
The Future of Public Transportation Employment: Bold Visions, Bringing Exciting Opportunities

Introduction

A shift is underway, as Americans begin to seek more robust transportation choices. Public transportation is at the center of the shift, and as a result, public transportation will need to invest in an even more skilled workforce. New job opportunities and careers will provide those interested in transit-related careers a chance to change America.

External Change Agents

Demographic and Social Trends

By 2050 the US will have close to ninety million more residents, an increase of almost 30 percent. The ability to house those new people and transport them has the potential to transform the look and feel of the nation's transportation network. Furthermore, consumer preferences are shifting, partially driven by generational shifts—such as the Millennial Generation, those born between 1980 and 2000, which prefers communities with more transportation choices and amenities—and Empty Nesters, parents that no longer have children at home, and therefore seek to reduce their housing size and locate near amenities that are important to them that can be easily accessed.

Fiscal Responsibility and Sustainability

The recent economic downturn has taught policy makers important lessons. Among those lessons is the importance of reducing the nation's reliance on imported energy sources, as well as the impact of fuel price spikes on the budgets of ordinary American families. Furthermore, a lack of balanced mobility options will further impact the environment. As policymakers seek ways to correct the nation's balance of trade, provide families with more support during difficult economic periods, and address negative environmental trends, investment in public transportation will prove to be an important ingredient to any viable proposal.

Impacts on the Public Transportation Industry

In order to be ready to fully participate in the change underway, the public transportation industry will need to continue its progress on the development of new business models and ways to operate and fund high quality public transportation services.

New and Enhanced Career Opportunities

Real Estate Management and Development Professionals

Internationally, public transportation agencies often play a role in the real estate directly around their stations, and in some business models, these developments help to defray the costs of operating the transit system, while enhancing ridership. As US systems seek models that will allow them to expand high quality service, there will be a growing need for transportation professionals that have the expertise to fully leverage real estate opportunities near transit stations, in an effort to increase ridership and contribute to the fiscal health of the agency. Utilizing graduate programs that will allow joint degree and multidisciplinary learning between real estate finance and development and transportation policy, will prepare professionals for their opportunity to bring these international models to the US.

Economists

There is a need for economists that focus on public transportation investment as a career. The current economics discipline often does not properly account for improvements transit infrastructure. This phenomenon makes it more difficult for public transportation to get the level of support it needs. The discipline needs more practitioners that can articulate the latest thinking and provide the networks that will allow fair public transportation research to thrive.

Economic Development Professionals

As the nation develops new mobility choices, suburbs will seek to develop areas that will have the amenities that the market is looking for—such as pedestrian friendly streetscapes, integrated and easily accessible public transit facilities, and more diverse land uses. Economic development professionals that can enumerate these benefits, which are often called suburban retrofitting, will be able to bring high quality public transportation to areas that currently do not have them, while improving the vibrancy of the suburbs.

Technology Professionals

The public transportation industry has seen a revolution in recent years in the deployment of customer facing technologies that improve the user experience. These include the provision of real-time information, which allows transit riders to find the precise arrival time of buses and trains on their cellular device; the development of fare payment technologies that allow seamless transfers and payment via cell phone; and the development of cellular and Wi-Fi coverage for passengers on vehicles and within stations. Technology professionals that understand the public transportation industry and the potential to improve the customer experience and connection to public transportation will be in high demand.

Contribute to a Bright Future

Public Transportation is truly on the move in America. The industry will need a variety of professionals not commonly associated with bus and train operations. These professionals will contribute to an industry that will reinvigorate the American economy, make opportunity accessible, while rebuilding communities.

For More Information

Darnell Grisby
Director
Policy Development and Research
202.496.4887 | dgrisby@apta.com

For General Information

Policy Development and Research
Darnell Grisby, Director
202.496.4887 | dgrisby@apta.com
www.apta.com/resources/statistics

The APTA Policy Department
Art Guzzetti, Vice President-Policy
202.496.4814 | aguzzetti@apta.com

The American Public Transportation Association (APTA)

The American Public Transportation Association (APTA) is a nonprofit international association of 1,500 public and private sector organizations, engaged in the areas of bus, paratransit, light rail, commuter rail, subways, waterborne services, and intercity and high-speed passenger rail. This includes: transit systems; planning, design, construction, and finance firms; product and service providers; academic institutions; transit associations and state departments of transportation. APTA is the only association in North America that represents all modes of public transportation. APTA members serve the public interest by providing safe, efficient and economical transit services and products. More than 90 percent of the people using public transportation in the United States and Canada ride APTA member systems.

APTA Vision Statement

APTA is the leading force in advancing public transportation.