



Integrated Security and Public Safety Plan



Charlotte Area Transit System (CATS)

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Charlotte Area Transit System Integrated Security and Public Safety Plan

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1 Introduction

The Charlotte Area Transit System (CATS) is committed to ensuring the safety and security of passengers, employees, and surrounding communities while addressing the social and behavioral health challenges that may impact our transit systems. The fatal incident that occurred on August 22 highlights vulnerabilities that extend beyond traditional security enforcement. In addition to a comprehensive CATS security plan, there is also a need to integrate public health outreach with security operations to create a balanced, proactive security model.

Over the past several years, CATS has taken numerous proactive measures to improve the security of the CATS system.

- CATS increased its authorized contract with our security provider from \$5.8 million in FY 2022 to \$18.4 million in the current fiscal year. This expansion has enabled the contractor to grow its authorized staffing from approximately 110 personnel in 2022 to 219 today.
- Conducted an APTA Safety and Security Peer Review (March 2024) and addressed major security recommendations.
 - Addition of a new Safety and Security Executive position, the Chief Safety and Security Officer.
 - Security contract consolidation to one contract for better integration and resource utilization.
- De-escalation training program for CATS staff.
- Comprehensive fare study (May 2024-July 2025) providing recommendations to improve fare policy, media, technology, education, and enforcement.
- Partnership with the FTA and the State Safety Oversight Agency to improve rail safety resulting in the development of a policy on risk and risk assessment.
- CATS-Pass App allows passengers/patrons to report security concerns/issues.
- CATS Connect program – connecting unhoused and persons in crisis to available resources from community partners.
- Security infrastructure and technology – upgrade of camera systems for revenue vehicles, stations, facilities and security dispatch center. In the process of upgrading the access control system for CATS facilities.
- Bus operator barriers installed on all fixed route buses.
- Remote viewing of in-vehicle cameras by bus and rail operations control centers personnel.
- Partnering with the Transportation Security Administration on various assessments and exercises, including the Baseline Assessment for Security Enhancement (BASE) assessment and Threat Vulnerability Assessment at key Light Rail stations.

In acknowledgement of some of these improvements, CATS was very proud to have received the Transportation Security Administration's (TSA) Gold Standard award in April 2023. This is the highest recognition for transit security and emergency preparedness. This prestigious award acknowledges transit agencies that achieve top scores on the TSA's Baseline Assessment for Security Enhancement (BASE) program, a review of 17 security and emergency preparedness categories, including security plans, training, public outreach and background checks.

1.1 CATS Integrated Security and Public Safety Plan

In recognition of needing a more comprehensive security strategy, CATS has developed an updated approach (see Figure 1) that builds on initiatives already developed or being developed. The Integrated Security and Public Safety Plan is a coordinated framework that blends management support and risk assessment addressing seven focus areas, outlined below, which are supported by specific tactics.

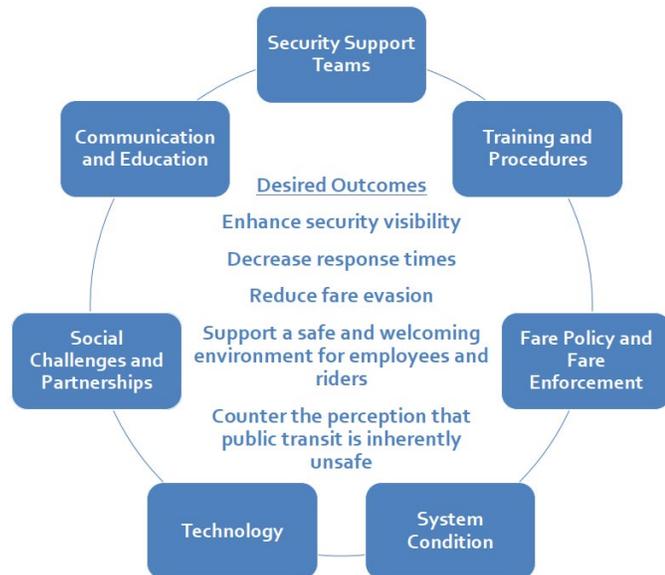
1. Security Support Teams
2. Training and Procedures
3. Fare Policy and Fare Enforcement
4. System Condition
5. Technology
6. Social Challenges and Partnerships
7. Communication and Education

By addressing these seven focus areas CATS seeks to influence the following security outcomes:

- Enhance security visibility
- Decrease response times
- Reduce fare evasion
- Support a safe and welcoming environment for employees and riders
- Counter the perception that public transit is inherently unsafe

Figure 1: CATS Security Strategy

CATS SECURITY STRATEGY



This CATS Integrated Security and Public Safety Strategy Plan addresses immediate and near-term actions; describes proactive security and public safety activities; and mid-term and long-term initiatives that will take additional time to fully develop, budget, procure and implement. These three categories are summarized below and will be described in more detail later in this document.

2 Immediate and Near-Term Actions – Being Implemented Now

CATS has addressed the following immediate and near-term actions including engaging in discussions with peer agencies to explore their security and policing strategies to identify additional industry best practices. CATS has also held a series of calls and in-person meeting with the FTA and the State Safety Oversight Agency to further discuss strategic approaches. As a result, CATS has taken the immediate and decisive steps, these include:

Security Support Teams

- Partnering with Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department (CMPD) to add approximately 24 Off-Duty Officers to patrol along the Blue Line, including in vehicles, at stations and along the rail trail that follows beside the Blue Line. This will equate to 966 additional patrol hours weekly. The deployment of these hours is as follows:
 - Shift 1: 6:30am-11:30am – 30 hours of additional staffing
 - Shift 2: 11:30am-4:00pm – 27 hours of additional staffing
 - Shift 3: 1:30pm-7:00pm – 12 hours of additional staffing
 - Shift 4: 4:00pm-10:00pm – 48 hours of additional staffing
 - Shift 5: 10:00pm-1:30am – 21 hours of additional staffing
- Implemented a security bike patrol that increases security officer presence, provides greater security officer access and mobility, and improved response time to incidents throughout the CATS transit system.
- Implemented a security Urban-Terrain Vehicle (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.
- Mutual Aid Agreement between the City of Charlotte and Professional Policing Services (PPS), dba. Professional Security Services (PSS). CATS and the City of Charlotte have contracted with PSS to provide security service for transit-related purposes, and PSS is an established company police agency under North Carolina General Statutes 74E and 74C. The Charlotte City Council authorized the agreement with PSS which granted PSS the authority to provide police services in designated areas near transit facilities. The agreement states that PSS shall have full law enforcement authority and jurisdiction when on duty for the City of Charlotte within the expanded boundaries established in the agreement.
- Reinforced a community policing strategy and structure with divisions led by a District Commander, like CMPD Captains, and includes the following roles.
 - Unarmed Security Guards
 - Deployed primarily along the Blue Line
 - Perform fare inspections
 - Provide customer service
 - Address quality-of-life concerns on platforms and trains
 - Armed Security Guards
 - Protect CATS revenue assets
 - Function as the civil and policy enforcement unit
 - Support order maintenance across the system

- Sworn Police Officers
 - Patrol CATS properties and the light rail system in marked police vehicles
 - Enforce local, state, and federal laws
 - Ensure safety throughout the entire transit network
- Additionally, CATS is staffing a Special Operations Unit (modeled after CMPD's CRU Teams). This unit will provide focused coverage across the Blue and Gold Lines, Charlotte Transit Center, and other 'hot spot' areas identified through real-time data.

Training and Procedures

- Utilized a data-driven approach to structure resources and align officer coverage with ridership peaks and hot spots. CATS has established three distinct divisions (North, Central, South), each operating independently but working collaboratively, mirroring the organizational structure of CMPD.
- Conducted a comprehensive after-action review/investigation/timeline indicating that response procedures, security equipment and technology functioned properly providing quick response and apprehension of the suspect. The review also indicated that CATS security infrastructure consisting of video surveillance on-board vehicles and located at stations and facilities functioned properly. This allowed CATS to identify and follow the suspect and track the suspects movement throughout the system and captured the incident allowing for thorough investigation.
- Initiated an external review of security and fare-related policies and procedures to assess alignment with industry standards and best practices, identify gaps, and assess practices and implementation of policies and procedures. The assessment reviewed the following policies/procedures.
 - Access Control
 - CATS-Issued Citations
 - CATS Exclusion Policy
 - CATS Fare Enforcement Policy
 - CATS Security Policy

The objective was to determine if the existing policies and procedures align with industry standards and best practices and identify any gaps. The assessment indicated the existing policies and procedures do align with industry standards as practiced by other transit agencies in the United States. The next phase of the assessment will be to determine areas for improvement and assess the practices and actual implementation of policy and procedures.

- Updated Exclusion/Banning Policy to increase penalties. 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. Violence in the transit system degrades public confidence in the system and puts our passengers and operators at risk. CATS will not tolerate such activities. In addition, CATS will employ its electronic security system, including its extensive camera network, forensically to gather information with our regional law enforcement partners to support the identification, arrest, and conviction of perpetrators. CATS is committed to fostering strong partnerships with regional law enforcement agencies to control crime, while also leveraging forensic information gathered through both its security systems and

the public to ensure the successful apprehension and conviction of offenders, thereby supporting system integrity and promoting the customer experience.

- Conducting discussions with peer agencies regarding their security and policing strategies to identify additional industry and best practices that may be developed by CATS. Valuable insight was gained regarding other agencies approach, especially regarding agencies that formed their own transit police divisions.

Communication and Education

- Updated PA announcements have been added for public awareness.
- Signage in-vehicles and at stations of ways to request support.
- Digital and social promotion of efforts and ways to engage, request support.
- Pop-Ups, in-person engagement with customers during National Rail Safety Week, See Tracks Think Trains.

System Condition

- Completing facility condition assessments to determine the status of facilities and systems and identify any possible upgrade or improvement opportunities.

3 Mid-Term and Long-Term Security and Public Safety Initiatives

CATS has either initiated or identified mid-term and long-term initiatives that will take time to analyze, plan, design, and implement. The mid-term initiatives are those that may be implemented within months to 1 year, and long-term initiatives are those estimated for 2 to 5 years for full implementation. These initiatives are listed below.

3.1 Mid-Term Initiatives – Completion in Next 12-Months

Security Support Teams

- Complete resource allocation and staffing needs to determine the optimal number of security officers, police officers, and fare enforcement officers needed to adequately cover both rail and bus operations. Once this baseline is established, CATS will work toward budgeting and/or obtaining funding to supply the resources identified.

Training and Procedures

- Complete the external review of security and fare-related policies and procedures to assess alignment with industry standards and best practices, identify and assess gaps, and assess practices and implementation of policies and procedures, and develop and implement mitigation strategies to address any gaps. The assessment will also evaluate the practices associated with policy and procedures to assess the culture of implementation and make necessary adjustments.
- Complete an analysis of security data collection and reporting. CATS will review current data collection practices and systems utilized. Key performance indicators will be reviewed and assessed with an emphasis on leading indicators and preparation of dashboard reports for CATS leadership.

- Complete a detailed analysis of operator assault incidents. After this analysis, CATS will revisit the transit worker assault hazard analysis completed in December 2024 to determine if additional mitigations may be applied.
- Evaluate the safety and security committees to assess effectiveness as currently structured. Depending on the outcome of this evaluation, adjustments may be made to the overall structure and interaction of the committees.
- Visit several peer transit agencies to learn about their fare policy and enforcement, security, and policing models. Agencies currently being considered are Denver RTD, Minneapolis, LA Metro, and WMATA. CATS will take away industry best practices from these agencies and apply those practices that are appropriate to the CATS system.
- Assess the effectiveness of the immediate and near-term actions already taken and adjust for continuous improvement.

Fare Policy and Enforcement

- Establish a Fare Inspection team that is responsible for proof-of-payment verification, supported by security and PSS Police Officers as a backup when required. They will also be responsible for customer service with an emphasis on informing and education of patrons.
- Define implementation plan for fare policy and technology enhancements.
- Seeking authority from the State of North Carolina to allow CATS contracted security to conduct fare enforcement on buses and bus stops, due to limitations of these activities only occurring on real property.

Technology

- Elerts Upgrade providing enhanced utilization of the App and communication with patrons.
- Research AI and advanced video analytics for monitoring fare payment, threat surveillance and to enhance responsiveness.
- Provide video access to Bus Dispatch to monitor bus operations facilities and vehicle storage lots.
- CATS is working to provide camera network access to the Charlotte Mecklenburg Police Department (CMPD). This will increase CMPD's awareness of transit system incidents as well as increase cooperation and collaboration between CMPD and CATS' contracted security provider in their efforts to eliminate criminal acts and violence in transit.

Communication and Education

- Public Awareness Campaign and targeted outreach for security and fare evasion issues.
- Review and update security related education materials for employees and customers.
- Update and communicate CATS Code of Conduct and clearly communicate to encourage positive behavior.
- Communicate enhanced communication platforms through Elerts platform upgrade.
- Employee communications will be enhanced focusing on security messages and awareness.
- Free Wi-Fi Service Expansion: CATS recently launched free Wi-Fi on fixed route buses. As a second phase, CATS is exploring options to expand this connectivity to the Blue Line rail cars and

stations along with CATS Transit Centers. Goal is to improve connectivity of passengers to communicate issues with CATS.

Social Challenges and Partnerships

- Expand CATS Connect Program, enhance and expand partnerships with Mecklenburg County Health and Human Services, enhance and expand partnerships with Homeless Outreach Partners.

System Condition

- Bus Operator Barriers – Evaluate marketplace for more protective options for operators.
- Transit Center Upgrades: Bright lighting, increased cleaning, reconfigured spaces and music has discouraged loitering and reduced the number of reported incidents of fighting, vandalism, and drug use.

3.2 Long-Term Initiatives – Completion 2 to 5 years

Security Support Teams

- Establish in-house transit police department should the referendum pass on November 4th. This will begin immediately with the recruitment of a Chief of Police to lead the new Transit Police Department including conducting a comprehensive planning study to determine the most effective structure and size of the Transit Police Department. Deployment of the new Transit Police Department is anticipated to take 18-24 months.
- Integrated operations control center for bus, rail, and security/police monitoring. This will allow greater integration, collaboration, efficiency, monitoring, communication with operators and field supervisors, police/security, and response among these operating resources.

Fare Policy and Enforcement

- Expanding on the completed fare study, revamping of the fare policy with the vision of modernizing, simplifying, and growing ridership requiring significant changes to policy and technology. CATS will work to advance the fare study recommendations with the goal to restructure fare, media, and technology. The restructuring will make the fare policy simpler and easier to understand, communicate and educate, more patron friendly, and more efficient to enforce for CATS staff. Fare media will be changed and improved, and new technology will be enabled and installed for users including fare validators.

Social Challenges and Partnerships

- Expand CATS Connect Program, enhance and expand partnerships with Mecklenburg County Health and Human Services, enhance and expand partnerships with Homeless Outreach Partners. CATS will work to expand partnerships with community and public health agencies. Building on existing relationships and partnerships, CATS will work with Mecklenburg County Health and Human Services and other agencies to expand existing programs with additional education, outreach, and resources. CATS will examine practices at peer agencies and apply those best practices in Charlotte.

System Condition

- CATS will assess existing safety and security-related infrastructure and determine what improvements can be made. Examples of areas already identified for improvement are upgrade elevators; improved lighting at stations, bus stops, and shelters; and increase shelter and bench installations.

Technology

- Assess the use of body cameras for law enforcement personnel. Part of the assessment will include discussions with peer agencies and their experience.
- CATS will research AI and advanced video analytics for threat surveillance and to enhance proactive strategies and improve responsiveness. With the advancement of AI, many video surveillance improvements and new capabilities are available to assist security and law enforcement personnel. CATS will evaluate what technology may be practical for CATS to implement, beginning with pilot programs.
- Upgrade video management system to a common platform for all camera systems (Facilities, revenue vehicles, station platforms) to support the use of AI analytics.

Communication and Education

- Fare policy, technology, and enforcement campaign to educate the public on fare policy, use of fare media and technology, and penalties for non-compliance.
- Conduct a systemwide signage and wayfinding study to assure clear communication and directional information along with increased use of digital signage throughout the system. Increased digital signage provides a framework to better communicate with patrons on a regular basis, provide frequent safety and security information and reminders, especially during abnormal or emergency situations.

4 Initiatives Implementation Matrix

The following matrix lists the seven focus areas and specific initiatives under each focus area along with the general time frame for implementation.

Category	Immediate Near-Term	Mid-Term (within 12 months)	Long-Term (2-5 Year)
Security Support Teams			
Off-Duty Police			
Bike Patrol			
Urban-Terrain Vehicle Patrols			
Mutual Aid Agreement			
Staffing Resource Allocation			
Establish In-House Transit Police Department			
Integrated Operations Center			
Training and Procedures			
Data-Driven Approach Resources and Alignment			
After-Action Review/Investigation			
External Review of Policies (Security and Fare)			
Updated Exclusion/Banning Policy			
Discussions and Visits with Peer Agencies			
Data Collection and Reporting Analysis			
Analysis of Assault Incidents/Revisit Worker Hazard Analysis			
Evaluate Safety and Security Committees			
Assess Effectiveness of Immediate and Near-Term Actions			
Communication and Education			
Updated PA Announcements			
Public Awareness Campaign			
Review and Update Security Education Materials			
Update/Communicate CATS Code of Conduct			
Communicate Enhanced Communication Platforms (Elerts)			
Enhance Employee Communications			
Free Wi-Fi Service Expansion			
Educate Public on New Fare Policy, Media, technology and Enforcement			
Systemwide signage and Wayfinding Study			
Fare Policy and Fare Enforcement			
Fare Study			
Fare Inspection Team			
Define Implementation Plan for Policy and Technology Enhancements			
Seeking authority from the State of North Carolina to allow CATS contracted security to conduct fare enforcement on buses and bus stops.			
Expand on Completed Fare Study			

Category	Immediate Near-Term	Mid-Term (within 12 months)	Long-Term (2-5 Year)
Social Challenges and Partnerships			
Expand CATS Connect Program			
System Condition			
Facility Condition Assessments			
Bus Operator Barriers, Evaluate Marketplace			
Transit Center Upgrades			
Upgrade Elevators			
Improved Lighting at Stations and Bus Stops			
Increase Shelter and Bench Installations			
Technology			
Elert Upgrade			
Research AI and Advanced Video Analytics			
Video Access to Bus Dispatch			
Camera Network Access to CMPD			
Body Cameras for Law Enforcement Personnel			
Upgrade Video Management System			