



Transportation Leaders Against
Human Trafficking
**COMMERCIAL BUS
SECTOR COUNTER-
TRAFFICKING TOOLKIT**



**U.S. Department
of Transportation**

**PUT THE
BRAKES ON | HUMAN
TRAFFICKING®**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Understanding Human Trafficking	3
What Is Human Trafficking?	4
Who Is Exploited?	4
Common Industries for Human Trafficking	4
How Victims Are Lured and Recruited	5
Victims and Traffickers	5
Human Trafficking versus Human Smuggling	6
Human Trafficking in the Transportation System	7
Why the Transportation Sector?	7
Commercial Bus-Related Data	7
Indicators.....	8
How to Report Suspected Human Trafficking.....	11
A Comprehensive Approach to Counter-Trafficking	14
Leadership & Funding	15
Organizational Proclamation	15
Leadership Statement	17
DOT Combating Human Trafficking in Transportation Impact Award.....	18
Policies & Reporting	19
Federal Human Trafficking Laws Intersecting with Commercial Bus.....	20
Model Comprehensive Strategy	21
Reporting Hotlines	25
Successful Federal Commercial Bus-Related Convictions	26
Partnerships	27
Transportation Leaders Against Human Trafficking	27
Training & Awareness	28
Transportation Leaders Against Human Trafficking Awareness Campaign	29
State & Territory Human Trafficking Laws Intersecting with Transportation.....	30
Research, Data & Information-Sharing	31
Victim & Survivor Support	32





Understanding Human Trafficking

UNDERSTANDING HUMAN TRAFFICKING

WHAT IS HUMAN TRAFFICKING?

Human trafficking is a crime that involves the use of force, fraud, or coercion to obtain labor or a commercial sex act. All commercial sex involving a minor is legally considered human trafficking, regardless of force, fraud, or coercion.

According to the [International Labour Organization](#) (ILO), 27.6 million people—or 3.5 out of every 1,000—were victims of human trafficking in 2021, including 77 percent through forced labor and 23 percent through commercial sexual exploitation. Their average trafficking situation is 15.4 months.

Who Is Exploited?

The majority of forced labor victims are male, and the majority of commercial sexual exploitation victims are women and girls (ILO).

In the United States, children and adults are exploited through human trafficking across every state and territory, and in urban, rural, and tribal areas. In 2023, the [National Human Trafficking Hotline](#) received a total of 30,162 substantive signals nationwide and received reports of 9,619 potential human trafficking cases referencing 16,999 potential victims.

The non-cumulative types of trafficking reported to the National Human Trafficking Hotline in 2023 included 5,572 sex trafficking situations, 1,558 labor trafficking situations, and 1,021 situations that included both sex and labor trafficking. Non-cumulative case demographic information for 2023 included 6,676 adults, 2,535 minors, 6,863 females, 1,480 males, 1,152 foreign nationals, and 934 Lawful Permanent Residents.

In 2023, the [National Center for Missing and Exploited Children](#) received more than 18,400 reports of possible child sex trafficking, and 1 in 6 (4,800 cases) of the more than 28,800 cases of children reported missing in 2023 were likely subjected to child sex trafficking.

Common Industries for Human Trafficking

Sex trafficking may be found in the stripping, illicit massage, escort, prostitution, and pornography industries, among others.

Forced labor can occur in every industry, including housekeeping, childcare, construction, agriculture, and the food service industries are particularly vulnerable.

How Victims Are Lured and Recruited

Acting alone or as part of an organized criminal enterprise, human traffickers recruit individuals in-person and online with false promises of a better life, employment, educational opportunities, conflict-free environments, temporary housing, access to basic necessities, or even a seemingly loving family, relationship, marriage, or home.

An [analysis of trends](#) of calls received in 2021 by the National Human Trafficking Hotline found that the top traffickers were employers (43 percent), family members (26 percent), and intimate partners (22 percent), and that most individuals subjected to human trafficking (65 percent) were recruited online.

Human trafficking is a crime often occurring in plain sight, as fear of traffickers often keeps individuals subjected to human trafficking from seeking help.

Traffickers coerce or force individuals into human trafficking through emotional, psychological, economic, and physical abuse. The National Human Trafficking Hotline's analysis of trends of calls received in 2021 found that emotional abuse (28 percent), economic abuse (26 percent), and threats (23 percent) remained the most frequently reported methods. A [2022 study](#) of 457 sex and labor trafficking survivors by Polaris, a non-governmental organization (NGO) that operates the National Human Trafficking Hotline, found that the majority had experienced a series of adverse childhood experiences. Among a range of 435 to 450 respondents, 96 percent had experienced physical, sexual, or emotional abuse; 91 percent experienced mental health challenges; 83 percent experienced poverty; 69 percent ran away from home; and 62 percent experienced substance abuse.

Traffickers also restrict the freedom of movement of individuals they subject to human trafficking by holding them in debt bondage, forcing them to work excessive hours, confiscating their earnings, controlling their movements and documents, threatening them or their loved ones, and threatening law enforcement action.

Victims and Traffickers

Victims can be anyone, regardless of age, sex, race, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, socioeconomic background, religion, national origin, education level, or citizenship status.

Some circumstances can heighten the risk of becoming a victim of human trafficking, including poverty, limited skills or education, being dispossessed or disenfranchised, previously experiencing other forms of violence, participating in migrant and seasonal work, being controlled by the State, working in an isolated industry, previous involvement with the system, and limited job portability.

Similarly, perpetrators of human trafficking also vary. Traffickers can be a victim's friend, family member, romantic partner, employer, acquaintance, or a complete stranger. They can act alone or as part of an organized criminal enterprise.

Language barriers and/or fear of their traffickers often keep victims from seeking help, making human trafficking a crime hidden in plain sight.

Human Trafficking versus Human Smuggling

Human trafficking is distinct from human smuggling, as human trafficking is the illegal exploitation of a person and does not require movement, while human smuggling is the illegal movement of a person across a border (that can turn into human trafficking). Survivor-informed training helps law enforcement screen for human trafficking indicators during smuggling operations and protect individuals potentially being subjected to human trafficking.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN THE TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM

Why the Transportation Sector?

The transportation sector serves as a critical connector that can both facilitate and prevent human trafficking. Commercial bus entities can play a key role in helping to intercept and prevent human trafficking by ensuring that their employees and travelers are equipped with the knowledge to recognize and report suspected instances of human trafficking. While some individuals subjected to human trafficking are transported locally, traffickers transport others to new locations, exploiting the inherent anonymity and mobility associated with transportation networks as they move individuals discreetly across regions and borders. Many traffickers transport individuals on circuits through multiple regions and cities, then quickly move them to ensure their dependence and avoid identification. The transient nature of transportation hubs and the high volume of travelers make effective detection and monitoring difficult for authorities.

Commercial Bus-Related Data

Transportation-related data on human trafficking includes the International Organization for Migration's [Counter Trafficking Data Collaborative](#)'s 2020 analysis of over 80,000 individuals subjected to human trafficking from 171 countries. The data indicates that nearly 80 percent of international human trafficking cases crossed official points of entry, including approximately 34 percent by bus, and another 26 percent crossed unofficial points of entry by bus. Transport-related data in the U.S. includes the Human Trafficking Institute's (an NGO) [Federal Human Trafficking Report](#) of federal sex trafficking cases filed in 2023, which found that defendants used buses in 3.2 percent of the cases.

Survivors of human trafficking report being subjected to the crime through all modes of transport. The NGO United Against Slavery conducted a [National Outreach Survey for Transportation](#) in 2021 that included 159 survivor respondents that utilized transportation during recruitment, exploitation, and extraction or escape. The survey found that 81 percent of 107 survivors of human trafficking utilized transportation during their recruitment, 76 percent used transportation during the course of their exploitation, and 52 percent stated that transportation facilitated their exit or escape from their trafficking situation. Of 97 survivor respondents, 19 percent were relocated during their exploitation by private bus, 12 percent by long distance bus, and 8 percent by intercity bus.

A 2018 [Polaris](#) survey of 104 survivors found that during their experience, 33 percent were transported by public buses and 19 percent by long distance buses.

Although transportation questions are not systematically asked of individuals reporting domestic tips to the National Human Trafficking Hotline, from January 1, 2011 to March 31, 2017, the National Human Trafficking Hotline documented 320 reports intersecting with buses or bus stations.

Indicators

Human trafficking victims are often overlooked because people do not recognize the indicators of human trafficking. When travelers and transportation employees know what to look for, they can serve as a community's eyes and ears. Recognizing indicators of human trafficking is the first step in identifying potential victims.

Human trafficking victims can be of any age, sex, race, ethnicity, ability, sexual orientation, socioeconomic background, religion, national origin, education level, or citizenship status.

Rather than being motivated by any single identity or demographic, human trafficking indicators identify objective signs that could indicate potential criminal activity. While **no single indicator can confirm a human trafficking situation, several combined indicators may increase the likelihood** that a person is actively being targeted, recruited, and/or exploited.

Note that all indicators listed below are not present in every human trafficking situation, and the presence or absence of any of the indicators is not necessarily proof of human trafficking. If you notice something, don't dismiss the feeling. Trust your instincts.

COMMERCIAL BUS-SPECIFIC

- Does not know the person who purchased their ticket, how the ticket was purchased, who is picking them up, and/or who is traveling with them.
- Traveling on a one-way, last-minute, stand-by, or same-day booking paid by someone else in cash.

TRAVEL-RELATED

- Improper clothing for weather or travel route.
- References frequent travel to other cities or towns.
- Using false identity or travel documents.

CONTROLLED

- No control of identification, documents, tickets, boarding passes, money, and/or phone.
- Controlled or unusually submissive to a traveling companion.
- No freedom of movement or social interaction
- Traveling with few or no belongings (e.g., no purse or wallet), especially for long distance travel.

- Not allowed to speak for themselves (a third party may insist on speaking for them or respond before they have a chance to say anything).
- Travel companion insists on providing translation.
- Answers may sound scripted or inconsistent; provides inconsistent stories in contrast with travel companion(s).
- Indicates they are being held against their will.
- Acknowledges that they are controlled by a third party or have a quota to meet.

AVOIDANT OR ABUSED

- Avoids and distrusts authority figures, including law enforcement, and may be combative.
- Signs of verbal threats, physical and emotional abuse, and/or being treated in a demeaning way.
- Signs of burns, tattoos, or branding to denote ownership.
- Signs of neglect, malnourishment, poor hygiene, fatigue, sleep deprivation, untreated illness, injuries, and/or unusual behavior.
- May seem unusually silent, avoidant, hypervigilant, intimidated, or mentally shut down.
- Exhibits fearful, anxious, depressed, nervous, hypervigilant, paranoid, or submissive behavior.
- Exhibits signs of self-harm/suicidal ideation.

UNAWARE

- Logistically unaware of where they are, where they are going, where they have been, or how they might arrive at their final destination.
- May appear drugged, disassociated, disoriented, or to have lost sense of time or location.
- Does not know their home or work address.
- May not know the contact information for the person who will be meeting them or the address of their final destination.

MINORS

- Minors traveling without adult supervision.
- Minors traveling with adults that seem abusive.
- Minors traveling during the school day.
- A child/person within a family appearing particularly unkempt and uncared for, particularly in the context of labor trafficking.
- Appears to be with a group of children traveling with an older, unrelated adult.
- Falsifies their age.
- Minors seeking to obtain an ID or individuals seeking to obtain an ID in a different name.

WORK-RELATED

- Traveling to obtain a job with no specific information, such as who will be meeting them.
- Did not receive a work contract or did not receive a work contract in their native language.
- May have limited information about specifics of anticipated employment and/or unrealistic information about the amount of money they will be earning.
- Improper clothing for work.
- Pays exorbitant recruitment fees necessitating having taken on a debt to a third party.
- Works excessively long hours, is provided few or no breaks, and/or has indicated their employer is withholding pay.
- Feels pressured, manipulated, or forced to work beyond their existing work contract without their consent.
- Inadequate workplace equipment for job.
- A highly controlled and/or hazardous, unsafe work setting (may contain substandard, unsafe and closely monitored housing).
- A work site that has heavy or excessive security measures that seem out of place.
- Signs of bedding in odd locations (e.g., backroom of a store).

GENERAL INDICATORS

- Acknowledges they have a debt and are being pressured to work or have sex to pay it back.
- Has a language barrier with their travel companion.
- Appears to be with a noticeably older romantic partner.
- Uses prepaid credit cards and gift cards.
- Offers to exchange sex for transportation, food, shelter, or assistance.
- Indicates that they have been threatened with deportation or law enforcement action.
- Shows signs of criminal indicators, such as possession of drugs, stolen property, etc.
- Deposits large amounts of money multiple times in one day.

How to Report Suspected Human Trafficking

Human trafficking is a crime involving the exploitation of someone for the purposes of compelled labor or a commercial sex act through the use of force, fraud, or coercion. In instances where a person younger than 18 is induced to perform a commercial sex act, it is a crime regardless of whether there is any force, fraud, or coercion.

Victims can be anyone from around the world or right next door: adults and children, citizens and non-citizens alike.

It is our responsibility as humans to report indicators of human trafficking. When encountering suspected instances of human trafficking, do not alert the suspected victims or traffickers by confronting them or drawing unnecessary attention to yourself. Ensure the safety of the suspected victim, yourself, and others by reporting your tip as soon as possible.

Rather than being motivated by any single identity or demographic, human trafficking indicators identify objective signs that could indicate potential criminal activity. While **no single indicator can confirm a human trafficking situation, several combined indicators may increase the likelihood** that a person is actively being targeted, recruited, and/or exploited.

Whether or not to act on a tip is up to law enforcement, and their response may not be visibly apparent.

HOW TO REPORT A TIP

If you see (or suspect) any indicators of human trafficking, assess the situation. **Do not attempt to confront a suspected trafficker or engage with a victim.** Instead, please contact local law enforcement directly.

911

Call 911 for immediate danger, including minor involvement.

The National Human Trafficking Hotline (La Línea Nacional contra la Trata de Personas)

Report a tip to the National Human Trafficking Hotline by phone, text, or web form:

- Call 1-888-373-7888
- Text INFO or HELP to BeFree (233733)
- [Submit a web form](#)

This national, toll-free hotline is available to answer calls in over 200 languages from anywhere in the United States, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. The **confidential** hotline is operated by a nongovernmental organization funded by the federal government; it is not a law enforcement or immigration authority.

The Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) Tip Line

Call 866-DHS-2-ICE (866-347-2423) or [submit a web form](#).

Report suspected human trafficking activity and receive support through the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) Tip Line. Highly trained specialists take reports from both the public and law enforcement agencies on more than 400 laws enforced by ICE HSI, including those related to human trafficking.

The StrongHearts Native Helpline

Call 1-844-7NATIVE (1-844-762-8423) or [chat online](#).

The StrongHearts Native Helpline is a safe, confidential, and anonymous helpline for Native Americans affected by domestic violence and dating violence. The helpline takes calls related to human trafficking, domestic violence, and sexual violence and connects callers to the National Human Trafficking Hotline when needed. If it's not safe to call, online chat and text advocacy sessions are also available. Users receive one-on-one, real-time, confidential information from a trained advocate. Support and referrals to resources are available for free, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Your Company/Organization

Follow your company's reporting policy if they have one in place.

WHAT TO INCLUDE IN A REPORTED TIP

When reporting suspected human trafficking activity, it's critical that you include as many details as possible. Start by including basic information such as the method of transportation, point of departure, and final destination.

Details Are Critical

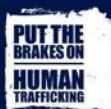
Provide as much information about the suspected victim and trafficker as you can, including:

- **Who** or **what** you saw (physical identifiers, nicknames overheard, date of birth, passport or driver's license number, citizenship, telephone number, address, license plate, etc.)
- **When** you saw it (date and time)
- **Where** it occurred (where you noticed the suspicious activity and any movement, if applicable)
- **Why** it's suspicious (what behaviors or observations led you to report a tip)

Then describe exactly what you saw or heard in detail. Keeping detailed notes can be helpful, such as, "Scar on forehead," "left wrist in cast," "appeared disoriented with slurred speech," "companion seemed to jump in to do the talking," and "observed in front of Bus 377 between 11:45am and 12:00pm."



U.S. Department
of Transportation



Follow-Up Questions

When speaking with a Hotline Advocate, they will ask questions to determine if what you've observed could be potential sex trafficking, labor trafficking, or another crime. Questions will assess elements such as the presence of indicators of individuals unable to leave their work situations or information indicating that someone is being forced, coerced, or defrauded into a situation involving commercial sex.

DO NO HARM

When encountering suspected instances of human trafficking, do not alert the suspected victims or traffickers by confronting them or drawing unnecessary attention to yourself. Ensure the safety of the suspected victim, yourself, and others by reporting your tip as soon as possible. Remember, it is not your responsibility to determine if a tip is actionable, or to directly investigate or intervene. That responsibility lies solely with law enforcement, and while their response might not be visibly apparent to you, be assured that your tip will be taken seriously.

REPORTING GOAL

Reporting suspected human trafficking is always the right thing to do. By itself or combined with other information, your tip may help law enforcement build a case against a trafficker and help a victim. Reporting also helps to identify potential “hot spots” of activity that could help law enforcement break up a trafficking ring. You may never know the outcome of the resulting investigation, but by reporting what you see, you just might assist someone in escaping.



A Comprehensive Approach to Counter-Trafficking

A COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH TO COUNTER-TRAFFICKING

LEADERSHIP & FUNDING

To set an example for employees, stakeholders, and travelers, C-suite commercial bus executives can issue organizational proclamations and leadership statements, establish a steering committee comprised of diverse perspectives, and obligate resources to develop a comprehensive counter-trafficking initiative and foster safer roadways.

Organizational Proclamation

The DOT Advisory Committee on Human Trafficking recommends this model proclamation for transportation authorities and organizations to adopt to demonstrate their commitment to combating human trafficking.

[Organization Name] Proclamation to Combat Human Trafficking

[Date]

WHEREAS, Every year, nearly 27.6 million men, women, and children are subjected to human trafficking and deprived of their freedom, human rights, and dignity (International Labour Organization);

WHEREAS, Human trafficking includes sex trafficking in which a commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such an act has not attained 18 years of age; and forced labor, which is the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor or services, through the use of force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery (Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000);

WHEREAS, the State of (State in which the Organization is based, if they have done the following) has enacted comprehensive counter-human trafficking laws, with a focus on criminal prosecution and support for individuals being subjected to human trafficking;

WHEREAS, [Organization Name] recognizes the considerable moral and economic harm of human trafficking in our communities and the nation; and recognizes that bringing a greater awareness to this problem will help victims;

WHEREAS, By bringing awareness to human trafficking within the [Organization's Sphere of Influence] sector, we bring hope to individuals being subjected to human trafficking, and the natural born freedoms all human beings should enjoy;

WHEREAS, [Organization Name] recognizes that increased public awareness and education within our organizations will provide more opportunities to recognize and aid in the fight against human trafficking;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE ORGANIZATION THAT:

In keeping with our mission, morals and ideals, we pledge to educate all staff, with an emphasis on those who interact with the traveling public, about human trafficking.

[Organization Name] will establish reporting mechanisms through which staff can report human trafficking and ensure that all employees are trained on reporting protocols.

[Organization Name] supports increased public awareness, stronger counter-trafficking laws, and the promotion of justice to reduce the exploitation of all peoples.

[Organization Name] will track and share key data points with the U.S. Department of Transportation to support measuring the collective impact of transport-related counter-trafficking efforts.

[Organization Name] supports the inclusion of zero-tolerance clauses within procurement contracts with private businesses regarding contractors engaging in any form of human trafficking.

Adopted by [Organization Name] on [Date]

Leadership Statement

This model statement can be used by transportation industry leaders to take a stand against human trafficking as an example for their employees and stakeholders:

[Organization Name] Public Leadership Statement Against Human Trafficking [Date]

Human trafficking is one of the greatest atrocities of the 21st century. With as many as 27.6 million men, women and children subjected to sex trafficking and forced labor in dark corners around the globe, it may seem like a problem beyond our borders. But the truth is, it's happening right here in our communities across the United States.

Those committing this terrible crime are using U.S. transportation systems to transport individuals for the purpose of human trafficking. We cannot allow our transportation systems to be an enabler in such awful acts.

[Organization Name] is joining with our partners across the transportation industry to stop the flow of human trafficking. [Organization Name] is committed not only to preparing our own employees to recognize and report suspected instances, but also to raising awareness among the traveling public. Our message is that human trafficking will not be tolerated.

In addition to joining the transportation sector effort, [Organization Name] is taking the following measures:

- * [Insert activity/commitment]
- * [Insert activity/commitment]
- * [Insert activity/commitment]

We invite you to join us in the fight to end human trafficking. Learn the basic indicators of human trafficking and be alert when you travel in and around transportation systems. Your simple act of calling in a tip could help someone escape their trafficking situation and help us move closer to a world without human trafficking.

DOT Combating Human Trafficking in Transportation Impact Award

This annual DOT award aims to incentivize individuals and entities to think creatively in developing innovative solutions to combat human trafficking in the transportation industry, and to share those innovations with the broader community. The award serves as a platform for transportation stakeholders to unlock their creativity and empower them to develop impactful and innovative counter-trafficking tools, initiatives, campaigns, and technologies that can help combat human trafficking. The award is open to individuals and entities, including NGOs, transportation industry associations, research institutions, and state and local government entities. Entrants compete for a \$50,000 first place cash award, a second place, and a third place for creating the most impactful counter-trafficking initiative or technology. To date, awardees include national, State, and local entities for awareness and research projects, such as a national highway billboard awareness campaign, a multilingual awareness campaign in ports, a national aviation counter-trafficking steering committee, and a multimodal counter-trafficking survey.

POLICIES & REPORTING

Comprehensive counter-trafficking policies that address employee guidelines and prohibitions, reporting protocols, supply chain monitoring, due diligence, and social responsibility, are critical to effectively tackle human trafficking. From codes of conduct and contract requirements to required training and established reporting protocols, policies and reporting play a key role in formalizing an organizational response to human trafficking. By ensuring that staff are properly trained and aware of these policies, employees are better positioned to prevent, identify, and report suspected instances of human trafficking in the commercial bus sector.

When commercial bus sector employees recognize suspected instances of human trafficking, clear organizational protocols facilitate successful reporting to the appropriate authorities. Comprehensive reporting protocols include detailed reporting guidelines that avoid causing potential harm to both employees and individuals subjected to human trafficking, and provide person-centered, trauma-informed human trafficking hotline and law enforcement points of contact. Regular reviews of these protocols and procedures help to ensure accuracy and efficacy.

Labor trafficking prevention in the commercial bus sector involves ensuring operations and supply chains are free of human trafficking. Commercial bus workers, contractors, and subcontractors can potentially be susceptible to human trafficking due to a lack of oversight, the role of “middlemen,” and other labor supplier entities that could subject individuals to human trafficking. Commercial bus supply chains for manufacturing, raw materials, and workforce services such as on-site security, construction, uniforms, concessionaires, and factory assembly lines are also at risk for human trafficking abuses.

As the risk of human trafficking can increase during natural disasters, economic crises, and major national health emergencies, it is also important to strengthen existing policies during crises to ensure resources are not diverted away from counter-trafficking efforts.

Federal Human Trafficking Laws Intersecting with the Commercial Bus Sector

2018 No Human Trafficking on Our Roads Act

The [2018 No Human Trafficking on Our Roads Act](#) institutes a [lifetime ban on Commercial Driver's Licenses](#) for anyone using a commercial motor vehicle to commit a sex trafficking felony.

2018 Combating Human Trafficking in Commercial Vehicles Act

The [2018 Combating Human Trafficking in Commercial Vehicles Act](#) expands the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) educational and outreach program and the CDL financial assistance program to include the recognition, prevention, and reporting of human trafficking.

2021 Infrastructure and Investment Jobs Act

The [2021 Infrastructure and Investment Jobs Act](#) expands FMCSA's [Motor Carrier Safety Assistance Program](#) grants to include human trafficking prevention, detection, and reporting.

2022 Human Trafficking Prevention Act

The [2022 Human Trafficking Prevention Act](#) requires that DOT seek to provide for the posting of contact information of the National Human Trafficking Hotline in the restrooms of each over-the-road bus and bus station operating within the United States.

Model Comprehensive Strategy

The DOT Advisory Committee on Human Trafficking recommends the following model comprehensive strategy as a tool for transportation stakeholders to adapt and implement within their organizations. The strategy includes a definition of human trafficking, leadership and funding, partnerships, legal compliance, social responsibility, employee responsibilities, employee reporting protocols, education and training, public awareness and outreach, data collection and information-sharing, and victim and survivor support. Following are the elements that comprise a comprehensive strategy for commercial bus entities to combat human trafficking:

ORGANIZATION Comprehensive Strategy to Combat Human Trafficking (DATE)

The ORGANIZATION condemns all forms of human trafficking and fully supports the elimination of the exploitation of human beings. ORGANIZATION has published an organizational statement against human trafficking and/or signed the U.S. Department of Transportation's Transportation Leaders Against Human Trafficking pledge. ORGANIZATION will not condone human trafficking in any part of our organization, and our policies and procedures reflect a strong commitment to upholding the belief that every person has the right to safety and security.

Definition

Human trafficking is a form of modern-day slavery in which individuals are subjected to force, fraud or coercion for the purpose of commercial sex, involuntary servitude/ labor, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery. Victims of human trafficking can be young children, teenagers, men, and women. They can be U.S. citizens, Legal Permanent Residents or foreign nationals, and they can be found in urban, suburban, and rural areas. Minors (under the age of 18) who are induced to perform commercial sex acts are victims of trafficking, regardless of whether their traffickers used force, fraud, or coercion. Types of human trafficking include:

Sex Trafficking: The recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, obtaining, patronizing, or soliciting of a person for the purposes of a commercial sex act, in which the commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such an act has not attained 18 years of age (22 USC 7102 (11)(A) and (12)).

Commercial Sex Act: Any sex act on account of which anything of value is given to or received by any person. (22 U.S.C. 7102(4)).

Forced Labor: The recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor or services, through the use of force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery (22 USC 7102(11)(B)).

POLICIES

Leadership and Funding

The ORGANIZATION's leadership endorses and supports the counter-human trafficking policies and initiatives below, including assigning the necessary funds to support their implementation.

Partnerships

The ORGANIZATION joins with our partners across the transportation industry to stop human trafficking through leadership, education and training, policy implementation, public awareness and outreach, data collection, and information-sharing. The ORGANIZATION leverages existing resources and partnerships both to reduce duplication and to maximize the collective impact of counter-human trafficking efforts by transportation industry stakeholders.

Legal Compliance

The ORGANIZATION strictly complies with all applicable laws and regulations regarding the prevention of human trafficking and cooperates with law enforcement authorities to address instances of exploitation which the ORGANIZATION or its employees have witnessed or become a party to.

Social Responsibility and Due Diligence

The ORGANIZATION has zero-tolerance for human trafficking. We are committed to ensuring that human trafficking is not part of our organization or supply chains, and to helping to reduce the probability that our properties will be used as a transit point for traffickers and the individuals they are subjecting to human trafficking. All entities we engage with in partnerships and contractually, including subcontractors, must comply with our values, counter-trafficking contract provisions, and the law.

Employee Responsibilities

Employees must be vigilant and immediately report, as appropriate, all situations that come to their attention within the ORGANIZATION's premises or businesses where human trafficking and/or exploitation is suspected or appears to be intended. Under no circumstances may the ORGANIZATION's funds, property or personnel be used to further or support activities that participate in human trafficking and/or human exploitation. This includes ORGANIZATION vehicles, buildings, facilities, parking lots, grounds, technology, equipment, computers, storage devices, software, websites, social media channels, networks, phones (including cell phones), funds (including company credit cards and expense accounts), and ORGANIZATION-funded hotel rooms, goods, and services.

No employee may:

- Use or allow the use of any of the ORGANIZATION's facilities, resources or equipment to support human trafficking (including forced labor and commercial sexual exploitation) and/or the exploitation of human beings.
- Use any ORGANIZATION resources, including credit cards and expense accounts, to buy sex.
- Create, download, view, store, copy, or transmit content that is sexually explicit or sexually-oriented, during work hours, while traveling on business, while engaged in any work-related activities, or using ORGANIZATION resources.
- View/search online advertisements for commercial sex during work hours, while working on company business, while engaged in any work-related activities, or using ORGANIZATION resources.
- View/search websites where adult entertainment is offered for sale during work hours, while working on company business, while engaged in any work-related activities, or using ORGANIZATION resources.
- Destroy, conceal, confiscate, or otherwise deny access to employee or contractor identity or immigration documents.
- Use misleading or fraudulent practices during the recruitment of candidates or when offering employment or contract positions.
- Enter into, on behalf of the ORGANIZATION or otherwise, any business relationships or any other arrangement with any organization which the employee has reason to believe participates in any way in human trafficking or the exploitation of human beings.

All employees have a responsibility to ensure that this policy is followed. Concerns and potential violations should be reported to the ORGANIZATION POC.

The ORGANIZATION strictly prohibits retaliation against any employee for making a good faith report of any potential or suspected violation of this policy or for cooperating in any investigation of such violation.

Employee Reporting Protocol – Suspected Human Trafficking

- When dealing with suspected cases of human trafficking, make every effort to avoid causing harm to yourself or to the possible individual being subjected to human trafficking.
- Assess the situation and if indicators are present: do not intervene, do not probe, act natural, leave, and go to a safe place to make a phone call. Employees should NEVER become directly involved in a suspected human trafficking situation.
- If you suspect there is a threat of immediate harm to an individual potentially being subjected to human trafficking, call 911.
- If there is no immediate danger to an individual potentially being subjected to human trafficking, call the National Human Trafficking Hotline at 888-373-7888.

- When an employee has human trafficking suspicions, they should note the following:
 - Date, time, and location of the suspected incident.
 - Description of those involved (include tattoos, physical identifiers, hair color, hair style, approximate age, any names or nicknames overheard, etc.).
 - A summary of the situation that prompted the report.
 - Vehicle information (overall description and details such as license plate number).
- Share the reporting of your tip with ORGANIZATION POC.
- For further questions or information, please contact ORGANIZATION POC.

Employee Reporting Protocol – If Approached by a Victim

- If the victim is in immediate danger, call 911.
- If there is no immediate danger to an individual potentially being subjected to human trafficking, call the National Human Trafficking Hotline at 888-373-7888.
- Ensure that the individual potentially being subjected to human trafficking feels safe throughout the process until the appropriate responder arrives.
- Share the reporting of your tip with ORGANIZATION POC.
- For further questions or information, please contact ORGANIZATION POC.

Education and Training

To ensure a high level of understanding of the risks of human trafficking, all employees have been informed of the ORGANIZATION'S expectations regarding human trafficking and will receive initial and annual training.

Public Awareness and Outreach

The ORGANIZATION raises awareness about human trafficking in areas that are frequented by employees and travelers by conducting and participating in public awareness campaigns. The ORGANIZATION leverages public touchpoints to spread the counter-human trafficking message.

Data Collection & Information-Sharing

The ORGANIZATION has developed reporting and documentation protocols and will share any relevant data and case studies gathered annually with the U.S. Department of Transportation.

Victim and Survivor Support

The ORGANIZATION posts survivor-informed awareness materials for individuals potentially being subjected to human trafficking, donates transportation service vouchers to a victim services organization to support individuals being subjected to human trafficking in their escape and survivors in their recovery, has established workforce development opportunities for survivors, and created a survivor-informed “second chance” employment program.

Reporting Hotlines

This chart outlines services provided by the primary national hotlines that receive human trafficking tips.

	911	National Human Trafficking Hotline	National Center for Missing and Exploited Children	Homeland Security Investigations	StrongHearts Native Tipline
Phone Number	911	1-888-373-7888	1-800-THE-LOST (1-800-843-5678)	1-866-DHS-2-ICE (1-866-341-2489)	1-844-7NATIVE (1-844-762-8483)
TTY	-	771	-	802-872-6196	-
24/7	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Connect with Law Enforcement	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Provides Victim Services	Emergency Services	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Multilingual	Spanish	Spanish and 200+ additional languages	Spanish	Spanish	Spanish, and other languages via Language Line
Texting Capabilities	Dependent on local emergency call center	BeFREE (233733)	-	-	Yes 1-844-7NATIVE (1-844-762-8483)
Anonymous Online Reporting Form	-	https://humantraffickinghotline.org/en/report-trafficking	https://report.cybertip.org/	https://www.ice.gov/webform/ice-tip-form	-
Shares Human Trafficking TIP Data Publicly	-	Yes	Yes	Limited	Limited
Shares Human Trafficking TIP Data Publicly on the Intersection of Transportation	-	Yes	Limited	Limited	-
Receives U.S. Government (USG) Funding	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No

Successful Federal Commercial Bus-Related Convictions

- **United States v. Davis:** In 2021, a man was sentenced to 10 years and 10 months, plus a 10-year term of supervised release and registering as a sex offender, for conspiring to recruit a minor to travel to Florida from Colorado with a one-way bus ticket to exploit her for commercial sex. The trafficker used a social networking site to recruit young women to engage in commercial sex.
- **United States v. Balcazar:** In 2023, a man was sentenced to over 3 years in prison and ordered to pay over \$11,000 in restitution with three years of supervision following his release and a woman was sentenced to two months and ordered to pay over \$500,000 in restitution with three years of supervised release and 100 hours of community service for exploiting 55 Mexican nationals who traveled to South Carolina via bus for agricultural labor. The traffickers used force and coercion to keep workers from leaving, including threatening deportation, confiscating passports and visas, brandishing and discharging firearms, failing to provide medical care, placing locks on the outside of the facility where the workers slept, and by posting armed guards at the camp facility.



PARTNERSHIPS

Effective counter-trafficking efforts require robust coordination and collaboration between multidisciplinary entities and transportation stakeholders across roadways, railways, waterways, and airways. When suspected instances of human trafficking are identified, public and private partnerships are critical to ensuring a seamless referral through established relationships with trained and qualified direct service organizations and law enforcement agencies.

Partnerships with federal, state, tribal, and local agencies; state and local taskforces; private sector entities (including labor unions); industry associations; law enforcement; non-governmental organizations; and support services ensure a comprehensive approach that supports more effective outcomes with greater impact than can be achieved by any one entity acting alone.

Regular information sharing, collaborative operations, and joint training sessions can foster stronger partnerships across organizations and communities, enhance human trafficking detection and reporting, and facilitate a more coordinated and effective response.

Transportation Leaders Against Human Trafficking

USDOT's Transportation Leaders Against Human Trafficking (TLAHT) initiative maximizes the transportation industry's collective impact in combating human trafficking by focusing on a comprehensive approach through leadership, training and education, policy development, public awareness, and information-sharing and analysis. Hundreds of transportation sector entities have signed the TLAHT pledge, including all State DOTs, airports and airlines, urban and rural transit agencies, trucking and bus companies, ports, railways, States, cities, and NGOs. TLAHT signatories commit to train their employees, raise public awareness, and track data. To sign the TLAHT pledge, visit: <https://www.transportation.gov/stop-human-trafficking/TLAHT-pledge>

TRAINING & AWARENESS

Initial and recurrent training for commercial bus drivers, school bus drivers, ticketing agents, and other commercial bus personnel on the definition and types of human trafficking, risk factors, mode-specific indicators, reporting methods, and existing policies and protocols uniquely tailored to their role is critical to countering human trafficking in the commercial bus sector. Expanding the capacity of commercial bus personnel and travelers to prevent, identify, and respond to suspected instances of human trafficking through training and awareness also facilitates the reporting of actionable information to law enforcement and the timely provision of essential services for potential survivors.

Many commercial bus sector employees are inadequately trained to recognize indicators of human trafficking or how to respond when they encounter potential trafficking situations, and ongoing efforts to standardize and require training across all transportation modes have yet to be fully realized. According to the 2021 National Outreach Survey for Transportation, 85 percent of 825 roadway workers, including commercial bus drivers, expressed a desire for training to help them learn how to identify human trafficking victims, and 47 percent of 931 roadway workers stated that it would be helpful for them to have a resource card that includes signs of human trafficking.

A 2021 NOST survey found that 85 percent of 825 roadway workers, including commercial bus drivers, expressed a desire for training to help them learn how to identify human trafficking victims

Raising public awareness about human trafficking through targeted campaigns, both annually and surrounding major events, can also contribute to the commercial bus sector's efforts to eradicate human trafficking. Efforts to raise awareness, such as public service announcements, exhibitions, billboards, videos, posters, digital displays, and flyers in and around bus stations can create an informed, vigilant public, thereby increasing the likelihood of identifying and disrupting trafficking operations. Press conferences, press releases, wallet cards, blogs, social media, and email messages can supplement these efforts.

Transportation Leaders Against Human Trafficking Awareness Campaign

DOT's TLAHT bilingual, multimodal counter-trafficking training and awareness campaign empowers travelers and employees across all modes of transportation to recognize and report suspected instances of human trafficking by underscoring the intersection of human trafficking and transportation, providing general and transport-specific indicators of human trafficking, and emphasizing reporting methods. DOT's Combating Human Trafficking in the Transportation Sector Awareness Training for transportation employees and the traveling public was developed in coordination with lived experience experts, partners, and transportation stakeholders. The TLAHT training is 20 minutes in length and available in English and Spanish.

TLAHT awareness materials are tailored for use in commercial buses, school buses, and other places where human trafficking may occur. TLAHT multimodal signs, modal posters, pocket cards, visor cards, modal graphics, and modal social media graphics emphasize reporting methods and include QR codes linking to the campaign page where viewers can learn more about the crime along with mode-specific indicators.



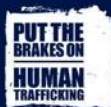
Visit <https://www.transportation.gov/stop-human-trafficking/commercial-bus> to view and download these materials.

State & Territory Human Trafficking Laws Intersecting with Transportation

DOT's [Compendium of Human Trafficking Awareness State and Territory Laws: A Resource Guide](#) provides an overview of transport-specific State and territory counter-trafficking laws, including requirements for posting the National Human Trafficking Hotline, training requirements, and data collection.



U.S. Department
of Transportation



RESEARCH, DATA & INFORMATION-SHARING

Research on the intersection of human trafficking and the transportation sector continues to grow despite definitional, identification, reporting, and prosecutorial gaps and challenges. Commercial bus sector entities can improve data collection by tracking employee training, tips reported by employees and travelers (including how and where suspected instances of human trafficking are encountered), and evaluating the efficacy of counter-trafficking programs, training, and awareness campaigns. Ensuring that data is shared with federal, state, local, and Tribal law enforcement is key to identifying high-risk routes and trafficking hotspots, allowing for more targeted enforcement, and facilitating investigations and prosecutions.



VICTIM & SURVIVOR SUPPORT

Commercial bus sector entities can support individuals being subjected to human trafficking and survivors of human trafficking through first responder training, public awareness, facilitating transportation support and employment opportunities, and providing funding and in-kind support to local direct service providers that serve human trafficking victims and survivors.

Training: As first responders, training commercial bus security employees with a survivor-informed, trauma-informed, and person-centered approach prioritizes the safety of individuals being subjected to human trafficking, avoids re-traumatization, and facilitates more effective interventions. Such an approach fosters a safe and supportive environment while increasing trust, which can support a willingness for survivors of human trafficking to serve as witnesses in investigations and prosecutions.

Awareness: Beyond DOT's free multimodal training and commercial bus-specific counter-trafficking awareness tools, engaging with survivors of human trafficking is key to ensuring that awareness materials accurately represent their needs. In addition, displaying person-centered awareness materials can increase self-identification among individuals who may be unaware that they are being trafficked and encourage them to seek support. Commercial bus sector entities can also designate safe areas to facilitate successful exit attempts and install phones in private spaces, such as restroom stalls, for individuals being subjected to human trafficking to discreetly connect with law enforcement when they are alone.

Transportation Support: In the 2021 National Outreach Survey for Transportation, 23 percent of 145 survivors indicated that a lack of transportation prevented them from exiting their trafficking situation. Commercial bus sector entities can donate credits, points, and vouchers to organizations that directly serve survivors of human trafficking to assist them in exiting their trafficking situation as well as accessing employment, legal services, medical care, training, and employment during their road to recovery. Transportation support can also facilitate family reunification, returning home, repatriation, relocation for safety purposes, traveling to testify against traffickers in court, and survivor leadership opportunities.

Employment Opportunities:

The National Human Trafficking Hotline's analysis of trends of calls received in 2021 found that 43 percent of 416 survivors were making under \$25,000 per year upon exiting their trafficking situation, compared to 26 percent of the general U.S. population. In addition, 69 percent of 457 survivors were seeking a stable, living-wage job while 65 percent needed education or job training. Commercial bus sector entities can support survivors of human trafficking by considering policies that could reduce barriers to employment, providing career re-entry skills (such as resume reviews and interview coaching), and increasing employment opportunities through paid internships,

apprenticeships, fellowships, and the dissemination of job postings to survivor networks. In addition, employing survivors of human trafficking as Lived Experience Experts at the earliest stages of counter-trafficking program design ensures that their expertise informs policies, programs, resources, and evaluation.

National Human Trafficking Hotline (Information & Assistance)

The National Human Trafficking Hotline assists individuals in crisis through safety planning, emotional support and/or immediate connections to emergency services through a network of trained service provider and law enforcement partners. Visit: <https://humantraffickinghotline.org/en/get-help>

National Human Trafficking Referral Directory (Local Services)

This online directory is comprised of counter-trafficking organizations and programs that offer emergency, transitional, or long-term services to victims and survivors of human trafficking. Visit: <https://humantraffickinghotline.org/en/find-local-services>

Worker Rights, U.S. Department of Labor

The Wage and Hour Division promotes and achieves compliance with labor standards to protect and enhance the welfare of the nation's workforce. Visit: <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/workers>