

State Safety Oversight (SSO) Program  
**ANNUAL REPORT**  
CY 2023

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## A Message from the Commissioner

We are pleased to present the Georgia Department of Transportation's (GDOT) 2023 State Safety Oversight (SSO) Program Annual Report highlighting a summary of significant program activities, changes, and updates provided to the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), the Governor of the State of Georgia, and the Board of Directors of the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA). This report builds on GDOT's strategic planning framework and illustrates our commitment in executing our oversight responsibilities for MARTA to deliver a safe, innovative, and sustainable rail public transportation service.

During Calendar Year (CY) 2023, a key component of the strategy was our collaborative approach to continually improving safety oversight activities through strengthening core competencies, developing partnerships, sharing knowledge, and monitoring the efficacy of mitigations in reinforcing safety values. Together, we remained focused on delivering a safe and connected transportation system for the citizens of Georgia.

This report highlights some of the GDOT SSO Program's significant efforts throughout 2023. Most notably, under the leadership of the Intermodal Division:

- GDOT made significant progress toward completing a draft of its Risk-Based Inspection (RBI) Program, in accordance with FTA Special Directive 22-29 and consultation with relevant departments throughout MARTA. GDOT will submit the full program manual to the FTA in CY 2024.
- GDOT successfully completed the FTA triennial on-site audit of the implementation of the GDOT's SSO Program between June 26 through 30, 2023. It is anticipated that any Corrective Action Plans (CAPs) will be closed in CY 2024.
- In August 2023, GDOT completed its triennial audit of MARTA's Security and Emergency Preparedness Program identifying three deficiencies and five areas of concern and requiring corrective action plans subsequently approved by GDOT.

During CY 2024, GDOT will continue to advance its primary goal of overseeing and enhancing MARTA's culture of safety and regulatory compliance through an ongoing review and adoption of industry best policies, practices, and procedures.

Russell McMurry, P.E  
Commissioner, Georgia DOT

## Rail Transit System Overview

MARTA is the only Rail Transit Agency (RTA) in the State of Georgia under GDOT's SSO Program. MARTA's Heavy Rail system consists of 316 railcars, 38 stations, and 104 miles of mainline track. Service runs seven days a week and approximately 21 hours per day. MARTA is the sole owner of all Rights-of-Way (ROW) on which its Heavy Rail services operate and does not share track with any other passenger or freight rail system. MARTA's Streetcar system consists of 2.7 miles of track, comprises both street-running rail sections and intersecting grade crossings in the downtown area, and features 12 stops, four light rail vehicles, and a vehicle maintenance facility (VMF). Streetcar service operates seven days a week and approximately 14.75 hours per day.

## SSO Program Standard Update

In March 2023, GDOT initiated its annual update of its Program Standard. This year's update included ensuring compliance with all federal regulatory requirements included in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) as well as FTA Special Directive 22-29 to establish an RBI Program. Additionally, GDOT refined its processes and procedures regarding GDOT's approval of MARTA's Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan (PTASP); event notification, investigation, and reporting; and CAPs. The refinement included but was not limited to re-evaluating and clarifying the event notification requirements, updating the GDOT review checklist matching the minimum criteria in the Program Standard about probable and contributing causes, and strengthening the training requirements of the MARTA's event investigators.

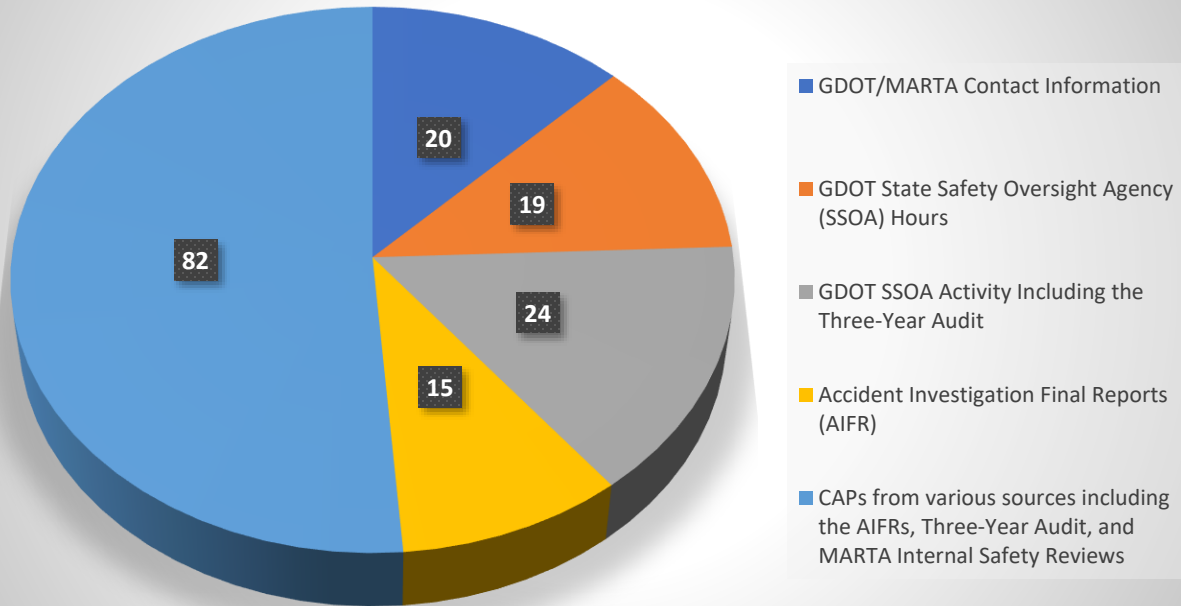
The updated Program Standard Revision 14 released in January 2024 provided updated standards, procedures, and technical guidance to better assist MARTA in implementing new federal requirements shaped by industry trends.

## FTA Annual Safety Report

On March 15th, 2024, as required by 49 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 674, GDOT submitted its 2023 annual report to the FTA. In CY 2023, there were 160 data inputs into the FTA's State Safety Oversight Reporting (SSOR) Tool (Figure 1).

- 20 GDOT/MARTA Contact Information
- 19 GDOT State Safety Oversight Agency (SSOA) Hours
- 24 GDOT SSOA Activity including the Three-Year Audit
- 15 Accident Investigation Final Reports (AIFR)
- 82 CAPs from various sources including the AIFRs, Three-Year Audit, and MARTA Internal Safety Reviews

**Figure 1: CY2023 Safety Data Reported to the FTA**



*[Figure 1: CY 2023 Safety Data Reported to the FTA]*

## 2023 FTA State Safety Oversight Triennial Audit

On April 23, 2023, the FTA issued a notification to conduct its triennial audit of the implementation of the GDOT's SSO Program and conducted the on-site audit on June 26 through 30, 2023. The purpose of the audit was to assess GDOT's SSO program's compliance with 49 Code of Federal Regulations, Part 674.

On October 24, 2023, the FTA issued the final triennial audit report. As a result of the audit, FTA required GDOT to develop CAPs to address four of five findings. Areas of findings included a Technical Training Plan (TTP) of GDOT personnel including the support contractor; the annual review process of the updated PTASP; and the review and approval process of the accident investigation final report and corrective actions. Since the issuance of the final report, GDOT has been working closely with FTA to complete corrective actions developed to address findings. As of the publication of this report, all CAPs have been closed.

## **FTA Special Directive 22-29: Risk-Based Inspection**

In 2023, GDOT continued its effort of developing the RBI program as required by 49 United States Code (U.S.C.) § 5329(k). The FTA Special Directive 22-29 which was issued on October 21, 2022, requires GDOT as the SSOA to submit documentation demonstrating it has developed an RBI program in accordance with the Special Directive requirements and criteria set forth in U.S.C. § 5329(k) within two years of the issuance of the Directive.

Since the issuance of this Special Directive, GDOT has initiated activities to develop a robust RBI program that includes (but not limited to): the authority to perform RBI; inspection policies and procedures; data sources and collection; inspection prioritization; and, SSO staffing, qualifications, and training. A series of focus group meetings with stakeholders were conducted to ensure GDOT meets the Directive's requirements. GDOT will submit a full draft of its RBI program to the FTA as required in CY 2024.

## **FTA Safety Advisory 22-2: Signal System Safety and Train Control**

On October 13, 2022, the FTA issued Safety Advisory 22-2, related to the safety risk management process for signal system safety and train control. On October 13, 2022, GDOT issued a letter requiring MARTA to consider signal system safety and train control as part of its Safety Risk Management (SRM) process as recommended by Safety Advisory 22-2.

On August 28, 2023, GDOT completed its review of MARTA's SRM assessment ensuring the SRM process for all elements including safety hazard identification, safety risk assessment, and safety risk mitigation. On September 5, 2023, GDOT submitted GDOT review checklists for MARTA's Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment (HIRA) for Heavy Rail/Streetcar Train Control Systems to FTA.

## **FTA Request for Information: Rail Transit Vehicle Crashworthiness Standards**

On April 5, 2023, the FTA issued a Request for Information (RFI) to solicit information from RTAs across the country regarding how they integrate crashworthiness or crash energy management (CEM) standards into the design of their current rail transit fleet and planned rail transit vehicle procurements. Included with the initial RFI letter was a form all RTAs were required to complete within 90 days.

On June 28, 2023, GDOT submitted the requested information to FTA through the FTA State Safety Oversight Reporting (SSOR) Tool to meet the 90-day requirement.

## **Annual Review of MARTA’s Agency Safety and Security Plan**

In February 2023, GDOT initiated its annual review of MARTA’s updated PTASP and the Security and Emergency Preparedness Plan (SEPP) as required by FTA requirements under 49 CFR Parts 673 and 674, the Official Code of Georgia Title 32, and GDOT’s Program Standard. During this review, GDOT continued its review of MARTA’s adherence to the BIL PTASP requirements. The BIL, enacted November 15, 2021, changed the PTASP requirements to 49 U.S.C. § 5329(d) and required MARTA to establish a Safety Committee composed equally of representatives from frontline employees and management. Once established, the Safety Committee began work meeting its responsibility in approving the update to the PTASP, incorporating applicable PTASP requirements of 49 U.S.C. § 5329(d). On April 6, 2023, GDOT completed its annual review approving MARTA’s PTASP and SEPP.

## **Accident Investigation Final Report Review**

In 2023, GDOT reviewed 40 accident investigation final reports (AIFRs) and issued review checklists to MARTA:

- 27 of which GDOT approved (19 safety and eight security)
- 13 GDOT recommended the remaining for revision and resubmission (six safety and seven security). GDOT committed resources to process all AIFR reviews within 30 days or less.

For CY 2023, there were 15 FTA reportable events.

- Two derailments
- Five events marked “other”
- Eight non-grade crossing collisions. The probable causes of the eight collisions are as follows.
  - One operating rule violation/human factors
  - One poor maintenance
  - One slips and falls
  - Two “other”
  - Three suicides.

## **Corrective Action Plan (CAP) Management**

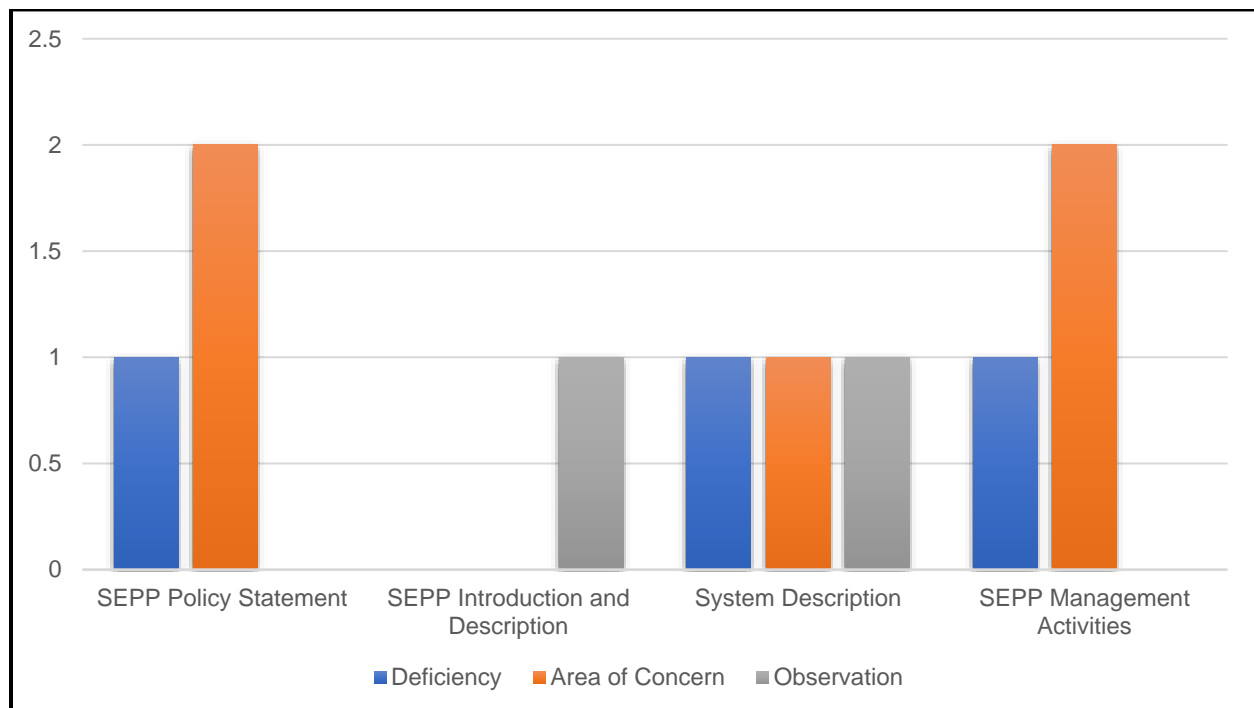
In 2023, GDOT reviewed and verified the closure of 32 CAPs, consisting of two CAPs from the MARTA Internal Safety Review, 15 CAPs from the safety triennial audit, and 15 CAPs from the safety event. During the review, GDOT continued its monthly CAP monitoring meetings with MARTA’s key stakeholders to discuss the status of aging CAPs and clarify any questions MARTA may have regarding GDOT’s expectation on closing the CAPs. GDOT also conducted meetings to discuss priority CAPs based on the time-sensitive nature of the scope.

## 2023 Rail Security On-Site Triennial Audit

In accordance with Section 7 of the GDOT Program Standard, GDOT conducted a triennial audit of MARTA on August 22 through 24, 2023 for its adherence to SEPP compliance. This comprehensive audit included several weeks of advance document review, three days of on-site audit activities, and follow-up document reviews and discussions with the MARTA Emergency Preparedness Unit.

GDOT's audit identified three deficiencies, five areas of concern, and two observations related to the following topics (See Figure 2):

- MARTA is in the process of restructuring and/or meetings that do not currently have formalized outputs (i.e., meeting minutes or tracking logs)
- Policies, procedures, and/or protocols that lack formalization (e.g., MOUs, MATRIX-specific standard operating procedures)
- Materials MARTA needs to provide to GDOT for further review (i.e., SEPP and SSI-related training materials)
- Protecting and updating the SEPP (e.g., password protection, organizational charts, ongoing data analysis, contractor-required training)



[Figure 2: 2023 Rail Security On-Site Triennial Audit Findings]

Currently, GDOT is working with the MARTA Emergency Preparedness Unit (EPU) to verify the closure of all CAPs, with a tentative completion date of Summer 2024.



## **GDOT/MARTA Safety Risk Assessment**

In 2023, GDOT conducted various reviews and assessments based on the trends GDOT observed in MARTA's submittals. The purpose of the assessment is to identify the root cause of repeated accidents and minimize potential hazards caused by such patterns. Review areas included but not limited to the following:

- System Modification Management Plan (SMMP)
- Safety Risk Review Committee Charter
- On-Track Equipment (OTE) Training & Certification checklists
- Event notification training materials
- Light Rail (LR) Right of Way (ROW) training materials
- 2023 Q1 Safety Risk Management (SRM)

Additionally, in July 2023, GDOT conducted riding observations and inspections on MARTA stations that were selected based on the number of track fires reported over the past three years. The goal of the inspections was to begin testing the procedures and practices necessary to implement the RBI program in accordance with the Federal mandate.

GDOT successfully completed the activities listed above and is currently monitoring the effectiveness of mitigations completed to minimize potential hazards identified during the assessments. GDOT intends to continue its monitoring of safety trends and conduct additional assessments, as necessary.

## **Technical Training Plan**

Pursuant to 49 CFR Part 672, the FTA sets minimum training requirements for federal, state, and contractor personnel who conduct safety audits and examinations of public transportation systems that receive federal transit funding, as well as public transportation agency personnel with direct responsibility for safety oversight of rail fixed guideway public transportation systems.

In September 2023, a newly hired SSO Specialist I enrolled in the FTA-sponsored Individual Training Plan (ITP) and was granted three years to complete the Public Transportation Safety Certification Training Program (PTSCTP). Currently, GDOT has two staff members with PTSCTP and Transit Safety and Security Program (TSSP) certifications.

## **Atlanta Streetcar Safety Hold**

On November 30, 2022, MARTA placed a safety hold on streetcar rail vehicles 1001, 1002, 1003, and 1004 due to an unacceptable false flange hazard condition. Inspections revealed the wheels on the streetcar vehicles deteriorated and required immediate safety hold to prevent any potential hazard. Any vehicle, piece of equipment, or system MARTA places on a safety hold must be taken and remain out of service until corrective actions are completed and MARTA performs a documented consent process to return to safe

service for the riding public. At the initiation of the safety hold, GDOT closely monitored MARTA's progress in the successful implementation of corrective actions.

In 2023, GDOT continued its oversight of the safety hold event by conducting monitoring activities through periodic progress update meetings with MARTA, technical document reviews, and testing and inspection verification activities.

On April 20, 2023, GDOT issued its approval authorizing the light rail system to return to service. As of August 28, 2023, all four (4) vehicles resumed their revenue service.

## **2024 Look Ahead**

In 2024, GDOT will continue its ongoing oversight activities to achieve the strategic goals and objectives of its SSO Program by continually strengthening its safety culture and values. Additionally, GDOT will complete and submit the RBI program to FTA for approval and initiating the preparation of the RBI implementation. GDOT also plans to conduct more robust initiatives with MARTA in various safety areas to continue its effective oversight activities and an increased level of effort to address the BIL requirement in implementing the RBI program in compliance with federal rail transit safety rules.