

Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority

Board Action/Information Summary

☐ Action ☒ Information

MEAD Number:
201898

Resolution:
☐ Yes ☒ No

TITLE:

Confidential Close Call Reporting System Update

PRESENTATION SUMMARY:

Metro and its two unions representing rail and bus employees share the common goal of improving transit safety. The Confidential Close Call Reporting System was implemented in 2013 for rail and expanded in 2016 for bus. The program gathers data related to safety issues that might otherwise not be captured. Confidential employee reports lead to preventive safety actions.

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this presentation is to update the Board about trends in reported events and employee reporting patterns in the Confidential Close Call Reporting System.

DESCRIPTION:

Key Highlights:

- In 2013, Metro became the first rail transit agency in the nation to implement a confidential Close Call Reporting System and in 2016 the program was expanded to bus, another industry first.
- The Close Call Program is a partnership between WMATA management, the Amalgamated Transit Union Local 689 (ATU L-689), the International Brotherhood of Teamsters Local 922 (IBT L-922), and the Bureau of Transportation Statistics (BTS). It provides a confidential platform to facilitate the voluntary reporting of close call events without fear of discipline.
- The program improves transit safety by collecting reports on close call events that have the potential for more serious consequences, determining their root causes, and developing and implementing applicable preventive safety actions.
- To support Metro's efforts to improve safety, BTS disseminates information about trends in reported close call events. BTS also analyzes changes in employee reporting patterns over time to measure the impact Close Call Reporting has on safety.

Background and History:

While the agency has instituted many safety initiatives to report safety concerns, close

call reporting provides another avenue of reporting incidents and ensures the confidentiality of the employee. However, the program does not eliminate employee accountability for specific serious rules violations. With the exception of serious rule violations, all other reported incidents will not be subject to administrative discipline. Management's knowledge of safety issues is critical to addressing these vulnerabilities and changing the safety culture.

It is important to stress the confidentiality of employees who report close calls is critical for success of the program. It allows them to report events that would otherwise go unreported, without fear of possible discipline. Close call reporting programs, which originated in the 1970's in aviation, have worked well in freight and commuter rail environments.

The partnership also includes the Bureau of Transportation Statistics (BTS), an independent statistical agency within the United States Department of Transportation, to help manage the project and take confidential safety reports from employees. BTS has more than 10 years of experience in the same role for Canadian Pacific, Union Pacific and New Jersey Transit in the Federal Railroad Administration's pilot.

Metro employees who see or experience unsafe conditions can submit a report to BTS. To maintain confidentiality, BTS removes all identifying information, conducts interviews with employees who submit reports, and then presents information about emerging trends and new sources of risks to a joint Metro/Labor committee known as the Peer Review Team. This trained team, which works under a strict confidentiality agreement required by BTS, meets regularly to establish root causes of reported events and recommend actions Metro should take to stop them from reoccurring. The preventive safety actions are reviewed, approved and implemented by Metro management.

Operations employees receive information about the safety actions resulting from Close Call Reports via a quarterly newsletter that is distributed by both management and the unions and posted on a special BTS website set up for the program: https://closecall.bts.gov/c3rs_esubmit.htm.

The program addresses a National Safety Transportation Board recommendation from the June 2009 Metrorail accident to develop and implement a non-punitive safety reporting program.

Discussion:

Since program inception in 2013, employees have reported a wide variety of safety concerns to BTS, resulting in preventive safety actions. To date, the following actions have been implemented:

- Focused more on new train operator training to ensure better communication via a repeat-back script
- Initiated a SOP12 course focusing on demonstration of flagging procedure, course test and signage at the shop apron doors to assist operators with procedures before entering the shop
- Established a log book for all company vehicles to include maintenance records to reduce the likelihood of operating defective vehicles and improved defective

vehicle procedures

- Replaced the bulk head door seal on 2K/3K models due to water infiltration during rain and snow
- Increased promotion of Radio Outage Detection reporting to identify intermittent radio communication issues
- Updated controller handbook to include a *malfunctioning* decision making matrix. A safety bulletin was issued regarding train malfunctioning with “dark console”
- Targeted flashlight safety campaign towards overheating and potential dangers
- Revised roadway access guide in the RWP manual to reflect accurate descriptions of risk throughout the system
- Began proper disposal of wastewater training of Plant Maintenance employees to deter dumping into track beds
- Adjusted decibel levels for stinger systems in shops from a piercing sound to a comfortable level for shop workers
- Replaced TAGS Ford Senator buses with Orion 30 foot buses to reduce obstruction for operators

Other actions pending include:

- Improving safe practices in overlapping work areas
- Establishing positive communication procedures for work equipment operators
- Marking station platforms where misalignment occurs between train doors and platform edge
- Updating the Hot Work Permit Program and Policy
- Retrofitting the high mounted mirrors on 351 New Flyer LFA fleets
- Improving congestion and unsafe turns for bus operators on the F8 route by trimming median, placing no parking signs near bus stops, using smaller than 30-foot buses
- Formalizing the Lock-Out Tag-Out procedure
- Performing air quality tests in Metrorail stations
- Resolve diesel emission fluid leakage
- Communicating safety shield progress with employees

Recent improvements have lead to faster improvements and demonstrated follow up to

employees. For example, high-level managers have been assigned to participate on the Peer Review Teams and are empowered to implement new safety actions without waiting for executive-level approval, as was required in past years. Additional program oversight has been added by including the status of Close Call actions in the monthly Executive Safety Committee meetings.

Despite ongoing program promotion by all partners, employee reporting of close calls remains relatively low as the safety culture continues to mature. With direction from the program steering committee and support from WMATA communications, new and expanded promotional outreach to targeted, eligible participants will be tested.

The BTS is currently finalizing the Annual Close Call Report, which will be presented to the Committee once available.

The existing program Memorandum of Understanding expires in December 2017.

During the remainder of 2017, the program will be evaluated by program partners for any needed adjustments in 2018.

FUNDING IMPACT:

There is no funding impact for this information item.	
Project Manager:	Andrea Burnside
Project Department/Office:	Chief Operating Officer/Budget, Performance and Planning

TIMELINE:

Previous Actions	April 2013 – Close call pilot program launched for rail and transit infrastructure employees May 2016 – Close call program expanded to include bus employees
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Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority

Confidential Close Call Reporting Status of Activities

Safety Committee
September 28, 2017



Purpose

- Background and context
- Status of preventive safety actions
- Oversight and monitoring
- Next steps

CONFIDENTIAL CLOSE CALL REPORTING



BE A
HERO
BEFORE
WE NEED
ONE.

Have you experienced an
unsafe event or condition?
Report at closecall.bts.gov or
call 1-888-568-2377.





Background

- National Transportation Safety Board recommendation
- Joint program with union partners, ATU Local 689 and IBT Local 922
- MOU for rail employees in 2013, bus in 2016
- Employee reports to third party, USDOT Bureau of Transportation Statistics (BTS)
- Key features: voluntary, confidential, protection from discipline if eligible





Definition of Close Call

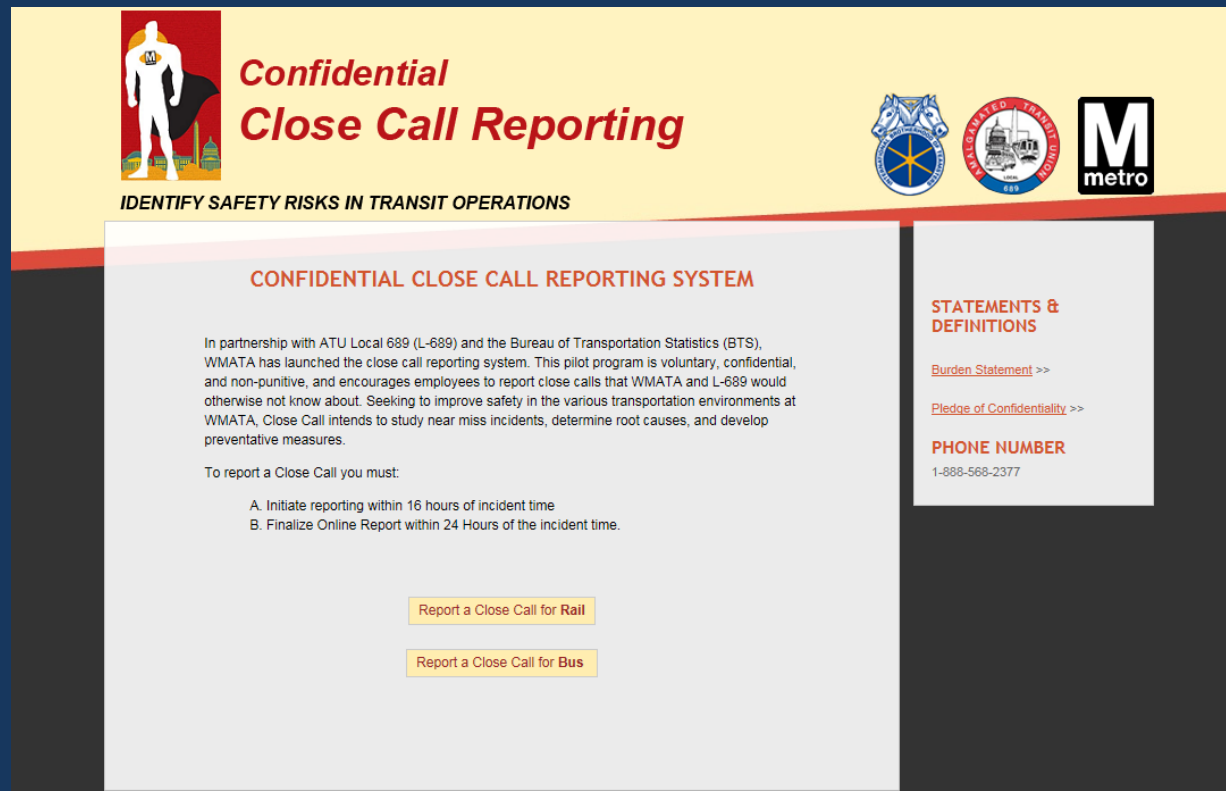
"A close call is a situation or circumstance that had the potential for safety consequences, but did not result in an adverse safety event."

Close Call MOU



Reporting Tools

- Employee reporting site: www.closecall.bts.gov
- By phone



The screenshot displays the 'Confidential Close Call Reporting' website. At the top, there is a header with a superhero icon on the left, the title 'Confidential Close Call Reporting' in red, and logos for the WMATA Police, the '689' union, and the 'M metro' logo on the right. Below the title is the tagline 'IDENTIFY SAFETY RISKS IN TRANSIT OPERATIONS'. The main content area is divided into two columns. The left column is titled 'CONFIDENTIAL CLOSE CALL REPORTING SYSTEM' and contains a paragraph explaining the program's partnership with ATU Local 689 and the Bureau of Transportation Statistics (BTS), followed by instructions on how to report a close call. The right column is titled 'STATEMENTS & DEFINITIONS' and includes links for 'Burden Statement >>' and 'Pledge of Confidentiality >>', along with a 'PHONE NUMBER' section listing '1-888-568-2377'. At the bottom of the main content area, there are two buttons: 'Report a Close Call for Rail' and 'Report a Close Call for Bus'.

Confidential Close Call Reporting

IDENTIFY SAFETY RISKS IN TRANSIT OPERATIONS

CONFIDENTIAL CLOSE CALL REPORTING SYSTEM

In partnership with ATU Local 689 (L-689) and the Bureau of Transportation Statistics (BTS), WMATA has launched the close call reporting system. This pilot program is voluntary, confidential, and non-punitive, and encourages employees to report close calls that WMATA and L-689 would otherwise not know about. Seeking to improve safety in the various transportation environments at WMATA, Close Call intends to study near miss incidents, determine root causes, and develop preventative measures.

To report a Close Call you must:

- A. Initiate reporting within 16 hours of incident time
- B. Finalize Online Report within 24 Hours of the incident time.

[Report a Close Call for Rail](#)

[Report a Close Call for Bus](#)

STATEMENTS & DEFINITIONS

[Burden Statement >>](#)

[Pledge of Confidentiality >>](#)

PHONE NUMBER

1-888-568-2377



Program Promotion

- Ongoing training
- Brochures
- Worksite banners
- Video
- Unions
- Quarterly newsletters



WHAT HAPPENS AFTER YOU REPORT A CLOSE CALL

Bureau of Transportation Statistics (BTS) receives your report and confirms eligibility. BTS sends a feedback confirmation of receipt or a rejection notice if the report is rejected.

BTS conducts a confidential interview with you (and any other reporting employees) to get more information about your report.

BTS provides information to a joint Metro/L-689/L-922 group. The information will not identify you. Your identity is kept secret.

The Metro/L-689/L-922 group reviews the cause of the close call along with new sources of risk based on information provided by BTS. The group then recommends preventative safety actions to the Chief Operating Officer (COO) for Bus Services.

The COO will review and either accept or request additional clarification of the recommendations. The COO will provide oversight and direct the implementation of recommendations.

The COO and the Safety Department will keep track of the preventative safety actions.

Metro, L-689, L-922 and BTS will provide monthly updates to employees about the safety actions resulting from close call reports.

BTS will provide progress reports to a Metro and union leader Steering Committee summarizing close call reporting activity, trends of new risks and approved preventative safety actions.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR CONFIDENTIAL CLOSE CALL REPORTING

Go to closecall.bts.gov or call 1-888-568-2377.

- You have 16 hours after the event to begin a report.

- You have 24 hours to complete the form.

When contacted by BTS:

- Participate in a confidential incident interview with a BTS safety analyst.



ANOTHER METRO SAFETY FIRST

**CONFIDENTIAL
CLOSE CALL
REPORTING**

BUS SERVICES



STARTS
MAY 2
2016



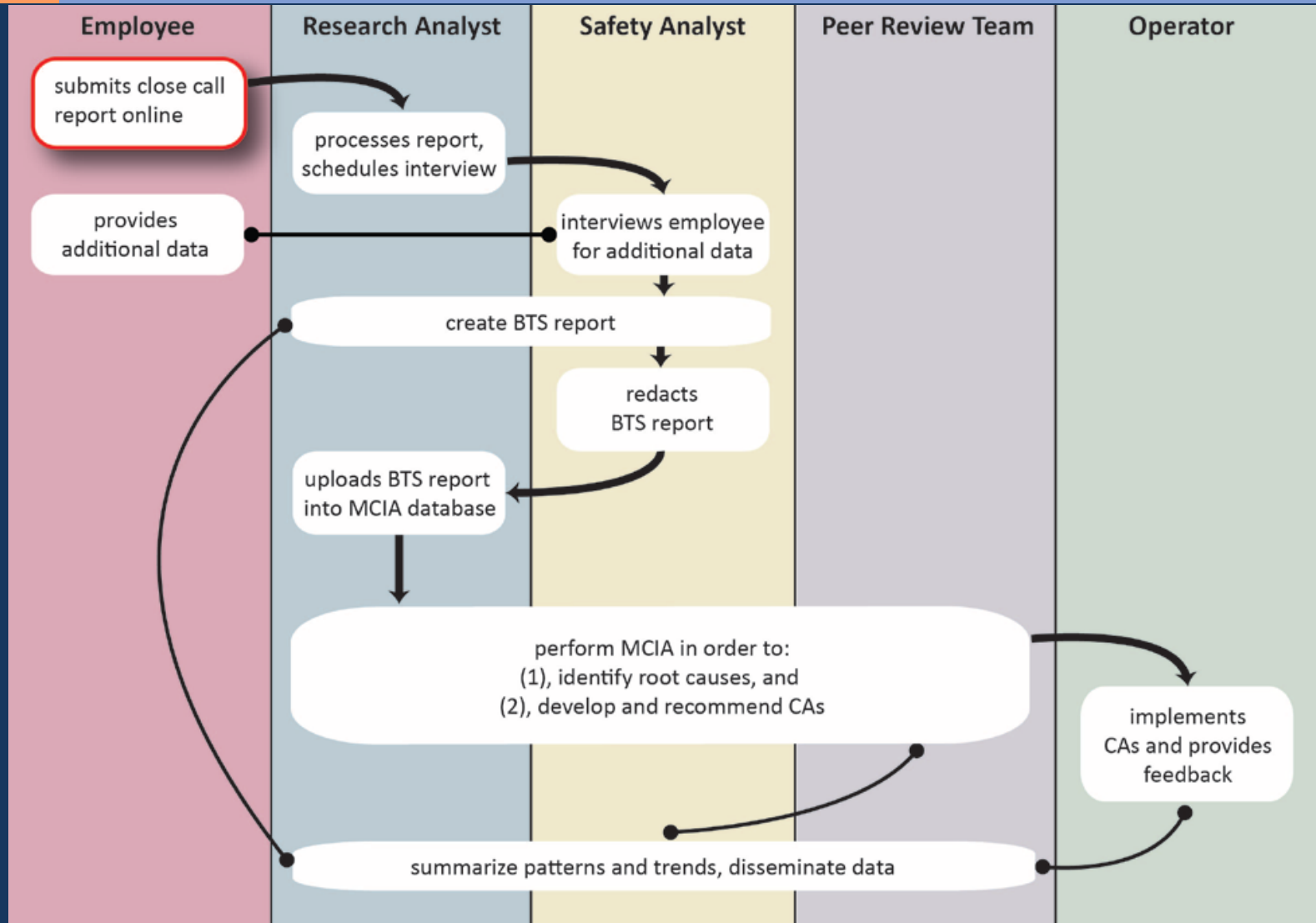
closecall.bts.gov or call 1-888-568-2377



closecall.bts.gov or call 1-888-568-2377



Roles and Reporting Process





Safety Actions from Reports

Samples:

- Focused more on new train operator training to ensure better communication via repeat-back scripts
- Initiated an SOP12 course focusing on demonstration of flagging procedures, with test, signage
- Increased promotion of Radio Outage Detection reporting to identify intermittent radio communication issues
- Revised roadway access guide in RWP Manual to better reflect system risks
- Adjusted shop stinger systems to more comfortable decibel levels
- Replaced older buses that had operator obstructions



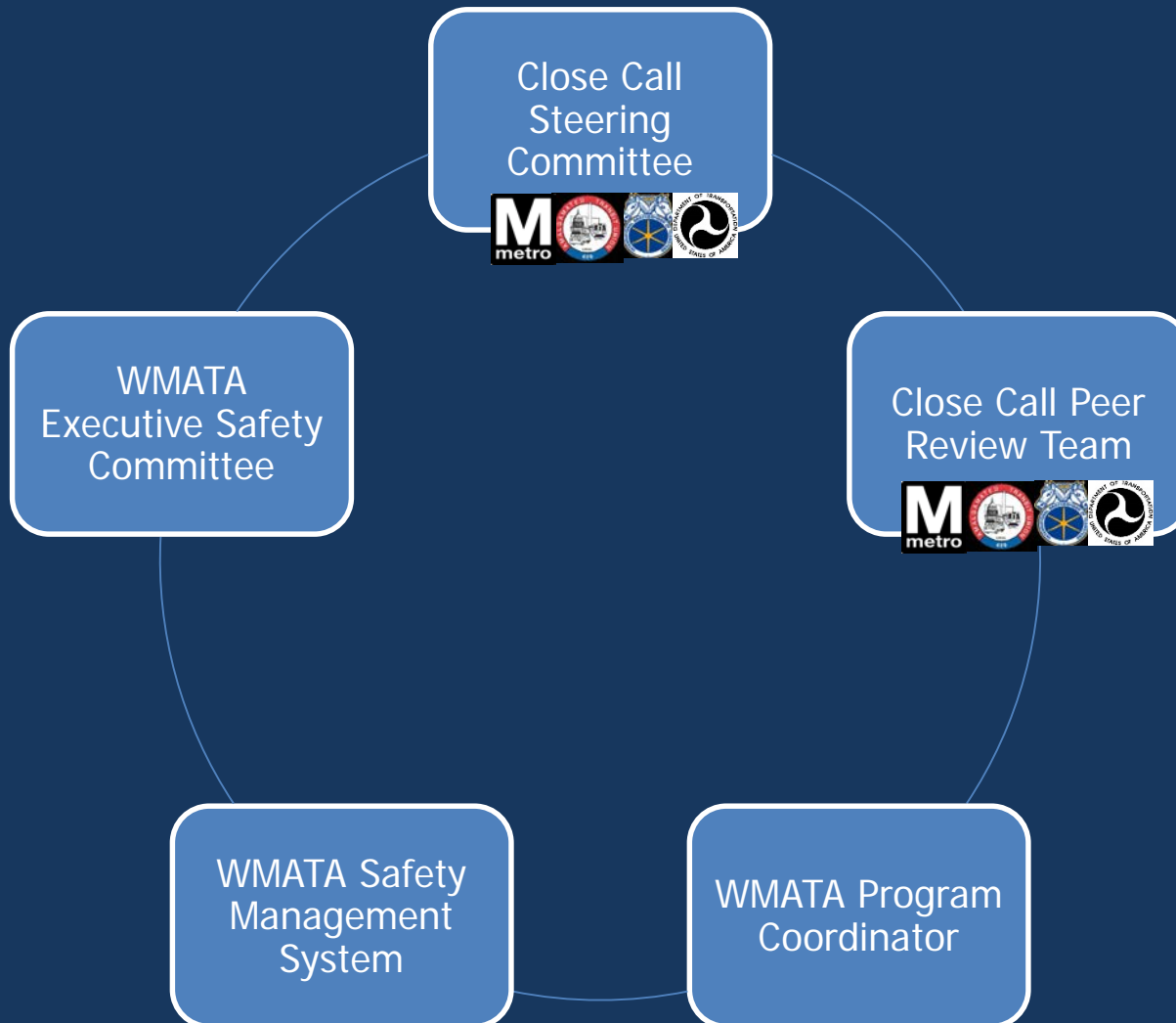
Safety Actions - Pending

Samples:

- Establishing positive communication procedures
- Marking optimal rail passenger boarding areas
- Retrofitting high mounted mirrors on 351 buses
- Improving congestion, unsafe turns for bus operators



Oversight and Action Monitoring





Next Steps

- BTS Annual Report presentation
- Continue building employee engagement
- Evaluate program agreement for CY2018