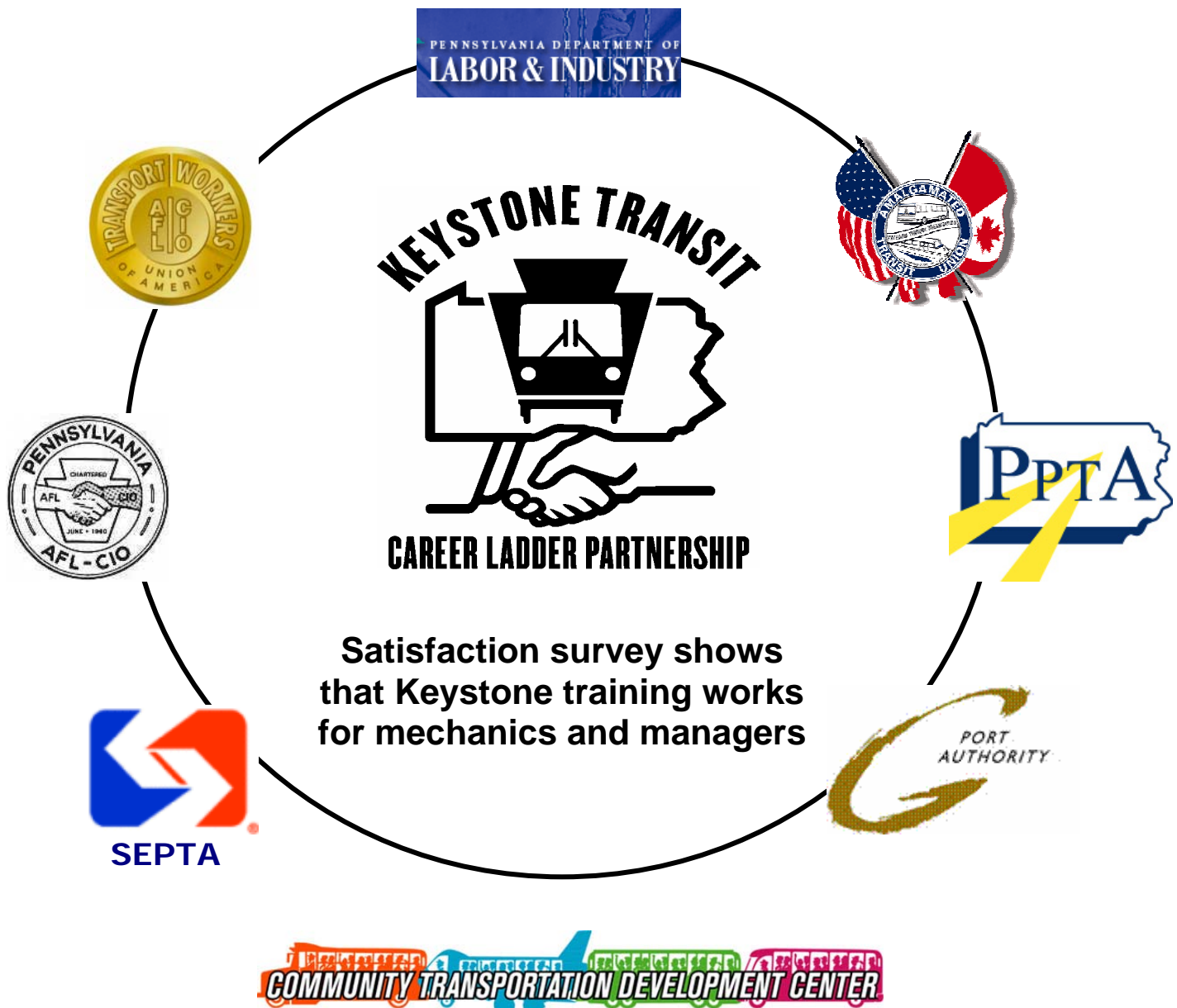


**Keystone**

# Making a Difference in Pennsylvania Transit

## Worker and Supervisor Satisfaction Survey - Keystone Case Study Interim Report



**Transportation Center  
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# **Making a Difference in Pennsylvania Transit - Keystone Case Study Interim Report**

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## **Summary**

The Keystone Transit Career Ladder Partnership has generated broad support from supervisors and workers in both small and large Pennsylvania transit agencies, as shown in this Transportation Center survey. Transit workers and supervisors in general feel very positively about Keystone training. Workers consider their experience to be rewarding and satisfactory, and desire more Keystone training in the future. Supervisors believe that Keystone has helped workplace problem resolution and hope to send more workers to these courses. Transit supervisors, members of the Transport Workers Union and Amalgamated Transit Union, and non-union transit mechanics perceive that Keystone has helped move their organizations toward more efficient and effective maintenance operations, while increasing mutual trust between supervisors and workers. The survey also reveals that improvements remain to be made in areas such as program communication, trainee selection and mentoring.

## **Making a Difference in Pennsylvania Transit - Keystone Case Study Interim Report**

### **I. Introduction**

With support and input from local partners and project staff, the Transportation Center initiated an in-depth case study on the Keystone Transit Career Ladder Partnership in the summer of 2003. This interim report is part of continuing case study research by the Transportation Center. An important objective of the case study is to measure the impacts of training using both quantitative and qualitative data. The initial research involved analysis of program documents and structured interviews with Keystone leaders, Pennsylvania transit managers, local union workgroup members and project staff. The first report based on that research, *Pennsylvania Transit on the High Road*, was published in July 2003.

Information collected from various sources shows that training has made a difference in the Pennsylvania transit maintenance world: In Philadelphia, training managers describe a dramatic increase in the practical exam passing rate of bus mechanic trainees after launching the Keystone training effort; top managers see a trend line tying improving skills to improving overall maintenance performance; line managers report fewer instances of buses sent back for rework after repair. General and maintenance managers in smaller properties consistently note that Keystone training courses result in better quality work in the shop. In one particular case, a severely damaged bus that was left untouched for months in a rural facility came back into service after two mechanics from Keystone's basic electrical course rewired its entire electrical system.

Despite all these positive accounts, some questions remained unanswered: What do the *trainees* themselves think about the training program? Do they feel that their knowledge and skills have been raised because of training? Has training had any positive effect on the successful completion of their daily job tasks? Furthermore, are *first-line supervisors* of these trainees satisfied with the training process and results? Has training helped make maintenance operation more effective and efficient? Are there things to be improved? This interim report analyzes the program as perceived by trainees and their supervisors.

### **II. Survey Method**

During the latter half of 2003, more than 350 Pennsylvania transit workers and supervisors took part in a survey designed by the Transportation Center to measure their satisfaction with the Keystone training<sup>1</sup>. Results from these surveys were not included in *Pennsylvania Transit on the High Road*, but will be incorporated in the

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<sup>1</sup> PAT Transit in Pittsburgh and ATU Local 85 had not joined the Keystone Partnership at the time this survey was conducted. Therefore, no data in this report represents PAT Transit worker and supervisor opinion. The Center will carry out a similar survey in Pittsburgh in the future.

forthcoming quantitative study, *The Keystone Transit Partnership: Measuring Up*<sup>2</sup>. This report provides statewide Keystone leaders with a preliminary analysis of how front-line workers and supervisors view the training.

With 234 SEPTA trainees on the survey roster and 146 completing the questionnaire, the response rate for the Philadelphia worker survey was 62.3 percent. Twenty two questionnaires were completed and returned by SEPTA maintenance supervisors, with 11 from bus, 5 from facilities maintenance, 4 from underground power, and 2 from rail<sup>3</sup>. For the 22 smaller properties which have sent workers to Keystone training, a total of 76 trainees were polled and 63 responded, for a response rate of 82.9 percent. In addition, 11 transit supervisors outside Philadelphia completed the survey, which represents roughly half of all the direct supervisors to the statewide Keystone trainees.

Trainees and supervisors were polled using different confidential questionnaires with some overlapping questions<sup>4</sup>. They were asked to indicate their transit agencies, maintenance divisions and job titles, and courses they or the workers they supervise have attended. They then rated a series of statements on a 5 point scale ranging from Strongly Agree (1) to Strongly Disagree (5). Additional comments could be included at the end of the survey.

### **III. Overall Survey Findings**

Surveys conducted in the 23 large and small Pennsylvania transit properties participating in Keystone show that that Keystone has generated broad support from supervisors and workers. Workers consider Keystone classes and mentoring program<sup>5</sup> to be very rewarding and satisfactory. They agree that the subjects covered by the training sessions are much needed skills in their workplace. They also believe that training has helped augment their technical skills and dramatically improved overall maintenance efficiency. Workers highly desire more Keystone training opportunities and express interest in several training subject areas that have not been covered.

Front-line supervisors also indicate that their experience with Keystone has been extremely positive. They believe that Keystone training has helped problem solving in the workplace and built mutual trust between workers and foremen. From their Keystone experience, most supervisors surveyed feel that cooperative labor-management training program is an effective way to upgrade worker skills, and they hope to send more workers to courses that Keystone offers.

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<sup>2</sup> Collection of the surveys took longer than anticipated. The last batch of completed questionnaires was returned to the Center in Spring 2004.

<sup>3</sup> The group size of SEPTA supervisors and the supervisor survey response rate will be presented in the detailed report *Measuring Up*.

<sup>4</sup> In addition, the statewide survey questionnaires were administered without reference to mentoring programs and reliance on manufacturers' extended warranties.

<sup>5</sup> The mentoring program has only been offered in the bus maintenance division at SEPTA.

Some improvements remain to be made in several areas. Program communication and trainee selection methods appear to be weaker links across the state. In Philadelphia, bus trainees voice specific concerns with the mentoring program, such as mentor qualification and willingness of mentor to teach.

The detailed presentation of the survey findings is divided into two sections. The first section addresses results from the Philadelphia area worker and supervisor survey, and the second one analyzes opinions from the rest of the state.

The charts on the following pages provide a complete report of Pennsylvania transit worker and supervisor survey questions and responses. For each group of questions, two bar charts are provided to show: (a) detailed percentages of trainees who strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree with the statement; and (b) combined percentages for all those agreeing, and for all those disagreeing. To simplify the display of these results, these charts do not present “neutral” responses, therefore the “agree” and “disagree” percentages may not add up to 100%.

#### **IV. Philadelphia Area Survey Findings**

##### **A. Keystone Positively Viewed by SEPTA Workers and Supervisors**

Overall survey results show that both workers and supervisors feel very positively about Philadelphia Keystone training.

**SEPTA Worker Survey:** Nearly all the workers feel that training is important for them to do their jobs. Workers consider their experience with Keystone classes and mentoring programs to be rewarding and satisfactory. Most of them believe that the subjects covered by these training sessions are much needed skills in their workplace. Keystone has helped move the organization toward more efficient and effective maintenance operations, while increasing mutual trust between supervisors and workers. More than 90 percent of the respondents would like to be involved in more Keystone training in the future. Detailed analysis also reveals a positive link between the number of courses trainees took and the overall rating they give to the program.