



# Transit Safety Task Force

## *Recommendations*



April 2023

TO INSPIRE AND INFLUENCE  
THE EVOLUTION OF  
INTEGRATED URBAN MOBILITY

*INSPIRER ET INFLUENCER  
L'ÉVOLUTION DE LA  
MOBILITÉ URBAINE INTÉGRÉE*

# **Prioritizing Safety on Public Transit**

## **Recommendations for transit agencies, partnering organizations and all levels of government**

**CUTA acknowledges the working approaches of Canada's transit agencies to address safety on public transit. This document incorporates many of the approaches already in place, expands on them and endeavors to address broader contributing factors.**

**Public transit systems reflect the communities they serve. Issues, such as homelessness, substance use, and mental health, when left unaddressed, can impact transit systems. Addressing these broader concerns extends beyond the purview of transit agencies, and these recommendations reflect CUTA's call for all levels of government to come to the table with appropriate funding and other supports.**

# Recommendation Development

## Objectives:

- Acknowledge current working approaches to transit safety
  - Integrate feedback and research from transit agencies on the five focus areas
  - Put forward recommendations on the broader societal considerations impacting public transit and the support transit agencies require from other levels of government to address these considerations
  - Recommendations are national in scope and not agency specific
  - Identify the time scale and accountability for each recommendation (immediate, intermediate – in the coming months, medium term: 1-2 years, long term: 2+ years)
- Participating agencies in the task force include TransLink, Calgary Transit, Edmonton Transit Service, Winnipeg Transit, Toronto Transit Commission, York Region Transit and Société de transport de Montreal
  - Recommendations were released at the Parliamentary Press Gallery in Ottawa on Monday, April 24, 2023

[Link](#) to backgrounder document

# Focus Areas

## CUSTOMER & STAFF SAFETY (2)

- Transit Safety Plan
- Resourcing
- Communications & Technology
- Infrastructure
- Training

## HOUSING & SUPPORTS

- Using transit as shelter space
- Connection to the housing crisis

## SUBSTANCE USE

- Substance use in transit facilities
- Connection to the opioid crisis

## MENTAL HEALTH

- Conduct and safety on transit
- Partnership models with service providers

# Transit Safety Plan

<p><b>Timing:</b> Intermediate</p> <p><b>Accountability:</b> Transit Agency</p> <p>In consultation with the municipality and other applicable partners</p>	<p>1) Transit agencies should develop a <b>Multidisciplinary and Integrated Transit System Safety Plan</b> that assesses the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>A. Recent actions</b> taken to improve transit safety</li> <li><b>B. Desired outcomes and required resourcing</b> (from the transit agency and involved partners)</li> <li><b>C. Identified accountability</b> for who is responsible for delivering on each program/initiative in the Transit Safety Plan</li> <li><b>D. Safety bylaws, policies, and practices</b></li> <li><b>E. Infrastructure that is currently in place</b></li> <li><b>F. Gaps/opportunities/call to action to work with the Province and community service providers to address complex societal considerations</b> including mental health, substance use and housing, which are not the purview of the transit agency</li> <li><b>G. Develop a protocol for involving equity-deserving groups in the development of transit safety initiatives and programs</b></li> </ul>
--	--

# Multidisciplinary Working Group

<p><b>Timing:</b> Intermediate</p> <p><b>Accountability:</b> Transit Agency with support from the Municipality, Regional Authorities (if applicable) and the Provincial Government</p>	<p>2) <b>A multidisciplinary working group should be formed. They can be led by the municipality, regional authorities, or the Province and it should be accountable for the following:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>A. Developing and implementing strategies to support and respond to transit safety challenges</b></li> <li><b>B. Developing programs and identifying resources</b> (staff and funding) from the transit system, municipal departments (e.g. shelters and housing), the local health authority, emergency services, local community service providers and the Province</li> <li><b>C. Identifying who is accountable</b> for the delivery of programs documented in the transit safety plan</li> <li><b>D. Defining roles and responsibilities</b> for partners, with reference to collective outcomes, procedures, rules, supports, enforcement (when applicable), reporting and evaluation measures</li> <li><b>E. Integrated data reporting</b> from the transit agencies, social service providers and emergency services to inform program design and evaluation. Ensure occurrence reports include demographic information such as age, gender and ethnicity to better understand safety concerns towards vulnerable transit users.</li> <li><b>F. Quarterly progress reports</b> on the transit safety plan, with adjustments as needed based on lived experience, perspectives from front-line staff and data</li> </ul>
--	---

# Resourcing

<p>Timing: Immediate</p> <p>Accountability: Transit Agency</p>	<p>3) Explore ways to enhance <b>staff visibility</b> in the transit system</p>
<p>Timing: Immediate</p> <p>Accountability: Transit Agency in consultation with municipal partners</p>	<p>4) <b>Continue to invest in safety, security and enforcement positions</b></p>
<p>Timing: Intermediate</p> <p>Accountability: Transit Agency, Municipality, Community Service Partners, Provincial Government</p>	<p>5) Creation of <b>multidisciplinary ad hoc project teams to address issues</b></p>
<p>Timing: Immediate</p> <p>Accountability: Municipality, Provincial Government</p>	<p>6) <b>Ensure regulations</b> (e.g. bylaws) are in place to give special constables and/or the Police the ability to <b>curb dangerous and unlawful behaviour</b> on transit systems</p>
<p>Timing: Intermediate</p> <p>Accountability: Transit Agency, Municipality, Community Service Partners, Provincial Government</p>	<p>7) Explore <b>partnerships to create multidisciplinary teams for outreach</b> to vulnerable individuals with a harm-reduction, community-safety, and well-being approach. Outreach programs should focus on building relationships with vulnerable users to establish trust and more effectively deliver resources.</p>

# Communications & Technology

<p><b>Timing: Intermediate</b></p> <p><b>Accountability: Transit Agency</b></p>	<p>8) Implement a <b>continuous customer safety marketing campaign</b> highlighting safety measures, informing customers how to report incidents, and communicating behaviours that are not tolerated in public spaces</p>
<p><b>Timing: Immediate</b></p> <p><b>Accountability: Transit Agency</b></p>	<p>9) Reduce <b>barriers for customers to receive help</b> with customer safety text messaging services and/or apps</p>
<p><b>Timing: Medium Term</b></p> <p><b>Accountability: Transit Agency, Telecom Providers</b></p>	<p>10) Introduce <b>cell service throughout transit facilities</b> including tunnels and underground stations</p>



# Infrastructure

<b>Timing: Immediate</b> <b>Accountability:</b> <b>Transit Agency</b>	<b>11) Enhance station cleaning</b> and explore introducing in-service cleaning during the day for areas with continuous cleanliness issues
<b>Timing: Intermediate</b> <b>Accountability:</b> <b>Transit Agency</b>	<b>12) Conduct Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) reviews</b> of transit stations and facilities that are experiencing a heightened level of customer and employee safety concerns

# Staff Safety

<p>Timing: Immediate</p> <p>Accountability: Transit Agency</p>	<p>13) Explore opportunities to introduce <b>de-escalation training for front-line transit staff</b> (e.g. operators, customer service, station maintenance, cleaners, etc.)</p>
<p>Timing: Immediate</p> <p>Accountability: Transit Agency</p>	<p>14) Ensure that <b>staff are aware of current transit safety initiatives</b> provided by the transit system and community service partners (e.g. mental health outreach workers – if applicable). Ensure staff are up to date on Standard Operating Procedures related to customer and staff safety.</p>
<p>Timing: Immediate</p> <p>Accountability: Transit Agency, Municipality, Provincial Government</p>	<p>15) <b>Leverage Occupation Health &amp; Safety committees, programs, hazard assessments and control measures</b> to increase staff safety and address current and evolving trends</p>
<p>Timing: Medium</p> <p>Accountability: Federal Government</p>	<p>16) The Government of Canada should <b>strengthen penalties for assault of all transit workers</b> by amending subsection 269.01 of the Criminal Code to include all transit workers, not just transit operators.</p>

# Housing and Supports

<p><b>Timing:</b> Intermediate</p> <p><b>Accountability:</b> Provincial/Federal Government</p>	<p>17) <b>Provincial and federal governments should develop a housing-first approach</b> for individuals experiencing homelessness and related issues on transit systems</p>
<p><b>Timing:</b> Medium Term</p> <p><b>Accountability:</b> Provincial/Federal Government</p>	<p>18) <b>Provincial and federal governments should ensure the sustainability of new permanent supportive housing</b>, including units developed through the federal government’s rapid housing initiative, by working together to fund associated wraparound services.</p>

# Housing and Supports

<p><b>Timing: Immediate</b></p> <p><b>Accountability: Provincial Government</b></p>	<p>19) Provincial governments should <b>fund overnight access and intake to social service providers</b> so that complex individuals requiring support can have 24-hours access to services</p>
<p><b>Timing: Immediate</b></p> <p><b>Accountability: Provincial Government</b></p>	<p>20) Provincial governments should fund an <b>extreme cold weather shuttle service</b> from transit stations and terminals to local area shelters during non-revenue hours. Explore providing shuttle services to cooling centres during times of extreme heat.</p>
<p><b>Timing: Immediate</b></p> <p><b>Accountability: Municipality, Provincial, Federal Government</b></p>	<p>21) All levels of government should work together to fund <b>daytime warming and cooling centres</b> to reduce sheltering in place on transit systems</p>
<p><b>Timing: Immediate</b></p> <p><b>Accountability: Transit Agency</b></p>	<p>22) Have transit agencies <b>post crisis hotline and community outreach numbers and emergency shelter locations</b> at key transit locations</p>

# Substance Use

<b>Timing: Immediate</b> <b>Accountability:</b> <b>Provincial Government</b>	<b>23) Depending on the jurisdiction, leverage established legal, enforcement and/or social support tools to prevent illicit drug use in transit stations, including diverting activity to alternate sites</b>
<b>Timing: Medium Term</b> <b>Accountability:</b> <b>Provincial Government</b>	24) Provincial governments should create/enhance drug treatment programs

# Mental Health

<p>Timing: Immediate</p> <p>Accountability: Transit Agency, Mental Health Providers</p>	<p>25) Explore partnerships with <b>mental health service providers with outreach workers positioned within the transit system</b> to assist transit staff</p>
<p>Timing: Immediate</p> <p>Accountability: Provincial Government</p>	<p>26) Request provincial governments develop an <b>accelerated handoff initiative between Police officers/special constables and health professionals</b> for individuals apprehended with mental health concerns</p>
<p>Timing: Medium Term</p> <p>Accountability: Provincial Government</p>	<p>27) Provincial governments should provide transit agencies with <b>dedicated mental health outreach case management services</b> for individuals with repeated mental health concerns</p>

# Contact

- Simon Minelli, Director Research, Technical Services and Industry Programs: [Minelli@cutaactu.ca](mailto:Minelli@cutaactu.ca)
- David Cooper, Principal, Leading Mobility Consulting: [David@leadingmobility.com](mailto:David@leadingmobility.com)