

# Assembly Bill 2034

## Human Trafficking Awareness Training: Transit Employees

Assembly Member Ash Kalra

### SUMMARY

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In an effort to better identify and prevent cases of human trafficking, AB 2034 will require transit employees in bus, train, or light-rail operations to undergo human trafficking awareness training by January, 2020. The bill will also require the Department of Justice to develop guidelines for transit operations to assist in their training.

### BACKGROUND

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California has the highest number of reported human trafficking cases in the country, and many human trafficking victims are hidden in plain sight along our state's transportation routes. In 2016, California had a total of 1,331 reported cases, of which 1,052 were sex trafficking cases, 147 were labor trafficking cases, and 46 were sex and labor trafficking cases.

Nationally, there has been recognition that human trafficking training for transit employees is critical. In 2012, the U.S. Department of Transportation mandated that all 55,000 employees take human trafficking awareness training, and train services like Amtrak is also training its 20,000 employees. Despite its critical role, there is no mandated human trafficking training in California for transportation industry employees.

Starting in 2015, the Santa Clara County Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) in collaboration with the South Bay Coalition to End Human Trafficking initiated its own human trafficking employee training program. The training was provided to front-line employees, including coach and rail operators, maintenance workers, and other field positions who are likely to observe suspicious activity, and is now incorporated into all new employee orientations to better report suspected human trafficking activity to law enforcement.

Reports regarding potential human trafficking have increased as a result of VTA's training. In the first week of training alone, there were 8 tips from VTA drivers, and law enforcement was able to follow up to ensure the safety of the persons involved.

Shortly after receiving VTA's training, Coach Operator, Tim Watson, successfully stopped an incident of child abduction by recognizing the signs of suspicious activity and followed established protocol to quickly alert authorities and reporting staff. Later, during a media interview, he credited the human trafficking training with helping him prevent the abduction.

### SOLUTION

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By its very nature, human trafficking involves transportation and transit. Every day, thousands of people are forced by fear, fraud or coercion to work in commercial sex and labor markets with little hope of escape.

AB 2034 equips transit operators and employees on the front-line of defense with the training to identify the signs of human trafficking. By doing so, suspected acts of human trafficking can be properly reported and, if needed, acted upon by law enforcement to prevent further harm to the victim.

AB 2034 will also provide transit employers training guidelines modeled after VTA's successful program.

### SPONSOR

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Katharine & George Alexander Community Law  
Center  
Step Forward Foundation

### CONTACT

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Ryan Guillen, Legislative Director  
[Ryan.Guillen@asm.ca.gov](mailto:Ryan.Guillen@asm.ca.gov)  
(916) 319-2027