



U.S. Department of Transportation  
Federal Transit Administration



# Bus Maintenance and Bus Testing Program Peer-to-Peer Exchange

## Summary Report

### Background

Significant shifts in the types of transit buses being procured (e.g., from traditional buses to alternative fuel/low- and no-emission buses) require new and different types of frontline worker training. Responding to requests from the public transit industry, the Federal Transit Administration hosted a peer exchange to share knowledge about bus maintenance worker training and discuss best practices for developing the next generation of highly-skilled bus technicians. Participants in the peer exchange included transit agencies, original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) of buses and bus parts, trainers, academics, and employee representatives.

### Objectives

The goal of the peer exchange was to share knowledge and best practices and develop recommendations for bus maintenance worker training that address current and evolving needs.

### Findings and Conclusions

*Effective training for workers who maintain transit buses is essential to ensure that buses operate safely and efficiently and reach their expected useful life.*

Participants in the exchange provided their perspectives on the importance of bus maintenance worker training and made recommendations related to training, recruitment, and procurement. Transit industry representatives noted that the industry has moved from fleets that were primarily diesel to those that include a mix of diesel, CNG, hybrid and all electric buses, requiring technician familiarity. Trainers noted that training should be an ongoing endeavor and should include training on technical issues and asset, records, and personnel management, noting that budget limitations and quantification of training are important. OEM representatives noted that training should be provided a few months after buses are purchased before providing detailed training to allow for technician familiarity and should emphasize hands-on training.

FTA provided an overview of how FTA's Bus Testing Program can be used to lower maintenance costs, and a case study of SunLine Transit in California was presented on how a small transit agency can effectively incorporate multiple bus types into its fleet.

Recommendations from the exchange included the need for better information on the value of frontline worker training; the need for standardized curricula and shared training facilities and instructors; recognition that training should be considered part of the cost of adopting new technology; encouragement of partnerships among transit agencies, education institutions, and OEMs, among others; and the need for support from FTA and the American Public Transportation Association in the form of training workshops and guidance.

## Benefits

Today's frontline maintenance workers must be familiar with highly-technical equipment, and effective training for workers who maintain transit buses is essential to ensure that buses operate safely and efficiently and reach their expected useful life. The transit industry is in a time of both disruption and innovation, and FTA's goal is to work with all of its partners and customers to help them develop the workforce they need for today and for tomorrow. Information and recommendations from this exchange will help the industry move forward to meet training, recruitment, and procurement needs.

## Project Information

### FTA Report No. 0160

This research project was conducted by SK Solutions for the National Transit Institute (NTI). For more information, contact FTA Project Manager Lisa Colbert at (202) 366-9261 or [Lisa.Colbert@dot.gov](mailto:Lisa.Colbert@dot.gov). All research reports can be found at <https://www.transit.dot.gov/about/research-innovation>.