow-up revision was issued in November 2022. The next update is scheduled for November 2025 and will at that time become part of the OARs. The SSOA will be conducting joint work sessions with both TriMet and PSC for

comment and review of proposed changes to the program standard and OARs

Oregon SSOA's current program standard discusses:

- The development, implementation, and subsequent revisions and reviews of the PTASP, and Oregon SSOA's review and approval of said PTASP;
- Investigations of accidents, incidents, and occurrences;
- Review, approval, and oversight of the development and implementation of CAPs related to accidents, hazards, internal and external reviews and audits, etc.;
- Hazard identification, assessment, and mitigations across all areas of the RFGPTS;
- Reporting and notification requirements for accidents to SSOA and FTA, in addition to documents required by Oregon SSOA for review;
- State laws regarding hours-of-service requirements and reporting;
- State laws regarding prohibited use personal electronic devices;
- Regular and periodic on-site reviews of PTASP implementation and compliance, including triennial safety audits.

The program standard provides procedures for how to manage corrective actions, including monitoring and review, safety risk management and monitoring, auditing, internal safety reviews, and accident investigation. It also explains Oregon SSOA's statutory obligations and those of the RTAs, along with guidance and examples.

SSOA Program Staffing

The program currently has four full-time rail transit compliance specialists managed by ODOT Rail Safety & Regulatory Compliance Branch Manager Karla Tackett. The newest specialist joined the Oregon SSOA program in March 2025 and has experience in rail equipment maintenance (REM) and maintenance of way (MOW). FTA's special directive for RBI required a workload assessment that ultimately identified a need for additional support in the SSOA program. A procurement process was completed in late 2024 resulting in consultant support that supports the SSOA's efforts to improve oversight and inspections of REM divisions at TriMet and PSC, as well as provide increased oversight of hazard mitigations, CAPs, PTASP implementation, and increased presence and participation at TriMet and PSC, and support the SSOA's work in complying with the changing federal regulations.

Rail Fixed Guideway Public Transportation Systems under SSOA Oversight

Tri-County Metropolitan Transportation District of Oregon (TriMet)

SSOA Oversight Activities 2024

Field Inspections/Observations/Evaluations

In 2024, the Oregon SSOA visited the field and conducted a total of 144 inspections. Oregon SSOA staff attended 54 meetings at TriMet during 2024 covering a wide variety of topics, including PTASP update meetings, safety committee meetings, status check-in meetings for corrective actions plans, and accident review meetings.

Oregon SSOA Triennial Review of TriMet

Oregon SSOA conducts a triennial review of TriMet every three years. The next triennial will occur in 2026. The 2023 triennial review was the first performed since the PTASP regulation (49 CFR 673) was initially promulgated. Following the triennial review, TriMet submitted formal corrective action proposals (CAPs) for review and approval by Oregon SSOA. TriMet has been working hard at closing the findings from the Triennial Audit.

Accidents and causal factors

In 2024, TriMet MAX vehicles were involved in 15 accidents that were reportable to both FTA and SSOA. Other events were only reportable to the SSOA. The regulations define an accident as any event involving a rail transit vehicle or occurring on a rail transit-controlled property; accident subtypes are included in the table below. The FTA and Oregon SSOA also designate some collisions as incidents, not accidents; the incident designation is reserved for low-speed collisions that don't result in serious injury or property damage.

Accident sub-type	2024	2023
Fatality, a death or suicide	0	1
Serious Injury	0	1
All collisions resulting in fatality	2	2
All collisions resulting in serious injury	2	2
All collisions resulting in substantial damage	9	13
Runaway Train	0	0
A collision between two rail transit vehicles	0	1 (MAX vs Streetcar)
Evacuation for a life safety reason	0	4
Derailment	2	1
Incident sub-type		
Collision - Certain low-speed collisions that result in non-serious injury or property damage	12	16

Accidents that are collisions with substantial damage occur with the greatest frequency. Most collisions are caused by motorists making unlawful turns or moves across the path of the MAX train at non-gated crossings. Collisions with serious injury and fatality generally involve persons trespassing in the MAX right-of-way.

Incidents that are low-speed collisions which result in non-serious injury or property damage are generally

caused by motorists making unlawful turns and moves across the path of the MAX train. Many of these low-speed collisions occur in the downtown Portland area, known as the 'central business district' or CBD, spanning from SW Goose Hollow to Lloyd Center. As a result, some accident investigations can be complicated by the lack of video to substantiate or validate what involved parties report. The introduction of new Type 6 light rail vehicles will replace all non-camera equipped Type 1 light rail vehicles. Identifying the root cause of collisions can be challenging without cameras, but TriMet has committed to installing in-cab forward facing cameras on most of the older remaining fleet by the end of 2025; indeed, the OARs will require such installations in all rail transit vehicles (RTV). Currently, TriMet has equipped 97% of its fleet with the in-cab forward-facing cameras.

The Oregon SSOA may join with the RTAs in investigating accidents or may conduct its own independent investigation when deemed necessary. FTA requires that the SSOA adopt a final accident investigation report whether produced by the SSOA or the RTA. Generally, the SSOA delegates accident investigation to the RTA since the RTA has subject matter experts employed within the agency; additionally, RTA staff can respond quickly to accidents and collect time sensitive electronic data from the MAX train. The SSOA compliance specialists visit most accident scenes shortly after they occur to conduct safety assessments. The assessment focuses on operating characteristics of MAX train operators, traffic patterns, lane markings, driver behavior, train and traffic light sequencing and phasing, pedestrian behavior, and installed pedestrian safety devices and treatments.

The Program Standard includes investigatory requirements for all accidents, and the SSOA only accepts final reports produced by the RTA that comply with the guidelines therein; otherwise, the report is returned for revision. The SSOA approved and adopted all RTA final accident investigation reports from 2024.

Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan, changes in 2024

Annually, TriMet is required to revisit its PTASP for updates. In 2024, PTASP updates included reassignment of the Accountable Executive from the Chief Operating Officer back to the General Manager. Some clarifications and additional information were added. During an in-person meeting where SSOA and TriMet representatives went page by page through the PTASP, modifications and adjustments were made through a collaborative process after which SSOA agreed to provide provisional approval of the plan, subject to the Board's review and approval.

TriMet's first PTASP was approved by Oregon SSOA in December 2020. Each year, TriMet has made changes to its PTASP and the SSOA expects changes to continue, but eventually lessen as TriMet's PTASP becomes fully integrated into all facets of the agency. FTA expects that an agency the size of TriMet could take up to seven years to fully incorporate SMS and the concept of safety risk management into the DNA of the agency. Each year, Oregon SSOA reviews all changes made to the PTASP, ensuring that changes comply with current FTA requirements and applicable Oregon SSOA Program Standard requirements.

Portland Streetcar

Portland Streetcar (PSC) is owned and operated by the City of Portland in partnership with TriMet, which contributes a portion of operating funds. TriMet also provides operational and maintenance support. The City of Portland contracts with Portland Streetcar, Inc. (PSI), to construct and promote the Streetcar system. PSI is a private, non-profit corporation. Thus, the Streetcar is staffed by a combination of City of Portland employees, TriMet employees, and PSI personnel.

PSC is managed by the Portland Bureau of Transportation (PBOT), under the direction of the Commissioner-in-Charge of Transportation. The Commissioner-in-Charge of Transportation has appointed a Citizen Advisory

Committee to advise the Commissioner, City Council, and PSC management on matters involving planning, design, and operation of the system.

SSOA Oversight Activities 2024

Field Inspections/Observations/Evaluations

The PSC streetscape is very different than TriMet's light rail system. PSC runs almost exclusively in mixed use traffic. There are very few dedicated train signals for streetcars; streetcars follow traffic signals for most of their routes. PSC employees are subject to agency rules, procedures, and processes, but they also are subject to rules of the road. Oregon SSOA inspections and observations of PSC, therefore, are somewhat different than TriMet's, so oversight in the field is different.

The majority of inspections were comprised of routine monitoring of PSC operations. In total, SSOA inspectors made 47 field visits to PSC in 2024. Items inspected included station platforms, traffic lane and streetcar lane markings, and rail employee adherence to rail operating rules, train orders, and traffic laws. Oregon SSOA staff attended 14 meetings at PSC during 2024 covering a wide variety of topics, including PTASP update meetings, safety committee meetings, status check-in meetings for corrective actions plans, and reviews of changes to policy documents and plans.

Oregon SSOA Triennial Review of Portland Streetcar

Oregon SSOA conducted a triennial review of PSC in 2023, as required by the applicable regulations. The 2023 triennial review was the first performed since the initial promulgation of the PTASP rule, 49 CFR Part 673. Every three years, the Oregon SSOA must conduct a triennial review of the agency's implementation and adherence to the PTASP and compliance to processes, rules, and procedures established by PSC, in addition to requirements of the Oregon SSOA Program Standard, 49 CFR Parts 40, 655, 670, 672, 673 and 674, and the OARs. The review identified several areas on non-compliance, resulting in 14 CAPS. Currently, PSC has three open CAPs.

Accidents and causal factors

PSC In 2024, streetcars were involved in 2 accidents that were reportable to both FTA and SSOA. There were other events that did not meet the threshold for reporting to FTA. FTA and Oregon SSOA define an accident as any event involving a rail transit vehicle or occurring on a rail transit -controlled property; accident subtypes are included in the table below. The FTA and Oregon SSOA also designate some collisions as incidents, not accidents; the incident designation is reserved for low-speed collisions that don't result in serious injury or property damage.

Accident sub-type	2024	2023
Fatality, a death or suicide	0	0
Serious Injury	0	0
All collisions resulting in fatality	0	0
All collisions resulting in serious injury	0	0
All collisions resulting in substantial damage	2	13
Runaway Train	0	0
A collision between two rail transit vehicles	0	1 (TriMet vs Streetcar)
Evacuation for a life safety reason	0	0
Derailment	0	0
Incident sub-type		

Collision – Certain low speed collisions that result in non-serious injury or property damage	44	33
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A moderate number of low-speed collisions involve mirror to mirror contact between the streetcar and another vehicle. Other common types of low-speed collisions involve motorists making illegal right turns (from the lane left of the streetcar) across the streetcar's path of travel, most resulting in minor cosmetic damages.

Oregon SSOA conducts safety assessments following most accidents at PSC. Given that the streetcar's operating environment is primarily in city traffic, recommendations from the SSOA are generally forwarded by PSC to PBOT. PBOT is responsible for the application of new pavement markings (such as lane delineators) and the maintenance of current applications. Oregon SSOA approved and adopted the accident reports submitted by PSC in 2024.

Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan, changes in 2024

Annually, PSC is required to revisit its PTASP for updates. PSC's first PTASP was approved by the SSOA in December 2020. Each year, PSC has made changes to its PTASP and the SSOA expects some minor changes to continue. At this point, PSC has a functional safety committee aligned with new FTA regulations and is implementing the safety risk management process and principles across operations and maintenance divisions; there were only minor changes in the revised 2024 version. Overall, PSC continues integrating and refining the PTASP and safety risk management principles into the organization. Each year, Oregon SSOA reviews all changes made to the PTASP, ensuring that changes comply with current FTA requirements and applicable Oregon SSOA Program Standard requirements.

The Astoria Riverfront Trolley

The Astoria Riverfront Trolley (ART) is a heritage trolley located in Astoria, Oregon. The ART provides service along Astoria's Riverfront from the trolley barn located near Hamburg Street, to the East End Mooring Basin near 39th Street. The track, right-of-way, and trolley barn are owned by the City of Astoria. The Riverfront Trolley Association, Inc., is a nonprofit organization that owns and operates ART under the umbrella of the City of Astoria and the authority of the City Council. The city reserves the decision-making authority for right-of-way and track design and configuration through its City Manager. The City Manager has assigned responsibility for these items to the Public Works Director of the City of Astoria.

In 2024, the trolley ran on select days and hours in March through October. It does not run every day or even all day on the days it does run.

SSOA conducted one inspection in April 2024. A triennial review was conducted in September 2024. The triennial review covered mechanical, track, records, operating practices, and crossings. The only defects found were with the track, and they have been repaired by the volunteer track crew that had a foreman with experience in heavy rail track maintenance.

The ART is a volunteer organization with three paid positions: a trainer, a scheduler, and a bookkeeper. Volunteers cover several duties, including motormen, conductors, maintenance workers, advertising, and merchandise positions. The ART is self-supporting; it does not receive funding for operations from the city. Its revenues include fares, advertising, charter fees, donations, and sales of trolley memorabilia. It receives a small matching grant from the urban renewal district for capital items.

Willamette Shore Trolley

The Willamette Shore Trolley (WST) had been providing scenic trolley rides on a 6-mile section of a historic rail line between Lake Oswego and Portland, Oregon, since 1987 and is operated by volunteer members of the Oregon Electric Railway Historical Society (OERHS, a not-for-profit Oregon Corporation, 501(c)(3)). The Willamette Shore Trolley is owned by the City of Lake Oswego.

In September 2024, SSOA staff performed a triennial review of the WST. They reviewed track, records, mechanical, operations, and crossings. There were two track defects noted, and three crossing defects. The defects will be monitored by the rail safety section, instead of the state safety oversight section, as the defects were identified by FRA-certified inspectors.

Because neither of these Trolley systems receive funding from FTA, they are not subject to the federal regulations, only to the state regulations. As a result, Oregon SSOA must bill both ART and WST for its oversight.

SSOA Planned Activities: 2024-2025

In addition to daily oversight functions, Oregon SSOA's primary goal going forward is to continue to revise the Program Standard and OARs to comply with FTA's new RBI requirements and other FTA rules, including a program related to on-track safety. Both PSC and TriMet are required to develop an on-track safety plan and related documentation, which the SSOA must review and approve near the end of 2025. Other activities include:

- Reviewing, approving, and overseeing RTA CAPS;
- Regular inspections of RFGPTS operations;
- Regular inspections of REM and MOW;
- Regular inspections of TriMet track structures and systems and compliance to on-track safety;
- Implementing and conducting Risk Based inspections at TriMet and PSC;
- Rewriting the OARs and Program Standard to comply with new RBI requirements;
- Rewriting the OARs and Program standard to comply with changes to 49 CFR Parts 671, 672, 673 & 674;
- PTASP reviews;
- Assimilating consultant support into the Oregon SSOA Program.

Appendix A

Acronyms

BIL	Bipartisan Infrastructure Law
CAP	Corrective Action Plan
CCD	Commerce & Compliance Division
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
FTA	Federal Transit Administration
OAR	Oregon Administrative Rules
ODOT	Oregon Department of Transportation
ORS	Oregon Revised Statutes
PBOT	Portland Bureau of Transportation
PSC	Portland Streetcar
PSI	Portland Streetcar, Inc.
RFGPTS	Rail Fixed Guideway Public Transportation System
RBI	Risk Based Inspection
RTA	Rail Transit Agency
SMS	Safety Management System
SSOA	State Safety Oversight Agency
TriMet	Tri-County Metropolitan Transportation District of Oregon