Building Human Capital and Career Pathways for Public Transportation

Policy Briefing: Transporting Urban Youth to Quality Careers

Brian J. Turner, Executive Director, Transportation Learning Center
Jeffrey L. Brooks, Administrative Vice-President and Director, Transit Division, Transport Workers Union of America; Board Member, TLC

September 26, 2012
Career Opportunities in a Growing Industry

- Fast job growth in transportation overall, and public transit in particular
  - Transit rail ridership up 75 percent since 1995
  - 38 percent job growth projected over next 10 years
- Up to 40 percent of the transit frontline workforce expected to retire within the next ten years
- Big city agencies face major skill shortages in years ahead, and major transit cities include large minority populations
Good Frontline Transit Skilled Jobs and Career Ladders for Urban Youth

• Family-supporting jobs - good wages and benefits
• Career ladders based on further training, education, growth and career advancement
• Careers concentrated in urban communities
• Strong union role in industry, with many Black union presidents and officers
• A green industry, benefitting the community and offering opportunities for specialized training in green technologies
Minority Employment in Transit: A Growing Share, with Critical Opportunity Gaps

• Transit provides good job opportunities for urban populations – 32.8 percent of frontline jobs nationally are held by minority employees

• Minority employment is largely concentrated in operations – 38.9 percent bus operators belong to a minority group

• Many big urban systems are becoming majority minority, with New York City Transit at 73 percent

• Less minority access to higher skilled technical jobs – 21.6 percent of bus/truck mechanics nationally
Challenges for Transit Workforce Policy

- Overall level of investment in human capital is very low – less than 1 percent of payroll
- Greatest need in transit workforce development: Frontline workers – operations and maintenance workers, 80 percent of transit employees
- April DOT Workforce Summit: Leaders of Railroad, Highway, and Transit – the frontline workforce is our greatest workforce need
Transit Lags in Investing in Human Capital

Public Transportation Behind the Curve on Training Investment

- US Public Transportation*: $91 m (0.66-0.88%)
- All US Industries: $266 m (2%)
- FHWA Goal: $357 m (3%)
- Leading US Companies: 4.5%
- Paris Transit (RATP): 8.4%

*Estimated by the Transportation Learning Center based on a 2010 survey of the transit industry
Federal Transit Investment in Human Capital

0.1% of Physical Capital

- Annual federal investment in transit workforce development (UTC training, NTI, TLC, SCATTC, Innovative Programs, etc.) – Total $10.2 million

- Annual federal investment in physical capital – Total $9.6 billion
Current Surface Transportation Act is Deficient on Human Capital

• Transit Capital Programs do not prioritize investment in human capital (0.5 percent requirement)

• Transit’s workforce development programs need to support Career Pathways for moving community members into quality transportation careers

• Need to link strong Career Pathways with effective Career Ladder programs to move people up within the industry – Philadelphia example
Need to Build Career Pathways Connecting Urban Youth to Quality Transportation Careers

1. Include Human Capital Investment in Transit Capital investment Funding: Raise transit human capital investment to FHWA target: 3 percent of payroll

2. Support Targeted Career Pathways Partnerships connecting Urban Youth to Quality Transportation Careers
   • Partner Schools with Transit Agencies and Unions
     - High schools, middle schools and post-secondary
   • Hands-on and problem-solving approaches to learning
   • Mentoring, job shadowing and internships
   • College credit for standards-based training at work
   • Prepare students for challenging skilled training programs
   • Direct connection to industry career ladder programs
Career Pathways for Urban Youth: Everyone Benefits

• **Youth**: Pathways to high quality jobs linked to career ladders and access to ongoing training and education

• **Schools**: Higher retention, graduation and job placement rates – best practice graduation rates of 98 percent in quality CTE programs

• **Industry**: Quality training meets critical skill needs with strong return on investment. Other transportation sectors (railroad, airline, trucking) have similar skill needs

• **Community**: More people with strong jobs skills and careers. Plus, quality transportation systems improve the environment and access to jobs in the region