Rapidly advancing technologies, shifting workforce demographics and the increasing demand for more public transportation makes the effective development of new skills for the transit workforce an urgent need. As transit agencies upgrade their equipment and increase their service, they must also upgrade the skills of their workers.

Transit capital equipment is expensive and complex. New technologies such as hybrid-electric propulsion, clean diesel, intelligent transportation systems and advanced electronics are continually coming online. Operating and maintaining this equipment requires making a parallel investment in human capital. To compound this crisis, 40 percent of skilled transit mechanics will reach retirement age in the next decade. There is a pressing need to train the workers who will move into these highly skilled positions. New workforce demographics demand fresh and innovative forms of training.

Labor-management partnerships are a proven method for building skills and strengthening transit’s workforce. The Transportation Learning Center helps transit systems and unions establish a participative process for developing training programs. Labor-management partnerships work because they address concerns shared by both parties. With over 90 percent of transit’s hourly workforce represented by labor unions, the public transportation industry is ready for constructive partnerships.

Transit Needs Training Partnerships Now

Warren S. George
International President
Amalgamated Transit Union

Building the skills of transit workers is at long last being effectively addressed through the joint efforts of transit unions and transit agencies. Through a national system of training and apprenticeship, transit workers can expand training opportunities and develop the skills for America’s public transportation needs of the future. Transit workers welcome the opportunity to help lead these partnerships to expand skills, strengthen job security and expand career ladder opportunities.

William W. Millar
President
American Public Transportation Association

Workforce Development is a top priority for the transit industry. Labor and management working together in large and small properties to address the issues facing public transportation through a joint project helps take us to a brighter future for public transportation.

The Transportation Learning Center builds constructive labor-management partnerships to strengthen transit’s workforce. The Center is the only nonprofit organization that receives support from the Department of Labor, the Federal Transit Administration and the Transit Cooperative Research Program.

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The Transportation Learning Center builds constructive labor-management partnerships to strengthen transit’s workforce.
A transit maintenance department’s ability to perform on-time preventive maintenance inspections is essential to ensuring uninterrupted service for transit customers. The Capital District Transportation Authority began joint training with Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1321, CDTA increased the skills of its workforce and brought maintenance jobs back to CDTA and away from outside contractors. For example, before joint training, CDTA would replace batteries dropped sharply resulting in a $54 savings. Mechanics to a Keytone basic electric course. The frequency of replacing batteries dropped sharply resulting in a $54 savings.

Bringing Back Jobs

The Capital District Transportation Authority contracted out much of its maintenance work before the training partnership began. With the partnership-based training, CDTA increased the skills of its workforce and brought maintenance jobs back to CDTA and away from outside contractors. For example, before joint training, CDTA could not maintain its own radios. After training began, the maintenance department was able to start radio maintenance internally because they had made the investment in training.

Training partnerships yield fruitful financial gains for transit agencies. They result in fewer bus breakdowns, increasing the life-span of equipment, and contracting out less work.

Strengthened Preventive Maintenance Program

Before training, the preventive maintenance inspections improved to a rate of 97.3 percent after four years of joint training. Prior to the joint partnership, CDTA struggled to perform maintenance on equipment in a timely manner. Six months after training, the preventive maintenance inspections improved to a rate of 97.3 percent as compared to 93.9 percent in previous years.

Fewer Bus Defects

When workers receive adequate training, transit equipment performs at a more optimal level. After the Capital District Transportation Authority began joint training with Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1321, bus defects were reduced by 30 percent overall. AMT VAN, a transit agency in Pennsylvania that is part of Keystone, saved money on batteries after sending mechanics to a Keystone basic electric course. The frequency of replacing batteries dropped sharply resulting in a $54 savings.

Keystone Electric Training Helps Amtran Save Money on Batteries

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