



U.S. Department
of Transportation

**Federal Transit
Administration**

Headquarters

1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

SENT VIA EMAIL

March 17, 2026

Ms. Gia Biagi
Secretary
Illinois Department of Transportation
2300 South Dirksen Parkway
Springfield, IL 62764

Subject: Safety Management Inspection of the Illinois Department of Transportation

Dear Secretary Biagi:

With this correspondence, the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) notifies the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) that it has initiated a Safety Management Inspection (SMI) of IDOT's State Safety Oversight (SSO) program for the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) rail transit system. Based on multiple Federal safety oversight activities described briefly below, FTA has determined IDOT's exercise of its oversight authority, resources, and responsibilities is not commensurate with the size, complexity, and safety risk of CTA's rail transit system. IDOT oversight has not demonstrated the independent, enforcement-oriented posture required to drive sustained safety improvement, creating ongoing risk to passengers, workers, and the public. These determinations reflect concerns that persist despite IDOT's clear statutory and regulatory responsibilities, the availability of federal SSO grant resources, and repeated prior findings and communications from FTA oversight activities. Given the longstanding deficiencies with IDOT's oversight of CTA that have not been sufficiently rectified, FTA believes an SMI is necessary to determine the root causes and the best way to address them. FTA is also issuing Special Directive 26-1, directing IDOT to address known deficiencies in its oversight of CTA.

Basis of the SMI

CTA operates one of the largest combined heavy rail and bus transit systems in the United States, providing more than a million passenger trips each weekday across the City of Chicago and 35 surrounding suburbs, supported by a workforce of more than 11,000 employees. Through FTA's ongoing oversight of Special Directive 23-1, issued to IDOT on October 23, 2023; FTA's evaluation of IDOT's response to FTA's October 7, 2025 SSO audit; and FTA's participation in the investigation of recent safety events at CTA, including a worker struck by a train on November 10, 2025, FTA has identified repeated and persistent deficiencies in IDOT's oversight performance, including limited onsite presence, weak accident investigation governance, ineffective corrective action plan management, and minimal use of enforcement authority.

FTA finds that IDOT's lack of independent, and enforcement-oriented oversight has created the potential for unsafe conditions and practices at CTA to go unidentified or unaddressed, creating ongoing risk to passengers, employees, and the public. In part due to inadequate IDOT engagement, FTA has exercised direct oversight of CTA by initiating a targeted Agency Safety Plan audit to assess CTA's implementation of critical safety risk management and safety assurance activities.

Given the ongoing issues with IDOT's oversight of CTA and the need to address the root causes, FTA's Office of Transit Safety and Oversight (TSO) will conduct an SMI of IDOT's SSO program. FTA is also issuing Special Directive 26-1, directing IDOT to immediately address known deficiencies in its oversight of CTA.

Purpose and Scope of SMI

The SMI will assess how IDOT performs its safety oversight functions in practice, with particular emphasis on whether IDOT:

- Independently identifies, evaluates, and prioritizes safety risk;
- Conducts and/or critically reviews safety event investigations, ensuring their sufficiency and thoroughness;
- Exercises active and informed oversight of CTA's Roadway Worker Protection (RWP) program;
- Critically reviews and, where necessary, challenges CTA's analyses and conclusions to ensure that safety risk is appropriately identified and mitigated;
- Verifies the implementation and effectiveness of corrective actions; and
- Takes timely and appropriate action to intervene when CTA's safety performance is inadequate.

The SMI will leverage materials already submitted to FTA through prior audits, investigations, and Special Directives, and will include targeted document requests, interviews, observation of oversight activities, and onsite verification as necessary.

Next Steps and Coordination

For scheduling and coordination purposes, **IDOT must designate a primary point of contact for the SMI within three (3) business days of receipt of this letter.** FTA will then schedule an SMI kick-off meeting to review the inspection process, timelines, and initial coordination requirements.

FTA anticipates initiating Phase 1 of the SMI immediately following the kick-off meeting. As part of this process, FTA may issue targeted supplemental document requests and observe IDOT's participation in CTA safety activities, including safety event investigations, corrective action plan reviews, and Safety Risk Management forums.

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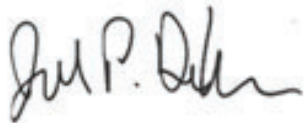
FTA expects IDOT's full cooperation with this inspection.

FTA will determine, based on the results of the SMI, whether additional enforcement action, including the issuance of Special Directives or other remedies authorized under Federal law, is warranted.

If you have questions regarding this inspection, please contact Dr. Santiago Cruz-Roveda, Division Chief, Safety Enforcement & Drug and Alcohol Compliance with FTA's Office of Transit Safety and Oversight, at santiago.cruzroveda@dot.gov or (202) 579-4148.

FTA looks forward to your cooperation in this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joe P. DeLorenzo". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Joe DeLorenzo
Associate Administrator and
Chief Safety Officer
Office of Transit Safety and Oversight

cc: Ms. Kelly Brookins, Regional Administrator, FTA Region 5
Ms. Nora Leerhsen, Acting President, CTA
Mr. Jeffrey Hulbert, Vice President, Safety, CTA
Mr. Jason Osborn, Director, Office of Intermodal Project Implementation, IDOT