

## Testimony by Jack Clark | WMATA safety hearing | March 25, 2015

My name is Jack Clark, and I am Executive Director the Transportation Learning Center, a national labor-management non-profit organization based in Silver Spring, MD. I also live in the District of Columbia and ride Washington Metro every day.

The Center was created by transit labor and management leaders more than fifteen years ago to address the need for technical training for the frontline workforce. Those of you who know transit understand that addressing that need, like the need for consistent system safety, represents a major culture change in how transit usually does business. We're in the culture change business. Our primary focus has been on technical training, but the Center has also pays a lot of attention to safety culture. One of our Board leaders stated that challenge well: the content is different between training and safety, but the process to achieve successful culture change is the same.

That successful process involves a commitment from the top levels of the transit agency and from transit labor to work jointly. Tonight's hearing involving both the top leaders of both Local 689 ATU and Washington Metro sets a very positive tone for moving forward.

In my testimony tonight, I want to draw on two documents that have addressed the issue of safety culture thoroughly:

1. Transit Cooperative Research Program Report 174: *Improving Safety Culture in Public Transportation*; and
2. *Implementing Safety Management System Principles in Rail Transit Agencies*, a final report to the Secretary of Transportation from the Transit Rail Advisory Committee for Safety (TRACS).

According to the TRACS report, a safety culture need to include:

- a reporting culture where employees report safety concerns without fear of retribution
- an informed culture where leading safety performance indicators are collected and widely disseminated
- a learning culture where practices are changed as needed, and employees are trained to ensure competency in their areas
- a just culture where employees are held accountable for reckless actions but where they are not unduly punished for unintentional errors.

The TCRP report highlights eight components shared across safety culture sites studied in-depth:

1. strong leadership
2. employee and union shared ownership and broad participation
3. Effective safety communication
4. Proactive use of safety data and key indicators
5. Organizational learning
6. Consistent safety reporting and investigation for prevention
7. Employee recognition and rewards and just disciplinary system
8. High level of organizational trust

As we can see, these lists overlap significantly. Safety culture is not simply an abstract concept. It manifests itself and is reinforced through many concrete organizational practices. TCRP Report 174 has identified 24 such practices from a relatively small group of transit agencies. The table below provides a snapshot of these practices along the lines of key safety culture components.

Local Safety Practices that Work

(Snapshot of Best Practices from TCRP Report 174: *Improving Safety Culture in Public Transportation*. <http://www.trb.org/Main/Blurbs/172000.aspx>)

	<b>Leadership Commitment</b>	<b>Employee Involvement</b>	<b>Safety Reporting</b>	<b>Learning</b>	<b>Communic ation</b>
<b>Champaign-Urbana Mass Transit District</b>				Tailoring Training & Policy for Improved Pedestrian Safety in a Campus Setting	Regional Sharing of Safety Information and Expertise
<b>SamTrans</b>		Joint Safety Task Force and Joint Accident Review Committee Pilot	Service Change Request		
<b>Des Moines Transit District</b>	Management Commitment to Safety Culture Statement			Peer Bus Operator Training	
<b>OCTA</b>		Safety Captain Program	“Good Catch” Recognition Program; Ri2 Safety Reporting Program		
<b>GCRTA</b>	Extension of 10- Hour Rest Guidelines to All Operators		Hazard Reporting and Management Procedure	Non- Disciplinary Safety Ride Check – Rail and Bus	Reason Safety Culture Survey
<b>Utah Transit Authority</b>	Chief Safety Officer Reports Directly to General Manager				
<b>King County Metro</b>		Safety Resolution Process through Joint Safety Committee	Green Card Safety Concerns Reporting Process	Collaborative Design and Procurement Process	
<b>LACMTA</b>	Board Involvement in Safety and Safety Culture	Local Safety Committee Program	Safe-7 Report of Unsafe Condition or Hazard and Near-Miss Program		
<b>New Jersey Transit</b>	Rail System Safety Program Plan		Confidential Close Call Reporting System	Safety Job Briefing Reference Card	

WMATA and Local 689 have implemented some of these best practices. In fact, Washington is one of the detailed case studies from TCRP Report 174, and that report highlights real successes in learning from the tragedy of the June 2009 accident on the Red Line and track worker deaths that followed shortly after.

The very significant successes in improving safety culture after 2009 have been overshadowed by the January 12 accident outside L'Enfant Plaza station.

Local 689 President Jackie Jeter issued a very powerful statement two weeks after the accident, pledging full support for the ongoing investigations and also stating " management will never be able to discipline its way to a safety culture. The fact that any employee should fear how management might react if an employee makes a report on a safety concern is unacceptable and dangerous! Unfortunately, for hundreds of our members, this is the reality that they face every day."

Look over again the characteristics of good safety culture from TRACS and from TCRP. Organizational trust, continuous learning and regular training, shared data and clear communication about safety all contribute to a robust culture of safety.

This hearing tonight chaired by President Jeter and Acting General Manager Requa can mark a new beginning on developing a strong, consistent and effective safety culture at Washington Metro, based on their shared commitment to principles and demonstrated best practices.

Thank you.