

E-7: Initiating a National Joint Transit Industry Rail Vehicle Technician Certification Program: Building for Success

DRAFT Components of a Work Program **Revised per Panel Meeting, March 6, 2007**

Project E-7 will be fully integrated with the ongoing labor-management project for developing national training standards for transit rail car technicians. This is also part of a broader effort developing a comprehensive system of standards for transit maintenance training and a national framework supporting transit maintenance apprenticeship. The goal is to develop a national joint certification system through the Community Transportation Center for transit rail vehicle technicians.

The first year's work is expected to build on four initial major tasks, once the TCRP contract funding is in place (expected in June 2008).

Major Task 1. Draw lessons for transit from joint training and certification systems in other US industries and internationally

- 1.1 Analyze and produce a report on the certification/testing methods used by national labor-management partnerships in other industries
- 1.2 Identify lessons that could be most usefully adapted for use by a national labor-management certification system for transit rail car technicians.
- 1.3 Gather data on the industry-wide systems of training and certification from countries that have well developed systems for the transit industry. This will include an overview of systems in at least Canada, Germany, Denmark and the Netherlands. Data will include how transit systems and labor work together, involvement of government and educational institutions, and certification methods and criteria.
- 1.4 Deliverable: A working paper that describes the lessons identified in Major Task 1.

Major Task 2. Produce a feasibility study of a proposed national certification system for rail car technicians (Excluding FRA for now)

- 2.1 Analyze the number of workers likely to participate each year (consider possible inclusion of railroad rail car maintainers) – based on different scenarios: voluntary or mandatory certification. Gather data on population of rail mechanics in each technical area through a survey of all US transit rail systems.
- 2.2 Analyze the optimum frequency of testing.
- 2.3 Analyze alternative test methods and their combinations (e.g., on-line tests, paper and pencil, computer-based tests with printout option, and/or hands on – simulation for certain tests).

- 2.4 Analyze approaches to grandfathering incumbents and developing incentives for passing certifications.
- 2.5 Analyze administrative issues in testing, including cost per test, life-cycle costs, methods of assuring complete integrity of the test process, test proctoring, test scoring, protecting against liability exposure, re-certification, development of study guides and pre-tests, etc.
- 2.6 Analyze cost structure for ongoing system of rail vehicle technician testing, including costs for developing an initial system, and ongoing costs of administration and periodic updating of test questions.
- 2.7 Develop a business plan that is institutionally sound for the long term, with an analysis of options for meeting any funding shortfall for financing such a system beyond nominal per-test charges to technicians and/or their employers.

Major Task 3. Prepare interim report number one summarizing Major Tasks 1 and 2 and organize a panel meeting to review report.

Major Task 4. Analyze options and develop a consensus proposal on the best way to integrate test administration systems institutionally with the work of the Transport Center. Options to be evaluated include:

- 4.1 A structure combining a national labor-management policy committee supported by a joint technical committee, with members nominated by national transit organizations, as an ongoing set of activities at the Center.
- 4.2 A similar structure in a self-contained nonprofit 501(c)3 as a subsidiary to the Center.
- 4.3 A similar structure as a stand-alone organization.
- 4.4 Test administration processes (i.e., how and where tests would be offered, scoring, record keeping, etc.).

Major Task 5. Develop interim report #2 including revised interim report #1 and results from Major Task 4 and organize a panel meeting to review report.

- 5.1 Develop and circulate the second interim report, including a detailed proposal for the certification program that could then be vetted through the transit labor unions, APTA committees, transit systems, etc.
- 5.2 Organize a panel meeting to review two reports and the proposed review procedure
- 5.3 Begin to carry out industry review that will take place through presentations and discussions at relevant national meetings of APTA (the Rail Vehicle Inspection and Maintenance Committee), ATU (Maintenance Seminar) and other transit unions, and through focused discussions with leaders of transit systems and their unions in