



State Auditor

Dave Boliek

RAPID RESPONSE SPECIAL REPORT

North Carolina

Office of the State Auditor

Rapid Response Division

1-800-730-TIPS

August 17, 2026

Charlotte Area Transit System

WHY WE CONDUCTED THIS REPORT

On September 12, 2025, the North Carolina Office of the State Auditor (OSA) published a preliminary [Rapid Response Special Report](#) that contained our initial findings about the Charlotte Area Transit System's (CATS) security procedures in the days after the murder of Iryna Zarutskya. This follow-up report confirms OSA's initial findings and presents newly discovered information about CATS's safety and security policies at the time of Iryna Zarutskya's death.

- CATS's implementation of its Capital Investment Plan, including security infrastructure.

WHAT WE FOUND

OSA identified the following areas of concern regarding CATS's safety and security operations and processes:¹

1. CATS has **no physical structures (e.g., turnstiles or gates) in place to deter entry by non-ticketed individuals**. CATS also lacks adequate procedures and policies to address fare evasion by riders or to enforce the collection of fines arising from fare citations, resulting in the **loss of between \$5 and 6.5 million in revenue per year**.
2. **The limited interactions between CATS and CMPD have been largely inefficient**. For example, **only two CMPD officers** are currently assigned to CATS's Metro Transit

OBJECTIVES

The objective of this report is to evaluate the adequacy and effectiveness of CATS's safety and security operations by analyzing:

- The presence of barriers, or lack of such, to system entry, frequency of fare evasion, and collection of fees from fare evaders;
- The effectiveness of current CATS security policies, including its Exclusion List;
- Interactions with and coordination between CATS and CMPD; and

¹ These findings generally reflect the condition of CATS's security system and structures as they were at the time of Iryna Zarutskya's murder and do not always reflect the efforts, if any, of CATS Leadership or the City of Charlotte (the City) to improve the transit system since. Additionally, the findings contained in this report stem from OSA's review of the documents and information provided to us by the City and CATS.

WHAT WE FOUND

Unit; at the time of Iryna Zarutsky's murder, there was **no direct connection** between CMPD's Real Time Crime Center and CATS's surveillance camera systems; and CMPD **does not appear to assist CATS in enforcing the transit system's Exclusion List**.

3. To frame its system risk assessment, CATS uses **U.S. Department of Defense** guidelines for assessing **operational risks associated with defense systems**, rather than the guidelines established by the Federal Transit Authority (FTA) for municipal transit systems.
4. CATS's "Multi-Year Safety and Security Equipment Plan" was **not executed in a timely fashion** and did not fully utilize the transit system's fiscal year (FY) 2025 budget.

NOTE

In the six months since Iryna Zarutsky's murder, CATS Leadership has developed and implemented various new policies and procedures designed to improve the safety of CATS passengers and employees. For example, CATS has:

- Adjusted its operational and security posture, based on incident data and identified higher-risk routes, times, and locations;
- Conducted a targeted review of stops and areas associated with elevated incidents of disorder, with coordinated law enforcement support;
- Strengthened after-action review processes aligned with Safety Management System (SMS) principles; and
- Increased security through the deployment of off-duty Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department (CMPD) officers and Mecklenburg County Sheriff's Office (MCSO) deputies.

Despite these improvements, a second (non-fatal) stabbing incident occurred on the light rail on December 5, 2025.²

² As discussed in Finding 2, the suspect in the December 2025 stabbing was named on CATS's "Exclusion List," which is designed to ban individuals who have violated transit rules, committed a crime, or otherwise acted disruptively from using any part of the transit system.

FINDING 1 DETAILS & RECOMMENDATIONS

CATS has inadequate systems in place to prevent fare evasion.

As reported in the days after Iryna Zarutska's murder, her alleged killer did not purchase a ticket when boarding the bus to the CATS transit center or upon entering the light rail.³ The lack of ticket verification at CATS entry points that day points to a gap in CATS's fare enforcement protocols. This issue, however, does not appear to be a new problem, as CATS has consistently failed to prevent fare evasion and to collect the associated penalty fees,⁴ as set forth in its fare evasion policy.⁵

Additionally, during a site visit to a CATS light rail station on February 16, 2026, OSA staff found that there are **few, if any, physical barriers (e.g., turnstiles or gates) preventing non-ticketed passengers from accessing CATS bus and light rail services**. This makes it unusually easy for non-ticketed individuals to board trains and buses and difficult for employees or security personnel to identify non-ticketed riders. Provided below, Figure 1 shows a typical CATS light rail stop lacking barriers to entry.

Figure 1: A CATS light rail stop lacking barriers to entry.



This photograph was taken by OSA staff during a site visit to a CATS light rail station on February 16, 2026.

In December 2025, CATS completed an analysis of non-paying ridership on its bus and light rail systems, which involved estimating fare compliance by comparing paid ridership to total system ridership. Total non-paying ridership was estimated at 45% (plus or minus 5%) of total bus and light rail ridership, with **bus non-paying ridership at 35%** (plus or minus 5%)

³ See, e.g., [CATS Believes Light Rail Murder Suspect Did Not Purchase Fare Before Fatal Stabbing | WSOC](#).

⁴ As reported by Brett Cagle, CATS's Interim CEO, at the Monday, April 13, 2026 City Council Business Meeting, "[r]oughly half of riders are not paying fares, across both the light rail and the bus system." [No Fares, No Safety, No Transit Future for Charlotte | The Charlotte Observer](#). At the time of this writing, the meeting minutes for the April 13 meeting had not yet been published.

⁵ CATS's Response Letter to the FTA dated September 25, 2025. CATS sent this letter in response to the FTA's engagement letter sent on September 10, 2025 which set out CATS's response to FTA's questions regarding its policing strategy.

and **light rail non-paying ridership at 60%** (plus or minus 5%).⁶ At OSA's request, **CATS calculated the estimated amount it loses to fare evasion annually to be between \$5 million and \$6.5 million.**⁷

As of November 4, 2025, OSA's review of documentation provided by CATS determined that **the number of citations issued for fare evasion dropped** from 4,763 in 2023 to 2,018 in 2025, a 39% decrease.⁸ Actual fines collected by CATS for fare evasions on the light rail system amounted to \$750 in state fiscal year (SFY) 2024 and \$550 in SFY 2025, indicating **massive underpayment.**⁹

CATS attributed the marked decrease in the number of citations issued for fare evasion in 2024 as being the result of it **instructing its bus drivers not to enforce fares, in order to protect operators from verbal and/or physical assaults arising from fare disputes.**¹⁰ CATS acknowledged to OSA that over-reliance on visual ticket inspections after boarding, flexible ticket activation periods, and non-route-specific ticket purchases pave the way for increasing rates of fare evasion.

CATS informed OSA that it is actively working with the City's Legal Department to improve its enforcement process for outstanding citations.

In a letter CATS sent to the FTA on September 25, 2025, CATS outlined its intent to deploy a dedicated Fare Inspection Team, tasked with promoting fare adherence and providing customer assistance.¹¹ In support of this effort, CATS plans to install fare validators across CATS buses, streetcars, microtransit vehicles, and light rail platforms by early 2027.¹² Additionally, CATS is contemplating whether to integrate artificial intelligence technology to strengthen its fare enforcement capabilities, once the validating machines are in place.¹³

RECOMMENDATIONS

CATS should consider conducting a study of the payment systems used by similar metro transit systems in an effort to implement a simple and convenient fare payment system,

⁶ HNTB's *CATS Fare Compliance Analysis* dated December 17, 2025.

⁷ HNTB's *CATS Estimated Lost Fare Revenue Report* dated March 10, 2026.

⁸ Citations for fare evasion can be issued by CATS contracted security personnel, MCSO deputies, or CMPD officers. First-time fare evaders receive a verbal warning, second-time offenders receive a civil citation and a \$50 fine, and third-time offenders are denied CATS ridership. Individuals cited for fare evasion can pay their fines at CATS's Customer Service Center. All citation fees collected are deposited into CATS's General Operating Fund. Memorandum from CATS to OSA on February 20, 2026.

⁹ Memorandum from CATS to OSA on October 9, 2025.

¹⁰ Memorandum from CATS to OSA on November 4, 2025. CATS light rail operators strictly operate trains and are not tasked with fare collection.

¹¹ CATS's Response Letter to the FTA dated September 25, 2025.

¹² [Fare Modernization Program - Electronic Validation | CATS](#).

¹³ Memorandum from CATS to OSA on February 20, 2026.

such as tap-to-pay technology for contactless credit cards or mobile wallets, increased rider spot checks, discounted passes for frequent riders, and the use of data analytics to optimize fare structures.¹⁴ Above all, **CATS should install gates or turnstiles to deter non-ticketed passengers, especially at light rail stations.**

FINDING 2 DETAILS & RECOMMENDATIONS

There is limited interaction between CATS and CMPD.

Only Two CMPD Officers Assigned to CATS's Metro Transit Unit

CATS's security operations are primarily staffed by Professional Security Services (PSS), a private company whose contracted by CATS on a three-year term. As discussed in OSA's preliminary [Rapid Response Special Report](#), PSS provides CATS with six armed guards, 26 state-certified police officers, and one captain—all of whom are armed.¹⁵

In addition to the security services provided by PSS, the City entered a March 2023 Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with CMPD, through which CMPD staffs a Metro Transit Unit.¹⁶ However, CATS reported that, to date, **only two CMPD officers** have been assigned to the Metro Transit Unit.¹⁷ According to the MOU, CATS may request additional staffing and resources “as a result of significant events, national emergencies, unanticipated security threats, elevated threats, or Transportation Safety Administration (“TSA”) requirements.”¹⁸ Additionally, the MOU explains that CATS shall determine the staffing levels “based on upon the level of service and security [it requests] and [as] mutually agreed upon by CMPD.”¹⁹

No Connection Between CMPD's Real Time Crime Center and CATS Surveillance Cameras

During a Special Meeting of the Metropolitan Transit Commission meeting on September 3, 2025, Chief Safety and Security Officer Eric Osnes indicated that at the time of Iryna Zarutskya's murder there was no direct connection between CMPD's Real Time Crime Center

¹⁴ See, e.g., [Combatting Fare Evasion: Effective Strategies for Transit Agencies](#).

¹⁵ CATS's July 10, 2023 Security Services Contract.

¹⁶ CATS and CMPD's March 22, 2023 MOU. The MOU remains in effect until terminated or superseded.

¹⁷ The duties of the two CMPD officers assigned to the Metro Transit Unit “consist of but are not limited to patrolling the light rail and CATS facilities; investigating crimes occurring on CATS vehicles, trains, facilities and properties; coordination efforts for large events; responding to active crime scenes associated with CATS property as well as assisting in any investigations; attending meetings as requested by CATS [L]eadership as a liaison for CPMD; responding after hours as needed to assist with video footage requests, or any other needs as it would relate to an active investigation.” Memorandum from CATS to OSA on February 20, 2026.

¹⁸ CATS and CMPD's March 22, 2023 MOU.

¹⁹ Ibid.

and CATS's surveillance camera systems.²⁰ CATS informed OSA that this problem was rectified on October 10, 2025.²¹

No CMPD Involvement in Determining Length of Bans from CATS or Enforcing Exclusions

CATS maintains an "Exclusion List" that includes the names and photographs of individuals who have been banned from riding CATS bus and rail systems, including for reason of having been previously caught engaging in criminal conduct within the transit system. As of February 2026, this Exclusion List included 175 people. Penalties vary according to offense: an OSA review shows that one individual was banned for six months for violating open-container laws, while another was banned for one year for assaulting a bus driver.

CATS informed OSA that while the Exclusion List is not publicly available, it is posted on CMPD's portal for access by all CMPD officers and on its internal scheduling portal for access by bus and train operators. The Exclusion List is also the subject of weekly briefings to CATS Leadership.

CATS's Exclusion Policy, which was most recently revised on September 23, 2025, may be enforced by "[s]worn [l]aw [e]nforcement personnel that have jurisdiction over any person or incident on [CATS]."²² During OSA's review, however, it was unclear whether CMPD plays any part in determining the length of exclusions or how CMPD enforces such exclusions on behalf of CATS.

Given that the suspect in the December 5, 2025 light rail stabbing was on CATS's Exclusion List,²³ the measures taken by CATS to enforce bans to date appear to be insufficient.

RECOMMENDATIONS

CATS and CMPD should agree to add additional CMPD officers to the Metro Transit Unit. The respective agencies should work together to monitor CATS light rail stops and surveillance systems, so as to identify banned individuals who are riding the transit system and to remove such persons promptly without jeopardizing the safety of permitted riders.

²⁰ MTC Special Meeting–September 3, 2025, at 38:57
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tfLijbZC4k0&t=2336s>.

²¹ Email from CATS to OSA on April 10, 2026.

²² [CATS Exclusion Policy, September 23, 2025, pg. 2](#). The policy may also be enforced by "[e]mployees, contractors[,] and agents of CATS authorized by the Chief Safety and Security Officer or CATS Security designee." Ibid.

²³ See, e.g.,
<https://www.wcnc.com/article/news/local/cats-exclusion-policy-under-scrutiny-light-rail-stabbing/275-f033ca86-3358-4158-bcde-fd801768c88d>.

FINDING 3 DETAILS & RECOMMENDATIONS

CATS's Safety Risk Assessment does not incorporate guidelines issued by the FTA.

Under federal law, transit agencies that receive federal financial assistance, including CATS, are required to develop and establish Public Transportation Agency Safety Plans (PTASP).²⁴ PTASPs must meet the minimum requirements outlined in 49 CFR § 673.11(a), including “document[ing] the processes and activities related to Safety Management System [] implementation.”²⁵

A transit agency's SMS implementation must include hazard identification, safety risk assessment, and safety risk mitigation.²⁶ The FTA's *Sample Safety Risk Assessment Matrices for Bus Transit Agencies* provides guidance for transit agencies to ensure adequate safety risk assessments are conducted so that they properly “implement the [SMS] process required in [the] FTA's [PTASP] regulation . . .”²⁷ The FTA's model systematic framework helps transit agencies:

- Evaluate the probability and severity of outcomes associated with identified hazards;
- Establish whether existing mitigations render safety risks acceptable or if further measures are necessary; and
- Rank hazards in order of priority, based on the safety risk posed by their potential consequences.²⁸

Instead of modeling its safety risk assessment on the FTA's guidelines for transit agencies, however, CATS utilizes the U.S. Department of Defense's (DOD) *Standard Practice for System Safety (MIL-STD-882E* or the *Standard Practice*) as its model for systematically categorizing and assessing its operational risks.²⁹ As identified in Section 4 of the *Standard Practice*'s foreword, however, the *Standard Practice* is designed to be used by “all Military Departments and Defense Agencies within the [DOD]” to “identify[] hazards and assess[] and mitigat[e]

²⁴ See 42 CFR § 673.11(a); 49 U.S.C. § 5329(a), (c). While related but not dispositive to OSA's review, the FTA recently released the results of its audit of CATS's compliance with 49 CFR Part 673. The FTA's audit is available for review at <https://www.transit.dot.gov/sites/fta.dot.gov/files/2026-02/Focused-Agency-Safety-Plan-Audit-Final-Report-Charlotte-Area-Transit-System.pdf>.

²⁵ Ibid. § 673.11(a)(2).

²⁶ 49 CFR § 673.25(a).

²⁷ [Sample Safety Risk Assessment Matrices for Bus Transit Agencies, September 2019, pg. 1.](#)

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ MIL-STD-882E is available for review at https://www.cto.mil/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/MIL-STD-882E-w_CHANGE-1.pdf.

associated risks encountered *in the development, test, production, use, and disposal of defense systems.*”³⁰

CATS reported to OSA that under 49 CFR Part 673, it is only required to “develop an Agency Safety Plan [] that includes the processes and procedures to implement a Safety Management System (SMS),” and therefore its use of DOD’s methodology is compliant with federal regulations.³¹

RECOMMENDATIONS

CATS Leadership should adopt and implement a PTASP that relies on the FTA’s *Sample Safety Risk Assessment Matrices for Bus Transit Agencies* as its principal methodology for conducting safety and security risk assessments, as this framework is more appropriate for use by transit agencies than DOD’s *Standard Practice*, which assesses the operational risks of defense systems. This will improve CATS’s capacity to systematically identify, evaluate, and mitigate safety hazards, thereby increasing the safety and dependability of transit services for passengers, staff, and the greater Charlotte-Mecklenburg community.

FINDING 4 DETAILS & RECOMMENDATIONS

CATS’s multi-year “Capital Investment Plan” for safety and security equipment is not being implemented in a timely fashion and does not fully utilize its allotted budget for FY 2025.

CATS’s adopted budget for FY 2025 includes a multi-year Capital Investment Plan for safety and security equipment. As shown in Figure 2, CATS budgeted a total of \$7,650,450 for safety and security projects scheduled to occur between FY 2025 and FY 2029, with FY 2025 designated as the first and largest spending year.

³⁰ Ibid. at ii (emphasis added). Defense systems contemplated by the *Standard Practice* include, but are not limited to, missile defense systems and fifth-generation stealth aircraft.

³¹ Memorandum from CATS to OSA on November 4, 2025.

Figure 2: CATS's Capital Investment Plan for Safety and Security Equipment

Item	FY 2025	FY 2026	FY 2027	FY 2028	FY 2029	Total
Mobile Video Replacements	\$634,600	\$396,000	\$396,000	\$1,343,500	\$961,350	\$3,731,450
Fixed Camera Upgrade	\$400,000	\$400,000	\$400,000	\$400,000	\$400,000	\$2,000,000
Portable Radios	\$350,000	\$350,000	\$125,000	\$125,000	\$125,000	\$1,075,000
Access Control Replacements	\$10,000	-	-	-	-	\$10,000
Access Control System Upgrade	\$500,000	-	-	-	-	\$500,000
Safety Management Software	\$300,000	-	-	-	-	\$300,000
Golf Cart	\$28,000	-	-	-	-	\$28,000
CONEX Box	\$6,000	-	-	-	-	\$6,000
Total Safety and Security on Transit	\$2,228,600	\$1,146,000	\$921,000	\$1,868,500	\$1,486,350	\$7,650,450

[City's FY 2025 Adopted Budget, pg. 319.](#)

Provided below, Figure 3 shows that CATS appropriated \$2,228,600 for safety and security equipment updates in FY 2025 but recorded only \$470,242 in expenditures. The remaining balance of \$1,758,358 indicates that CATS did not utilize most of the funding designated for safety and security equipment upgrades during the fiscal year, and that such upgrades were not completed as anticipated. Given the total amount of money budgeted for the five-year plan, **CATS's underspending in FY 2025 represents a significant deferral of planned safety and security work into later years, rather than completion as budgeted for FY 2025.** Overall, CATS expended 21.1% of the FY 2025 budgeted amount.

Figure 3: CATS's FY 2025 Safety and Security Equipment Budget-to-Actual Expenditures

Item	PJ#	FY 2025 Budget	FY 2025 Actuals	Variance	On-Going Project
Mobile Video Replacements	4171102416	\$634,600	\$31,728	\$602,872	\$602,872
Fixed Camera Upgrade	4171102503	\$400,000	-	\$400,000	\$400,000
Portable Radios	4171102504	\$350,000	\$344,041	\$5,959	\$5,959
Access Control Replacements	4171102505	\$10,000	\$3,406	\$6,594	\$6,594
Access Control System Upgrade	4141302506	\$500,000	\$24,045	\$475,955	\$475,955
Safety Management Software	4141302507	\$300,000	\$46,605	\$253,395	\$253,395
Golf Cart	4171102508	\$28,000	\$20,417	\$13,583	\$13,583
CONEX Box	4171102508	\$6,000			
Total Safety and Security on Transit		\$2,228,600	\$470,242	\$1,758,358	\$1,758,358

Data provided by CATS to OSA.

CATS informed OSA that it did not utilize the full amount budgeted for safety and security upgrades in FY 2025 for the following reasons:

- Multi-year project complexity: According to CATS, several initiatives require extended timelines for procurement and installation, making completion within one fiscal year impractical.
- Capitalization timing: CATS intends to capitalize certain items (e.g., portable radios) after fiscal year close, delaying full recognition of expenditures.
- Non-capital items: CATS reported that certain purchases did not meet capitalization thresholds under the Capital Asset Policy and FTA Circular 5010.1e.³²
- Active but incomplete projects: CATS explained that while work is underway, technical requirements have deferred spending into subsequent years.

In addition to the automated fare validation planned for 2027, CATS confirmed that it is evaluating and planning future physical security enhancements, including:

- Expanded, integrated or improved camera coverage;
- Communications enhancements;
- Artificial intelligence camera overlays;
- Mobile video surveillance assists for hotspot deterrence and evidence captured along bus routes;
- Solar-powered light towers to improve visibility at end-of-line and poorly lit locations;
- Enhanced security design features for future rail stations (lighting standards, sightlines, camera placement, and feasibility of controlled access elements); and
- Updates and revisions to CATS's Transit Security Plan.

RECOMMENDATIONS

CATS should strengthen its planning and procurement processes to ensure that it executes safety and security projects in the same fiscal year as the budgets for those projects. Delays that arise during project implementation should be minimized and managed proactively to prevent deferral into subsequent years. Additionally, given that CATS estimates \$5 million to \$6.5 million per year lost to fare evasion, CATS should consider allocating the revenues gained from improved enforcement of fares to future security improvements.

³² Published in February 2017, FTA Circular 5010.1e, *Award Management Requirements*, is available online at https://www.transit.dot.gov/sites/fta.dot.gov/files/docs/Grant%20Management%20Requirements%20Circular_5010-1E.pdf.

RESPONSE FROM THE CITY OF CHARLOTTE



OFFICE *of the* MAYOR

600 East Fourth Street
Charlotte, NC 28202
charlottenc.gov

July 31, 2026

Charles Dingee
Deputy State Auditor
North Carolina Office of the State Auditor
20601 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, NC 27699

Dear Mr. Dingee:

We appreciate the partnership of our federal and state colleagues, including the Office of the State Auditor, and we value the opportunity to share updates on the work completed since the period covered in the Rapid Response Special Report. Over the past ten months, CATS has continued strengthening its safety, security, fare enforcement and operational practices in alignment with recommendations and ongoing support from our partners.

Several major developments have helped shape this work and are worth noting:

- **Voter approval of the one-cent transportation sales tax (November 2025)**, activating the Metropolitan Public Transportation Authority and enabling long-term planning, including evaluation of a dedicated transit police division funded through new recurring revenue.
- **Creation of the first Integrated Security and Public Safety Plan for CATS (October 2025)** with acceptance by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA).
- **Completion of the FTA Agency Safety Plan Audit (February 2026)**, which established a federally supervised corrective action process that now guides several of our updates.
- **Adoption of a funded fare modernization and enforcement program (June 2026)**, supporting systemwide improvements in fare collection and customer experience.

Over this period, CATS significantly expanded its safety and security resources. The authorized security services contract increased from 5.8 million dollars in fiscal year 2022 to 23.1 million dollars in fiscal year 2027, with contracted staffing growing from approximately 110 to 262 personnel. Off-duty CMPD support has provided approximately 1,540 hours of weekly uniformed coverage, totaling over 46,000 hours since the start of this expanded partnership. Off-duty Mecklenburg County Sheriff's Office deputies and contracted company police operating under a Mutual Aid Agreement also contribute to this presence. In our FY 2027 budget transit security investment increased by \$10.0 million with the continuation of CMPD off-duty coverage, adding dispatch and telecom capacity, deploying fare inspectors and transit ambassadors, and growing our security contractual services for police and security, safety and security services across the transit system.

These combined efforts have led to measurable improvements. In the first quarter of 2026, crime on the Blue Line decreased by approximately 69 percent compared with the same quarter in 2025, and bus-related assaults declined by roughly 67 percent, with zero major assaults recorded.

CATS also advanced several systemwide initiatives:

- **Fare Modernization:** Contactless tap-to-pay technologies are now approved for future deployment across the transit system, paired with simpler fare media and expanded reduced-fare eligibility for income-qualified riders, veterans, active-duty military and students.
- **Fare Enforcement:** A new fare enforcement ambassador team of more than sixty uniformed personnel will launch in October 2026, providing inspection coverage across the system and direct customer engagement. We recognize these individuals are not armed security officers, and we are not trying to compare the advantages of the aforementioned law enforcement officers. With that said, this program does have value when included with the other initiatives described herein. The benefits are additional deterrents to those looking to use the transit system for illegal purposes.
- **Exclusion Policy and Identification Improvements:** The strengthened exclusion policy (effective September 23, 2025) raises penalties for severe violations and supports consistent enforcement. The exclusion list is now available on CMPD and internal CATS portals, and weekly briefings support real-time coordination.
- **Technology Integration:** The direct connection between the CATS camera network and the CMPD Real Time Crime Center was completed on October 10, 2025. CATS is assessing additional video analytics tools to support identification of excluded individuals and fare evasion.
- **Capital Program Delivery:** The fiscal year 2026 to fiscal year 2030 Transit Safety and Security Capital budget totals ~\$7.2 million focused on advancing safe, reliable and equitable transit service throughout the system including camera replacements and dispatch upgrades. CATS' updated FY 2027 to FY 2031 Transit Safety and Security Capital budget totals ~\$9.8 million advancing safe, reliable and equitable transit service throughout the system including additional camera replacements, dispatch upgrades and enhancements to light rail crossing gates.
- **Infrastructure Enhancements:** Operator barriers have been installed across the fixed-route fleet, maintaining approximately 4,500 active cameras across vehicles and facilities with completion of a blind-spot review to ensure accurate coverage and converting the Charlotte Transportation Center into a fare zone.

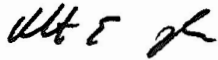
CATS is also revising its safety risk assessment matrices in accordance with FTA recommendations and will submit updates as part of a revised Agency Safety Plan. The recent FTA audit found no issues in CATS' practice of identifying and mitigating hazards across the system.

One correction we wanted to share is with regards to the finding that "CATS uses U.S. Department of Defense guidelines for assessing operational risks associated with defense systems, rather than the guidelines established by the Federal Transit Authority (FTA) for

municipal transit systems.” As previously mentioned, CATS finalized an FTA Focused Agency Safety Plan Audit in February 2026 and will continue to provide the federal agency with updates per the plan’s requirements. While U.S. Department of Defense guidelines are used in the FTA requirements, it should be noted that CATS is fully within standard of all FTA guidelines and requirements.

Safety requires continuous investment and honest measurement. CATS remains committed to that work and appreciates the continued engagement of the Office of the State Auditor as corrective actions move forward.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R. E. Harrington".

Robert E. Harrington
Mayor

Ordering Information

Copies of this report may be obtained by contacting:



Office of the State Auditor
State of North Carolina
20601 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, North Carolina 27699

Telephone: 919-432-4050
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