

WORKING TOGETHER

A SYSTEMS APPROACH FOR TRANSIT TRAINING



INTRODUCTION

The transit industry is building effective labor-management partnerships to address its critical skills challenges resulting from changing technology, shifting workforce demographics and growing ridership. Led by the American Public Transportation Association (APTA) and the Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU), and with staff support from the Transportation Learning Center, transit systems and local unions – from ATU, Transport Workers Union (TWU), International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) and elsewhere – have been working together to develop a system of consensus training guidelines. The results are presented in this report.

This joint activity is both important and unprecedented for our industry. On issues such as training, where management and labor have parallel interests, our industry can get far better solutions for everyone by working together.

We recommend these consensus guidelines – and this process – to public transportation systems and their unions. Working together, we can build a better public transportation industry.



WARREN S. GEORGE
International President
Amalgamated Transit Union



WILLIAM W. MILLAR
President
American Public Transportation Association



OVERVIEW

WORKING TOGETHER: A SYSTEMS APPROACH FOR TRANSIT TRAINING

Transit faces a critical skills challenge driven by changing technologies, shifting workforce demographics and record-breaking growth in ridership.

Working Together: A Systems Approach for Transit Training outlines how constructive training partnerships provide the most effective way for the transit industry to address its skill challenges. National labor-management committees have met regularly for several years to develop consensus training guidelines. These joint committees have been focusing on five transit maintenance occupations: bus, rail signals, traction power, rail vehicles and elevator/escalator. A parallel joint effort has been crafting a national framework for transit apprenticeship.

Consensus national training guidelines make it possible for transit organizations and partnerships to assess the current skills of their workforce through a skills gap analysis. They can use the guidelines to conduct a training gap analysis that measures the quality of their current curriculum and training materials. After identifying current skills gaps and training gaps, the recommended guidelines can be used to create a customized training improvement plan. Among other applications, the training guidelines can be used for courseware mapping which can lead to courseware sharing among transit training programs.

Emerging from the work of these committees is a national system to support transit training partnerships. Local partnerships are possible between labor and management at a single location and regional training partnerships among transit systems and their training partnerships. When labor and management work together, they can create effective and sustainable systems of training. Regional training consortia are powerful tools to provide cost-effective and high-quality training to transit agencies.

Improving transit workforce skills through partnership-based, data-driven training yields very high rates of return on training investments. Labor and management, by working together, can solve the transit skills challenge and strengthen the entire industry.



Honorable Rodney Slater
Former US Secretary of Transportation

Recruiting the next generation of skilled workers is an imperative for America's public transportation industry. With transit's career ladder jobs young people can start building their careers

soon after high school and connect their professional development to academic opportunities. With expanded training resources, transit labor and management working together can reach out to train young people for productive careers © Transportation Learning Center 2009

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SECTION ONE: STRENGTHENING TRANSIT THROUGH A SYSTEM OF QUALITY TRAINING

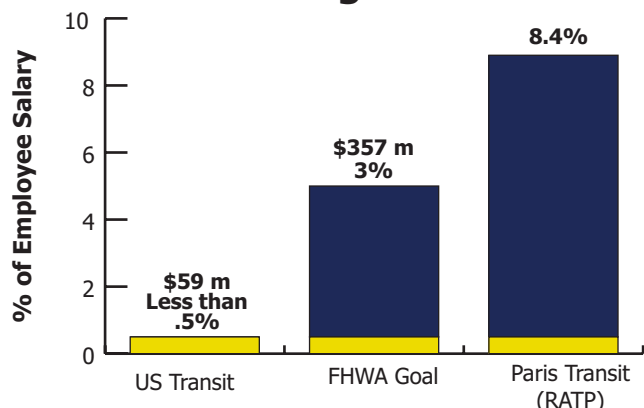
Changing technologies, shifting workforce demographics and record-breaking ridership levels make the effective development of new skills for the transit workforce more urgent than ever.

Transit labor and management have been working together actively since 2004 to resolve this skills challenge. Through a consensus-based approach, participating leaders are developing training guidelines to improve the quality of the industry's training, expand training capacity more rapidly and greatly reduce training costs. The American Public Transportation Association (APTA) and partner transit unions, led by the Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU), are national sponsors of this effort with the Transportation Learning Center, a labor-management nonprofit, providing staff support. The Federal Transit Administration, the US Department of Labor and the Transit Cooperative Research Program have also provided essential support.

Transit capital equipment is expensive and complex. New technologies such as hybrid-electric propulsion, intelligent transportation systems and advanced electronics are continually coming on line. Operating and maintaining this capital equipment requires making a parallel investment in transit's human capital. Yet in most cases, quality training for modern electronics, contemporary propulsion and other systems is not available to the transit workforce.

While transit's advanced equipment requires an increasingly skilled workforce, a large portion of the most skilled technicians are nearing retirement, with some 40 percent of skilled transit mechanics reaching retirement age in the next decade. There is a pressing need to train those who will move into these highly skilled positions. New workforce demographics demand fresh forms of training.

Transit Training Investment



As a whole, the transit industry has not had sufficient resources to invest in training. Transit currently commits less than 0.5 percent of payroll to training, while the strongest industries strive for investments of four, five and even six percent. The Federal Highway Administration has set a training investment goal of three percent of payroll. While the industry works legislatively to increase the funds available for transit training, this joint process is creating effective approaches to training that can be implemented quickly and at a reasonable cost.

Through a partnership-based, data-driven process, labor and management experts have built the foundation for a comprehensive set of training guidelines. This joint effort began with bus maintenance occupations in 2004. Since 2005, it has also addressed maintenance training for transit rail vehicles, elevator/escalator, signals and traction power, along with a framework for transit apprenticeship. A companion project was launched in 2008 to explore developing a joint system of certification for rail car technicians. All of this work brings together maintenance managers, trainers and skilled technicians.

Faced with these converging forces of change, the transit industry needs innovative strategies to address transit's skills shortage. This is an industry-wide challenge that requires an industry-wide solution.

WORKING TOGETHER TO MAKE BETTER TRAINING A REALITY

A systems approach to transit training builds on the connections that link together all the components of good training:

- **Identifying the knowledge**, skills and abilities transit workers need to perform their jobs at the highest level of expertise with today's advanced technologies.
- **Organizing training** around the skill gaps of current workers.
- **Preparing** for transit's workforce demographic changes, including training, recruiting and developing future generations of workers.
- **Recognizing** that working together gives transit managers and their unions the best chance to successfully develop and implement quality training.
- **Building a national partnership** that links individual transit systems, their unions and the entire industry.

An interconnected system of training guidelines makes it possible for each local transit system to build on the solid foundation of a consensus national blueprint. The national training guidelines provide a common starting point for setting up new training or upgrading existing training in a way that fits with industry needs.

This shared foundation of training guidelines, approved curriculum and courseware makes it much easier to expand local training. Individual transit systems and their unions will no longer be in the difficult and expensive position of developing their own training programs in isolation. By sharing these resources, transit locations can deliver more and better training, quickly and at a greatly reduced cost.

A Partnership-Based, Data-Driven Process

To establish a systems approach for transit training, experts from labor and management representing transit agencies nation-wide jointly developed recommended training practices in critical maintenance occupations along with guidelines for apprenticeship. This framework for transit training builds directly on the knowledge of national and local experts from labor and management. These partnerships rely on jointly developed data to prioritize training needs.

Partnerships work in addressing mutual concerns: Labor-management partnerships work because they address concerns shared by both parties. Industry-based, labor-management partnerships have a successful track record in the US, including the limited training partnerships in transit, and in other countries where industries thrive with joint training systems. There is abundant evidence that the most successful, cost efficient and durable training systems come from industry-based, labor-management partnerships. With over 90 percent of transit's hourly workers represented by unions, the US public transportation industry is ready for constructive labor-management partnerships.



Dr. Beverly A. Scott

General Manager/CEO MARTA
Chair, APTA Executive Committee,
2008-2009

Over the past eight years, national leaders of transit management and labor have been building new partnerships to strengthen workforce training.

The most recent product of this joint effort is a system of consensus training guidelines. These are tools we can use to jointly build the skills our industry so urgently needs.