



Utah Department of Transportation  
State Safety Oversight Program  
Annual Report to the Governor of the State of Utah – April 2021

Governor Cox:

Pursuant to federal regulation, the Utah Department of Transportation hereby presents this Annual Report of rail transit State Safety Oversight program activities. This report outlines the program's mission and details accomplishments in compliance with federal rules. Please do not hesitate to contact me at any time should you or your staff have questions or wish to discuss the program.

Respectfully:

*James W. Golden*

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## Program Background and Overview

State Safety Oversight (SSO) of “rail fixed guideway public transportation systems” has been required by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) since 1995, initially under 49 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 659 and subsequently replaced by 49 CFR Part 674 in 2015. FTA regulations specify system safety and emergency preparedness requirements for rail transit systems and their oversight agencies. In the State of Utah, the modes covered by these regulations are Utah Transit Authority (UTA) TRAX Light Rail and the Sugar House Streetcar (S-Line).

Pursuant to federal regulation, each state designates a State Safety Oversight Agency (SSOA). The Utah Department of Transportation (UDOT) has been designated as the SSOA for the state of Utah. The SSO program is housed within the Division of Traffic & Safety and run by one Program Manager and one Assistant Program Manager. The Program utilizes assistance from in-house and external technical and administrative consultants.

Key SSOA program activities include:

- Meeting regularly with UTA Safety, Operations, Maintenance, and Emergency Preparedness personnel,
- Conducting required triennial audits and as-needed special assessments,
- Approving UTA safety and emergency preparedness plans,
- Adopting UTA investigations of accidents, and
- Verifying UTA progress in correcting safety deficiencies.

The SSO program maintains a collaborative relationship with UTA, particularly with its Safety and Security Department and executive leadership. This facilitates strong communication between the parties and an atmosphere of mutual respect. When UDOT makes note of a deficiency or point of non-compliance at UTA, UDOT works with UTA to devise a path forward to eliminate or mitigate the issue. UTA’s Safety Department then monitors the Corrective Action Plan to resolution, providing UDOT with status updates and verification documentation.

## Safety Plan Completion and Approval:

UDOT partnered with UTA to transform its comprehensive safety plan to comply with 49 CFR Part 673, which was released as a Final Rule in July 2018. This new regulation required all transit agencies to enhance safety risk management and safety performance measurement programs to become more proactive under a Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan (PTASP) that was required to be completed by December 2020. UDOT is pleased to report that it approved UTA’s PTASP as Part 673-compliant in January 2020, well ahead of most other rail transit agencies nationwide.

## Program Highlights from 2020:

### Safety Event Investigations:

The SSO program tracked and adopted UTA's investigation reports on 43 events that met UDOT and/or FTA-established reporting thresholds. Many of these events involved minor collisions between a train and an automobile at a grade crossing or intersection. As a result of this trend, UDOT contracted a third-party study to investigate causal factors of incidents in which vehicles make illegal left turns at red lights across tracks and is exploring solutions with UTA to prevent these events. Potential solutions could involve traffic signal timing enhancements. In all cases, UDOT works with UTA to agree upon probable cause and develop solutions to prevent reoccurrence where possible. UTA has been very proactive in identifying incident trends and corrective measures, even when probable cause rests with the automobile driver.

### Hours of Service Audit:

In October 2020, UDOT conducted an annual Hours of Service audit to verify UTA compliance with applicable regulations pertaining to time on/off duty and record-keeping for rail operators, dispatchers, and signal maintainers. UDOT has worked with UTA to resolve the one finding resulting from this audit.

### TRAX Airport Station Relocation:

UDOT's SSO program has been participating in the planning and design stages for the new TRAX light rail station at Salt Lake City International Airport. SSO representatives have attended meetings with UTA and airport staff and provided feedback on initial engineering drawings. SSO staff is also attending UTA Safety Certification meetings and providing ongoing guidance and feedback. The SSO program plans to review UTA's final documentation and conduct an inspection before station opening, currently expected in fall 2021.

### FTA Oversight Activities:

In July 2019, the FTA conducted its triennial audit of UDOT's SSO program. The audit examined the processes and results of the SSO program and assessed its compliance with federal regulations.

In December 2020, the FTA distributed a draft audit report to UDOT which included two minor findings. UDOT has worked to address the areas of improvement raised in the findings, which focused on enhancing documentation of UDOT's future financial spending and staff training; both of which have already been completed. UDOT believes that its program showed exemplary compliance with all federal regulations, demonstrated an effective and successful system of oversight, and showed that the program has a cooperative and collaborative relationship with UTA as evidenced by the results of the FTA audit.

For further information, please feel free to contact the UDOT SSO Program Manager, whose contact information is contained on the cover page of this report.