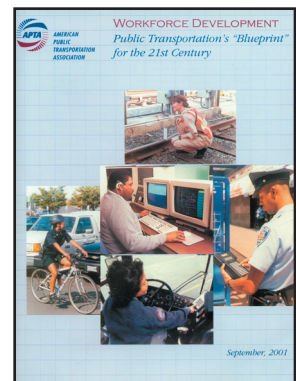
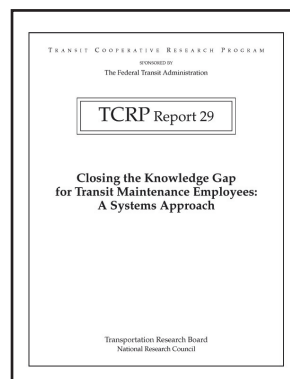
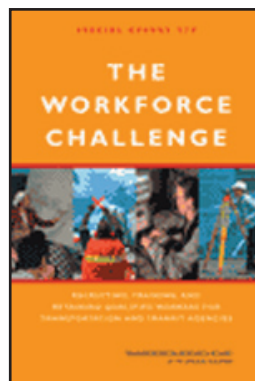
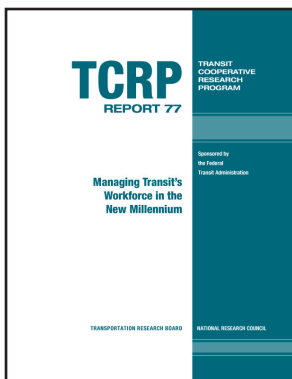


PEOPLE MAKE THE HARDWARE WORK:

Transit Experts Call for Labor-Management Training Partnerships



*A summary of findings from the
Transit Cooperative Research Program,
a service of the U.S. Dept. of Transportation,
the National Academy of Sciences, and the
American Public Transportation Association.*

People Make the Hardware Work:

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The Transit Cooperative Research Program (TCRP), a service of the U.S. Department of Transportation, the National Academy of Sciences, and the American Public Transit Association (APTA), serves as the country's leading transit research organization. Its mission is to research and develop innovative solutions to a wide range of issues facing the industry.

What follows is a series of statements taken from TCRP reports produced over the last 15 years on issues and solutions to rapid changes taking place in the transit industry. Also included are statements from an APTA report "Workforce Development: Public Transportation's Blueprint for the 21st Century."

The bottom line is clear: labor-management training partnerships deliver higher productivity, greater efficiency, improved industrial relations, and better service for management, employees, and customers.

The Training Crisis in Transit

"In the course of this study, it became clear to the committee that many factors require immediate action and that the situation may, in fact, be far worse than anticipated. Among the factors are high levels of anticipated retirements...the need for new workforce skills required to keep pace with new methods and advanced technologies, including systems analysis, computer-aided design and engineering, new materials, robotics, intelligent transportation technologies, and increasing demands on surface transportation agencies." (The Workforce Challenge)

"There is a shortage of the technical competencies required to cope with new technologies. Many industry experts fear that agencies lack the internal capacity to develop the needed skills, and there is concern that potential recruits emerging from the U.S. education system who are considering a career in transit maintenance lack many of the basic skills necessary to build an effective technical workforce." (Closing the Knowledge Gap)

"The industry has been hardware, not people-oriented...As a result, it has not learned how more sophisticated organizations recruit and retain their workforce. One key part of addressing the workforce challenge is finding ways to transform deeply rooted cultural attitudes and practices in transit." (Blueprint for the 21st Century)

Labor-Management Training Partnerships: Five New Tools for Success

1. Unions as Partners

“Union representatives recognize that relations between workers and management have often been tense in the past. But they argue persuasively that cooperation between unions, rank and file workers, and management is critical to addressing workforce issues. Both major transit unions have taken innovative steps toward encouraging new approaches to recruitment, on the job training, and the creation of “career ladders” within transit organizations.” (Blueprint for the 21st Century)

“Labor – at least nationally – has already taken the first steps toward building an ongoing, high level process for creating innovative approaches to workforce recruitment, training and retention. They express a strong desire to work with national and local transit management on these issues. The existence of these labor initiatives ...represents a promising avenue for institutionalizing a successful process.” (Blueprint for the 21st Century)

2. A Joint Training Strategy

“A successful program must involve partnering with the employees being trained and with labor unions whose members are affected.” (Training for New Technology)

“Experience indicates that a systems approach is necessary to successfully implement new technologies, and quality training is an integral part of a systems approach. There is a need to make the extensive body of knowledge on adult learning and technology training available to transit trainers in a form that can be quickly used to develop effective training programs for a transit agency.” (Training for New Technology)

“An open systems approach recognizes the relationship between different forms of training (e.g., do not offer a large-scale apprenticeship for new mechanics without recognizing the need to upgrade the skills of existing mechanics and supervisors) and makes the connection between skill development and work organization (e.g., there is no point in providing broad skills to the workforce if they are not then given the opportunity to use these skills).” (Closing the Knowledge Gap)

3. Empowering the Workforce

“Empower the mechanic workforce. As in most organizations, the individuals with the greatest knowledge about the work process and how to improve it are the frontline employees. Most agencies do relatively little to tap this potential knowledge in order to improve productivity. When agencies do try to harness this resource (e.g., through a TQM initiative) they often make two mistakes: imposing the change from above, without buy-in from the workers, and/or failing to create an incentive for change, which workers may view as threatening to job security.

Empowerment means moving decision-making closer to the front line of the organization, rather than keeping it solely in the hands of management. Empowerment benefits customers because decisions can be made in real time. Empowerment provides a sense of ownership and control over processes and job activities.” (TQM)

“To gain worker input into improving maintenance performance, managers should (1) try to build the change from the bottom up, giving workers ownership over the process, (2) ensure no one will be laid off as a result of productivity improvements, (3) share any gains from cost savings with the workforce, and (4) publicize any successes.” (Closing the Knowledge Gap)

4. Cultivating a Learning Organization

“Creating a learning organization requires commitment from senior management....Because employees have operational experience, they often have the best knowledge of where improvements should be made. Further, employee involvement and participation is essential to translate new ideas into action.” (TQM)

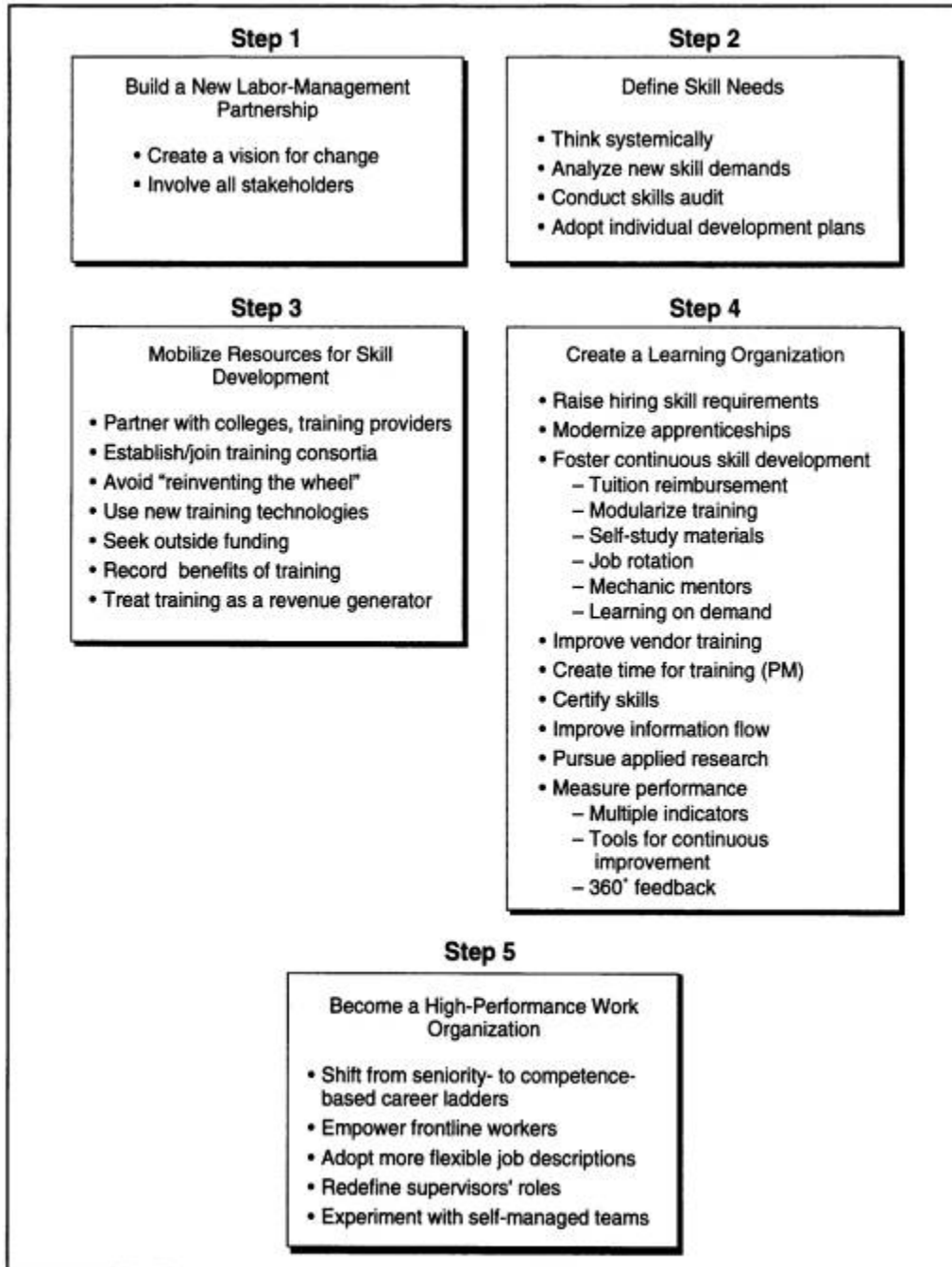
“Formal training is too often viewed as curative or even disciplinary rather than as part of a continuous learning process. This attitude must change in order to create a cultural environment in which new technologies can flourish. A stable work force is a plus for the industry, because trained employees stay with the system. Providing a work environment supportive of continuous learning will further capitalize on this human resource.” (Training for New Technology)

5. Reaching High Performance

“Even if all technical skill needs are met, the transit industry may face a second, broader skill problem—making the transition from traditional to high-performance work organizations. There is growing evidence from the management literature that organizations can achieve dramatic performance improvements if coordinated changes can be made in skill levels, work organization, and the surrounding incentive. Specific characteristics of high-performance work organizations include self-managed teams, systematic job rotation, problem-solving groups and quality circles, total quality management, and employee involvement programs.” (Closing the Knowledge Gap)

“It is vital to identify and support broader programs that can help change the cultural attitudes that make the industry a laggard in addressing human capital issues. The key to simultaneously addressing particular needs and broader cultural attitudes may be to design projects and program so they meet both goals.” (Blueprint for the 21st Century)

Implementing the Strategy for Success



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