



# Rail Transit Safety Oversight Program 2024 Annual Safety Status Report



*Report prepared by:*

**Wisconsin Department of Transportation  
Public and Specialized Transit Section  
Rail Transit Safety Oversight Program**

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Information on WisDOT’s SSO program, including links to current program documents, can be found here:

<https://wisconsindot.gov/Pages/doing-bus/local-gov/astnce-pgms/transit/compliance/safety-rail.aspx>

Questions or requests for further information may be directed to WisDOT’s SSO program manager:

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# Introduction

This report summarizes the status of the safety of each rail transit system overseen by the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) through its rail transit safety oversight program, as required by [49 CFR 674.13\(a\)\(7\)](#). There are currently two (2) qualifying rail transit systems operating in Wisconsin:

- **Kenosha Electric Streetcar Circulator**
  - Refurbished vintage streetcars, in service since 2000
  - Under the City of Kenosha; operated by Kenosha Area Transit (KAT), a city-owned public transportation agency
- **Milwaukee Streetcar System (MSS) – *aka* “The Hop”**
  - Modern streetcars, began operations on November 2, 2018
  - Under the City of Milwaukee Department of Public Works (DPW); operated by Transdev, DPW’s streetcar operations and maintenance contractor

## WisDOT State Safety Oversight (SSO) Program Overview

Federal law requires that each state designates an agency to oversee the safety program of any rail transit system in its jurisdiction funded through the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). WisDOT is Wisconsin’s designated state safety oversight (SSO) agency, with its SSO program responsibilities defined through the following:

- [49 U.S.C. § 5329](#) – Public transportation safety program, federal statute
- [49 CFR Part 674](#) – State safety oversight (SSO) program, federal rule
- [Wis. Stat. § 85.066](#) – Transit safety oversight program, state statute
- [Wis. Admin. Code Transportation \(Trans\) 10](#) – Transit safety oversight program, state rule
- [WisDOT SSO Program Standard](#) – Revision 7.0, January 2025
  - Program manual, required under Part 674; describes SSO program activities and interaction between WisDOT, each rail transit agency, and the FTA

By March 15<sup>th</sup> of each year, WisDOT completes a report to FTA that covers a variety of topics, including the status of safety events, corrective action plans (CAPs), audit activities, and system hazards. That report, which has been received and accepted by FTA, is included through the attached Excel workbook, presented as exported from FTA’s online reporting system – please see the Summary of FTA SSO Annual Reporting Template 2024, below.

As required, this report will be updated each year and transmitted to the governor’s office, the FTA administrator, and to the board of directors (or equivalent) for each rail transit agency. The transmittal letters from WisDOT to each office will also be uploaded to FTA’s online system.

The following sections summarize the contents of the exported report on status of safety for each of Wisconsin’s two rail transit systems, the Kenosha and Milwaukee streetcars.

## Rail Transit System – Status of Safety

### *Kenosha Streetcar*

As of the date of this report, KAT has maintained a good operational safety record. Factors that contribute positively to KAT's overall safety performance include: the streetcar operates on a very small, non-complex rail system with low speed throughout; KAT reduces streetcar service during cold winter months; and the streetcar has a relatively light ridership during regular operational hours throughout the year, with heavier ridership during the summer and for various festivals and events.

Areas of concern for KAT include: an aging system (track, vehicles, infrastructure) and its specialized maintenance needs; a small team of personnel with other duties; and an uncoordinated system for data collection and recordkeeping. KAT is engaged in good faith efforts to comply with all streetcar safety program elements and enhance their effectiveness with documentation. Through WisDOT's CAP process, KAT has identified key staff responsible for safety oversight within their agency safety plan, has committed to a training plan for each staff member, and has created a new full-time safety position – set to begin work in July 2025 – to focus efforts on safety program compliance. Current KAT supervisors continue to meet regularly with WisDOT SSO staff to complete work on a list of CAPs from the most recent WisDOT SSO audit (concluded in June 2024) – these CAPs are included in the FTA annual report workbook.

### *Milwaukee Streetcar*

As of the date of this report, MSS has maintained a good operational safety record. Factors that contribute positively to MSS's overall safety performance include: the streetcar operates on a relatively small rail system with few complex elements; the streetcar generally operates at low-to-moderate speed throughout the system; and there is coordinated safety training and regular meetings with first responders and other critical City departments.

Areas of concern for MSS include: the streetcar operates year-round in a dense, busy urban environment; occasional management-level vacancies and frontline worker turnover; and that various pieces of infrastructure have experienced elevated wear, including: accelerated wheel wear; operational issues with mainline switches; and availability of replacement vehicle batteries. An area of special concern is that MSS experiences recurring internal communication issues that have contributed to lapses in safety program compliance. Through WisDOT's CAP process, MSS has taken steps to identify and mitigate safety risks posed by accelerated wheel wear, faulty switch operation, and reporting and investigation insufficiency. WisDOT's SSO team continues to work with MSS on improving their internal safety communication and will also be conducting a comprehensive audit (beginning in October 2025) to follow-up on each area of concern.

## Summary of FTA SSO Annual Reporting Template 2024

### *Overview*

Per [49 CFR 674.39](#), FTA requires SSO agencies to report on a variety of safety program topics each year, to be “submitted electronically through a reporting system specified by FTA.” Currently, that system is State Safety Oversight Reporting (SSOR), housed in the same online platform as other

federal reporting required by FTA, including both NTD and the Transit Award Management System (TrAMS).

Each year, WisDOT completes the pre-set fields in SSOR, some of which are automatically populated with transit system data (from NTD) by FTA. Once the annual report is submitted, FTA will review the report, typically over several weeks or months, and generate a list of issues to be reconciled before the report is considered final. SSOR exports this report to an Excel workbook with twelve (12) spreadsheets (including a cover page). Below is a summary of the contents of the 2024 annual report to FTA, sorted by spreadsheet tab.

### *FTA Annual Report Sections*

#### Agency Information

Address and contact information for each agency: WisDOT, KAT, and MSS.

#### SSOA Contacts

Contact information for WisDOT employees associated with the SSO program in 2024.

#### REGPTS Contacts

Contact information for KAT and MSS management in 2024.

#### SSOA Hours

- 1) Approximate hours spent by WisDOT employees on SSO program-related activities in 2024; and
- 2) contractor hours and costs for SSO program-related activities in 2024.

The WisDOT SSO program uses contractors to assist with both the day-to-day activities of the SSO program and with more complex projects like on-site inspections, rail transit system audits, and participating in federal SSO audits.

#### SSOA Activities

Approximate number of meetings and on-site field visits made by WisDOT in 2024.

#### Documentation

List of documentation uploaded to FTA's online reporting system for the 2024 annual report.

#### FRA Waivers

The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) does not exercise jurisdiction over KAT or MSS. Accordingly, no FRA waivers are associated with either system.

#### STARs – State Triennial Audit Report

List of WisDOT audits of either KAT or MSS that took place in 2024. WisDOT conducted a triennial audit of KAT that began in 2023 and concluded in 2024 (with a final report).

### Events

A list of safety events reported by each rail transit agency into the National Transit Database (NTD). When KAT or MSS reports a safety event into NTD, FTA reviews and transfers into SSOR anything meeting federal SSO reporting thresholds – only those events transferred by FTA are listed in this report. For 2024, KAT reported zero (0) safety events and MSS reported six (6) safety events.

### CAPs – Corrective Action Plans

A list of CAPs for each rail transit system in 2024. KAT had thirty (30) CAPs stemming from the WisDOT audit that took place between 2023-2024. MSS had fifteen (15) CAPs from a variety of sources, including internal audits, a previous WisDOT audit (2022), and safety events.

### HM – Hazard Management

A list of system hazards being tracked by each rail transit system in 2024. KAT had twenty (20) hazards. MSS had ten (10) hazards.

## WisDOT SSO Program Activities – Plan for 2025

Activity	Date	
Submit annual report to FTA	By March 15: Completed March 14, 2025	
Attend required FTA SSO program workshops	Participated May 6-8, 2025; Arlington, VA	
Participate in FTA triennial audit of SSO program	FTA audit of WisDOT: scheduled August 5-6, 2025	
Attend quarterly FTA conference calls for SSO managers	Next scheduled call: August 20, 2025	
Participate in transit system safety and security exercises	KAT: scheduled August 20, 2025 MSS: scheduled October 15, 2025	
Review and update of WisDOT SSO program standard	Completed January 28, 2025	
Hold quarterly meetings with each rail transit agency; includes on-site inspection activities	Q1 March 10-13, 2025 Q2 July 7-10, 2025	Q3 September 15-18, 2025 Q4 January 26-30, 2026
Review and adoption of safety event investigations	Ongoing, as needed	
Review, approval, and monitoring of rail transit agency corrective action plans (CAPs)	Ongoing, as needed	
Conduct triennial audit of each rail transit agency	WisDOT audit of KAT: July 2026 WisDOT audit of MSS: scheduled October 13-17, 2025	
Semi-annual reporting on SSO team member recertification (Public Transportation Safety Certification Training Program, PTSCPT)	By January 31: Completed January 31, 2025 By July 31: Completed July 1, 2025	
Submit Safety Status Report to governor, FTA, and board (or equivalent) for each rail transit agency	Annually – this report	