

# YOUTH



## CRITICAL CONVERSATIONS: THE PUBLIC TRANSPORT FRONTLINE WORKER CRISIS

November 2023

[www.iyai.org](http://www.iyai.org)



**THE FUTURE IS NOW**

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**CRITICAL**  
**CONVERSATIONS:**  
**THE PUBLIC TRANSPORT**  
**FRONTLINE WORKER**  
**CRISIS**

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# ABBREVIATIONS

Amalgamated Transit Union	ATU
American Public Transportation Association	APTA
Bureau of Labor Statistics	BLS
Commercial Driver’s License	CDL
Conference of Minority Transportation Officials	COMTO
Federal Transit Administration	FTA
Government Accountability Office	GAO
International Transportation Learning Center	ITLC
Introducing Youth to American Infrastructure	iyai+
Latinos in Transit	LIT
National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Sciences	NAS
National Infrastructure Advisory Council	NIAC
Shared Use Mobility Center	SUMC
Transit Cooperative Research Program	TCRP
Transit Workforce Center	TWC
Transportation Research Board	TRB
Transport Workers Union of America	TWU
U.S. Department of Transportation	U.S. DOT (USDOT)
WTS International	WTS

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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This “Critical Conversations” report was prepared by Introducing Youth to American Infrastructure (“iyai+”) as a part of its **2023 Sustainable Mobility Career Awareness & Innovation Challenge Program** (18-25 years of age) – [www.iyai.org](http://www.iyai.org). This report addresses a gap in recent national reports and literature on the frontline public transit workforce shortage – *minimal input and direct engagement of youth*.

The input collected from these *youth-centered* focus groups, national surveying, participating transport agencies (management and labor), private sector, and community partners is intended to help bridge that gap. And most importantly ensure that “YOUTH VOICE” – our future transport leaders, skilled workforce, entrepreneurs, innovators, and community advocates – “COMMUNITY BUILDERS” are *meaningfully engaged* (“a front row seat”) in future transit industry workforce planning and decision-making.

The Barr Foundation provided support for the research element of this important youth empowerment and “people-readiness” initiative. Founded in 1997, the Barr Foundation is a private, Boston-based foundation with core programs in Arts & Creativity, Climate and Education.

## THE TRANSPORT AGENCIES (LOCAL HOSTS)

participating in the 2023 Sustainable Mobility program recruited the innovation challenge and focus group participants:



- Chicago Transit Authority (CTA)
- Denver Regional Transit District (RTD)
- Indianapolis Public Transportation Corporation (IndyGo)
- Jacksonville Transportation Authority (JTFLA)
- Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA)
- MetroLINK (Rock Island County, IL)
- Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC), Bay Area Regional Collaboration
  - Alameda Contra Costa Transit District (AC Transit)
  - Bay Area Rapid Transit District (BART)
  - Caltrain
  - Golden Gate Bridge, Highway and Transportation District (GGBHTD)
  - SamTrans
  - San Francisco Municipal Transportation District (SFMTA/“MUNI”)
  - Santa Clara Valley Transportation Agency (VTA)
- Omnitrans (San Bernardino/Inland Empire)
- Rhode Island Turnpike & Bridge Authority (RITBA)
- Toronto Transportation Commission (TTC)
- TriMet (Portland)



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# INTRODUCTION

These unprecedented times, marked by massive societal and personal change – *transformation* -- provide us with a unique opportunity to complete the *“unfinished” business* of seriously integrating *“people-readiness”* into every aspect of the work and services that we provide – *planning, operations, capital, and financial* (Scott 2016).

Finally making good on the age-old adage -- *Our People are Our Greatest Resource*.



Workforce shortages that have caused North American public transit agencies to report reducing transit service (84%) (APTA 2022, 1)

Today, public transportation agencies across the country are experiencing serious workforce challenges. Most notably, *a crisis in attracting, recruiting, and retaining “essential” frontline employees who are critical to providing safe, reliable, and efficient transit service.* Critical frontline employees (bus and train operators and maintenance personnel) who account for approximately 80% of the national public transit workforce (TWC 2023; BLS 2023). Coupled with future 10-year projections of bus operator retirements that estimate a turnover rate attributable to future retirements of more than 50% -- with a need to hire 23,000 positions annually (i.e., 50% of the transit workforce with a median age of 53 (TCRP 240 2023, 1)

Workforce shortages that have caused North American public transit agencies to report reducing transit service (84%) (APTA 2022, 1). A major setback for the millions of people who depend upon public transit as their mode of choice and an essential lifeline. And at a time when the nation is recovering from the Pandemic and the importance of public transit to national recovery is irrefutable.

While the COVID-19 Pandemic and its lingering impacts have exacerbated the sector’s workforce shortage challenges – regrettably this is NOT *“new”* news. What is *“new”* is the scale, impact, and public visibility -- all resulting in much broader public interest, concern, and growing understanding of the urgency -- and consequences of inadequate preparation and prioritization of *“people.”*

## A “Wake-Up” Call for Public Transit Leadership and Communities.

Management, labor, policymakers, and community – who will all have to work together to usher in the bold transformation that is needed to urgently address and appropriately resource the existing crisis. And, most importantly -- prepare for future mobility which is undergoing a major transformation.



# 80%

Critical frontline employees (bus and train operators and maintenance personnel) account for 80% of the national public transit workforce.

**HOW -- a New Playbook.** Totally “re-thinking” how we *attract, retain, and manage* our most important asset – starting with a serious, fact-based re-examination of the “work”, the “workplace”, and the “workforce”. **ALL** tremendously changed and continuing to evolve.

Beyond messaging – “*Telling Our Story*”. Part of that will require re-assessing and “reframing” transit’s critical frontline positions to align with the sector’s expanded “mobility” emphasis and realities of the work and workplace (knowledge, skills, competencies, work environment). And “rebuilding” the brand to incorporate the emphasis on a **more expansive “mobility” mission and outcomes** -- with “fresh eyes” and “voices”, and a “bigger tent”. Bringing both worker and community voices to the forefront – along with inviting input from others outside of the transportation sector with helpful relevant experience and examples.

The reality – industry wide – public transit has a lot of work to do to *purposefully move from “business-as-usual” and accelerate the pace of “people-readiness” change.*

Supported by **more rigorous fact-based analysis** – some of which will require a level of mandatory data collection and reporting, significantly greater investment; and **seriously increased “accountability” for “people-readiness” planning, action, and results.**

The good news is the increased federal emphasis on people-readiness and workforce development. And the work underway in local communities by enlightened transit leadership and practitioners (management and labor) – including worker voices and a rich mix of community partners. Increasingly working together to implement new strategies, policies, and actions to address the frontline worker crisis



## WHY THIS REPORT – THE FUTURE IS NOW!

TODAY – *NOW* – *we must Accelerate!* This is a “[Call to Action](#)” – with specific emphasis on ensuring that young adults and youth have a “*front row seat*” and meaningful voice in future transit industry workforce and workplace planning -- “[Re-Imagining](#)” and “[RE-WRITING](#)” NORMAL!

They are the next generation of *future leaders, skilled workforce, innovators, entrepreneurs, and community advocates* – “[Community Builders](#)”. And, their insights, knowledge – lived and learned experience – and fresh perspectives re: ways to address the overall challenge of attracting, recruiting, and retaining a future-ready workforce are vitally important to future success.

At iyai+, we believe that a [steady pipeline of motivated “next generation” talent is a critical link to achieving a “future-ready” workforce](#). Today, there is minimal information providing direct input from young adults regarding causes of the public transit frontline worker shortage. Or reasons for the apparent disconnect between young adults seeking employment and the lack of interest and/or success in more young adults filling these positions. Even more disturbing when we look at data citing significantly higher turnover and lower retention rates for younger employees.

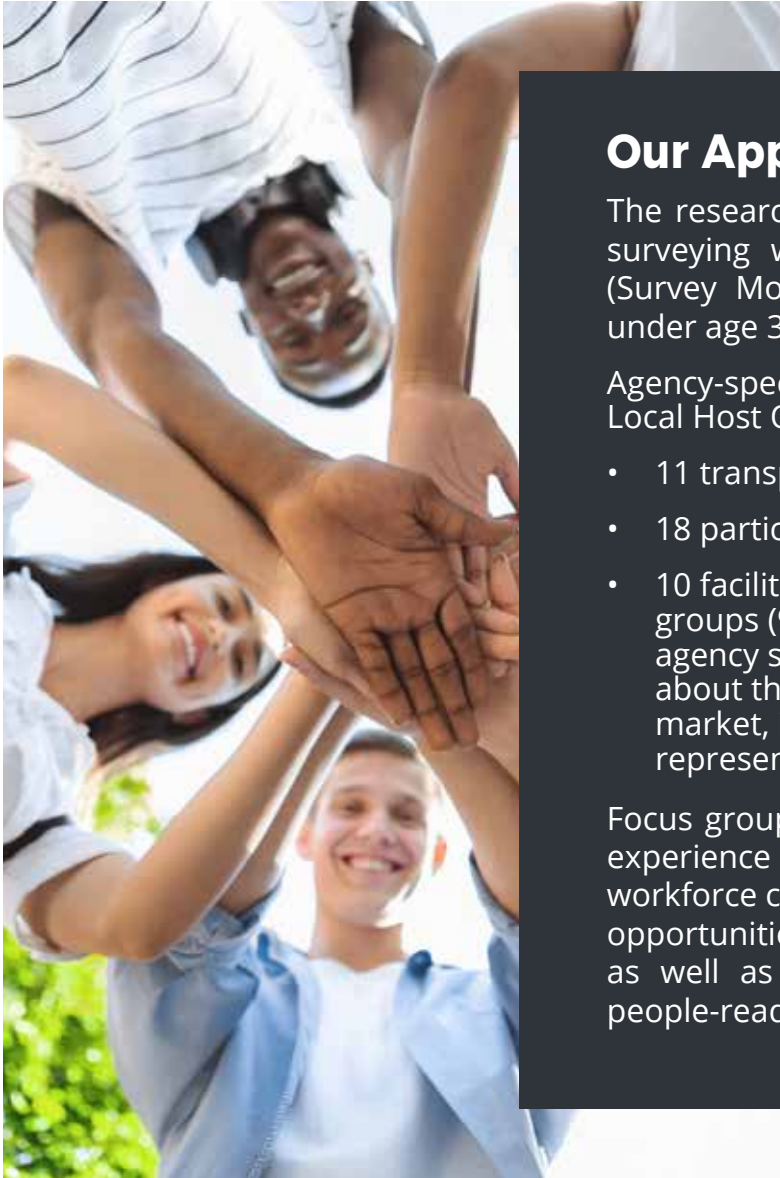
For these reasons, in 2023, we targeted young adult participants (18-25 years of age) and incorporated a *youth-centered* “[Critical Conversations](#)” element -- including national survey data and local focus group input specifically to hear directly from young adults. Their perceptions, personal experiences, and insights regarding our industry’s serious workforce challenges – with particular emphasis on essential frontline positions.



» In 2023, we targeted young adult participants (18-25 years of age)

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Critical Conversations provides insights from youth (predominately young adults) on public transit’s “essential” frontline workforce crisis – bus and train operators, and entry-level mechanics



## Our Approach

The research approach includes results of national surveying which resulted in 788 total responses (Survey Monkey) – targeted to elicit respondents under age 30;

Agency-specific Human Resources information from Local Host Organizers

- 11 transport organizations
- 18 participating agencies
- 10 facilitated local “youth-centered” focus groups (90-minutes) with a total of 62 youth, and agency staff/program partners, knowledgeable about the local hiring needs and labor market, i.e., including labor and community representatives.

Focus group participants were asked to share their experience and insights regarding the frontline workforce crisis -- major challenges, lessons learned, opportunities and promising changes and initiatives; as well as information concerning other priority people-readiness/workforce development concerns.

## Organization of the Report

The report is presented in five (5) sections:

(1) the [Introduction](#) which presents relevant background information and context regarding the transit frontline workforce shortage – and its significant impact on people and communities.

(2) the [Executive Summary](#) which describes the approach and data collection methods; presents key findings and takeaways; and recommended Next Steps.

- (3) the [Literature Scan](#) which provides brief historical context; and highlights recurring themes and key areas of discussion from more recent reports and publications – most of which highlight examples of new initiatives and pilot programs.
- (4) the [Examples](#) section which highlights a few of the *promising changes in policy, practice, process and implementation underway at the transit systems participating in our 2023 program.*
- (5) [Appendices](#) which include the References and Survey Instrument.

Along with others, the Examples section of this report spotlights the work and “results” of [Denver RTD’s Innovation Challenge team](#). A team comprised of young adults participating in the 2023 Sustainable Mobility Program. Denver RTD selected the agency’s workforce challenge as their innovation priority. And the results of their team’s work and [pilot program](#) – including new approaches and enhancements to the agency’s overall recruitment and hiring process -- resulted in impressive Summer hiring results.

The [RTD Innovation Challenge Team](#) won 3<sup>rd</sup> place and [Special Recognition](#) for this initiative.

In addition to the Examples highlighted from transit systems participating in our 2023 Program, there are local transit systems of all sizes who are doing the important work of “*Re-Imagining*” and “*Re-Writing Normal*”. A look at these “real-world” examples of change and innovation [offers](#) an important immediate opportunity to implement and accelerate improvements by leveraging promising “better” and “best” practices, along with “lessons learned” and food for thought. [Plus, a growing network of helpful contacts, and practical resources.](#)



Many of these industry trailblazers (practitioners, worker voices, senior/executive leaders) are recognized in various of the recent reports and publications noted in the Literature Scan, including the [USDOT Federal Transit Administration’s Transit Workforce Center](#) – [www.transitforce.org](http://www.transitforce.org), the first national technical assistance/resource center for transit workforce development. The Center’s portal information – reports, publications, webinars, and networking opportunities – are expansive, regularly updated and broadly accessible to the public.



## Major Research Highlights

**Literature Scan.** *The information we found providing direct input and specificity from young adults re: their experience, insights, and suggestions on ways to address the frontline workforce crisis was limited and largely anecdotal.* That said, overall results of the literature scan were very beneficial in identifying major causes of the public transit frontline worker crisis. Those factors most frequently cited are highlighted below.

### Those factors most frequently cited are highlighted below.

- ✓ *Industry wide Aging Workforce with High Retirement Rates* (particularly for operators); compounded by difficulty in “attracting” and “retaining” a younger workforce for frontline positions, i.e., negative “image” perceptions.
- ✓ *Noncompetitive Compensation (and Benefits).*
- ✓ *Minimum Flexibility with Work Schedules and Unfavorable Work Hours* (often accompanied by outdated work rules and practices).
- ✓ *Outdated and Complex Hiring Processes* accompanied by *Outdated Position Descriptions and Requirements.*
- ✓ *Lack of Clear Career Progression and Advancement Opportunities (upward mobility).*
- ✓ *Safety & Security Concerns.*
- ✓ *Undesirable Working Conditions.*
- ✓ *Agency/Management Responsiveness to Worker Concerns.*



## Agency Highlights

The 2023 Program participants included public transit agencies of all sizes across the U.S. and Canada's largest transit operator, the Toronto Transit Commission (TTC). Including all the surface transit modes -- fixed route/BRT, demand-response/paratransit services, heavy rail, light rail and commuter rail; and water services/ferry operations. Along with transport agencies with responsibility for toll facilities, bridges, regional multi-modal transportation planning and congestion management, design, and construction of surface transportation projects.

*ALL* (including management and labor input) confirmed the essential frontline transit workforce challenge and crisis. Along with significant changes occurring in the overall *workforce* (diversification of local labor markets, interests and motivation, and ready access to prospective hires), the world of *work* (new technologies, methods and means), and the *workplace* (most notably, the pervasive impact of the remote/distributed work transformation). And, in several instances cited examples of changes in policy, practice, process, and action(s) – they (and others) have implemented – along with others under review.

In addition to the #1 issue – critical vacancies in frontline transportation and maintenance/facilities positions -- several noted other positions, knowledge, competencies, and skills that are high on their “people-readiness” needs list (including third-party consultants and contractors), i.e., IT/cybersecurity (digital proficiency, critical thinking and analysis), safety (operational/human factors/public health), engineering, project/program management, procurement, environmental (sustainability/resilience/climate) – the “electrification/ZEV and greening” transformation; communications --both written and verbal; accompanied by a growing list of “soft skills”.



Coupled with a host of “real-world” remote/hybrid “people” and “workplace” considerations needed NOW requiring vastly different approaches for both current and new employees at all levels, i.e., effective management and supervision in an increasingly mixed “in-person” and remote/hybrid environment, onboarding and socialization, team building, knowledge transfer, safe and secure information sharing and records retention, mentoring and coaching, career advancement and succession planning – just to name a few. Not to mention consideration of the impact on employees of important externalities that are directly (and indirectly) impacting and significantly changing work-life needs and preferences.

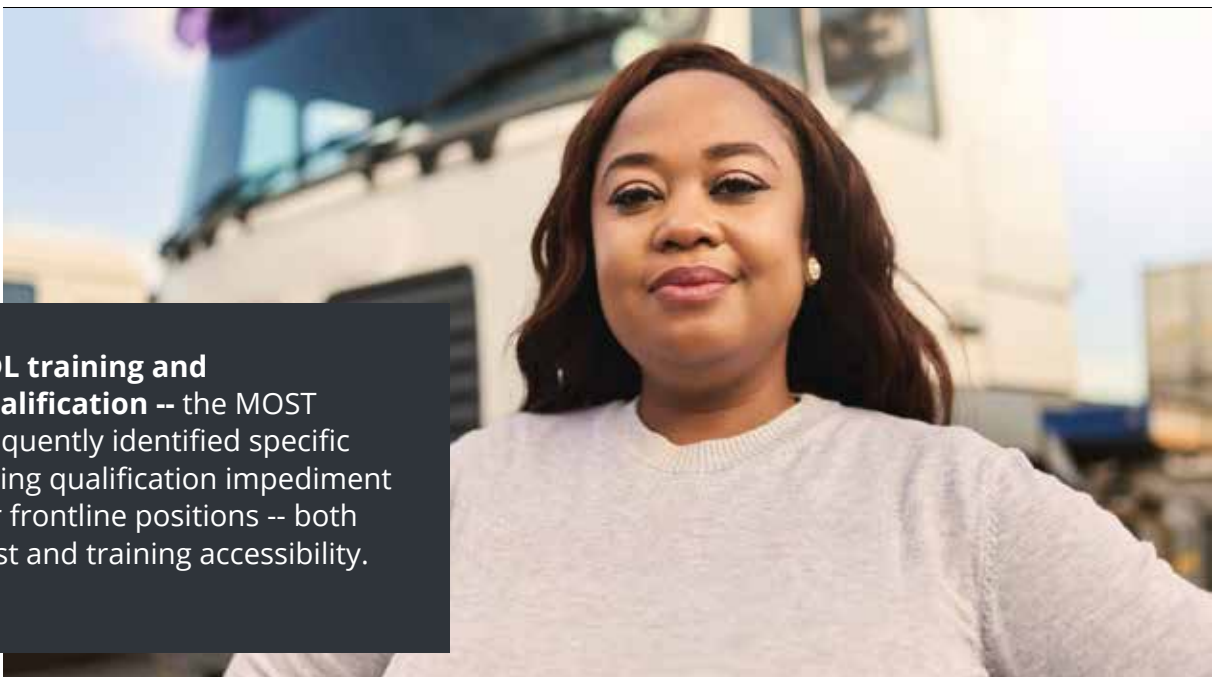
*Again, all even more challenging in a transit environment where the nature of most essential frontline work and workforce needs does not lend itself to a remote, telework environment.*



Finally, and importantly – *ALL acknowledged the necessity of industry-wide elevation of the criticality of “people-readiness” – including the importance of increased investment and resources.*

**Specific take-aways most frequently highlighted by industry representatives are:**

- *Competitive Total Compensation- “cash” and “benefits”* (in line with the local market); *utilization of hiring “incentives”* (as warranted)
- *CDL training and qualification* -- the **MOST** frequently identified specific hiring qualification impediment for frontline positions -- both cost and training accessibility.
- Implementation of *new initiatives and pilot programs* to improve recruitment (expansion and diversification of outreach and local partnerships — including nontraditional settings and “2<sup>nd</sup> chance” program opportunities), serious review, documentation, and update of hiring requirements; and elevation of the importance of “*retention*” – recognizing the “*root causes*” of the current frontline crisis go deeper and are not “*episodic*”. Examples of some of these initiatives are highlighted in the report.
- *Expanded In-house Training; Better Information re: Career Paths & Advancement Opportunities; and Mentoring Opportunities* were frequently mentioned as important areas for improvement.
- Increased emphasis on *Worker Voice* and meaningful engagement in the recruitment, hiring, and onboarding/orientation process.
- Immediate implementation of *changes to the work environment* – with emphasis on overall health and wellness – both “*physical*” and “*mental*”, i.e., basic restroom facility access, operator safety features, greater scheduling flexibility.



**CDL training and qualification** -- the MOST frequently identified specific hiring qualification impediment for frontline positions -- both cost and training accessibility.

## Survey Results/Takeaways

While providing extremely beneficial insights, these Survey results are not purported to be statistically generalizable.

A total of 788 responses were received. Eighty (80%) of the Survey Respondents are 18-29 years of age.

For these respondents – almost 50% reporting industry employment and/or career preparation -- half (50%) were unfamiliar with the requirements for a Bus/Train Operator. Close to half (47.2%) were unfamiliar with the requirements for an entry-level transit mechanic position. And 25% were NOT aware of the major “frontline” worker shortage.

For those respondents who were unemployed, a significant number (352; 44.7%) stated they would personally apply for a frontline position. An overwhelming majority stated they would recommend a frontline transit position to a Friend/Family member (571; 72.4%).

And, of eight (8) possible areas of career interest, ranked Train/Bus Operator/Mechanic as one of their top 3 choices – a close third position (see below).

*While issues of “safety and security” and some negative image perceptions are important considerations – the general lack of Career Awareness re: public transit frontline positions reported by these predominantly younger respondents – many of whom stated they are in the transport sector “or” preparing for a transportation career – is the major take-away.*



### Demographic Profile (voluntary):

#### Age:

18-29 years of age (626 respondents; 80.4%)

#### Gender:

Female: (391; 50.1%)

Male (388; 49.7%)

#### Highest Level of Education:

Bachelor’s Degree (301; 39.1%)

Some College/Associates Degree (205; 26.6%)

High School Diploma/GED (150; 19.5%)

Technical Institute/Apprenticeship (49; 6.4%)

#### Employment Status:

Full-Time (348; 45.5%)

Part-Time (143; 18.7%)

Student (135; 17.6%)

#### Region:

Pacific (162; 23.1%)

South Atlantic (108; 15.4%)

Middle Atlantic (99; 14.1%)

East North Central (84; 12.0%)

West South Central (77; 11%)

Mountain (67; 9.6%)

West North Central (42; 6%)

East South Central (33; 4.7%)

New England (29; 4.1%)

**Areas of Greatest Career Interest:** Respondents prioritized the following three (3) areas of interest from a list of eight (8) disciplines:

- #1 – Organizational Development/Human Resources
- #2 – Operations/Maintenance & Safety
- #3 – Bus/Train Operator/Mechanic Roles – *a close third.*

## Identify Top Incentives to Personally Work as a Public Transit Frontline Employee

### #1 Compensation

- Guaranteed Annual Pay Increases (including bonuses) – 56.4%
- Employer-Paid Tuition Reimbursement for Required Training/College Degree – 53.8%
- Competitive Pay/Benefits – 53.8%

### #2 Work-Life Balance (46.8%)

- Schedule Flexibility – 41.4%
- Physical & Mental Health Support Services – 24.2%

### #3 Clear Career Pathways and Growth Opportunities (36.2%)

## Top Reasons for Not Being Interested in a Frontline Position (if unemployed)

- **Compensation:** More Competitive Pay (35.6%) + Better Benefits (27.7%)
- **Better Career Awareness Needed:** Generally unfamiliar with requirements (33.4%)
- **More Flexible Work Hours/Schedules** (24.5%)
- **Better Availability of Job Training** (23.4%)
- **Better Personal Safety/Security** (16.5%)
- **Better Clarity re: Career Pathways and Growth Opportunities** (13.8%)

Overwhelmingly, more “competitive TOTAL compensation” – both “pay” and “benefits” – and “Better Career Awareness” are cited as the top reasons for lack of interest in frontline positions.

Followed by “the transit work environment” (flexibility, safety and security considerations) and a need for clarity regarding “career progression” (perceived lack of progression), coupled with greater availability and accessibility to job training.

## CHALLENGES/POTENTIAL BARRIERS “PERSONALLY” ENCOUNTERED BY RESPONDENTS WHO PREVIOUSLY APPLIED FOR A FRONTLINE POSITION

... (481 respondents; 61% of the survey participants) responded to this question based on their *“personal” experience* of “challenges/potential barriers”.



- **Commercial Driver’s License (CDL) Testing/Qualification** (37.2%; 179)
- **Health Issues** (35.1%; 169)
- **Drug/Alcohol Testing** (20.8%; 100)
- **Child/Other Family Care** (19.5%)
- Criminal Background (15%)
- Poor Credit (15.4%)
- Lack of Reliable Access to Affordable Transportation (19.5%)
- A Long Employment Screening/Hiring Process (8.7%)

Not surprisingly, this survey data confirms industry-wide acknowledgment of the CDL as the most readily identifiable “specific” barrier for recruitment to public transit frontline positions.

Followed by “Health Issues” and “Drug/Alcohol Testing”.

This is another area where better evidence-based data to help “unpack” specifics re: *“what, why, and who”* is most heavily impacted would be extremely helpful, i.e.,

**Health Issues** – physical *“and”* mental/emotional well-being; the conundrum of increasing State legalization of marijuana vs federal drug and alcohol testing requirements.

**Criminal Background** – the “nature of offenses” creating the greatest recruitment/hiring impediments and their fact/evidence-based rationale for traditionally blanket inclusion.

**“Poor” Credit** -- what is the standard being utilized at the agency-level – including best/better practices for addressing unbanked/no or minimal credit history.

**Mobility and Child/Family Care challenges** – what are better and best approaches to help mitigate this important work-life balance need -- and at the same time not compromise “safety” and “reliability” operational requirements.



## Employment Process (multiple responses)

- Searching for Job Opportunities: **On-Line** (78.8%)
- **In-Person** (34.5%)
- **Word of Mouth/Family, Friends, Colleagues & Co-Workers** (30.3%)
- Schools/Educational & Training (16.4%)
- Professional Associations/Employers/Unions (15.9%)
- Career/Job Fairs (14.1%)
- Community-Based/Youth Organizations (10.4%)



The importance of *highly visible, interesting, and informative* On-Line “presence” cannot be overstated. At the same time, the importance of other “*trusted*” voices and networks is a powerful motivator – family, friends, colleagues, co-workers, schools, professional associations, etc. And underscores the importance of “*Telling the Story*” (*employee and employer “ambassadors”*) in addition to expanding community-based information and knowledge regarding local public transit employment and career opportunities; needs and the very *real adverse impact to daily service as well as major project plans of extended vacancy levels*.

## Job Search Assistance Priorities

- **Resume Writing** (44.3%) – new screening methods, i.e., artificial intelligence; key words
- Classes for **Computer Skills (On-line Job Apps)** – 41.4%
- **Mentor** (30.8%)
- **Better Job Training** (28.5%)
- Employment-Related “*Navigator*” Skills (20.3%)
- Transportation Access to Job Interviews (26.9%)



Overall, few respondents expressed computer equipment availability or internet access impediments. However, many expressed a desire to receive On-Line Job Search Assistance – starting with basic “How To” training and familiarization with resume writing and interview skills. Followed by Better Job Training (28.5%) and employment-related Navigational supports -- a “mentor” and assistance with employment “navigational” skills, i.e., exposure and information re: potential opportunities, access to training and preparation support. It is also noteworthy that more than *1 of 4 respondents (26.9%) reported transportation access to in-person Job Interviews as an impediment.*





## Following an Interview, Time Expected to Receive Hiring Decision

- **Within 1 week** (41.6%)
- About 2 weeks (33.6%)

The criticality of accelerating (and simplifying) the “hiring” process is a major imperative. One of a handful of recurring themes. And one that appears to be receiving considerably increased attention across the industry.

## Why Would You Potentially Leave An Organization

- **COMPENSATION:** Pay Not Competitive (52%) + Benefits Not Competitive (50.8%)
- **WORK SCHEDULING** (too inflexible) – 43.1%
- **Work Not Interesting** (40.4%) + **No Clear Opportunities for Advancement** (35.8%) + **Inadequate Worker/Training Skills Enhancement** (32.6%)
- **Personal Safety/Security** (35.4%)
- **Location Not Convenient** (33.6%)
- **Employee Input Not Respected/Lack of Organizational Responsiveness** (30.6%)

This question was *intentionally “not” directed to only public transportation.* But is also extremely consistent with the more transport-specific feedback received. And provides important insights into the career decision-making “drivers” of young adults in the workforce.



**Compensation, Flexibility, Interesting Work and Career Advancement matter!**

## Most Important Life Goals (Priority Order)

- Maintaining **Good Physical/Mental Health**
- Being **Successful in Work**
- Having a **Good Family Life**
- Doing Good & Well
- Having Lots of Money
- Making a Contribution to Society
- Finding Purpose, Personal Fulfillment & Meaning in Life

Again, additional insights into the thinking, motivators, and decision-making of young adults – with issues of overall *personal well-being, life balance, and economic security* – being paramount considerations.

## Focus Group Highlights/Takeaways

A major **Career Awareness/Information Gap re: public transit frontline positions** (even among those who have familiarity/interest re: public transit sector careers – and are generally favorably disposed). **This is an “immediate” opportunity area meriting serious and urgent fact-based industry wide assessment and action.** Accompanied by direct action at the local level by transport agencies (management and labor); knowledgeable, informed and engaged local partners.

A “lack” of career awareness that needs to be accompanied by a **“compelling” 21<sup>st</sup> century “IMAGE” of the public transit sector’s frontline positions is an industry-wide challenge.** Work that must be comprehensively and urgently addressed by transit management and labor. Starting with worker voice and knowledgeable industry practitioners --**“revisiting” and “re-evaluating” these critical positions** considering today’s knowledge requirements and emerging trends, the current and evolving operating environment and conditions; and important externalities, including the labor market, public and worker expectations.



This finding presents an opportunity to take immediate action—and importantly “actively” engage an important target population (young adults, adolescent youth, their personal networks, and families), aligned with an expanded cadre of respected community-based organizations so they can “learn” more about public transit’s critically important frontline positions.

“Good jobs” that have tremendous impact, value, and content -- and in many instances do not require a college degree – making them more reasonably accessible to a broader population.

### THE GOOD NEWS

The good news is that work is underway in this area – including greater visibility re: the criticality of these essential frontline positions. **What is missing is “urgency” and “accountability” for the development of a comprehensive, fact-based PLAN of ACTION.** Based on an industry wide 21<sup>st</sup> century reassessment and updating of these invaluable “positions” (jobs), accompanied by clear “career paths” and potential advancement opportunities.

Other Focus Group Highlights and Take-Aways -- include some of the following ideas for attracting more young professionals into frontline jobs in the public transportation industry.



- **Engage with Youth** starting at K-12 in schools to expose youth (their families and support networks) and educators – both classroom teachers and guidance counselors -- to the public transportation industry and its “mobility” impact, i.e., “community-building”. Spotlight “frontline” employees at Career Days – “faces” and “voices” that are representative of the communities they represent and populations that have been under-represented and marginalized.

In addition to “recruitment” and “outreach”, young adults emphasized the importance of “retention”. Including opportunities for young adults currently employed to be exposed to a full range of opportunities at the agency/ locally, encouraged to apply for current openings, as well as provided with opportunities to participate in some of the special youth initiatives typically targeted exclusively to external applicants/participants.

- **Better Describe the “Image” and “Value” of these Positions as the “backbone” of public transport organizations.** Be clear and highly visual re: their importance in the community. Along with the expanded range of future career opportunities and advancement.

Many of the young adult focus group participants indicated there is a public “blue collar” perception of frontline infrastructure sector employees. A national “image” issue often associated with trade positions which has also been highlighted as an impediment at the federal level.

In public transport, focus group participants *particularly noted “stigmatizing” of bus operators.* And strongly recommend that the public transportation sector nationally (management and labor) – work to “update” and “lift up” the image and value of frontline employees – starting with the Bus Operator. An increasingly important “face, voice, and overall customer ambassador touch point” – even more so -- as direct customer service and in-person interaction becomes much less readily available.





- **Be Clear re: Career Paths and Advancement Opportunities.** In addition to examples, young adults want *“specifics” regarding career advancement pathways and opportunities*. This is also an area where *“worker” voices and faces “telling their stories”* was emphasized by youth as being powerful and motivational.

Youth participants stressed that it is critical for public transport organizations to *“show”* and *“spotlight”* employees who enter as operators and mechanics – and have advanced into supervisory/ management/growth roles in other departments.



On that note, Public Transit’s most prevalent position - **“Bus Operator”** - was frequently noted as being *“outdated”* in terms of *“image”* and *“responsibilities”* – and perceived as a *“dead-end”* position. “Start as a Bus Operator and after 25+ plus years – retire as a Bus Operator.” Interestingly, the same perception is not there for an airline pilot although the core role and responsibilities are very similar. And, arguably much more complicated for the Bus Operator given the operating environment. Their point – **“THE”** most critical position and image in need of a *“makeover”*.

Several youth focus groups recommended upscaling traditional internship programs – starting *“earlier”* and going *“deeper”* – as an important experiential step beyond the classroom. Including the potential for a *“structured” progression* opportunity from an *“internship”* to a *“full-time”* position; potentially *“part-time”* positions for youth preparing for public transit positions while in school/training; providing opportunities to connect with prospective mentor/buddies (career navigational guides); along with exposure to industry-specific professional associations, grant, and scholarship opportunities.

They also emphasized that finding ways to stay connected for at least 12-18 months beyond the *“internship”* experience is important, i.e., virtual meetups, information re: *“local”* career outreach/employment/training opportunities and national resources.

- **Work with Community Partners to connect with and engage “disconnected youth/ young adults”** who are not in traditional schools or working. In addition to visiting schools, agencies should host students and interested youth at transit properties, i.e., participation in a mock orientation/onboarding class, tour administrative, operations, maintenance facilities, learn more about community projects (talk with employees, contractors, and community representatives), drive the bus and/or rail simulator, shadow a bus/paratransit operator; see and hear from maintenance and facilities workers about new technologies, sustainability and resilience initiatives.
- **Make the “Mobility” Connection** to highlight the various *“career”* opportunities that are involved in helping to achieve safe, reliable, affordable, and equitable sustainable mobility for all people and communities, i.e., public health, housing, planning and land use; use and deployment of new technologies, methods and means in the workplaces.

Participants expressed that all too often, making this important *“mobility” careers connection* to expanded career opportunities and resources does not occur. And, when it does – it is not very specific or actionable, i.e., *“what”* positions;

knowledge, training, experience needed; “where” are the positions most readily available; and “how” best to access more career information and resources.

One suggestion is to expand “Career/Job” Fairs to include representatives from the broader group of local/regional “Mobility” partners and organizations.

- **Partner with Community Colleges, Technical and Vocational Schools and Training Programs, Other Agency Partners/Industry Employers/Professional Associations.**

In addition to quality job-related training and experience –*tangible value for time spent is a very important participation consideration.* Particularly for young adults 18-25 years of age “paid” internships, school/class credit for a degree, certification, or graduation requirement; access to helpful industry networks and mentors/buddies (knowledgeable navigational guides) matters.

It was further emphasized that young adults and youth who are economically challenged and others under-represented in the sector can have the interest – but simply don’t have the means to “freely” participate in unpaid/no credit career programming.

- **Communicate Workforce Shortage Information/Metrics to the Community**

Most of the young adults participating in the focus groups indicated they had been unaware of the severity of the frontline workforce shortage prior to their 2023 Program participation. And strongly recommend that public transportation agencies include “people-readiness/workforce availability” and “needs” as an important element of their public communications and reporting, i.e., Dashboards.

The public can’t help if they are largely unaware of the problem, and its adverse impacts.

- **Re-Assess, Re-vamp and Simplify the Hiring Process**

Young adults expressed challenges and significant dissatisfaction with the overall recruitment and hiring processes, i.e., intimidating, cumbersome, complicated, difficult to navigate, lengthy, lack of transparency, uneven communications regarding status/next steps. And frequently include a few years of experience or acquired training -- with the CDL being the most frequently cited major obstacle for frontline positions. The takeaway – unacceptable. And the competition – “other” employers – particularly in the private sector have much clearer and simplified hiring processes.



**The participants recommended agencies create structured internship programs that show clear pathways to full-time roles after successfully completing the internship.**





To attract more young adults to apply, public transportation agencies should streamline the application by simplifying allowing candidates to upload a cover letter and resume.

- **Be Competitive and Provide More Hiring Incentives**

Youth participants made the point that “competitive” pay and benefits is an important employment factor. At the same time, they shared that for many young adults – what that means and involves in terms of overall “value” and “trade-offs” is not well or uniformly understood.

They recommended that current public transit benefits packages be more broadly communicated and “explained” – with good examples, i.e., “total” compensation inclusive of tuition reimbursement programs, paid vacation, sick leave, and medical benefit personal/family enhancements.

Young adults also shared that public transit is a labor intensive and often stressful position. And, not as competitive in terms of work flexibility and scheduling options as other major private sector mobility providers like Uber, Lyft, and Amazon – with more attractive and flexible work scheduling options.

To offset the low wages, youth participants supported the use of incentives –including bonuses, relocation, and housing assistance –particularly in high cost of living, highly competitive markets.

- **Promote Work-Life Balance**

Work-life balance is a priority retention factor for young adults – starting with flexibility in scheduling and work hours.

Participants generally acknowledged that the nature of public transportation service requirements complicates what is practically doable, sustainable, and equitable – for transit sector “desk” vs “frontline” positions.

And, suggested this as a prime area for much deeper review re: the future workplace – including youth voice and industry representatives. Areas discussed included a range of scheduling possibilities, work arrangements, and supportive services, i.e., flexible hours, part-time options, child/home care assistance.

- **Organizational/Management Responsiveness and Meaningful Employee Engagement**

In addition to ensuring work-life balance, young adults want to be actively engaged in interesting and meaningful work. Compensated fairly and competitively for their contributions. *Be appreciated and respected within an organization and by management that values and encourages employee contributions at all levels -- including, new thinking and constructive input.* And takes proactive action to address areas of concern.

While there are plenty of really great places to work in public transport – there is also serious work to be done in this area.

Making this “culture” and “image” for public transport a reality – will require a total commitment by transit leadership (management and labor) at all levels.

## NEXT STEPS ... URGENCY & ACTION

Our recommendations are highlighted below.

Start by elevating the industry wide importance of **a more strategic, fact-informed, systematic approach to “people-readiness” - no one left behind.** Integrate people-planning and thinking into overall agency decision-making and prioritization, investment and resource allocation, public information and community outreach, partnerships, performance assessment and reporting.

The goal is to make “people-readiness” a continuously “top of mind” part of everyone’s thinking, planning, and doing (“actions”) – both internally and externally, i.e., raising public awareness and understanding of the practical importance of employee availability and workforce readiness.

No different than any other important element of enterprise risk assessment and asset management – better data collection, a reasonable degree of industry-wide standardization for reporting and analysis; and accountability – matter!

To make that happen, it is vitally important that nationally and locally – the public transport sector expand its work, community partnerships, and communications – to **continuously raise the visibility and criticality of “people-readiness” and “availability” – supported by meaningful data.**

Starting in local communities to help advocates, partners, and the public understand and connect the dots between “people” availability and readiness – and the safety, reliability, service quality and efficiency of daily service along with capital program implementation, i.e., adherence to schedule and budget. And, as importantly – including them in the work of developing and implementing solutions to address critical vacancy and retention problems.

At the same time, public transit agencies will need to **make “people-readiness” “WE” work – and a critical element of everyday in-house discussions, planning, and decision-making.** Not just the “job” of the Human Resources and/or Operations Department(s). And, not just at the recruitment stage. Retention is equally important.

For many organizations, being “less internally siloed” – where **everyone is potentially an “ambassador”, a “recruiter” and a “keeper” (mentor/buddy, coach, sponsor, champion)** will involve a significant culture change and organizational shift. Along



with intentional training, support, and additional resources to make it happen.

From experience, we know that for our frontline workforce, no one does that better than the men and women who “make NORMAL happen every day”! And our research makes it clear that authenticity and credibility really matter to young adult applicants. To expand and amplify the message --“**worker voice**” at all levels will need be empowered and motivated to “**tell**” and “**sell**” the public transit story –to motivate and excite, attract, and retain future and existing talent.

Public transit must be *competitive* – and that requires **top-down reassessment of the work, workforce, and workplace; policies, practices, outcomes, needs and results**. Along with a realistic assessment of the resources and investments required to support a much more robust, diversified outreach and accelerated recruitment application, screening, and hiring process. Coupled with a lot more focus and **clarity regarding “career” progression and advancement opportunities** – and the knowledge, training, and experience needed to be successful.

As evidenced by the hundreds and thousands of vacancies across the country in transit agencies serving communities of all sizes – this is also NOT the job market of even 10 years ago. Fact-informed **updating and “re-framing” the “image” of our frontline workforce as an important “gateway” to a lifetime “career” of exciting and interesting work opportunities** is a necessity.

To make any of this happen will require **top public transit leadership (management and labor) to lead this radical transformation –both internally and externally**. Including proactive local community outreach – information and education, meaningful engagement, working relationships and partnerships. All critical to achieving long-term success for public transit – and its mission to help *all* people and communities achieve the triple “bottom line” of expanded opportunity.

Again – **URGENT “WE” Work** – that will require an “*all-in*” community response and a “*radical hospitality*” on the part of transport agencies to be more inclusive and less insular.

An “all-in” response that must include *communities, families*, and **meaningful youth participation and leadership “YOUTH VOICE”** – in all phases of planning, development, and implementation.

## LITERATURE SCAN



Moving into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, USDOT under the Clinton Administration and Secretary Rodney Slater, launched several people-centered transportation workforce initiatives – including several focused on expanding opportunities for historically under-represented groups. One of the most notable and enduring is The Garrett A. Morgan Program: Shaping the Future of Transportation – intended to establish a partnership among the DOT, the private sector, and communities to prepare students (K-12) to become tomorrow’s transportation workforce. That Program continues and remains as relevant today as it was when it was first launched in 1998. (Paulson 1998)

In 2001, the U.S. Government and Accountability Office (GAO) added “Strategic Human Capital Management” to the federal High-Risk List, citing mission-critical skills gaps to federal agencies and across the federal workforce posed a high risk to the nation. For more than two decades, “people-readiness” has continued to be identified as a government-wide high-risk area (GAO 2023) A point that is highlighted later in the Scan by a recent workforce report on the nation’s critical infrastructure sectors.

In 2001, the American Public Transportation Association established the industry’s first Blue Ribbon Committee on Workforce Development. While not limited to the frontline workforce, that report highlighted the critical need to elevate the overall importance, visibility, and resourcing of “people-readiness” across the sector. Including significant data gaps, Identification of an aging workforce and increasing retirements, high attrition projections, significant industry-wide and agency information and data gaps, lack of training standards and rigor, need for greater career awareness and interest by the younger generation coupled with major diversity challenges – to highlight some of the major themes.

Over the past two decades-, that initiative along with several others has resulted in an increasing number of “people-readiness” programs, publications, reports, and research regarding the transit workforce. Until recent years – more generally focused on management/supervisory levels. That said, while there has been considerably more attention and progress in several areas – industrywide prioritization, metrics, reporting and accountability for “people-readiness” has continued to lag. With the COVID-19 Pandemic, criticality of addressing the frontline workforce challenge – catapulted to national attention. Resulting in a number of recent publications and reports examining the public transit industry’s frontline workforce shortage conundrum –including recommendations and proposed solutions to attract and retain operations and maintenance employees. At iyai+, we also had particular interest in sourcing information in this important area that included significant input from young adults (and adolescent youth).



Several of the more recent publications and reports are highlighted below. This Literature Scan identifies and synthesizes innovative solutions to address the frontline workforce shortage crisis proposed by industry associations, research centers, and workforce development organizations. All helpful in better understanding the challenges, work underway; and a growing list of better and best practices – along with lessons learned.

Unfortunately, we did not find research that included much in the way of direct qualitative or quantitative youth-centered input on the causes, proposed solutions and/or recommendations to address the documented frontline workforce crisis. Again, positions that comprise an estimated 80% of the transit workforce in North America.

## A Focus on the National Frontline Transit Workforce

The USDOT's first ever national technical assistance center for transit workforce development – the *Transit Workforce Center (TWC)*, the International Transportation Learning Center (ITLC) is the only national labor-management consortium whose mission and purpose are focused on “people-readiness” of the transit industry's frontline workforce <https://www.transportcenter.org>

A national trailblazer, in the early 2000's, the “TLC” led the work and advocacy to advance the need for an industrywide framework and management-labor partnership model for developing and implementing priority worker readiness solutions for agencies across the nation. *A unique partnering model for its day – anchored by “hands-on” subject matter experts – knowledgeable and respected worker voices coupled with seasoned agency practitioners – responsible to a Board of Directors comprised of CEOs/C-suite executives from both labor and management.*

While the composition of the ITLC Board of Directors has expanded through the years to include other important constituencies – predominately transport-focused community-based and educational institutions – *active Board participation by CEOs/C-suite, including the highest levels of transit management and labor has remained an important constant.*

In a nod to history, the TLC modeled its initial work on the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority's highly successful Keystone Transit Career Ladder Partnership Program in coordination with Transport Workers Union, Local 234.

For over two (2) decades, the ITLC has provided much needed laser focus, fact-based curriculum/training and national standards development – prioritizing “safety first”, performance metrics and assessment. And persistent, steadfast advocacy for the importance of quality, continuous learning for essential frontline operations and maintenance employees, i.e., early work on the need for a comprehensive systems approach (ITLC 2010) and (Nuen 2010), the importance of mentoring (ITLC 2012), knowledge management and transfer (NAS 2017), and a hands-on approach (Schiavone and Glover 2010) to retain frontline employees.

In 2019, the ITLC Executive Director testified before the US House Transportation and Infrastructure Subcommittee on Highways and Transit on Aligning Federal Surface Transportation Policy to Meet 21st Century Needs. The Director stressed that based on the aging workforce and new technologies, the federal government must invest more in training of frontline staff to prepare the workforce for the future (Clark 2019).

## Today and Moving Forward

Today, the ITLC continues its work to provide quality, hands-on training, and continuous learning opportunities for public transit's frontline workforce. A few examples of more recent work and initiatives include its work on emerging technologies, i.e., zero emission vehicles (ITLC 2022), automated vehicles (NAS 2022); a national Resource Center with "free" access; and recent launch of a Transit Training Network. (<https://www.transitworkforce.org>).

The Transit Cooperative Research Program (TCRP) is the transit industry's premier research center and has published a series of reports examining and identifying solutions for the frontline workforce crisis. The most recent, [TCRP Report 240: Bus Operator Workforce Management: Practitioner's Guide](#) identified the following eight forward thinking strategies to hire and retain bus operators (NAS 2023):

- » Identify and apply COVID's impacts on the workforce in the development of formulas and models to determine staffing needs.
- » Remove barriers and provision of supportive services for diverse populations consideration and occupation entrance.
- » Implement strategically designed compensation, benefits, and incentive programs to attract, reward, motivate, and retain bus operators.
- » Effectively use technology to assist with recruitment, selection, and training.
- » Streamline human resource processes for hiring and onboarding with union involvement.
- » Develop labor-management partnerships for joint safety, health, and training programs to improve working conditions, elevate skills, and increase retention.
- » Develop mentoring, apprenticeship, and career ladder programs to provide opportunities for career advancement to both entry-level and veteran bus operators.
- » Employ innovative approaches to increase flexibility in the work – changes to scheduling and wage progression.



In a follow-up to the [APTA \(2022\) Transit Workforce Shortage: Root Causes, Potential Solutions, and the Road Ahead](#) report, APTA (2023) published [Transit Workforce Shortage: Synthesis Report](#) and recommended the following solutions in six areas to address the frontline workforce shortage (see Table 1):

Table 1. APTA Frontline Employee Workforce Shortage Solutions

SOLUTION	STRATEGIES
RECRUITING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase Agency Recruiting Capacity.</li> <li>• Improve Job Advertising Effectiveness.</li> <li>• Cultivate Referral Networks.</li> <li>• Increase an Agency’s Visibility via Public Events.</li> <li>• Make Applications More Accessible.</li> </ul>
HIRING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Streamline the hiring process.</li> <li>• Expand interviewing capacity.</li> <li>• Host hiring events and hire in mass.</li> </ul>
TRAINING AND ONBOARDING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct Early Training and Onboarding.</li> <li>• Expand On-the-Road Training.</li> <li>• Provide More Accessible Training.</li> <li>• Train For a Positive Culture.</li> <li>• Provide assistance to Applicants Get CDLs.</li> </ul>
WORKING CONDITIONS AND POLICIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase Agency Capacity for Better Scheduling.</li> <li>• Change Worker Schedules.</li> <li>• Rethink Shift Selection.</li> <li>• Expand Full-time Work.</li> <li>• Incentivize Retention and Shift Distribution Through Pay.</li> <li>• Protect Workers’ Health and Safety.</li> <li>• Restructure Compensation to Improve Retention.</li> </ul>
BUILD AGENCY CULTURE AND IMPROVE MORALE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide clear Pathways and Growth Potential.</li> <li>• Engage, Recognize, and Acknowledge Employees.</li> </ul>
INTER AGENCY COORDINATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with state and regional partners to help advance workforce objectives.</li> </ul>

The [Shared Use Mobility Center's Managing the Labor Shortage at Transit Agencies \(2021\)](#) briefing report recommends transit officials equip themselves with data to properly navigate the frontline workforce crisis, in addition to advocating for changes that will positively impact the future of the workforce, the agency's services, and public transit more broadly.

The report advances two major strategies to attract new talent:

- Provide non-wage incentives, and
- Change labor practices.

In recent years, [Transit Center](#), a foundation committed to securing a more just and sustainable future with abundant public transportation has helped to spotlight the importance of “people-readiness” as an important element of achieving that goal through targeted research and grassroots advocacy (<https://transitcenter.org>). Their more recent publications include:

The [Bus Operators + Transit \(2019\)](#) briefing report which recommends the following four solutions:

- Redesign the job for health and success
- Raise the pay
- Create clear opportunities for advancement
- Make bus driving more flexible

The [Bus Operator in Crisis \(2022\)](#) report which documented how the national bus operator shortage is impacting agencies and outlined several major structural barriers to hiring and retention of frontline employees.

The report recommends the following eight solutions agencies can employ to hire and retain frontline employees:

- Focus on strategies to increase application rates
- Improve the hiring process
- Ensure competitive compensation
- Improve employee facilities
- Provide support for employee's career and lives
- Prioritize operator safety
- Provide flexibility in scheduling, to the extent possible
- Listen to operators.

The recently published [People First](#) report examines the current challenges facing public transportation human resource departments (Paget-Seekins 2023). The author recommends agencies transform their human resources departments into strategic functions that can proactively address future workforce needs, prioritize professional development and succession management, and build a positive workplace culture.

The report provides four solutions human resource departments should employ:

- Change hiring policies and procedures
- Rewrite job descriptions to better explain benefits
- Eliminate unnecessary requirements and process steps
- Ensure compensation is competitive



## Federal Approach

In recent years, the federal government has taken a more active approach to elevating the overall importance of “people-readiness” across the nation’s critical infrastructure sectors.

In 2021, The President’s National Infrastructure Advisory Council (NIAC) was tasked by the National Security Council to prepare a Workforce and Talent Management Study examining the challenges facing the 16 nation’s critical infrastructure workforce (NIAC 2021). The report highlighted the consequences of an ill-prepared critical infrastructure workforce “as just as devastating as those caused by natural disasters, or physical or cyber-attacks on our system”. Cited the lack of an overarching national critical infrastructure workforce Plan of Action; and “failure to elevate, prioritize, and adequately invest in the development and preparedness of...our people...who are central to keeping our nation safe and secure.”



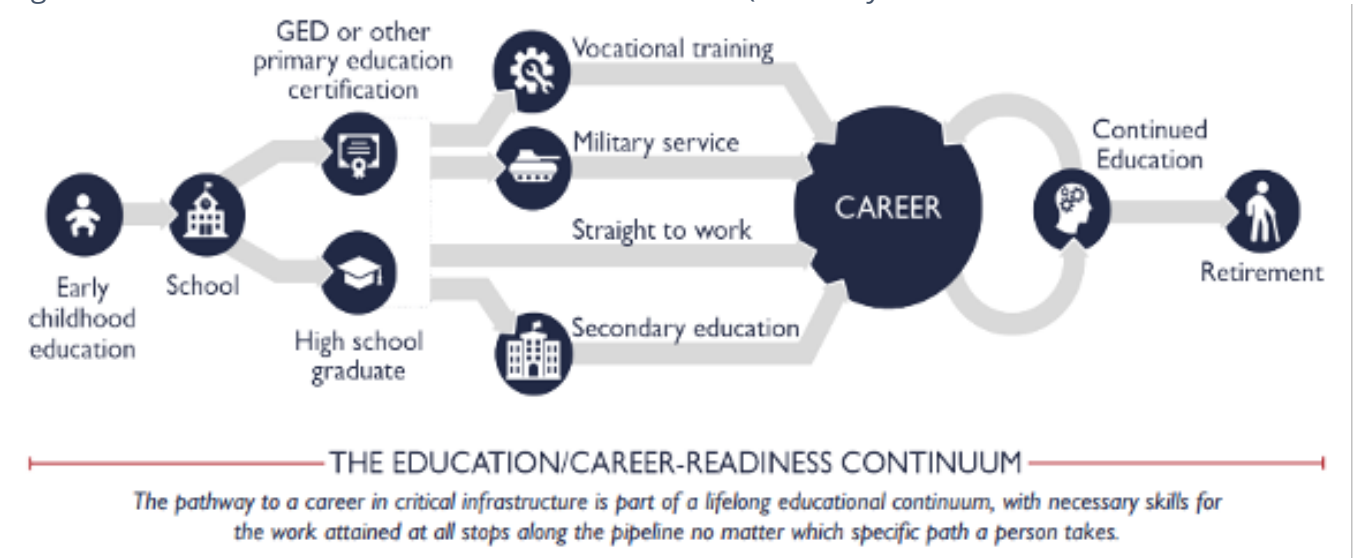
The Council report advanced three (3) major cross-cutting findings for their impact on all the critical infrastructure sectors: (1) Workforce Readiness is disconnected from the traditional educational system, (2) Lack of Coordination between the public and private sectors and across all levels of government hampers critical infrastructure workforce development; and (3) Lack of Diversity which presents significant and persistent challenges for recruitment and talent retention.

The study recommends development of a Strategic Workforce Planning Framework that is fact-based, coordinated, actionable and directly aligned with national priorities. Including a series of near-term, mid-term and long-term strategies (see Table 2)

Table 2. NIAC Workforce Solutions

TERM	STRATEGY
NEAR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Track all spending on critical infrastructure, including interagency efforts.</li> <li>Use executive authority to support best practices.</li> <li>Establish a critical infrastructure workforce coordinating council.</li> </ul>
MID	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop national standards.</li> <li>Launch a public awareness and image campaign.</li> <li>Provide increase funding and support to state and local governments.</li> </ul>
LONG	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reshape cultural perceptions of technical careers.</li> <li>Develop a national workforce plan.</li> <li>Build a workforce development system that connects education to career development.</li> </ul>

Figure 1. The Education/Career-Readiness Continuum (K to Gray)



Source: President's National Infrastructure Advisory Council. (2021). Workforce and Talent Management Study.

Last year, the Transit Workforce Center (TWC) coordinated with the FTA, key labor and industry partners and launched a national recruitment campaign to address the national bus operator shortage.<sup>1</sup> The outcome is the Connecting My Community Toolkit which consist of the following resources for transit agencies across the nation to employ for the recruitment and hiring of bus operators:<sup>2</sup>

- Building an Effective Local Campaign
- Advertisement Templates
- Recruitment Videos
- Print & Digital Advertising Materials
- Provide Case Studies
- Resources on Hiring and Recruiting

Most recently, in August 2023, the FTA published the nation's first National Transit Workforce Development Six-Year Strategic Plan, outlining goals and objectives to address workforce challenges and opportunities in the public transportation industry (FTA 2023).

The Plan's six overarching goals are:

- Ensure worker safety and health.
- Invest in workforce development.
- Drive workforce recruitment.
- Ensure worker retention.
- Develop worker skills.
- Track success through appropriate metrics.

<sup>1</sup> The Transit Workforce Center was established by the FTA and expands technical assistance efforts focused on industry workforce needs and is managed by the International Transportation Center.

<sup>2</sup> Transit Workforce Center. (2022). TWC Launches National Frontline Worker Recruitment Campaign. Retrieved from [TWC Launches National Frontline Worker Recruitment Campaign - Transit Workforce Center](#)

## Key Themes

Based on a review of recent public transit frontline workforce reports, we identified five consistent themes and forward-thinking approaches to recruit, hire, train, and retain frontline employees:

- Career Awareness and Preparedness
- Expanded Communications, Recruitment and Outreach Activities
- Competitive Wages & Benefits/Incentives
- Enhanced Training, Continuous Learning, Career Development and Advancement
- An Emphasis on Retention (Employee Health, Wellness & Welfare)

The next section provides a few examples of approaches that 2023 Local Host Transport Agencies are using to address frontline workforce challenges at their respective agencies. New strategies and initiatives that are increasingly being implemented by transit systems across North America.

# AGENCY EXAMPLES

## Career Awareness and Preparedness

### K-12 School Partnerships

Agencies are partnering with K-12 schools within their respective communities to expose youth to the functions of city and transportation planning. The primary purpose is to provide career awareness by capturing and sparking “early” interest in a career at a public transportation agency. As part of the transit agency-school partnership, agency employees volunteer at a local school and participate in public transportation-related activities with students. Activities include playing city and transportation games, presentations to classes on various transportation topics, participating in Career Days and other activities



“Engage with youth early – introduce to the transit planning process & seek their input” TriMet

## » Rock Island County Metropolitan Mass Transit District (MetroLINK) and Junior Achievement Partnership

MetroLINK partners with the local Junior Achievement program, a youth-center non-profit agency that focuses on worker readiness by providing young people with the knowledge and skills for the future. The MetroLINK and Junior Achievement program targets elementary and middle school students with the goal of introducing youth to city planning and public transportation. In elementary school, 5th graders participate in BizTown which combines in-class learning with a day-long visit to a simulated town. With this simulation, students are exposed to the financial aspects of operating a city by connecting the dots between what they learn in school and the real world. Middle school students (8th graders) participate in the JA Finance Park program where students visit a realistic on-site community. The purpose is to put into practice what has been learned in school by developing and committing to a personal budget.



## Secondary School Partnerships

In addition to partnering with K-12 schools and continuing with the career awareness and preparedness (K to Gray), the agencies are partnering with local universities, community colleges and vocational schools within their community. With these partnerships, the agencies are collaborating with the schools about the workforce shortage challenge and identifying the necessary curriculum to train for a career in public transportation.

### » **IndyGo, Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1070, and Ivy Tech Community College Partnership**

In Indianapolis, IndyGo, Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) Local 1070, and Ivy Tech Community College developed a partnership to provide technical certifications in diesel technology. The program is the first of its kind within the public transportation sector, specifically diesel technology. The agreement allows an IndyGo Apprenticeship Program graduate who successfully completes the Bus Maintenance Technician Apprenticeship Program to receive up to 24 credits after completing 16 credit hours at Ivy Tech. The credits will go toward a technical certification in diesel technology, providing more students options to pursue credentials or a degree that can lead to a higher wage.

## Expanded Communications, Recruitment and Outreach Activities

### Expand and Strengthen Community Partnerships

Agencies are increasingly working with existing community partners, expanding, and building new relationships to include information to help address the frontline workforce shortage within their respective communities, i.e., data on workforce needs, job requirements, wages, and benefits – and career advancement opportunities.

And, at the same time working with communities to help “connect the dots” between people-readiness, employee availability, and service quality.



**“Sell the career opportunities and benefits of working for a public transit agency.”  
Portland TriMet**

### » **Rock Island County Metropolitan Mass Transit District (MetroLINK) and World Relief Partnership**

MetroLINK developed a partnership with World Relief Quad Cities. The World Relief partnership is designed to target immigrant populations living in the Quad Cities area. Recruitment representatives visit with the agency participants and demonstrate how to ride the bus and conduct ride-a longs for the immigrant populations to increase their knowledge base of the system and possibly gain interest in applying for a frontline position.



## Increase Community Awareness, Visibility, and Active Engagement

To increase visibility, awareness of transit careers and workforce needs, human resources professionals are more proactively working to connect with people and communities -- attending community events to include cultural events, festivals, and neighborhood events. For example, the **Jacksonville Transit Authority attends the city's Juneteenth celebration to directly attract and recruit African Americans.** At these events, agency personnel host a booth or walk around scouting potential candidates. The purpose is to make a personal connection with the community and educate people on the agency -- including elevating the importance and value of the frontline workforce, workforce needs, job requirements (which often DO NOT require a college degree), compensation and benefits; and career advancement opportunities.

**"Put the HUMAN back  
in Human Resources"**  
Jacksonville Transit Authority

## » Alameda-Contra Costa Transit District (AC Transit) Innovation Solution to Attract Frontline Employees

AC Transit employs several non-traditional "targeted" recruitment strategies to increase community awareness, visibility, and engagement with residents of Alameda and Contra Costa counties. Two notably innovative approaches are:

- **Attend car shows.** Human resource representatives attend local car shows to attract and recruit frontline candidates, in particular mechanics. The thought is participants at these types of events are most likely to have an interest in vehicles and are already trained in repairing vehicles. Direct engagement with a transit agency staff member within their element can spark interest in a career with their community's transit agency.
- **Visit high volume facilities.** Another innovative approach human resource staff employs are visiting vehicle registration facilities. The facilities are known for high-volume traffic throughout the day and people are at the facilities for long time periods. AC Transit staff utilize the opportunity to provide information and speak to personally speak with people about employment opportunities and benefits of working at the transit agency.

## Targeted Recruitment

The agencies recognize social media is a primary source for the public and potential employees to learn new information and/or about upcoming events. Agencies leverage the free professional focused LinkedIn, in addition to popular social media platforms Facebook, Instagram, X (formerly known as Twitter), and YouTube to advertise job openings and upcoming hiring events. The videos are used to highlight the agency, discuss recruitment needs, and the role transit plays in connecting people to jobs and essential destinations throughout the city. The agencies are leveraging the opportunity to better explain to the community public transit's importance and the value of working for a company that serves an employee's community.

Capitalizing on the free online advertising platforms, agencies are posting employee testimonials ("worker voice") on social media sites. For example, the Rhode Island Turnpike and Bridge Authority (RITBA) publishes employee testimonials on the agency's website and social media platforms. The videos showcase employees describing their job duties and how the role contributes to connecting people to jobs and everyday activities. And, as importantly why the employee enjoys working for the agency. **IndyGo created a Diversity and Inclusion Team that lead to the establishment of a diverse hiring panel (persons representative of the agency and Indianapolis demographics).**

"Agencies need to be INTENTIONAL with recruitment – directly target underrepresented populations (e.g. African Americans and Women)."

**Toronto Transit Commission**

## Competitive Wages & Benefits/Incentives

### Competitive Wages

In this increasingly competitive labor market, non-competitive compensation is one of the leading reasons candidates forgo applying for transit frontline positions. To increase hiring rates, most of these agencies have conducted (or plan to) compensation studies and increase the starting wage and annual wage increases for frontline roles.

## » MBTA Increases Bus Operator Starting Wage

In Boston, the MBTA and Boston Carmen Union Local 589 entered into a four-year labor agreement that increased the bus operator starting hourly wage from \$22.21 to \$30.00 (a 35% increase). This is the largest bus operator increase in nearly 30 years. With the hiring incentive, the MBTA hopes to reduce the number of operator vacancies. At the same time, the agency has implemented an aggressive recruitment campaign.

Note: The MBTA also offers bus operators a \$7,500 sign-on bonus, paid CDL training, up to \$10,000 in tuition reimbursement, and a pension (vested after 10 years).



### Cash Hiring Bonus

Cash hiring bonuses for frontline employees are a relatively new incentive agencies are using to increase hiring rates. Several agencies indicated that cash hiring bonuses were first put into practice during the COVID-19 pandemic, however, the incentive was insignificant in attracting more applicants. More recently, some of the agencies have increased the hiring bonus amount and experienced an uptick in applications. For example, beginning in September 2021, Portland TriMet started offering a \$1,000 sign-on bonus for bus operators, and in 2022 increased the bonus to \$3,500; and most recently increased the hiring bonus to \$7,500.

### Paid CDL Training

Agencies uniformly recognize the process to acquire a CDL is expensive and cumbersome. To eliminate the CDL cost barrier and provide an additional hiring incentive, several of the agencies are paying the cost for required CDL training and exams for bus operators.



## » Portland TriMet Bus Operator Hiring Incentives: Cash Bonus and Paid CDL Training

TriMet has a suite of incentives to attract more bus operators to include:

- Cash hiring bonus (\$7,500)
- Guaranteed hourly wage increase after the 18 months of employment (full time bus operators)
- Paid CDL training and testing for newly hired bus operators
- Referral bonus (\$1,500)
- Pension (vested after three years)





## Relocation Bonus

Jacksonville Transit Authority includes a relocation bonus as an additional hiring incentive.



### » Jacksonville Transit Authority (JTAFLA) Bus Operator Hiring Incentives: Cash Bonus, Paid CDL Training, and Relocation Bonus

JTAFLA has lucrative and competitive incentives to attract more bus operators to include:

- Hiring bonus (\$5,000 for non-CDL holders and \$1,000 for persons who hold a CDL)
- Relocation bonus (\$5,000)

## Eliminate (Some) Application Requirements

A growing national trend is to eliminate “nonessential” application questions (requirements) that discourage and/or disqualify many candidates. One target population is to responsibly establish 2<sup>nd</sup> chance programs to provide applicants with a criminal history (excluding violent, predatory, sex crimes) with a second chance at a good career.

### » IndyGo Second Chance Policy

In Indianapolis, IndyGo created a Second Chance Policy for applicants with unfavorable criminal backgrounds. The agency eliminated the question requiring applicants to disclose criminal background history. However, if a background check returns a criminal infraction (minus violent crimes and crimes against children), the human resources department has a confidential conversation with the applicant to gather further information regarding the offense. If the background check and secondary screening results are satisfactory, the applicant will most likely be hired.

## Reduce Hiring Timeframe

Agencies acknowledged up to 6 months+ as the average time for processing employment applications. To increase hiring rates, the agencies are fast tracking the process. Simplifying and combining elements of the hiring process.

**“Host hiring events – interview candidates and provide conditional job offer on same day.” IndyGo**

## Enhanced Training, Continuous Training, Career Development and Advancement

### Early “Onboardings” Training Programs

Frontline employee training is extensive, and agencies recognized a significant share of new hires do not complete the required training. To ensure employees who accept the job complete the training and start in the role, **agencies are enhancing training programs to provide employees with a better understanding of what to expect while on the job to include early “onboarding” training programs.**

### » Alameda-Contra Costa Transit District (AC Transit) Pre-Training Program

AC Transit implemented a one-week pre-training program. During the pre-training period, bus operators are provided with a preliminary understanding of the day-to-day duties and expectations of the job. The program is designed for frontline employees who accepted job offers to interact with agency staff prior to the official first day of employment. Newly hired employee visits to the agency consist of a scaled down orientation with overview of benefits, meeting team members, touring facilities, and riding along on a bus route (for bus operators).



### Continuous Training Opportunities

The agencies recognize that continuous training for frontline employees is paramount. **IndyGo created a Learning Academy that creates trainings based on common occurrences.** Similarly, the **Boston MBTA is in the process of developing a Learning and Development Team** that will create programs and initiatives to support the growth and development of employees.

The agencies are also emphasizing training frontline employees for emerging technologies – zero emission vehicles and automated vehicles. To gain a broader context of the emerging technologies, **IndyGo partners with Purdue University and covers the cost of frontline employee’s tuition and fees.**

### Career Pathways and Advancement

Agencies that participated in the focus groups acknowledged the common feedback from frontline employees about the lack of knowledge and clarity regarding career advancement and progression opportunities – including supervisory and management as well as movement into other departments within the agency. The **Toronto Transit Commission established a one-week training program – employees interested in another role can apply to shadow an employee currently working in the role.**

To ensure frontline employees are aware of the career pathways and advancement opportunities, agencies are developing structured career path programs for how to advance:

**Step-by-step employee process to advance from Bus Operator – Lead Operator – Road Supervisor – Operations Manager – Operations Director – Operations Superintendent – Vice President of Operations**

### Formal Mentoring Programs

The agencies recognize a missing element in traditional training and retention of frontline employees is formal mentoring programs. In response, several agencies have recently implemented formal programs to develop early career frontline staff into senior employees. The agencies are using the program to contribute to – increasing engagement, retention; pipeline preparation; workforce diversity; and increase productivity.

The IndyGo Operator Mentoring Program – **pairs senior operators with junior operators, with an emphasis on teaching new operators how to deal with customers.** As part of the Jacksonville Transit Authority Mentoring Program, **retired bus operators are invited back to the agency to speak to current operators about their experiences and overcoming challenges while on the road.**

## » Toronto Transit Commission Women Operator Program

The Toronto Transit Commission recently launched a Women Operator Program to increase comfortability for women working in male-dominated frontline roles. Newly hired women in frontline roles are partnered with senior frontline women employees. The program is designed to contribute to developing a diverse workforce and increasing comfortability for women operators in male dominated job classifications. In addition to the Women Operator Program, the Toronto Transit Commission recently launched a job shadowing program. The one-week program allows employees who are interested in other roles shadowing an employee in the role to obtain a better understanding of the requirements and duties.

## Employee-Driven Retention Initiatives

### Work-Life Balance

Frontline employees require that employees work in-person. To compete with administrative roles and the private sector that allow complete telework, hybrid work schedules, and flex days, agencies are revising policies to provide frontline employees with more flexibility.

### Physical Fitness and Mental Health

Frontline roles can be physically and mentally taxing. While agencies have historically subsidized gym memberships and provided Employee Assistance Programs to promote physical fitness and address mental health, the participating agencies recognize the importance of increasing offerings to retain employees. To relieve the stresses of the job, the Jacksonville Transit Authority built an **on-site gym and offers on-site massages for operators, to relieve stress on the back from sitting for long periods.**



**“Access to mental health services to maintain stress is an incentive to retain employees.”**

**Toronto Transit Commission**

### Safety and Security

In recent years, there has been a significant increase in operator assaults from customers. To mitigate the assaults, agencies have increased safety measures – bus operator protector shields, cameras on vehicles with real-time video feeds, and secret patrol officers on vehicles and at transit facilities. Recognizing more needs to be done, **MetroLINK established a Safety Committee to review regular issues (i.e., assaults from customers) operators encounter and develop measures to mitigate the issues.** The **Toronto Transit Commission implemented de-escalation training into its training program, providing operators with techniques to resolve or avoid conflict with customers.**

### Employee Engagement and Employer Responsiveness

Agencies indicated employees who feel appreciated remain at the company long-term. To increase employee engagement and employer responsiveness, the **Jacksonville Transit Authority conducts “stay” interviews with employees to discuss concerns and identify solutions for retention.** During the interviews, managers and human resources representatives meet with the employees to discuss satisfaction levels, career aspirations, and how the agency can assist with achieving career goals. Similarly, the San Bernardino OminTran **General Manager hosts monthly 30-minute coffee sessions with employees.** During the session, the General Manager meets and listens to employee concern, and develops action(s) to address employee issues.

**“Transit agencies must invest in their employees to retain their employees.” MetroLINK**



### **Case Study: Denver RTD Innovation Challenge**

Denver RTD's Youth Team developed a Youth Career Awareness Outreach and Training Program as its 2023 Innovation Challenge. Based on internal discussions and review of agency data, the greatest worker vacancy needs and largest gaps in representation were for operator, information technology, and engineering positions.

*Within a five-month timeframe, January 2023 to May 2023, the RTD Youth Team's Plan of Action – a “pilot” program -- resulted in 25+ dynamic and talented new young adult employees.*

Denver's youth team won 3<sup>rd</sup> place in the Grand Innovation North American Challenge competition. The Denver Team's Innovation Challenge and presentation links are: Team Info: <https://iyai.org/denver-regional-transit-district-rtd-denver/>; 3-minute video submission: [https://youtu.be/i\\_zHTmn6kpo?si=zCEBSgJLTe7Sysmh](https://youtu.be/i_zHTmn6kpo?si=zCEBSgJLTe7Sysmh); and Full Presentation: <https://youtu.be/BUJaE69o6-8?si=5bvbKwH4FBjpeGQ5>.

Program highlights are summarized below.

- The purpose of the Program is to develop a fact-informed, *replicable Plan of Action* to address the agency's most serious “high needs” workforce vacancies. Including strategies to improve recruitment, hiring, and retention – with emphasis on targeting young adults and historically-underrepresented groups. The Plan of Action, major findings, and lessons learned (pilot program) are planned to be shared with other interested public transport agencies.
- The *Plan of Action* includes a comprehensive fact-informed research approach including both qualitative and quantitative data, risk assessment and mitigation strategies, implementation plans, performance measures, and other important considerations, i.e., replicability, scale, speed of implementation, resource requirements.

#### **Major findings and results of the team's research and analysis pointed to:**

- Extremely Limited Transit Career Awareness/Interest.
- Transit Not Perceived by Youth as a High Potential Career Option.
- A need for significantly expanded “active” Career Awareness Outreach with local/regional workforce-focused partnerships, collaboration, and engagement with similarly aligned institutions.
- The Denver team attended, supported, and showcased Denver RTD career opportunities at numerous events (i.e., connect and meet with 50+ individuals per event, including youth and interested industry professionals, i.e., Latinos in Transit, COMTO, WTS local Chapters) – resulting in increased applicants.
- Major Barriers to Young Adult Engagement/Future Transit Career – lack of exposure to careers/limited educational job-readiness preparation, balance between school and work, exposure to diverse role models, lack of advocacy.
- Incentives/Value for Participation: “Time” and “Value” matter to young adults in terms of their decision-making re: participation in surveys and programs. This needs to be factored into Program budgeting.

The *full-scale Implementation Process* is planned to occur in *three phases*:

**(1) Survey Research and Needs analysis** – initial Denver metro youth survey results found that respondents had extremely limited awareness of transit careers, i.e., 90% responded “bus” when asked to provide one word when you think of public transportation.

**(2) Significantly expanded, “active” participatory career awareness, outreach, and collaboration with local/regional education/training, social, community-based organizations; and relevant professional associations** – targeting institutions and constituencies with a lens of an equitable and sustainable future -- that play a critical role in preparing youth to enter the future workforce.

**(3) Development of a Career Awareness/Training Program** that provides an internship opportunity for interested youth to join and learn more about Denver RTD careers and hiring needs, the transport sector and related transportation/mobility careers (2-3 weeks of career awareness immersion); informational interviews, 1-1 mentorship opportunities, simulated trainings, and career coaching.

The proposed Program will provide education and increase awareness for youth of “essential” high needs positions as well as create an entry point into the organization (i.e., internship program).

# APPENDICES

# SURVEY INSTRUMENT

One of 16 critical infrastructure sectors in the United States, transportation is a critical "lifeline" that matters to all of us!

Today, public transportation providers across North America are facing a shortage of bus operators, train operators, and mechanics. Frontline positions that are essential to safe, reliable, and quality services – that often require them to be "on-site".

The big questions are "WHY" – with special emphasis on the essential public transit frontline positions? And, most importantly – "WHAT" can we do better to motivate, attract, prepare, and retain a diverse and "future-ready" workforce.

At [Introducing Youth to American Infrastructure \(iyai+\)](#), we are digging deeper to **proactively engage youth**, as well as including input from workers, management and labor, and community stakeholders.

This Survey is another opportunity for us to "LISTEN" and receive valuable insights and improvements that we will utilize to identify important themes, suggestions, and recommendations around motivating, attracting, preparing, and retaining a diverse cadre of young adults – critical to a "future-ready" transportation/sustainable mobility workforce.

This anonymous survey should take about 10 minutes of your time.

Thank you very much for your participation!

1) Are you currently employed in the transportation sector - OR, preparing for a future transportation career?

Yes  No

2) If "Yes" to Question 1, indicate your top 3 areas of interest:

<input type="checkbox"/> Bus or Train Operator/Mechanic	<input type="checkbox"/> IT/Cybersecurity/Advanced Technology/Critical Manufacturing
<input type="checkbox"/> Human Resources/Organizational Development	<input type="checkbox"/> Government Affairs/Community & Stakeholder Engagement
<input type="checkbox"/> Operations/Maintenance & Safety	<input type="checkbox"/> Police & Security
<input type="checkbox"/> Architecture/Engineering & Construction	<input type="checkbox"/> Planning/Finance/Procurement/Legal Services

3) Would you recommend any of the positions (i) in Q2) to a family member, friend and/or colleague?

Yes  No

4) Have you been aware of the major "frontline" workforce shortage for bus operators, train operators, and mechanics facing public transit providers across North America?

Yes  No

5) If you answered "No" to Q4, skip this question. If "Yes" to Q4, please share how you personally became aware of the problem. (Select all that apply.)

<input type="checkbox"/> Local/National News	<input type="checkbox"/> Family, Friends, Colleagues
<input type="checkbox"/> Local Public Transit Service Plans (Actual/Potential Impacts)	<input type="checkbox"/> Community Organizations/Advocates
<input type="checkbox"/> Education & Training	<input type="checkbox"/> I am not aware of the "frontline" workforce shortage
<input type="checkbox"/> Professional Associations, Government, Employers and Labor	

6) Are you generally familiar with the job requirements for a Bus or Train Operator?

Yes  No

7) What is the minimum starting salary that you would accept to work as a bus operator or train operator?

<input type="checkbox"/> \$30,000 - \$40,000/annually	<input type="checkbox"/> \$50,000 - \$60,000/annually
<input type="checkbox"/> \$40,000 - \$50,000/annually	<input type="checkbox"/> \$60,000 - \$75,000/annually

8) Are you generally familiar with the job requirements for a entry-level mechanic?

Yes  No



# SURVEY INSTRUMENT

9) What is the minimum starting salary that you would accept to work as a entry-level mechanic?

- \$30,000 - \$40,000/annually  
 \$40,000 - \$50,000/annually  
 \$50,000 - \$60,000/annually  
 \$60,000 - \$75,000/annually

10) If employed, what type of work do you currently do, i.e., Position Title?

---

11) If not employed, would you consider making an application for one of these positions now (i.e., Bus Operator, Train Operator, Mechanic). Or, in the future?

- Yes  No

12) If you selected "No", please share why not. (Select all that apply.)

- Better Career Awareness Needed (generally unfamiliar with)  
 Need Better Availability of Job Training for these Positions  
 More Competitive Pay  
 Need Better Benefits  
 More Flexible Schedules/Working Hours  
 More Remote (work from home) Opportunities  
 Better Clarity re: Career Pathways and Growth Opportunities  
 Better Personal Safety & Security  
 Better Public Image of Positions  
 Work-Life Balance  
 More Access to Child/Family Care  
 Other (please specify)

13) How Do You "Search" for Jobs/Career Opportunities? (Select All that apply.)

- Online  
 In-Person  
 Through a Local Government/Workforce Board  
 Through Schools/Educational, Training & Counseling  
 Professional Associations, Employers and Unions  
 Word of Mouth (Family, Friends, Colleagues & Co-workers)  
 Community-Based/Youth Organizations & Programs  
 Attending Job & Career Fairs  
 Other (please specify)

14) How Do You "Apply" for Jobs/Career Opportunities? (Select All that apply.)

- Online  
 In-Person  
 Other (please specify)

15) Would You Like Assistance in the Following Areas? (Select for "Yes", ignore for "No")

- Resume Writing  
 Transportation Access Needed to Get to Job Interviews  
 Employment-Related "Navigator" Services  
 Classes for Comp. Skills & Online Applications/Interview Practice  
 A Mentor  
 Better Job Training

16) If you have ever applied for an essential "frontline" transit operating position – did you encounter any of the following challenges/potential barriers to employment– or "others"? Check all that apply. If so, please share.

- Commercial Drivers License (CDL) Testing/Qualification  
 Health Issue(s)  
 Drug/Alcohol Testing  
 Child/Other Family Care  
 Criminal Background  
 Poor Credit Rating  
 Lack of Reliable Access to Affordable Transportation  
 A Long Employment Screening/Hiring Process  
 Other (please specify)

17) Please Share Your Job Search Resources & Ability (Select for "Yes", ignore for "No")

- Computer Access  
 Personal E-Mail Account Used Regularly  
 Telephone Access (w/ an active voicemail)  
 Comfortable with Current Resume  
 Comfortable with Computer Skills Proficiency for Job Searching  
 Comfortable with Skills Needed to do Online Job Searches and Job Applications  
 Comfortable with Online Interviews  
 Comfortable with an In-Person Interview  
 No Impediments to Get To a Job Interview

# SURVEY INSTRUMENT

18) When You Submit a Job Application and are invited for an interview ("on-line" or "in-person"), how long do you expect before hearing about a hiring decision?

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> The Same Day        | <input type="checkbox"/> About 1 Month Later                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Within 1 Week       | <input type="checkbox"/> Within 2-3 Months                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> About 2 Weeks Later | <input type="checkbox"/> I do not have any timeframe expectations |

19) What would be some incentives for you to work at a public transit agency as a bus operator, train operator, or mechanic? (Select ALL that apply.)

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Guaranteed Annual Pay Increases (including bonuses)                             | <input type="checkbox"/> Schedule Flexibility                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Competitive Pay and Benefits  | <input type="checkbox"/> Child/Family Care Assistance                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Clear Career Pathways and Growth Opportunities                                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Physical and Mental Health Support Services |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Work-Life Balance   | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify)                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Employer-Provided Work-Related Tech Equipment (i.e., tablet,                    |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Employer-paid tuition reimbursement for required training and/or college degree |  |

20) Why Would You Potentially Leave an Organization? (Select ALL that apply)

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pay Not Competitive                           | <input type="checkbox"/> No Clear Opportunities for Advancement                           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Benefits Not Competitive                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Personal Safety/Security Concerns                                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Work Not Interesting                          | <input type="checkbox"/> General Public Image/Perception of Job                           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Inadequate Worker Training/Skills Enhancement | <input type="checkbox"/> Employee Input Not Respected/Lack of Organization Responsiveness |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Location Not Convenient                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify)   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Work Scheduling – too inflexible              |   |

21) What would motivate and inspire you to be a public transit bus operator, train operator, or mechanic?

\_\_\_\_\_

22) Please Share the Most Important Goals in Your Life (select the top 5)

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Being Successful in Work                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Finding Purpose, Personal Fulfillment and Meaning in Life    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Making a Contribution to Society          | <input type="checkbox"/> Building Self-Esteem and Confidence                          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Having Lots of Money                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Having a Lot of Different Experiences                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Maintaining Good Physical & Mental Health | <input type="checkbox"/> Build a More Sustainable & Resilient Future                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Doing Good and Well                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Achieve a More Equitable Future for all People & Communities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Having a Good Family Life                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify)                                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Achieving Good Work-Life Balance          |   |

23) Do you have any other recommendations, specific insights, or examples of strategies and promising approaches to addressing public transit's frontline workforce challenges that you would like to share?

\_\_\_\_\_

24) Are you a young adult participating in Iyai's Sustainable Career Awareness Program?

- Yes  No

25) What best describes your current employment status?

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Employed, full-time                              | <input type="checkbox"/> Homemaker   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Employed, part-time                              | <input type="checkbox"/> Unemployed (not currently looking for employment) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Student  | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify)                            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Unemployed (and actively looking for employment) |  |

26) What is Your Highest Level of Education?

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> No HS or GED  | <input type="checkbox"/> Some College/Associate's Degree |
| <input type="checkbox"/> High School Diploma/GED                               | <input type="checkbox"/> Bachelor's Degree               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Technical Institute/Apprenticeship Program Completion | <input type="checkbox"/> Advanced Degree                 |

27) What is your age?

- |                                |                                |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> < 18  | <input type="checkbox"/> 45-60 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 18-29 | <input type="checkbox"/> > 60  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 30-44 |                                |

# SURVEY INSTRUMENT

28) Device Type

- iOS Phone / Tablet
- Android Phone / Tablet

- Windows Desktop / Laptop
- MacOS Desktop / Laptop

29) What is your gender?

- Male
- Female
- Non-binary

- A gender not listed here
- Prefer not to answer

30) What is Household Income?

- \$0-\$9,999
- \$10,000-\$24,999
- \$25,000-\$49,999

- \$50,000-\$74,999
- \$75,000-\$99,999
- \$100,000-\$124,999

31) What region do you live in?

- East North Central
- East South Central
- Middle Atlantic
- Mountain
- New England

- Pacific
- South Atlantic
- West North Central
- West South Central

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**AMERICAN**  
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Thank You!