FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS OF
APTA’S BLUE RIBBON PANEL ON WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

BACKGROUND

APTA’s Executive Committee has previously acknowledged that workforce and human capital issues are critical to the continuing success of the public transportation industry. Currently, the $48 billion industry employs more than 380,000 people and supports 1.7 million jobs. Attracting, developing and retaining a diverse workforce able to deliver high-quality performance that effectively and efficiently responds to the evolving needs of public transportation customers is key to our industry’s continuing success. In recognition of this need, Dr. Beverly A. Scott, APTA Chair 2008 – 2009 identified workforce development as one of her priorities. APTA’s engagement to advance the association’s federal authorization recommendations and develop specific actions to implement recommendations from APTA’s TransitVision 2050 initiative, including a review of APTA’s governance and committee structure, presented a prime opportunity to review and address current and future workforce development in our industry. To facilitate this process, Dr. Scott established a blue ribbon panel on workforce development, representing the public and private sectors of the industry, key stakeholders and partners, including labor, academia, and the next generation of leaders in APTA. The panel was augmented by a technical resources group, comprised of federal partners, labor, and organizations responsible for delivering workforce development and training programs.

APTA Chair, Mattie P. “M.P.” Carter has continued this initiative for 2009 – 2010. Under the leadership of Doran Barnes, APTA’s Vice-Chair-Human Resources, the panel was charged to:

- Review the research and recommendations of the earlier workforce development initiative;
- Identify gaps, new opportunities, programs and services geared to helping to create and sustain a stronger, vibrant, efficient and effective workforce; and
- Define APTA’s role in providing ongoing support to members and the industry on these issues.

The objective of this effort was to present a unified work plan for the next five years. In November 2009, the Executive Committee reviewed the preliminary recommendations of the blue ribbon panel, and directed the panel to complete its work in early 2010. The following report outlines the panel’s final recommendations, including next steps to implement the recommendations and activities which were also used as input into the development of APTA’s 2010 – 2014 Strategic Plan.

The panel initiated its work by seeking industry input (including listening and program sessions at APTA conferences and meetings; participating in meetings/conferences with members, federal partners, union representatives, university transportation centers, education and training providers, other stakeholders, etc.); and data analysis and research on leading industry workforce development practices (both transit and similar industries).
Based on these resources and their own expertise, the panel developed a series of 32 recommendations organized under the following six (6) areas:

**Legislative Issues**: the need to focus on advancing APTA’s authorization recommendations and other legislative proposals (American Recovery and Reinvestment Act and Jobs bills) for funding to promote the development of a skilled industry workforce. The working group was co-chaired by J. Barry Barker, executive director, The Transit Authority of River City, and Doran Barnes.

**Image and Branding: Making the Business Case for Workforce Development in Public Transportation**: the need for a targeted campaign to improve the image of public transportation as a career; promote “green jobs; and “sell” our industry by creating messages that reach new generations and talent pools (i.e. returning veterans) by using social media tools and other technologies. The working group was co-chaired by Stephanie Pinson, president and chief operating officer, Gilbert Tweed Associates, Inc., and Alan Wulkan, managing partner, InfraConsult LLC.

**Higher Education**: the need to focus on a variety of post-secondary educational options, including the role of universities, transportation research centers, community colleges and technical schools in providing the pipeline for public transportation careers, and how best to leverage opportunities for development of core curricula in universities and community colleges. The working group was chaired by Dr. Jill Hough, program director, Small Urban and Rural Transit Center, Upper Great Plains Transportation Institute, North Dakota State University.

**Youth Outreach and Awareness**: the need to address how best to prepare the next generation of leaders within the public transportation industry, e.g. developing key programs, activities and partnerships for grades K – 12. The Youth Outreach and Awareness working group focused on strategies, programs and activities targeted to K - 12 levels. The working group placed an emphasis on opportunities to promote and expand the workforce pipeline earlier in the educational process. The working group was co-chaired by Aida Berduo Douglas, business development manager/DBE officer, Capital Metropolitan Transportation Authority, and Tammy Haenftling, assistant vice president, paratransit management services, Dallas Area Rapid Transit.

**Partnerships and Collaborations**: the need to focus on how to enhance training and educational opportunities for the current and future workforce, through diverse, collaborative partnerships, i.e. labor-management; regional training consortiums; and opportunities for public and private partnerships on workforce development, etc. The working group was co-chaired by Mary Ann Collier, director of operations, Swayzer Engineering, Inc., and Robert H. Prince, Jr., vice president and industry liaison, DMJM Harris, an AECOM Company.

**Performance Metrics/Return on investment (ROI)**: the need to establish an industry-developed model that measures the ROI on workforce development, training, etc., and a regular benchmarking program. The working group established three primary objectives: (1) Communicate the successes of existing programs; (2) develop recommendations that use performance metrics and benchmarking to measure the effectiveness and improve public transit workforce development programs; and (3) collaborate with the other working groups to develop
performance metrics for all focus areas defined by the blue ribbon panel. The working group was co-chaired by Brian J. Turner, director, International Transportation Learning Center, and Dr. Stephen D. Van Beek, president & CEO, Eno Transportation Foundation.

SUMMARY OF PANEL RECOMMENDATIONS

The following summarizes some of the strategies and tools the panel identified to assist APTA and the industry in addressing the above issues. As noted below, the recommendations are to be implemented within 18 months (immediate) and 5 years (long-term).

Legislative Issues

(Ongoing)

1. As part of ongoing work with Congress and the Administration, as well as with coalition partners, stakeholders, other groups and the public, APTA should continue to achieve the best possible outcome for the public transportation industry’s workforce development in the legislative process for the next authorization.

Image/Branding: Making the Business Case for Workforce Development in Public Transportation

(0-18 months)

2. Assess the role and development of “green jobs” in the public transportation industry. Identify possible research topics to document the “green jobs” in the industry, and how best to demonstrate public transportation’s contribution to these opportunities. Build upon APTA’s series of studies on the impact of the green economy on public transportation.

3. Collaborate with the “Telling Our Story” task force to promote the benefits of public transportation career opportunities.

(18 months – 3 years)

4. Continue to showcase public transportation as a high-growth industry by developing improved recruitment and promotional resources, including public service announcements, and media outlets, etc. (a partnership between APTA’s Human Resources and Marketing and Communications Committees). Emphasize the need to advance collaboration among other APTA committees.
(Multi-year campaign program covering 5 years)

5. Explore the development of a workforce development image campaign to promote public transit careers, including “green jobs.” The purpose of the campaign is to:
   
   o Continue collaboration with the human resources and marketing and communications committees to further promote the benefits of public transportation career opportunities.
   
   o Promote social media tools and resources and build upon APTA’s current social media development.
   
   o Collaborate with the proposed higher education subcommittee of the human resources committee.
   
   o Develop proposed campaign elements. Recommendations include:

(0 – 18 months)

   o Conduct a scan of other high-growth demand industries to examine workforce development real-world case studies, successes and lessons learned.
   
   o Identify new technology/social networking tools as a way to more effectively engage the next generation of public transportation employees.
   
   o Develop an ongoing inventory of available industry jobs. In collaboration with the higher education subcommittee, establish a communications program to share this information to students at universities, colleges, community colleges, technical schools, etc.

(18 months – 3 years)

   o Conduct research on the perceptions of the image of working in the public transportation industry (an initial step in developing the predecessor of the Research, Communications and Advocacy (RCA) program.
   
   o Based on outcome of new research listed above, determine the feasibility of developing an image campaign for workforce development in the industry.
   
   o Assess progress within the previous (18 months – 3 years) timeframe. Identify the next series of projects (within 3 - 5 years and beyond)
**Higher Education**

**(0 – 18 months)**

6. Produce market and maintain an initial database inventory/web portal of existing higher education transit-related educational programs and resources.

7. Establish a higher education subcommittee, under the auspices of the human resources committee. The subcommittee would oversee and implement the proposed projects developed by the working group.

8. Identify and track higher education/transit agency partnerships to address skill gaps and workforce development needs.

9. Increase internship opportunities. Identify how best to link higher education institutions with transit agencies and the private sector to further develop and promote internship opportunities.

10. Identify, develop and manage models for industry mentor programs.

**(18 months - 3 years)**

11. Further refine and expand database/web portal begun listed above of higher education institutions that have transit courses, curricula, certificate programs, co-ops, industry internships, etc.

12. Establish partnerships with transit agencies and businesses to provide ongoing site visits, briefings, and related programs to showcase their organizations and to encourage students to pursue careers in the industry.

13. Develop and submit a proposal for a TCRP synthesis study to identify best practices/success stories regarding transit agencies’ experience with hiring and promoting employees via non-UTC and UTC training and education programs.

**(3 – 5 years)**

14. Continue further in-depth research on public and private sector industry mentoring programs, including methodologies for tracking and assessing the benefit and impact of these mentor programs for both employers and students.

15. Develop, implement and maintain an ongoing tracking/monitoring system to measure how higher education increases performance and continuous improvement for the public transit industry. *(See also related planned research and work of the Metrics/Return on Investment (ROI) Working Group recommendations).*
Youth Outreach and Awareness

(0-18 months/18 months – 3 years)

16. Develop new strategies, tools and resources to introduce and connect students (K- 12) with a broad range of information on attainable public transportation careers.

   o Produce, market and maintain an initial database of existing youth outreach educational programs and resources. This is part of the phase I of the “9000 in ‘09” initiative.

   o Develop list of available youth outreach programs and partnerships. This is part of the phase II of the “9000 in ’09” initiative.

   o Host webinar/listing sessions with APTA members to build awareness of youth outreach programs, including partnerships with non-traditional organizations, i.e. Junior Achievement.

17. Encourage transit agencies and organizations to connect and collaborate with educators at the K-12 level to attract and recruit the next generation of leaders for public transportation’s workforce.

   (0 – 18 months)

   o Build upon work of initial focus groups. Establish an advisory group of subject matter experts to provide guidance and direction to develop the toolkit.

   o Develop and test three pilot youth outreach toolkits based on results from September 2009 focus groups and recommendations and prototype poster. Include toolkits for elementary, middle and high school students to be used by transit agencies and organizations to develop local programs with schools. Continue to convene additional focus groups with middle and high school teachers.

   (18 months – 3 years)

   o Develop electronic or printed materials and resources that can be distributed across the industry to schools and non-profit organizations promoting careers to K-12 students.

   o Incorporate input from pilot programs to launch and issue “Release One Youth Outreach Toolkits” geared toward the three age groups.
18. Develop and implement a national Youth Outreach Program, including the following elements:
   - “Public Transportation Career Day”
   - National “Shadowing” Program
   - Youth Summit
   - Series of mini-video clips that feature a range of transit professions

(3 – 5 years)

19. Develop, implement and maintain an ongoing tracking/monitoring system to measure performance and continuous improvement.

Partnerships and Collaborations

(0 – 18 months)

20. Review existing list of core audiences of APTA’s Cooperative Agreement partners, among others, to help “target” the message on workforce development. Leverage APTA and its partners’ resources and outreach efforts. Augment list with those organizations with whom we should be more strongly aligned.

(18 months – 3 years)

21. Collaborate with APTA’s Communications and Marketing Committee and other committees to develop and implement a plan to educate and inform our partners on the range of existing and possible transit outreach, communications, industry career-related programs that have been implemented, successes and lessons learned. Establish working groups as needed to supplement resources to accomplish this work.

22. Collaborate with the various working groups and APTA committees to develop a common workforce development portal of dynamically-changing resources; include various “How to” toolkits of resources to help transit agencies and organizations, and partners foster and enhance productive, working relationships on workforce development partnerships. These toolkits will also assist teachers, academics, students and others to foster these partnerships.

23. Encourage that APTA members, partner organizations, and labor unions continue to collect, manage and effectively use metrics and ROI research for baseline data, monitoring, and continuous improvement. Promote and integrate ongoing industry metric research in program development. APTA, Federal Transit Administration, Transit Cooperative Research Program, Eno Transportation Foundation, Transportation Learning Center, regional training consortiums, such as the Southern California Regional Training Consortium, and other organizations continue to collaborate on producing and
distributing industry reports/report cards on industry metrics to be used for continuous improvement.

(3 – 5 years)

24. Develop a plan to implement, maintain, and track ongoing monitoring systems which measure performance and continuous improvement of all appropriate panel recommendations.

25. Identify potential funding sources to sustain the research, implementation plans for newly identified projects and programs, including related marketing and support for existing and new partnership programs, executed during the first three years.

Performance Metrics/Return on Investment (ROI)

(0 – 18 months - ongoing)

26. Provide adequate federal resources and expanded capacity within federal agencies to ensure they can execute and follow through on the national funding program and related legislative recommendations being advanced.

27. Create a matrix of new workforce related TCRP research projects, including the International Transportation Learning Center (TLC) scoping study, and the panel’s recommendations to identify key activities, research being conducted and outcomes.

28. Share results of TCRP J-6 quick response study, Transit Training Resources, Practices and Metrics Survey, being conducted by the Transportation Learning Center with the work of the Blue Ribbon Panel.

29. Based on the results of the TCRP scoping study, identify additional areas for research on performance measures.

30. Develop performance metrics and benchmarking methodology for each of the focus areas addressed by the blue ribbon panel.

(18 months – 3 years)

31. Develop the process, methodology and system for evaluating progress on the various workforce development activities and programs.

(3 - 5 years)

32. Based on the industry-developed models to measure ROI, evaluate the ongoing program focusing on performance measures and benchmarking.
IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

The panel firmly believes that successful implementation of the recommendations outlined above requires strong commitment and collaboration among APTA members, partners and key stakeholders, among others. The following outlines the recommended action plan to implement the panel’s recommendations:

1. The programmatic responsibilities for addressing workforce development issues, programs and activities for APTA remain assigned to the APTA Vice Chair-Human Resources, human resources committee (including workforce development, labor and higher education subcommittees) and staff.

2. Establish a small working group, comprised of the vice chair-human resources, APTA, human resources committee leadership, the working group chairs of the former blue ribbon panel, and a representative from the American Public Transportation Foundation Board of Directors to advance the implementation of the recommendations.

3. Continue efforts to support the implementation of APTA’s 2010 – 2014 Strategic Plan and annual business planning process. APTA’s proposed FY11 business plan includes the following workforce development projects: (1) implement final recommendations from the blue ribbon panel; (2) conduct a pilot program to conduct an education “road show” for members; (3) conduct a national public transportation career day; and (4) host APTA’s second youth summit.

4. Implement recommendations from APTA’s Preliminary Workforce Survey to be issued in spring 2010.

5. Continue to advance, monitor progress and promote the unified work plan associated with ongoing TCRP projects. There is consensus among the panel members that the progress and conclusion of these studies will continue to inform the implementation of the recommendations.

- TCRP Project J-06/Task 72 – Professional Certification and Credentialing Programs for the Transit Industry – A Scoping Study.


6. Leverage the opportunities available through APTA’s new governance structure recently adopted by the membership. Engage the chairs of the 25 standing committees, now members of the APTA Board of Directors, to promote, support and assist in the implementation of the panel’s recommendations.
7. Finalize recommendations to define APTA’s role in providing ongoing support to members and the industry on workforce development issues. The potential options include: (1) continuing to address these issues with existing APTA resources; (2) establishing a non-profit organization dedicated to workforce development research and training (similar to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Institute for a Competitive Workforce; and (3) establishing a “Public Transportation Center for Excellence,” offering a complete range of programs to address industry workforce gaps and training needs (modeled after the aviation industry’s center).

Attachments:

APTA Workforce Development Blue Ribbon Panel Members List
Technical Resources Group List