



NEXT STOP: Your Career in Transit

Utilize this APTA Job Fair Resource to Advance Your Career in Transit

25 Tips for Early-Career Professionals in Transit

Finding and Landing the Right Job

1. **Tailor your résumé for every opportunity.** Highlight skills and experiences that directly match the transit position.
2. **Don't underestimate transferable skills.** Customer service, data analysis, communications, project management, technology, and leadership can all translate into long-term transit careers. It will be valuable to understand the employees who operate and maintain the system, and experiencing the customer journey firsthand can provide invaluable perspective throughout your career.
3. **Know the issues shaping transit.** Follow topics such as funding, workforce development, sustainability, accessibility, AI and new technology impacting the industry. Consider not simply understanding the impact of AI in transit but learn how to use emerging technologies responsibly and effectively in your work.
4. **Build a professional online presence.** Keep your professional profile current and focused on where you want your career to go. LinkedIn is the primary online platform to promote yourself and your skills. A strong “About” paragraph is critical to draw interest.
5. **Join APTA and attend industry events.** Membership can provide the networking, education, mentors, and career opportunities to level-up your job search. Be sure to set up your APTAConnect profile! Plus, maximize Student Membership, as a key benefit of your \$25 investment, is that you may attend APTA Conferences FREE!

Extra tip: Prepare a 30-second introduction. Be ready to confidently explain who you are, what you do, and what interests you about a career in transit. Further, **prepare thoughtful questions.** Good candidates interview the employer, too. Have written questions that will spur thoughtful discussion and showcase your passion for joining their team. Demonstrate a strong understanding of the employer's business.

Making a Strong Start

6. **Be known for being reliable.** Do what you say you will do—and do it on time. It becomes your reputation. Additionally, take assignments outside of your comfort zone. Some of the greatest career-development opportunities may come from projects, assignments, and challenges that were not necessarily part of your original career plan. Say “YES” to opportunities that may stretch you!
7. **Arrive prepared.** Review meeting materials and understand why your participation matters. **Book Suggestion: *The First 90 Days* by Michael Watkins.**
8. **Learn how your organization works.** Understand departments, reporting relationships, decision-making, and priorities. If you work at a transit agency, understanding the jobs of employees who operate and maintain the system and interact with customers will prove invaluable throughout your career.
9. **Ask questions early.** It is better to seek clarification than make assumptions.
10. **Understand your supervisor's expectations.** Ask how success is measured.

Extra tip: Become a problem solver. When possible, bring a recommendation—not just your challenges with the issue that needs to be resolved.

Build the Skills That Will Advance Your Career

11. **Strengthen your communication skills.** Learn to write clearly, speak confidently, and listen carefully.
12. **Become comfortable with data.** Learn how to read reports, identify trends, and turn information into useful insights.
13. **Develop presentation skills.** The ability to explain an idea clearly can set you apart.
14. **Improve your project-management abilities.** Learn how to organize work, manage timelines, and coordinate people.
15. **Build your financial and technological literacy.** Understand budgets, costs, funding, and the business side of transit. Seek to learn how technology, infrastructure, operations, and the workforce intersect.

Extra tip: Keep learning. Take courses, attend webinars, earn certificates! [APTAU](#) has more than 100+ hours of e-learning courses and on-demand videos that you can use today to enhance your career success.

Develop Executive Presence

16. **Speak with confidence—even when you are early in your transit career.** You do not have to know everything to contribute thoughtfully.
17. **Come prepared with facts.** Confidence is more powerful when supported by knowledge.
18. **Practice professional body language.** Make eye contact, sit attentively, and project engagement. Also, dress appropriately and professionally at all times.
19. **Be comfortable in rooms with senior leaders.** Introduce yourself, ask thoughtful questions, and participate when appropriate.
20. **Develop your personal leadership brand.** Decide what you want people to say about you when you are not in the room.

Extra tip: Be concise. Leaders value people who can get to the point quickly – with facts.

Build Relationships and Your Professional Network

21. **Find mentors.** Look for transit leaders who can provide you perspective, advice, and encouragement.
22. **Build relationships across generations.** Learn from experienced professionals while also sharing your own perspectives. The APTA Student Member Mentoring Program may just be right for you.
23. **Create a strong internal network.** Get to know colleagues outside your immediate department and organization. An exceptional way to do this is to participate in APTA Committee meetings and Working Groups.
24. **Seek sponsors as your career grows.** A sponsor may advocate for you and recommend you for opportunities.
25. **Give before you ask.** Be helpful to others and build a reputation as a good colleague.

Extra tip: Manage your career intentionally. Set goals, build new skills, seek experiences, and periodically ask yourself: **"What do I need to do now to be ready for my next opportunity in Transit?"**

The bottom line

You are building your professional reputation which will carry you throughout your career. Be curious. Be reliable. Keep learning. Build relationships. Develop confidence. And remember that a successful transit career is built with one experience, one skill, and one relationship at a time.

For additional resources be sure to visit the [APTA Career Center](#), and download the [APTAU Workforce Mini Guides](#)

Visit: www.apta.com

Contributors:

- Derik Calhoun, Chief Transportation Officer, San Francisco Bay Area Rapid Transit District (BART)
- Carita Ducre, Vice President of Workforce Development and Educational Services
- Shelley Taggart Kee, SPHR, SHRM-CP, Vice President Human Resources and Administration, American Public Transportation Association
- Christian T. Kent, CEO, Transit Management Consulting, LLC
- Dawn M. Kruger, Vice President, Amtrak / Rail & Transit Growth Strategy, Parsons
- Ray Melleady, CEO, Ster Seating
- Chris Ramirez, Interim Chief Transportation Officer, Valley Metro
- Dr. Carol Parker Walsh, JD, PhD, PCC, CEO, ThriveAxis®