



Using Public Transportation to Combat Human Trafficking

Contents

5	Foreword
7	Our Contributors
8	Their Stories
9	Defining Human Trafficking
11	Hiding in Plain Sight
14	Difference Makers
16	Spirit of Strength
17	Conclusion
18	References

A dark, blue-tinted photograph of a person's silhouette looking out a window at a landscape. The person is in the foreground, their head and shoulders visible in profile. The background shows a hazy, mountainous landscape with some buildings visible in the distance. The overall mood is contemplative and serene.

“You have the power to save a life.”

- GLENDA SKIPPER



Foreword

The average public transportation passenger arrives at their designated bus stop, waits with others in their community for the bus to arrive, boards the bus upon arrival, travels with and picks up more passengers along the way, before exiting the bus to embark on the next step of their journey. As these passengers rely on public transit, operators safely transport them. What passengers and bus operators may not know, is that they likely crossed paths with a human trafficker and/or a trafficked victim. Having read this, you may now be thinking, “no - they didn’t see anything,” or, “that doesn’t happen where I live.” Whatever the thought may be, the sad fact is that human trafficking is much more prevalent today than one would like to believe.

So, what does public transportation have to do with human trafficking – besides the obvious, that a victim could be transported on buses, trains, and other public transit vehicles? The answer: **everyone has a role to play in fighting against trafficking to make our communities safer.**

As one of the largest transit providers across the globe, RATP Dev USA aims to do our part in informing our operators, fellow industry colleagues, and the general public about human trafficking education, awareness, and prevention. But we are not the experts. In the pages to follow, you will find a compilation of primary research, and you will hear from two featured subject matter experts, Glenda Skipper, Founder of One Child at a Time, and Annie Sovcik, Program Director of Busing on the Lookout (BOTL) - Truckers Against Trafficking. Both of our experts have spent years studying human trafficking, developing education and training materials that will provide you a solid understanding of what human trafficking is, the different education and training you and your teams can take, and the contact information you need to report suspicious activity related to trafficking.

Together, we can make a significant impact. As Glenda Skipper simply states: “If you anonymously report something and nothing comes of it – so be it, if you report something and you are right – you just saved a life. You have the power to save a life.”



Our Contributors

Annie Sovcik, Program Director | Busing on the Lookout



Annie Sovcik is the Director for Busing on the Lookout (BOTL), a program of Truckers Against Trafficking (TAT). As BOTL director, Annie is responsible for leading TAT's engagement with the bus industry (motorcoach, transit, and school). Annie came to TAT in 2018 with over 12 years of experience as a human rights lawyer, working on anti-human trafficking, anti-torture, and refugee protection policies at a national and international level. Prior to joining TAT, Annie was the director of the Washington DC office of the Center for Victims of Torture. She is a graduate of the University of New Mexico School of Law and received her BA in International Studies from the University of Denver.



BOTL educates the bus industry specifically, to spot and report potential signs of human trafficking. Equipping members of the bus industry to detect and report possible signs of sex trafficking can lead to the investigation, arrest, and prosecution of traffickers and freedom for victims. BOTL provides a wealth of information on the topic of human trafficking and great resources for training. Visit their [website](#) for additional information, or email asovcik@truckersagainsttrafficking.org.



Glenda Skipper, Founder/CEO | One Child at a Time

Glenda Skipper is the Founder/CEO of ONE CHILD AT A TIME, a 501(C)3 nonprofit in Florence, SC. Founded in January 2018, their mission is to eliminate modern slavery one person at a time to prevent human trafficking through education, rescue trafficked individuals through intervention, and restore human dignity through affirmation. Glenda has a BS in Business and Psychology and is currently completing her MA at Liberty University in Human Services, specializing in Trauma Counseling. She has been studying human trafficking for the past four years and partnering with all local Law Enforcement, Homeland Security, and ICE. She believes that when the community gets involved, trafficking is reduced!



Glenda currently speaks in schools, at churches, and civic organizations about what human trafficking is and what it looks like to be groomed by a predator. In the past 18 months, they educated over 7,000 children in Florence and the surrounding Pee Dee area, and will continue to fight against this evil until it is eradicated from our community, state, and country. Additional information is available on her [website](#), or via email onechildatathetime.co@gmail.com.



Their Stories

It Can Happen to Anyone.

Derrick got fired today, after taking a 30-minute bus ride into work – they fired him! Now he has another 30-minute ride back home. While sitting at the bus stop waiting, he meets Chris. The two strike up a conversation; they have a lot in common. Derrick blurts out the bad news he received earlier, but fortunately Chris has the perfect opportunity for him - he even offers Derrick a ride, and so his 'job' begins.

Samantha is sick of living with her mom and her younger siblings and never having enough money to get the things she wants. Her friend Steven who she met online says he's starting a band and Samantha can sing lead. He offers to buy her bus ticket so she can join him in the next town over, and she's sold! Unfortunately, Samantha never sings a note on stage.

Although these stories are fictional, they originate from many similar stories. How can you help Derrick or Samantha? The first step is education.



Defining Human Trafficking

Human trafficking involves the use of force, fraud, or coercion to obtain some type of labor or commercial sex act. The Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 (TVPA), as amended (22 USC § 7102), defines “severe forms of trafficking in persons” as sex trafficking and labor trafficking¹. You may be surprised to learn that human trafficking is the second largest criminal activity in the world exceeded only by drug trafficking². Every year, millions of men, women, and children are trafficked worldwide – including right here in the United States.

Common Types of Trafficking

Sex trafficking and labor trafficking are big business. It’s estimated that they produce \$150 billion in global profits per year³.

Sex Trafficking

The recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, obtaining, patronizing, or soliciting of a person for the purpose 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 act has not attained 18 years of age⁴.

Examples: Prostitution, sex tourism, and pornography.

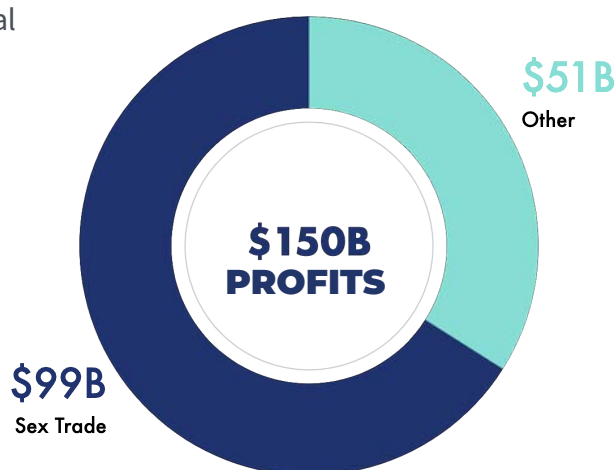
Labor Trafficking

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 by the International Labor Organization⁵.

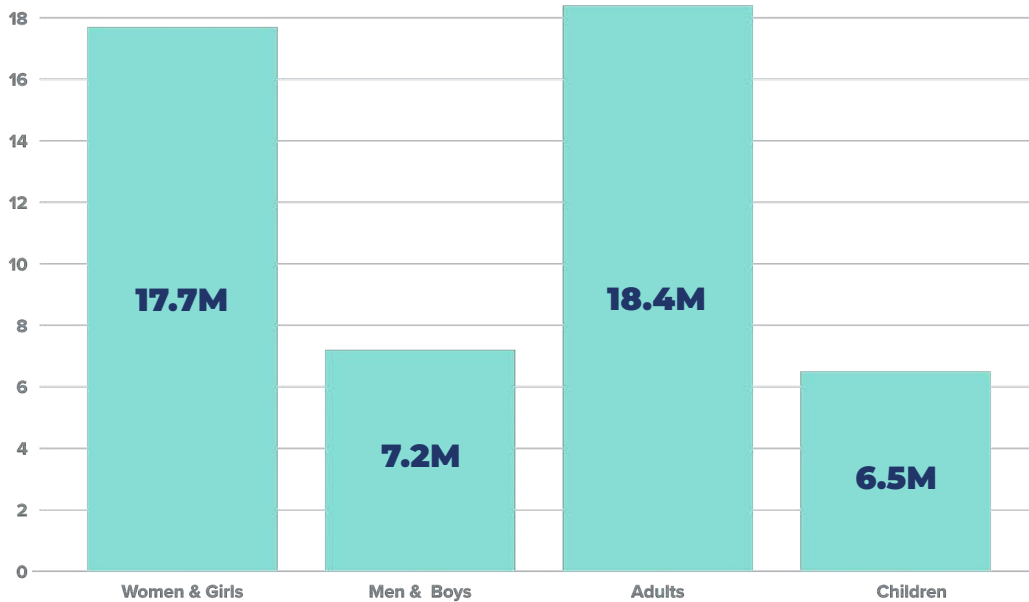
Examples: Servile marriage, factory work, agriculture work, construction, hotel and tourism industries.

Here is a closer look at the numbers:

- Of the \$150 billion in profits, the International Labor Organization attributes about \$99 billion to sexual exploitation.
- According to the International Labor Organization, there are 24.9 million people who are being trafficked around the world.
- 71% are women and girls, 29% are men and boys. 74% are adults; 26% are children⁶.
- In the US, in 2017, nearly 9,000 cases were reported to the National Human Trafficking Hotline and BeFree Textline. The Polaris Project notes a 13% increase over the prior year⁷.





Victim Breakdown 24.9M



Through our research, RATP Dev has been made aware of the rate at which human trafficking is increasing throughout the United States, and we are committed to help eliminate it. Our overarching goal is to aid in the awareness, education, and prevention of this crime. By no means do we expect nor suggest your participation in the prevention of a crime in process. We understand the primary focus is providing safe and reliable transportation to the community. But we also know that, as public transit professionals, we are in a unique position when it comes to this issue. We intend to provide the information, strategies, and resources that you can use to help save a life.

Resources you can use:

 [The Blue Campaign](#) is a national public awareness campaign designed to educate the public, law enforcement, and other industry partners to recognize the indicators of human trafficking and how to appropriately respond to possible cases. The website contains a collection of campaign materials, training, and videos on this topic.

 [The Polaris Project](#) analyzes data collected from the US National Human Trafficking Hotline and research from other available sources of information, working closely with survivors, to create insightful and actionable solutions that shine a light on the shadowy world of human traffickers to shut them down.

National Human Trafficking Hotline: 1-888-373-7888.

Hiding in Plain Sight

Myths about Human Trafficking

Human Trafficking can happen in any community at any time of day or night, and victims can be any age, race, gender, or nationality. There are many myths and misconceptions that exist about both sex and labor trafficking. **To better understand the critical nature of this crime, it is important to be aware of what it is and what it is not.**

Myths	Facts
Human trafficking is a crime that only happens in other countries.	Human trafficking is an international and nationwide crime that is happening in communities everywhere.
Human Trafficking is a crime that takes advantage of poor and hopeless individuals.	Human trafficking does not discriminate on the base of race, gender, age, socioeconomic status, or nationality. Families, as a group, can also be trafficked.
Smuggling individuals into the country is done through human trafficking.	Smuggling is not the same as human trafficking. Smuggling involves consent to movement across borders in violation of immigration laws, while trafficking is based on the exploitation of the individual regardless of consent.
Only people over the age of 18 can be victims of labor and sex trafficking.	Unfortunately, children under the age of 18 are also victims of both labor and sex trafficking.
If victims of human trafficking wanted to be rescued, they would seek help and leave that life behind.	The fear of punishment, the influence of drugs, and other forms of violent threats can keep human trafficking victims from seeking help to take back their freedom.

**The above myths and facts have been summarized from the Blue Campaign⁸. Please visit their website for additional information.*

How does it happen?

Predators use a variety of methods to lure in and take advantage of their victims, the most common attraction being the promise of a better life. Technology such as smartphone applications and social media is one of the easiest ways for criminals to access potential victims. According to Glenda Skipper, “Social media is the ‘open door’ to crime, including human trafficking.” Add to technology the false guarantees of well-paying jobs, romantic relationships, or a sense of belonging, and victims become trapped before they are even aware of what is actually happening. Criminals also often take advantage of people with language barriers and mental illness in their ploy to recruit innocent victims.

Once traffickers gain the trust of their victims, they trap them into the criminal lifestyle using violence, manipulation, and fear to keep them under their control. Fear, of their traffickers and/or law enforcement, is devastating and debilitating; therefore, victims frequently refrain from seeking help, and human trafficking remains in the shadows – hiding in plain sight.

The Red Flags

Awareness and recognition are critical for identifying and preventing human trafficking. In fact, being able to identify a human trafficking situation could mean the difference between life and death for the victims. Red flags for this criminal activity vary widely from person to person and situation to situation. Listed below are some signs that have triggered concerned citizens to take notice. While this list is obviously not exhaustive, it does provide realistic examples.

Signs that could indicate human trafficking is taking place⁹:


- The person has no form of identification
- The person is visibly uncomfortable, nervous, or scared
- A younger person, with an older adult, is not allowed to speak for themselves, is being coached on what to say, or is submissive in nature
- A young person out late alone and explicitly dressed or out alone during the school day if he/she is school age
- Visible bruising on an individual
- A dazed, disoriented or confused individual showing signs of mental abuse or drug abuse


“Be suspicious—appropriately so. Notice people, hear them, and read between the lines.”

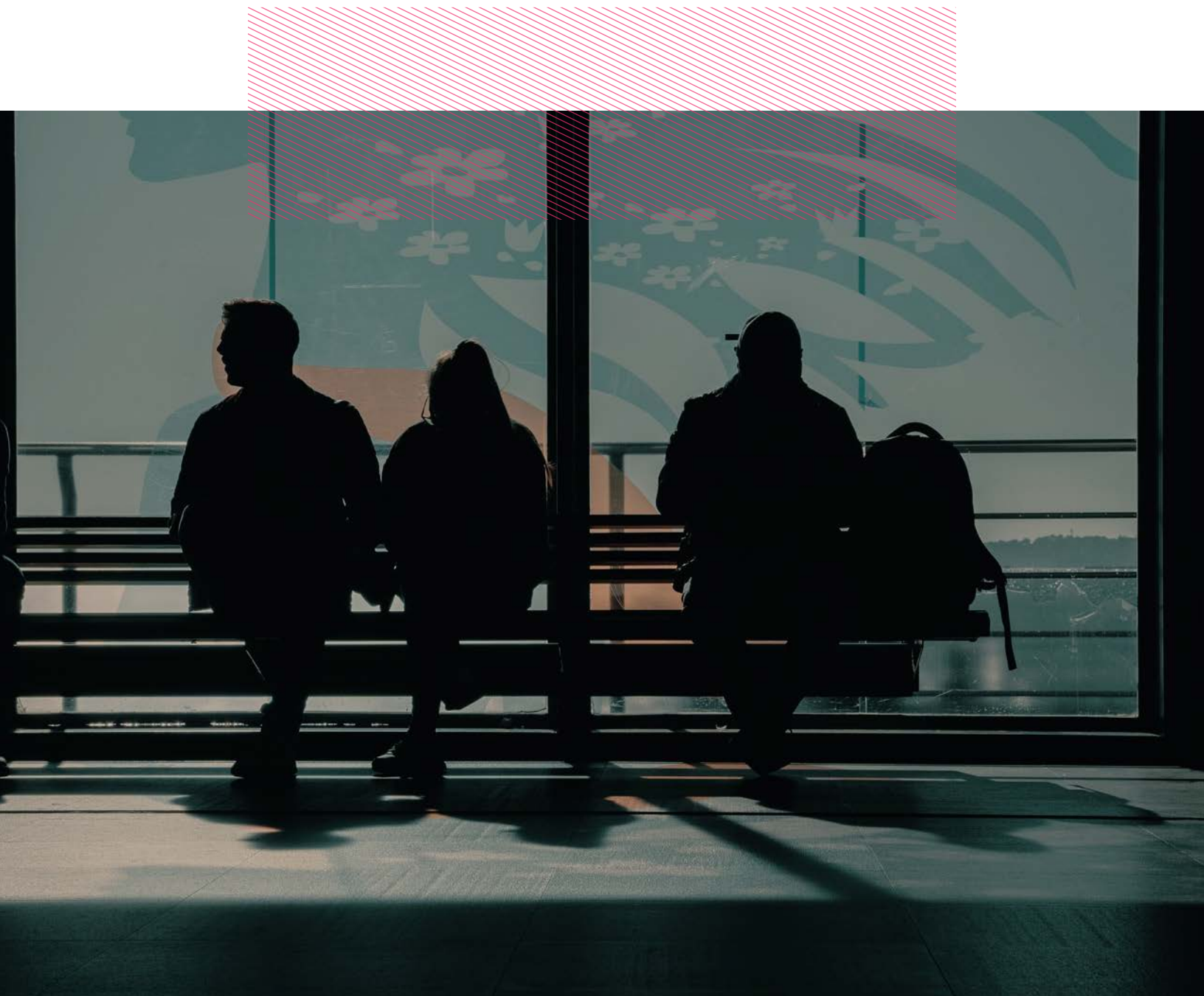
- ANNE SOVCIK

A little extra awareness and a sense of empathy for others will help you become conscious of behaviors that are hiding in plain sight. When you see something suspicious, alert the authorities by calling the **National Human Trafficking Hotline: 1-888-373-7888**. Calls about possible human trafficking occurrences can be reported anonymously. By taking action, we become active disruptors of this crime and aid in the prevention of it.

Resources you can use:

 The US Department of Transportation (DOT) believes that raising public awareness is key, and provides [print-ready posters](#) for the transportation industry free of charge.

 The Blue Campaign provides free [indicator cards](#) that list common signs of human trafficking and how to report the crime. The card is pocket-size and is available in over 15 different languages.





Difference Makers

The Transit Industry

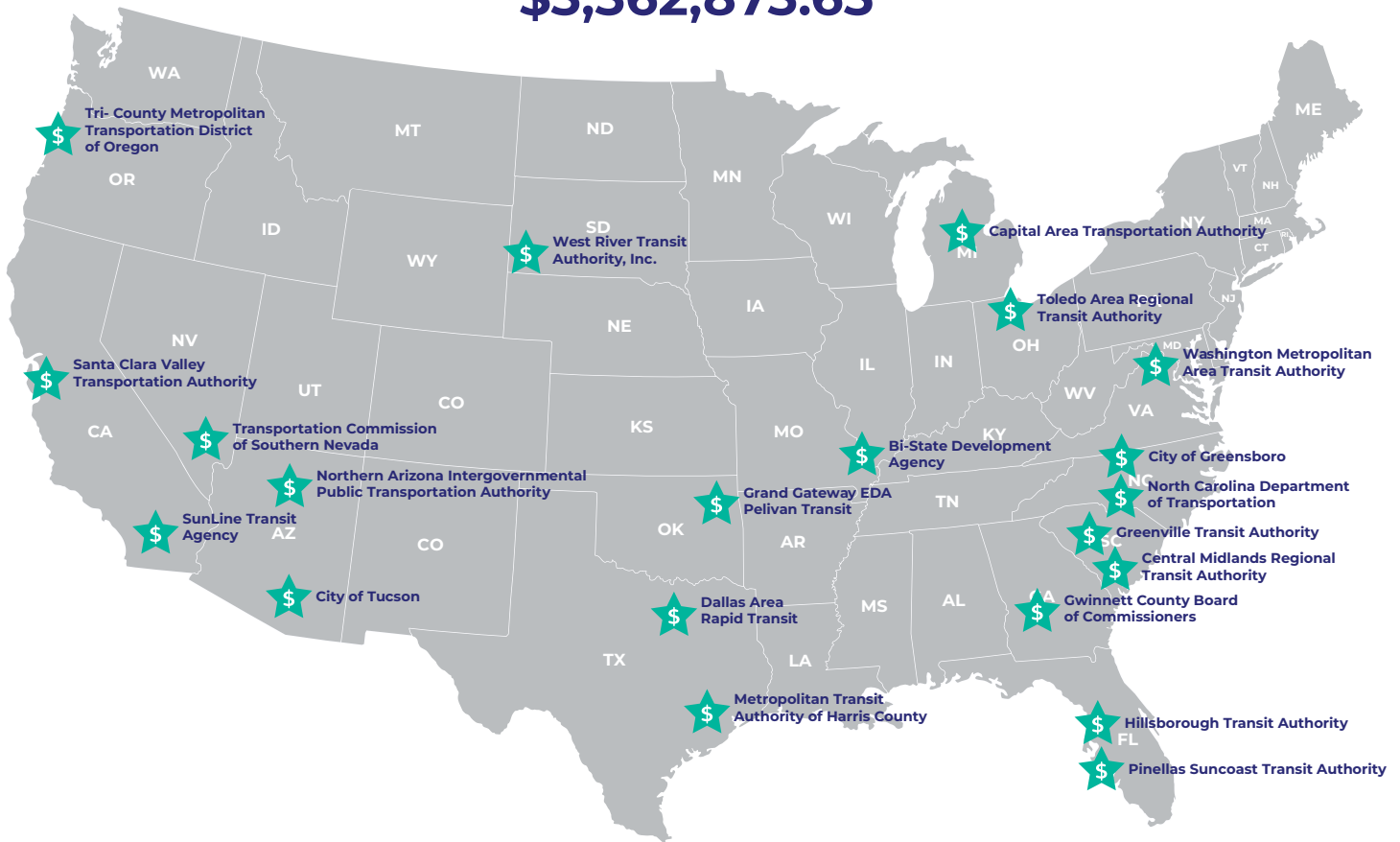
The success of human trafficking depends on multiple industries to stay in business, creating a ripple effect of problems for our communities. Criminals use legitimate companies - various modes of transit, hotels, and even banks – to keep their criminal enterprises operational.

As transit providers, we are the eyes and ears within our local communities. We are in the business of moving people from point A to point B, an essential service for every community. But while we help mothers get to grocery stores, the elderly get to doctor's appointments, and everyone in between get to schools, government offices, and places of employment, we also unintentionally and unknowingly aid in the business of human trafficking. From bus stops and shelters to vehicles, human traffickers use all the assets of our industry for their business transactions in both sex and labor trafficking.

Over the past 20 years, human trafficking and its negative impacts have evolved and captured the attention of our federal, state, and local governments to get involved and support the fight against this criminal activity. The US Department of Transportation (DOT) combats human trafficking by working with public and private sector stakeholders to empower transportation employees and the traveling public to recognize and report possible instances of human trafficking. The Transportation Leaders Against Human Trafficking (TLAHT) initiative was formed in 2012, specifically for transportation and travel industry stakeholders to focus on areas of leadership, training, and education, policy development, public awareness, and information sharing to reduce the occurrences of human trafficking¹⁰.

In January of 2020, The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) announced \$5.4 million in funding to 24 transit agencies specifically for the awareness and prevention of human trafficking¹¹. Through these grants, transit systems nationwide are allocating funds to help in the education and reduction of this crime in their communities.

Total FTA Grant Dollars: \$3,362,873.65



One such public transit system is RATP Dev USA's Sun Tran, in Tucson, AZ. In addition to its bus operation, this transit agency also operates streetcar and shuttle services. The grant will enable Sun Tran to provide training to all operators, supervisors, customer service staff and managers on how to recognize signs of human trafficking and ways to help with prevention. The grant also includes a public awareness campaign to promote the knowledge of safe places for those in need. Once complete, Sun Tran's training staff will be qualified to provide additional training to new employees, other transit systems, and area school bus operators.

"Sun Tran is excited to have this opportunity to support efforts to fight human trafficking."

**- STEVE SPADE
GENERAL MANAGER, SUN TRAN**

Training

Training begins with the support of industry leaders and the buy-in of team members. As a new bus driver, operator, mechanic, and supervisor, you must go through various training to ensure you are adept at doing your job successfully and understand what is expected of you. Being an advocate for victims of human trafficking is no different. Advocates need to be equipped with the tools and knowledge of best practices that empower them to help victims. In fact, training is particularly important when dealing with such an intense and challenging topic. Fortunately, training is widely available and easily accessible to team members in our industry and the public.

A leader in training tools and resources specific to our industry is Busing on the Lookout (BOTL), which started in 2017 to increase awareness of human trafficking and educate bus drivers on ways they can help victims. BOTL is a result of the success experienced by the nonprofit organization, Truckers against Trafficking (TAT). To date, TAT training has resulted in 2,496 calls made to the National Human Trafficking Hotline, and 1,230 victims being identified¹².

“With the right information and the right tools,” says BOTL Program Director Annie Sovcik, “we build a mobile army that are no longer passive enablers but active disruptors.”

As bus drivers, our number one goal is to provide safe transportation for our passengers. It is a goal we must remember when we suspect human trafficking is occurring. It is not our responsibility to get involved in an active crime of human trafficking – that can be dangerous everyone involved. To remain safe and protect the wellbeing of potential victims as much as possible, contact the appropriate authorities and the National Human Trafficking Hotline so law enforcement can do their job and investigate these situations.

Resources you can use:



The [Busing on the Lookout](#) website provides training videos, a bus wallet card, brochures, and posters specifically for transit professionals. Visit their website to access these resources and complete the training to get certified.



[Transportation Leaders Against Human Trafficking](#) offers opportunities to take action with other transit professionals against human trafficking through training and partnerships.

**“When the community is involved,
trafficking is reduced – we can only combat
this evil together.”**

- GLENDA SKIPPER

Spirit of Strength

Making the Connections

Compassion and care go a long way in the fight against trafficking. Victims feel trapped and often do not have the physical or psychological strength to escape. Encountering someone who cares about them as human beings could be all the hope they need to seize their opportunity to break away and transition from victim to survivor. The Polaris study underscores the critical role transit plays for trafficking victims seeking escape or recovery. According to the study, more than 25% of the survivors say that public and mass transportation systems were vital to their eventual escape¹³.

In addition to providing safe transportation, best practices call for transit drivers to know and be able to direct survivors to safe havens where they can get the help and support they need. Each community has local options for survivors of sex and labor trafficking, including:


- Local Law Enforcement
- Homeless Shelters
- Crisis centers
- Soup kitchens


Building these connections and partnerships in each community is vital to stop the spread of human trafficking. Together, we provide the hope that these survivors are so desperately seeking.

Continuing the Conversations

We have unique opportunities to share the information and resources around human trafficking. For instance, our buses can be used to share the National Human Trafficking Hotline number. They can also display advertisements that show we, as an industry, care. By sharing these messages, we can make the citizens of our communities aware of the stark reality of human trafficking and increase the number of eyes and ears watching for this crime. While we understand that this is not an easy subject to discuss, it is a topic that needs to be addressed in order to save potential victims and expose the criminal predators. The more people talk about human trafficking, the more likely we will be able to do to reverse its adverse effects and help eliminate it.

Resources you can use:

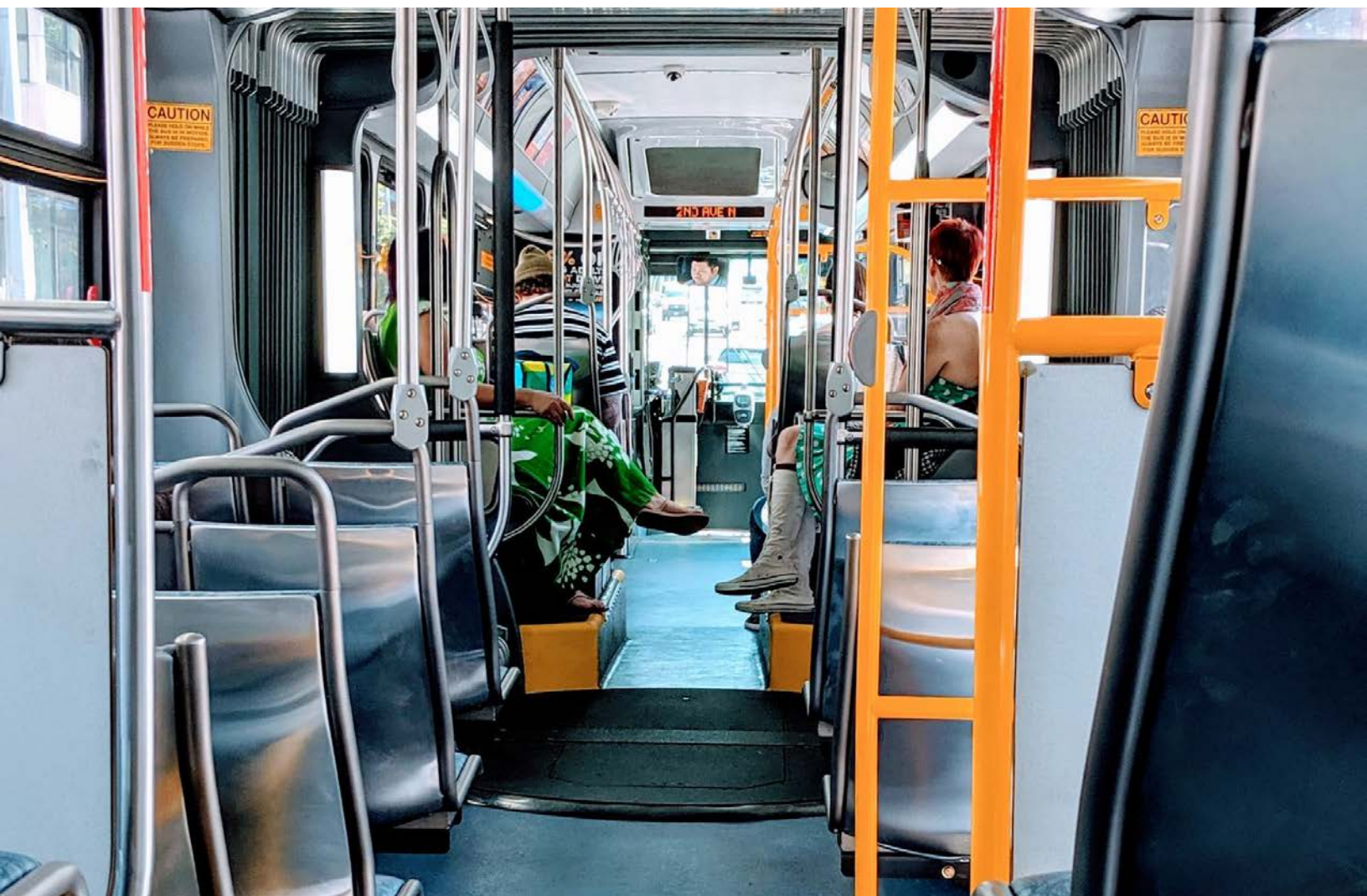
 [End Slavery Now](#) includes an international directory of organizations to help people get involved in the prevention of human trafficking and shares a variety of learning resources on the topic.

 [The Covenant House](#) is a directory of homeless shelters spanning 31 cities and six countries you can use to lookout up safe havens near you.

Conclusion

As a transit provider for more than 25 system locations, RATP Dev is grateful for the opportunity to bring attention to this topic and highlight what we as an industry can do to help save lives. We would like to thank our subject matter experts, Annie Sovcik of Busing on the Lookout and Glenda Skipper of One Child at a Time for their insight and information on human trafficking.

While we are not the experts on trafficking, we are honored to share the expertise and resources that are available on this subject. We encourage you to continue this conversation with your team members, your colleagues, your supervisors, and your families and friends. We have the power to prevent this criminal activity and save lives.





About RATP Dev USA

Founded in 2002, RATP Dev operates and maintains urban transportation systems in 12 countries on four continents (United Kingdom, France, Italy, Switzerland, Algeria, Morocco, South Africa, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, China, the Philippines, and the United States of America). With more than 1.5 billion passengers travelling on its networks every year, RATP Dev demonstrates every day its extensive and renowned expertise in a wide range of mobility services, ranging from rail, regional express rail, tramway, to bus, cable car and sightseeing activities. RATP Dev leverages in France, outside of Paris, and across international markets the technical expertise and experience of RATP Group, the leader in driverless and tramway operations and operator of the Paris network, one of the largest public transportation networks in the world. In North America RATP Dev employs over 6,000 team members transporting more than 78 million passengers in over 30 locations across the US, operating a wide range of services.

Resources

1. <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/otip/resource/fshumantrafficking>
2. <https://truckersagainsttrafficking.org/bus-training>
3. <https://fortune.com/2019/04/14/human-sex-trafficking-us-slavery>
4. <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/otip/resource/fshumantrafficking>
5. <https://humantraffickinghotline.org/what-human-trafficking/federal-law>
6. <http://www.my-sisters-house.org/getting-help/human-trafficking>
7. <https://polarisproject.org>
8. <https://www.dhs.gov/blue-campaign/myths-and-misconceptions>
9. <https://www.dhs.gov/blue-campaign/indicators-human-trafficking>
10. <https://www.transportation.gov/stophumantrafficking>
11. <https://www.transit.dot.gov/regulations-and-programs/safety/human-trafficking-awareness-and-public-safety-initiative>
12. <https://truckersagainsttrafficking.org/making-an-impact>
13. <https://www.transportation.gov/sites/dot.gov/files/docs/mission/administrations/office-policy/343931/acht-final-report-section-508-compliant.pdf>



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