



U.S. Department
of Transportation
**Federal Transit
Administration**

Administrator

1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

September 9, 2025

The Honorable Vi Lyles
Mayor of Charlotte
600 East Fourth Street
Charlotte, NC 28202

Re: Urgent Demand for Accountability and Reform in Charlotte's Transit System

Dear Mayor Lyles,

The horrific killing of Iryna Zarutska on the Lynx Blue Line has shaken not only Charlotte but also every community that relies on public transportation. As Administrator of the Federal Transit Administration, I must speak plainly: This tragedy was preventable, and it reflects systemic failures in leadership and accountability that cannot be ignored.

On August 22, 2025, Ms. Zarutska, a 23-year-old refugee from Ukraine, was brutally stabbed to death at the East/West Boulevard station. The suspect—whose criminal record included armed robbery, breaking and entering, and larceny—should never have had the freedom to board a transit line and prey on innocent riders. Charlotte failed her, and in doing so, failed every rider who depends on the promise of safe and reliable transportation.

The facts make the case undeniable:

- **Transit Violence Rising:** FTA notes that the rate of assault on transit workers at CATS has jumped to five times the national average in 2025 despite being below the national average the prior two years. That is a change from one major assault on a transit system in 2024 to six already in 2025.
- **The rate of crimes against its riders is three times the national average.**
- **Failure of Oversight:** Public safety on transit cannot be left to chance. Riders deserve systems that anticipate danger, deter offenders, and respond decisively. Instead, repeated warnings went unanswered until tragedy struck.

Mayor Lyles, safety is not a talking point. It is the most basic obligation of public service.

As FTA Administrator, I expect immediate answers and action:

1. Transit Security Plan – Your administration must immediately release a transparent, measurable plan to secure Charlotte’s buses, trains, and stations. This plan must detail staffing increases, police coordination, surveillance upgrades, and response protocols.

2. Visible Security Surge – CATS must immediately increase uniformed presence at stations and onboard vehicles, with priority given to evening service and high-risk corridors.

Federal support for transit depends on local leaders upholding their end of the bargain. Citizens should not be asked to fund systems where safety is neglected. The federal government cannot and will not subsidize complacency.

The people of Charlotte — and especially the family of Iryna Zarutka — deserve justice, accountability, and a city government that finally places rider safety at the top of its priorities. I expect your response and transit security plan by [insert date, e.g., September 21, 2025].

Lives depend on leadership that is honest, accountable, and unafraid to act. I urge you to meet this moment with the seriousness it demands.

Respectfully,

Marcus J. Molinaro