

**FINAL DRAFT**

**AMERICAN PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION ASSOCIATION**

**Credentialing and Certification Options for the Public Transportation Industry**

**Executive Summary**

**August 2018**

# Credentialing and Certification Options for the Public Transpiration Industry

## Executive Summary

### *Introduction*

The American Public Transportation Association is charged with broadening the base of new credentialing and certification models for the public transportation industry that will prove to be both valuable to the membership and profitable to the association. This report provides APTA leadership with models for consideration, as well as the information they need to decide whether to move forward with any of these options. Each credentialing and certification option outlined in the report includes details about the potential credential or certification, feedback received from APTA members and staff, a timeline, potential costs and implementation steps.

#### Defining Credentials

The report begins by differentiating between the three most common types of credentials issued by associations. These include:

* **Assessment-based Certificate**: With an assessment-based certificate, individuals must show they have achieved a set of learning objectives through an education or training process. Individuals who earn the certificate must show mastery of the learning objectives by passing an assessment upon completion of the program.
* **Certification:** A certification reflects attainment of established criteria for proficiency in a profession or occupation and is granted following successful performance on an assessment measuring an individual’s knowledge, skills and abilities (competencies). It is based on a scientific study of a specific job or practice and is associated with a high-stakes exam or performance requirement.
* **Digital Credential/Badge:** A digital credential/badge is a newer type of credential that has developed with changing technologies. It can be issued along with a certificate or certification as another way of demonstrating that an individual has earned that credential.

There are several crucial factors critical to the success of new credentials or certifications that an organization new to issuing credentials should consider. The credential should have labor market value; be connected to a set of competencies; be priced in such a way that it supports the staff time required to manage the credentialing processes; be affordable to employers who will be supporting their employees earning the credential; and be easily accessible to those interested in pursuing the credential.

As part of developing the credentialing and certification options in this report, APTA hired a Credentialing Consultant who assisted APTA, under the advisement of APTA’s Certification and Credentialing Advisory Group (members are included in Appendix A) and APTA’s staff Subject Matter Experts (SMEs, included in Appendix B). The Credentialing Consultant conducted thorough research, including review of the Transit Cooperative Research Program’s (TCRP) 2011 Report: *Professional Certification and Credentialing Program for the Transit Industry.*

Four credentialing options are detailed in this framework.

### *Assessment-based Certificates*

**Option #1: Develop a high school-level, transit-focused Career and Technical Education (CTE) course that results in an assessment-based certificate to help build a new generation of transit workers.**

**Career and Technical Education** provides students of all ages with the academic and technical skills, knowledge and training necessary to succeed in future careers and to become lifelong learners. In total, about 12.5 million high school students are enrolled in CTE programs across the nation. CTE prepares these learners for the world of work by introducing them to workplace competencies and makes academic content accessible to students by providing it in a hands-on context.

With a transit CTE credential, these high school graduates can move directly into entry-level transit jobs or they can enter post-secondary education to receive additional education for those positions in industries that require it. The CTE course would be a yearlong program that would utilize the National Transit Curriculum for content. APTA would develop the instructor and student materials, as well as the assessment, with the assistance of an instructional design firm. The association would also issue the credential. Local transit agencies would form partnerships with their local school districts, with specialized support and training from APTA staff. The APTA Certification and Credentialing Advisory Group and staff are enthusiastic about this prospective course and credential to build the next generation of transit workers.

* Timeline: One year
* Total Investment: $142,000-$200,000 plus related internal costs (APTA staff labor and G&A)

**Option #2: Develop a Transit Fundamentals e-learning course that results in an assessment-based certificate for employees who are new to the transit industry.**

A Transit Fundamentals e-learning course would enable new transit employees to develop a set of foundational competencies and a better understanding of the industry, as well as the opportunity to earn a credential. Benefits to APTA member agencies include saving them training dollars by alleviating the need to develop, implement and keep their own programs up-to-date; providing new employees with a broader perspective of the transit industry that goes beyond any one agency’s footprint; and strengthening the competencies of those new employees.

This prospective course and credential dovetails with APTA’s e-learning initiative, for which APTA’s Workforce Development staff is developing transit related e-learning modules, with extensive feedback from agency CEOs. The e-learning credentialing option detailed in this report appeals to APTA’s Certification and Credentialing Advisory Group and APTA staff since the credential would be easily accessible. This option also lends itself to the development of “add-on” credentials down the road on topics of broad appeal and importance, such as security.

* Timeline: 8-12 months
* Total investment: $123,500-$185,000 plus related internal costs (APTA staff labor and G&A)

**Option #3: Develop a Transit Cybersecurity course that results in an assessment-based certificate for transit managers, supervisors and CEOs.**

In today’s world, cybersecurity threats are real. Yet, at this time, there is no credential or certification designed specifically for transit agency managers, supervisors and CEOs who play essential leadership roles in ensuring this issue is addressed. APTA’s creation of a specialized cybersecurity credential would be an important first step in helping the industry move in the direction of creating a culture of cybersecurity, just as it did with safety.

To maximize impact, this assessment-based certificate program would utilize a hybrid learning approach. Interested managers, supervisors and CEOs would complete pre-work in advance of an in-person training program that would include an internal cybersecurity assessment and pre-reading of relevant materials. They would then attend a one-day training program followed by action planning and an assessment in order to earn the Transit Cybersecurity credential.

* Timeline: 6-9 months
* Total investment: $53,500-$70,000 plus related internal costs (APTA staff labor and G&A)

### *Certification*

**Option #4: Launch a mobility management certification program that includes two levels, one for mid-level and the other for senior-level professionals.**

Option #4 is a certification that builds on *Competencies for the Practice of Mobility Management*, an effort by the National Center for Mobility Management (NCMM), of which APTA is a consortium member. The competencies outline the knowledge, skills and expertise for the growing field of mobility management. APTA and its NCMM partners could utilize the mobility management competencies as a starting point for developing a mobility management certification program. These core competencies would add a level of rigor and professionalism to the emerging field of mobility management. Given that a set of competencies exists, this would make the process for developing and implementing the certification program less intensive than a brand new certification. Ideally, the mobility management certification program would support two occupations: one for Mobility Managers, and a more senior, strategic level for Innovation Officers.

While a certification would require a more in-depth process and has legal responsibilities associated with it, APTA and NCMM could utilize the expertise of a firm specializing in developing and implementing new certification programs. They would provide the guidance needed for such an endeavor. APTA’s Credentialing Consultant can provide recommendations for reputable organizations that would help to ensure this option’s success.

* Timeline: One year
* Total investment: $130,000-$250,000 plus related internal costs (APTA staff labor and G&A)

In conclusion, APTA has four strong credentialing options to consider, all of which have overwhelming support from APTA’s Certification and Credentialing Advisory Group and APTA SMEs. Even though each will require up-front investment and time, they all have potential to help transform the public transportation industry, build a pipeline of talented workers and improve the knowledge and skills of those already in the industry.