

JOINT LABOR-MANAGEMENT TRAINING: A NEW OPPORTUNITY IN THE RAILROAD INDUSTRY

Need

The Rail Safety Improvement Act of 2008 became law October 16, 2008. Title IV, Railroad Safety Enhancements, Section 401 (attached) spells out new requirements for minimum training standards in and a study of certification for the railroad industry.

Opportunity

Responding to the new requirements presents an important opportunity for railroad employers and unions to work together in a way that builds on the partnership-based training structures established between transit rail systems and transit unions.

Railroad employment began declining in the late 1960s. As hiring came to a standstill, apprenticeship and training programs fell into disuse. These programs strongly need to be renewed and retooled to help the industry meet the requirements of the Rail Safety Improvement Act and address the urgent need for skilled workers.

The Joint Training Model

To develop a joint approach for craft training, it is essential to develop an agreement among all participating parties. As in transit and other industries, a national rail training partnership can succeed if the parties commit to separating issues of training from the often adversarial labor-management relationships over contracts.

Learning from Transit's Successes

Transit, passenger rail and freight railroads face the same safety and skills challenges. For all, large percentages of current hourly employees are eligible to retire.

- Over the past eight years, public transportation agencies and their unions have been developing joint training programs.
- Research studies show that training benefits accrue directly to an agency's bottom-line, providing as much as 440 percent return on training investment dollars.
- The American Public Transportation Association, transit agencies, the Amalgamated Transit Union International and key locals of the Transport Workers Union, IBEW, IAM, Railroad Signalmen and other unions have been working with the Transportation Learning Center to develop a system of consensus training guidelines.
- The Center's work is funded by US DOT, US DOL and the Transportation Research Board as well as employers and unions. This broad set of training partnership work is explained more thoroughly in the Transportation Learning Center's report, *Working Together*.

Labor-management partnerships are a critical element to building effective training programs in all industries. Experience around the world and in other US industries demonstrates that joint training partnerships deliver the best quality training, with the lowest program costs and the greatest longevity. Faced with new legislative requirements, the railroad industry has a historic opportunity to build new industry-wide training partnerships based on the best elements of past industry experience and the best practices in modern training development.