



U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Transit Administration



Identifying Current and Future Training Needs of the Public Transportation Industry

Final Report

Background

Acknowledging that technological progress and innovations largely shape the public transportation industry, the industry workforce is critical for guiding the sector through the 21st century. At the request of the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), the National Transit Institute conducted a study to assess and codify the public transportation industry's training practices, interests, and priorities and to determine training needs. This study is part of NTI's statutory mission to address training needs for the public transportation industry.

Objectives

Objectives of the study were to explore the workforce skills gaps in the U.S. public transportation industry, identify strategies to address those gaps, and seek approaches to more successfully recruit and retain employees representing the full spectrum of the transit workforce, from frontline to technical to professional staff.

Findings and Conclusions

Although challenges exist, the transit industry offers a diversity of job positions that can meet the career goals of nationwide job seekers with divergent ambitions and skill sets.

This report identifies the training needs of the public transportation industry and includes background information on expected trends in the industry, a review of prior work that examined training issues, and a qualitative and quantitative research approach to gather more detailed information. It also includes issues associated with recruitment and retention of employees, as these are critically linked to training needs. Primary data were collected through a literature review, listening sessions with transit industry professionals, a nationwide online survey of transit agency employees from all 50 states, and focus groups with staff and leaders of transit agencies, labor unions, consultants, and higher education institutions.

Selected key findings identified to building and enhancing the transit workforce were the following:

- The right skills exist.
- Resources and available training time are scarce.
- There is a lack of awareness of careers.

- Agencies use a variety of strategies for recruitment.
- Strong benefit packages help retain staff.
- Rapidly-changing technologies are a challenge.
- Cross-cutting training needs are important.

Selected strategies include the following:

- Pursue partnerships within and beyond the public transportation industry.
- Consider creation of a fresh, public-facing national campaign.
- Identify and clearly communicate transit industry staffing needs.
- Initiate and sustain a concerted effort to develop a workforce that more closely reflects the diversity of the U.S. and the communication that transit agencies serve.
- Specify step-by-step career ladders.
- Maintain up-to-date and high-quality training programs and materials.
- Develop and promote a supportive and positive work culture.

Benefits

This research aims to inform and inspire the leaders of the U.S. transit workforce to engage and empower the transit industry of today and tomorrow to “strive to become better than we are,” with the ultimate goal of fostering a thriving workforce supporting the mobility of their individual communities and the mobility of the nation. Exploring and implementing many of the recommended strategies will greatly aid U.S. transit agencies in their attempt to build and strengthen their workforce.

Project Information

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