

September 2012

# Creating Sustainable Human Capital Investment

A FINAL REPORT OF THE 2012 APTA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT TASK FORCE



AMERICAN  
PUBLIC  
TRANSPORTATION  
ASSOCIATION

**2012 APTA Workforce Development Task Force**

***CREATING SUSTAINABLE HUMAN CAPITAL INVESTMENT***

**FINAL REPORT**

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

**BACKGROUND**

Building on the foundation of the recommendations and implementation plan of the American Public Transportation Association (APTA) Workforce Development Blue Ribbon Panel, the association continues to explore strategies to address workforce needs, given evolving demands for the public transportation industry. APTA Chair Gary C. Thomas identified workforce development as one of his priorities for 2011 – 2012. Mr. Thomas' focus on workforce and succession planning addressed how APTA and the industry prepare the next generation of leaders, specifically the mid-level managers of transit agencies and businesses.

Given the importance of workforce development, Mr. Thomas appointed a task force, chaired by APTA Vice Chair Flora M. Castillo, including broad representation of members: APTA's executive committee, board of directors, leadership of the blue ribbon panel, transit CEOs, board members, business members, key designated committees, and the next generation of leaders in the association.

**TASK FORCE SCOPE**

The task force's scope complemented the association's ongoing activities in workforce development. The task force was charged to address any recent developments or changes in the industry that would shift the focus of the association's workforce development strategy as outlined in APTA's 2010-2014 Strategic Plan. The task force was charged to:

- Review and assess an updated scan of workforce trends to provide members with data on the impact of the public transportation industry in job creation and employee recruitment and retention strategies.
- Develop opportunities for engaging mid-level managers in transit agencies and businesses with involvement from industry leaders at APTA conferences and meetings.
- Review opportunities to promote succession planning with the industry for CEO and other executive-level positions in the public and private sectors by establishing partnerships with new and non-traditional organizations that provide access to new and diverse talent pools.
- Identify gaps, new opportunities, programs and services geared to helping to continue to create and sustain a stronger, vibrant, efficient and effective workforce.

The full report outlines the task force's final recommendations, immediate deliverables, and next steps for implementation.

**TASK FORCE ACTION PLAN**

The task force established four (4) working groups, all designed to provide a sustainable human capital investment program for the public transportation industry:

- **Sustaining Human Capital Investment**
- **New and Expanded Partnerships**
- **Mid-Level Managers Development and Mentoring**
- **Private Sector Workforce Development and Recruitment**

The task force conducted its work through conferences calls and face-to-face meetings (including the working groups) from February – August 2012. The full report summarizes key discussions and recommendations from each working group.

## **SUMMARY OF TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **KEY RECOMMENDATION – CALL TO ACTION:**

The task force acknowledges the challenges the public transportation industry faces, as an unprecedented wave of retirements and an abundant, irreplaceable loss of industry knowledge and experience. APTA must move beyond research and discussing the importance of these issues. The task force strongly recommends that APTA respond by taking bold, innovative and decisive actions. To address the sense of urgency in firmly addressing our human capital investment needs, the task force recommends that APTA institutionalize the industry's efforts and create an entity that can effectively prepare the next generation of leaders, on a substantial, ongoing basis.

- Continue to seek new and sustainable funding sources for programs to support the industry's human capital investment strategy. APTA's preparation for the next authorization bill is an opportunity to continue to focus on advancing recommendations for funding to promote the development of a skilled workforce.
- Integrate human capital investment efforts into one of APTA's existing educational affiliates, such as the Public Transportation Partnership for Tomorrow Foundation. Commence process in FY2013.
- Support APTA's overall strategy and program to promote and connect Veterans Administration offices with job opportunities in public transportation. Continue to participate in APTA's Transit-Military Cooperative Initiative task force in support of APTA's overall strategy and program development to address these issues.

### 2. **New and Expanded Partnerships**

- Continue to build on the opportunities to establish formal, new, non-traditional partnerships to support APTA's efforts to further succession planning for the industry.

3. **Mid-Level Managers Development and Mentoring**

- Develop the scope for a professional development and mentoring program for new, early-career mid-level managers in their current positions for 1 – 3 years. The full report attached document, "Proposed APTA "Early Career" Mid-Level Managers Professional Development Program."
- Conduct the first session of the inaugural class in Spring 2013.

4. **Private Sector Workforce Development and Recruitment**

- Establish a portal on APTA's website for members to post internships, co-ops, education and training programs.

**2012 APTA Workforce Development Task Force**

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Given the importance of workforce development, Mr. Thomas appointed a task force, chaired by APTA Vice Chair Flora M. Castillo, including broad representation of members: APTA's executive committee, board of directors, leadership of the blue ribbon panel, transit CEOs, board members, business members, key designated committees, and the next generation of leaders in the association.

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The task force's scope complemented the association's ongoing activities in workforce development. The task force was charged to address any recent developments or changes in the industry that would shift the focus of the association's workforce development strategy as outlined in APTA's 2010-2014 Strategic Plan. The task force was charged to:

- Review and assess an updated scan of workforce trends to provide members with data on the impact of the public transportation industry in job creation and employee recruitment and retention strategies.
- Develop opportunities for engaging mid-level managers in transit agencies and businesses with involvement from industry leaders at APTA conferences and meetings.
- Review opportunities to promote succession planning with the industry for CEO and other executive-level positions in the public and private sectors by establishing partnerships with new and non-traditional organizations that provide access to new and diverse talent pools.
- Identify gaps, new opportunities, programs and services geared to helping to continue to create and sustain a stronger, vibrant, efficient and effective workforce.

This report outlines the task force's final recommendations, immediate deliverables, and next steps for implementation.

## **TASK FORCE ACTION PLAN**

The task force established four (4) working groups, all designed to provide a sustainable human capital investment program for the public transportation industry. The task force conducted its work through conferences calls and face-to-face meetings (including the working groups) from February – August 2012. The following report summarizes key discussions and recommendations from each working group:

### **1. Sustaining Human Capital Investment**

#### **Activities**

This working group's focus was three-fold:

- (1) Identify gaps in current transit professional programs at the national, regional and local levels, i.e. mid-level; Leadership APTA; Eno Center for Transit Leadership; National Transit Institute (NTI) programs, among others. The working group will also review and monitor progress of the blue ribbon panel's implementation to avoid potential redundancies between the two efforts. The task force also supports APTA's efforts to engage veterans in employment opportunities in public transportation.

#### **Deliverables**

- Finalized "Transit Industry Scan of Workforce Development Topics in: Job Creation, Employee Recruitment and Retention, and Turnover Rates," April 2012. This report served as the basis for the task force deliberations.
  - Reviewed and monitored progress of APTA's Blue Ribbon Panel implementation process. The working group determined that there were no redundancies between the panel and the current task force's focus.
  - Developed a "Public Transportation Industry Workforce Development System Map," highlighting national, local and regional training and professional development programs available to determine any gaps.
- (2) Identify new, sustainable funding sources for programs to support human capital investment for the public transportation industry, including federal funding, foundation support, public-private partnerships, etc.

#### **Activities**

- The working group developed a straw model to advance a sustainable human capital investment strategy. The model focused on the challenges in seeking a variety of long-term funding sources; "big picture" trends public transportation faces as an industry; and existing workforce development training programs, etc.

- Given the impending passage of the new federal funding authorization bill, the working group monitored the status of the various proposals. For example, the Senate-passed bill included language requiring transit agencies to spend not less than 0.5 percent on workforce, training and educational programs.
- The final bill, “Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (MAP21),” includes the provision of \$5 Million to be available for public transportation workforce development and human resources programs.
- The provision requiring transit agencies to expend no less than 0.5 percent was not included in the final bill. However, transit agencies may spend not less than 0.5 percent of such funding activities. The working group estimated that if all transit agencies exercised this option, \$30 - \$31M (5307 & 5309 funds), might be available for these programs.

### **RECOMMENDATION – CALL TO ACTION:**

The task force acknowledges the challenges the public transportation industry faces, as an unprecedented wave of retirements and an abundant, irreplaceable loss of industry knowledge and experience. APTA must move beyond research and discussing the importance of these issues. The task force strongly recommends that APTA respond by taking bold, innovative and decisive actions. To address the sense of urgency in firmly addressing our human capital investment needs, the task force recommends that APTA institutionalize the industry’s efforts and create an entity that can effectively prepare the next generation of leaders, on a substantial, ongoing basis.

The following are related recommendations to further support APTA’s role as a thought leader and “game-changer” in sustaining human capital investment in the years ahead:

- Continue to seek new and sustainable funding sources for programs to support the industry’s human capital investment strategy. APTA’s preparation for the next authorization bill is an opportunity to continue to focus on advancing recommendations for funding to promote the development of a skilled workforce.
- (3) Recommend a long-term, sustainable mechanism for APTA to provide on-going support to the industry on these issues, i.e. establish an entity focused only on human capital investment.

### **Activities**

- The working group reviewed several trade association models to consider, including APTA’s existing mechanisms, i.e. American Public Transportation Foundation and Public Transportation Partnership for Tomorrow Foundation); Center for a Competitive Workforce of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, and “Aviation Centers of Excellence, affiliated with the American Association of Aviation Executives.

## **Recommendation**

- Integrate human capital investment efforts into one of APTA's existing educational affiliates, such as the Public Transportation Partnership for Tomorrow Foundation. Commence process in FY2013.
2. Support APTA's overall strategy and program to promote and connect Veterans Administration offices with job opportunities in public transportation.

### **Activities**

The task force members continue to participate in APTA's Transit-Military Cooperative Initiative task force in support of APTA's overall strategy and program development to address these issues.

## **5. New and Expanded Partnerships**

### **Activities**

The working group identified opportunities to further promote succession planning within the industry for CEO and executive level positions, and other transit professionals, including engaging current transit CEOs in the public and private sectors. The key focus was to identify opportunities to establish new and expanded partnerships with non-traditional organizations that provide access to new and diverse talent pools.

Through the support and active participation of the task force members, APTA was positioned to collaborate with new partners to advance sustainable human capital investment in public transportation. In response to the Federal Transit Administration's (FTA) notice of availability for \$5M for innovative transit workforce development program, APTA partnered with several new and non-traditional organizations to develop proposals. The FTA is expected to announce the recipients of the funds in late September 2012. The projects proposed are designed to continue the industry's strategy to create a sustainable workforce.

### **Deliverables**

- APTA partnered with the American Association of Community Colleges, National Association of Workforce Boards, and the John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, to establish a "Virtual Career Network." This project provides career exploration and training tools for employment opportunities in public transportation. APTA member transit agencies and businesses offered letters of support.
- APTA partnered with the National Transit Institute, several university transportation centers (UTCs), transit CEOs, business members, TCRP, etc. to develop a national curriculum which addresses an industry void for both community colleges and four-year university programs. At this point, no such curriculum yet exists that provides students with foundation

skills about the transit industry – from history through economic benefits and career opportunities.

- The Transportation Learning Center, along with APTA transit agency members, and transit labor, partnered to establish a career signals training consortium. The project covers the development of training curriculum and other resources using APTA industry-wide training standards.
- Finally, APTA is partnering with the ENO Foundation to develop a “National Transit Fellows Program,” geared toward recent college graduates. The Fellows would have opportunities to work in a public transit agency for an 18-month period (similar to the “Teach for America Model”)

### **Recommendation**

- Continue to build on the opportunities to establish formal, new, non-traditional partnerships to support APTA’s efforts to further succession planning for the industry.

## **6. Mid-Level Managers Development and Mentoring**

### **Activities**

This working group explored and assessed gaps in the industry’s workforce development training and educational programs. The working group identified the need to develop an early career, specialized, professional mentoring program that will focus on) mid-level managers new (1 – 3 years of experience) maximizing their skills in their current positions. The proposed program could include connecting experienced member in executive leadership to mentor lower to new and nearly new mid-level managers, through one-on-one meetings and other coaching opportunities to complement the professional development component of the program.

### **Deliverable**

- Produced a scope and straw model for a program for new, early-career mid-level managers in their current positions for 1 – 3 years. The attached document, “Proposed APTA “Early Career” Mid-Level Managers Professional Development Program,” provides the scope of the program, including the mentorship component to complement the leadership development curricula. The first class of the program will commence in Spring 2013.

## **7. Private Sector Workforce Development and Recruitment**

### **Activities**

This working group addressed the challenges the private sector of the public transportation industry faces (along with the public sector) in attracting, recruiting and retaining its workforce. APTA’s

business members are challenged in finding qualified candidates for various disciplines, specifically engineering and technical position.

Based on recent research commissioned by APTA's business members, there continues to be a lack of strong rail and transit engineering academic programs on the undergraduate and graduate levels.

The working group also highlighted the business members' commitment to initiatives to promote public transportation as a career. The business members sponsored APTA's 2011 Youth Summit, and will do so in 2013. The group also recommended that APTA establish a portal on the association's website for members (public and private) to post internships, co-ops, educational and training programs.

### **Deliverable**

- Developed the scope for a "roadmap" document to identify the range of private sector employment opportunities, focusing on functional areas/disciplines; job groups, key skills, educational requirements, etc. The human resource/talent management staff of several APTA business members will continue to work as an advisory group to advance this product development.

### **Recommendation**

- Establish a portal on APTA's website for members (public and private) to post opportunities for internships, co-ops, educational and training programs.

### **IMPLEMENTATION PLAN/NEXT STEPS**

The task force firmly believes that successful implementation of the recommendations outlined above continues to require strong commitment and collaboration among APTA members, partners and key stakeholders among others. The following summarizes the immediate recommendations moving forward:

- Launch Early-Career Mid-Level Managers Professional Development Program – Spring 2013
- Integrate the industry's workforce development and human capital investment strategies into APTA's educational affiliate, Public Transportation Partnership for Tomorrow Foundation.
- Establish new, expanded partnerships with non-traditional organizations with mutual interests in human capital investment, workforce development and training. This strategy will continue to be a major focus of activity for APTA in 2013.
- Establish a portal on the APTA web site for member transit agencies and businesses to post internship, co-op, training and educational opportunities to further promote public transportation as a career.

- Continue to monitor and advance the multi-phase implementation plan of APTA's Blue Ribbon Panel.

APTA's FY2013 Business Plan presents new activities for the association to continue to achieve "A Quality Workforce." These initiatives reflect the focus of the task force's scope, discussions and recommendations:

**1. Creating Sustainable Workforce Development – The Next Generation**

This initiative addresses the breadth of issues and recommendations emerging from the task force's work, specifically continuing to investment in human capital, workforce development and succession planning. Based on existing gaps, there will be a emphasis on additional professional development programs geared to new mid-level managers and deputies in the public and private sector.

**2. Serving and Engaging Veterans**

This initiative supports APTA's collaboration with member transit agencies and businesses, and other partners to provide returning veterans with access to employment and other elements of active living.

**3. Virtual Transit Job and Internship Fair – Feasibility Study**

This initiative addresses a recurring theme regarding how best to promote careers in public transportation to the next generation of leaders. A virtual transit job and internship fair would provide an excellent forum for APTA members and other organizations to list internship, co-ops and other educational and training opportunities.

**4. Giving Middle Management Prominence at APTA**

This initiative encourages participation of middle level management staff in the associations' programs and services. Building upon orientation and networking forums held at APTA's 2012 major meetings/conferences, the new, early-career mid-level managers development and mentoring program, addresses a gap in the industry. This initiative will be branded and marketed prominently through FY2013.

**5. Encouraging Expansion of Transit and Rail Engineering Curricula**

This initiative, developed by APTA's business members, encourages the expansion of rail and transit engineering curricula by building strong alliances with other associations and academic institutions. The task force's deliverable will complement the on-going initiatives to promote private sector career opportunities for the industry.

**Attachments:**

APTA Workforce Development Task Force/Resource Group Roster

APTA "Early Career Mid-Level Managers Professional Development and Mentoring Program

September 2012

**American Public Transportation Association  
2011 - 2012 APTA Workforce Development Task Force**

**Attachment 1**

Ms. Flora Castillo, CHIE  
APTA 2011 – 2012 Vice Chair, and Chair, Workforce Development Task Force  
Board Member  
New Jersey Transit Corporation (NJ TRANSIT)  
Newark, NJ

Mr. Greg Evans, M.Ed.  
Vice President  
Lane Transit District  
Eugene, OR

Mr. Charles Wochele  
Vice President, Industry & Government Relations  
ALSTOM Transportation Inc.  
West Henrietta, NY

Mr. Phillip A. Washington  
General Manager  
Regional Transportation District  
Denver, CO

Mr. Doran Barnes  
Executive Director  
Foothill Transit  
West Covina, CA

Ms. Mary Ann Collier  
Director of Operations  
Swayzer Engineering, Inc.  
Dallas, TX

Mr. Richard Maxwell  
Assistant Vice President of Marketing  
Fort Worth Transportation Authority (The T)  
Fort Worth, TX

Ms. Terry Garcia Crews  
CEO & General Manager  
Southwest Ohio Regional Transit Authority (SORTA/Metro)  
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September 2012

Mr. Jerome Premo  
Global Transit Director/Executive Vice President  
AECOM  
Orange, CA

Mr. Richard W. Andreski  
Chief of Staff – Rail Operations  
New Jersey Transit Corporation (NJ TRANSIT)  
Newark, NJ

Barbara Gannon  
Executive Vice President  
The Eno Center for Transportation  
Washington, DC

Jill Chen Stober  
Transportation Planner  
KFH Group, Inc.  
Bethesda, MD

Leticia Mata, Former Policy Intern  
American Public Transportation Association  
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John B. Catoe, Jr., President & CEO  
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Milo Victoria, Chief Executive Officer/General Manager  
OMNITRANS  
San Bernadino, CA

Shelley Xie, Director, Office of Rail Operations Scheduling  
Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority  
Washington, DC

Jeffrey Ensor, Principal Consultant  
Parsons Brinckerhoff  
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APTA Staff Advisors:  
Pamela L. Boswell  
Joseph Niegowski



## **Proposed APTA “Early Career” Mid-Level Managers Professional Development Program**

### **Executive Summary**

The American Public Transportation Association (APTA) and its executive leadership have long been recognized by its members, the transit industry, and members of the transportation industry at large for APTA’s leadership, commitment, and innovations in workforce development. APTA’s Blue Ribbon Panel on Workforce Development and APTA’s Human Resources Committee, through the current Workforce Development Task Force, have been led by exceptional industry leaders who work to create the vision for the future and who recognize the talented workforce needed to ensure the future success of our industry.

This paper proposes that APTA develop and sustain a brand new national program designed to help develop “Early Career” members of the public transportation industry’s middle management. This program would complement, but not duplicate other existing professional development programs such as Leadership APTA. We proposed to launch this new Early Career program in late spring/early summer 2013, in conjunction with one of APTA’s 2013 modal conferences.

This group of early career individuals, those with three-to-five years of work and program/project management experience, is often seen as the most vulnerable. If that is the case, what do we as an industry need to do so they do stay, that they deepen their interests and roots in our industry, and that they see and feel capable of attaining the great opportunities ahead of them?

Developing and providing a new national program sends a strong message. These early career members can be provided with an exceptional program which lets them benefit from the support, at a national and local level, of the expertise and resources of the public transportation industry. Further, there is an opportunity with this program to strengthen the retention and development of minority mid-level managers to set the course for greater diversity in the board rooms and executive suites down the road.

This new proposed year-long program takes bold steps to provide these young individuals with the skills, perspectives, and networks they need to grow and succeed. This program connects them with the wisdom and experiences of industry leaders. It provides and surrounds them with a host of learning and professional development opportunities, access to industry leaders and experts, connections with their peers and virtual resources. All these program elements aim to facilitate the professional growth of promising Early Career members. By the end of this proposed program, participants will know that their organizations, mentors, and the industry value their contributions and want to help them advance a long career in the public transportation industry, including future leadership roles.

### **Developing Mid-Level Managers – an Industry Priority**



Executive Support, Sponsorship and Special Task Force: APTA's executive leadership – Gary Thomas, chair, Flora Castillo, vice chair, and Michael Melaniphy, APTA president & CEO – along with industry leaders have elevated the discussions to develop our mid-level managers at a number of executive venues: the APTA Board of Directors Meeting, the APTA Chief Executive Officer Seminar, the Business Members Board of Governors, and most recently, at the 2012 APTA Rail Conference.

This past year, APTA Chair Gary Thomas appointed APTA Vice Chair Flora Castillo to lead the Workforce Development Task Force. Members of the task force represent a broad range of leaders, including CEOs and General Managers, those newer to senior leadership and those with aspirations of executive leadership. This task force represents both the public and private sectors of our industry.

This task force was charged to look strategically and with fresh eyes at workforce development needs, and to focus on a few special areas needing new energies and attention.

The work of the task force included looking at the work and recommendations of the Blue Ribbon Panel and its many ongoing projects under the leadership of APTA's Human Resources Committee. Developing mid-level managers emerged as a critical area of focus for the Workforce Development Task Force.

The Mid-Level Management Working Group (See Attachment 1) recognized the breadth of needs and audiences within mid-level management. Mid-level managers in both the public and private sectors encompass a wide range of individuals, from those new to management with a few years of work experience to those at the upper end of mid-level ranks, who have been leading and managing complex programs, budgets, and scores of individuals.

The working group quickly identified one mid-level management audience, those in "early career" management positions, as being the most vulnerable. "Early career" individuals tend to be those newly minted mid-level managers with three-to-five years of work experience, often younger individuals and members of Generation Y, who recently have been given some level of management responsibilities. This is the target audience group, those "early career" individuals, that the Mid-level Management Working Group will focus its energies and recommendations.

These early career individuals are now moving from executing individuals tasks to leading and managing small projects, programs, and maybe even small teams. Despite their growing responsibilities, this group makes up that population of workers who are most likely to leave their jobs and look for other opportunities, often outside of public transportation

This is the group that often asks themselves do I stay or do I leave, especially when jobs at advanced levels may not be opening up as quickly due to the down economy, slowing retirements, and tight budgets. Of the various audiences within middle management, this is the audience for whom no national professional development program currently exists. This is the group that needs our immediate attention. Members of the Mid-Level Management Working



Group have several accounts of young talent leaving the public transportation industry. This Early Career program is a timely solution proposed to end this real trend.

*Note: As background, for those in middle “middle management,” the industry offers the Eno/NTI Mid-level Managers Program. For those in upper middle management with aspirations of executive leadership, the industry offers Leadership APTA. For those on the brink of moving to the executive suite, the industry offers the Eno Transit Executive Seminar. And, most recently, for those at various levels of middle management, APTA recently launched the Mid-Level Management Breakfast Briefings at its Bus & Paratransit and Rail conferences, a program that will expand in 2013.*

### **APTA’s “Early Career” Mid-Level Managers Program: Industry Commitment/ Program Success**

The Mid-Level Management/Early Career Working Group quickly assembled energies and ideas of what would make this new program unique, singular, and highly effective.

The group quickly embraced the recommendation of APTA Vice Chair Flora Castillo that “industry mentoring” be the hallmark of this new program. Early career members of the industry would be coached, guided, and mentored by a mix of industry leaders outside their organizations as well as leaders from within their organizations. Each of these respective mentors would provide invaluable leadership and guidance for this new generation of the workforce. The goal is for the industry mentor to serve as a ‘mentor for life,’ providing longer term guidance and direction regardless of the early career professional’s workplace; the internal mentor would provide coaching and support to succeed within the participant’s own organization.

The “industry mentor” component of the program would be structured, have assigned/recommended topics on a regular basis, agendas and rich discussions, with means for both the industry mentor and mentee to grow and see the results of their respective personal investments. The program would provide many opportunities – in-person, telephonic, virtual – to share resources, stories, lessons learned while on the mentor/mentee journey.

The structure of the “internal mentor” arm of the program might look differently from organization to organization. The Workforce Development Task Force and the Mid-level Management Working Group would provide guidelines on elements, activities and outcomes to guide it toward success.

Developing the mentor component will be one of the heavy-lifts for this new program. APTA would establish the template and model for the Early Career mentor program module by leveraging and adapting from various national and regional mentoring program models having great success – and not just those currently in use by the transit industry – but those currently in place within the health insurance industry, academic communities, private sector, and much more.

The mentor program is an opportune moment for the broad diversity of public transportation industry leaders among APTA members to give back to the transit industry. APTA would



provide direction, guidance and coaching to ensure the mentor program would have great success, and to work on means of continuous improvement during its initial years. We would provide sets of targeted goals, objectives, and roadmaps for the mentor program, with opportunities for sufficient flexibility and sharing of new discoveries along the way.

Interestingly, the proposed mentor component of this new Early Career program for mid-level managers follows a directive of U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood given this past spring at the National Workforce Summit in Washington, D.C. Secretary LaHood spoke extensively about our responsibility to the next generation – to seek them out, to mentor them, and to bring them along. “The one thing you need to do is mentor someone...we will not have our jobs forever... you have no idea of the influence you have on others.” Indeed, most of the industry’s current senior leaders can identify one or more mentors who have influenced their successful careers. The Early Career program now extends a formal invitation to seasoned professionals to actively promote and foster the next generation of transit leaders, thereby ensuring the future success of our industry and the vital services we provide.

### **Proposed Straw Model: Overview**

**Program Identity:** The working group felt very strongly that this new program have its own identity, that it speak and appeal to a younger audience that works, lives, learns, communicates, and interacts differently than other generations. Those leading this program need to represent the range of our current members, with many opportunities given to those who are younger, who have a greater affinity with the target audience, and whose own career success demonstrates examples of attainable growth, rewards, and related benefits within the transit industry.

The key components proposed for the APTA Early Career Mid-Level Managers Program are highlighted below:

- **Opening Session:** We propose to open the Early Career program with a few days of an in-person orientation, meeting mentors, goals setting and expectations, skill building training workshops and opportunities for industry leadership engagement. We envision opening the Early Career program a few days in advance of one of APTA’s major modal conferences, APTA Bus & Paratransit Conference or APTA Rail Conference. In addition to the structured in-person orientation, participants will have the opportunity to better understand the size, scope and impact of the industry by attending the related modal conference and its sessions.
- **Mentor Segment:** We hope the mentor program, the centerpiece of the Early Career program, quickly becomes the program’s hallmark. We propose a nine-to-ten month period during which mentors/mentees enact the agenda, plans, and recommendations for the mentor component of the program.

The design of this period would provide structure and flexibility. Mentors and mentees would be expected to set up a regular schedule, follow the proposed discussion topics, have enough room to adjust along the way, report back to each other and APTA on key learnings from given topics/assignments, and have two-to-three scheduled ‘check in’



virtual events run by APTA members and staff. To keep participants engaged, we would provide various web-based forums and other means to stay connected, from online collaboration sites to blogs and other social media venues.

- Closing session and graduation: At the conclusion of the program year, we propose to conduct a few days of ‘wrap up’ training sessions, presentations, and skill building workshops, to bring the program year to a formal close. This session would showcase some key participant accomplishments over the year and to receive the industry’s graduation recognition for their participation in this program.

### **Proposed Program Components: A Closer Look**

Getting it right: The working group agreed we need to be guided by those from the public and private sectors who have “early career” mid-level management staff in their workforce as well as those who are potential attendees for this program. We need to ground the program by identifying the goals, objectives, outcomes, and specific skills someone relatively new middle management needs to demonstrate. We need to set the tone and direction, be clear about the target audience, expectations, and levels of investment.

Innovation and creativity will ignite how we execute and approach the goals, objectives and outcomes for this program. APTA will call upon members of the task force, working group, and others very early on to ensure we identify and agree upon those key elements that become the pillars and infrastructure for this new proposed program.

Opening session: One goal is to educate the individual about the industry, help them acquire and appreciate the bigger picture of what public transportation is all about – public/private, large, small, partners, federal, regional and local. We need to lift them out of their local view of the world, broaden their perspectives, and educate them about the overarching components, issues, people, opportunities, challenges, and many successes of this industry. Another goal is to encourage the early career professionals to share their perspectives of the industry, including challenges of the industry and their own professional development. These issues can be addressed through group and mentor discussions throughout the yearlong program. The opening session will also provide opportunities to help the participants meet and connect with their industry mentors.

The initial proposed three-to-four days would help attendees bond as a cohort, as a class, develop their network, and have the opportunities to hear from others in mid-level and senior executive positions about our industry. These initial days would also provide skill building workshops, experiential learning situations, and visits with transit organizations.

We propose to hold this opening session a few days in advance of one of APTA’s modal conferences, either the APTA Bus & Paratransit Conference or the APTA Rail Conference, so that these individuals can then benefit from a few days at each of the conferences to experience and better appreciate the size, opportunities, roles, economic contributions, impact, and value of the public transportation industry and APTA’s role in the industry.



Mentors, Mentor Meetings, Topics, and Events: The working group sees the mentor program as a major innovative element of the program. The mentor program leverages the industry's and an organization's expertise. The mentor program demonstrates the industry's commitment to developing our future workforce by tapping into the experiences of seasoned leaders. Likewise, early career members will have the opportunity to share their own career needs and desires and to learn, speak up, and demonstrate what is important for their own successes.

Mentors, industry and internal, can make the difference in a person's career aspirations and job progression. The working group will be seeking diverse seasoned industry professionals from all backgrounds to serve as industry mentors. We will be seeking APTA members to serve as mentors who have experience in multiple aspects of the public transportation industry as well as involvement in professional associations and organizations. And, these individuals need to be willing to devote on average three-to-four hours per month as an industry mentor to help improve the lives of aspiring early career professionals. Industry mentors will have the flexibility to work with their mentees to determine the means and schedule of their regular communication.

The working group does not underestimate the work involved to recruit, coach and support industry members who are willing to invest significant time and energies to serve as mentors by supporting and guiding an individual during the program year and beyond.

Pairing and matching industry mentors with program participants is a critical task for the mentorship component to succeed. The working group and task force members would use various proven tools, resources, and experts to help make the best 'matches' with mentors and program participants. Potential criteria for matching mentors and mentees include transit interests or specializations and geography. There would be special emphasis on making sure the mentors and mentees are diverse in terms of gender, ethnicity, experience, skills and life story. The mentors and mentees could also potentially prioritize their preferences based on bios, resumes, or short interviews.

Similarly, we need organizations having members in the Early Career program to identify internal leaders to serve as internal mentors to guide their own individuals through internal rivers, streams, and seas. This would be a condition of their nominating an employee for the program. APTA would provide recommended topics and agendas for internal mentors to review, use, and adapt to organizational settings and needs. APTA envisions internal mentor sessions running about once a month.

Like the opening segment for this program, the goals, objectives and outcomes for the mentor component need to be further identified and developed by the working group. The working group would hope that current members of the task force would be able to volunteer as industry mentors, plus others, for the initial launch of the program.

Based on discussions with other APTA members currently running mentor programs, these proposed mentor/mentee sessions, in order to be successful, need to have regular schedules and structure, including recommended topic assignments, discussion points, questions, and outcomes. Mentees would keep a journal of what they learn, so as they progress during these several



months, they have points of reference and documented examples of lessons learned, applications, and success.

The industry mentor sessions could address both industry topics as well as professional development areas. Industry mentor session topics might include: customer service, ridership demands, boards and governance, public private partnerships, innovative funding sources, safety and security, benefits and impact of technology. These topics will help the early career professionals learn more about transit specializations and issues beyond their everyday work experiences. Professional development topics for industry mentors to address might include life balance, management versus leadership, managing up, and navigating your organizations to guide participants in professional development planning.

APTA would work to provide online means and much more for mentees to share and post related thoughts, lessons learned, and resources to benefit themselves and their peers in the program. We would tap the power of social media forums as well as means to enhance communication and industry access. A potential format is to provide readings and encourage participants to post on monthly online discussion boards, thereby connecting them through a common topic and providing opportunities to share lessons learned from their mentoring relationships. The online forum would also be appropriate for program participants and mentors to serve as resources to each other, to help solve a problem, gain different perspectives, or share interesting news and case studies.

In addition, we envision conducting two-to-three scheduled online sessions during this extended mentor period. These online sessions could be educational in nature and/or encourage “in person” discussion among early career cohort members, industry experts and guests (to complement the ongoing dialogues in online forums). We would leverage technology and leading innovations in learning models during these sessions.

Capstone session: The capstone session brings the year full circle. We propose a three-to-four day program held prior to and in conjunction with either the APTA Bus & Paratransit Conference or the APTA Rail Conference.

This session will build on the learning, growth, and mentorship period the attendees just experienced. As part of this concluding session, we proposed developing a forum for cohort members to share their experiences and demonstrate their new skills and lessons learned through innovative sessions, role playing, and interactive audience dialogue sessions.

Through a few specialized workshops and skill building sessions, this capstone session will introduce the next level skills needed for an early career mid-level manager. We envision leveraging the expertise of the many mentors who supported the program members as part of the session leaders for this capstone session.

We will celebrate the successes of these new graduates with a special high-profile graduation program and reception held in conjunction with the modal conference.

### **Marketing, Application and Selection, Fees, Work Plan**



Proposed Program Marketing Partners and Collateral: The working group would work closely with APTA's Human Resources Committee, Marketing and Communications Committee, APTA staff, and its internal resources to brand and identity this new proposed program. This communications plan would use a variety of outreach means, media and messages.

For this proposed program to succeed, the marketing materials need to be very clear about the purpose, goals and objectives, outcomes, but most importantly, the target audience and related criteria. Decision makers nominating applicants to this program cannot be confused about the stated purpose and audience for this new program.

Executive sponsors and others need to know what this program is about, who it is for, what the applicants need to bring to the table, the sponsor's and applicant's level of investment, costs, and benefits. We stress this point because currently, the industry has a variety of programs to select from - The Eno Transportation Foundation, the National Transit Institute, COMTO, WTS, APTA and others. Decision makers need to understand what will set this new proposed program apart from the others: the focus on an important segment of the workforce that is most vulnerable to leaving transit, the great opportunity for early career professionals to learn more about the industry and transit operations outside of their specialties, and the unique mentoring component that will help guide career development and make early career professionals feel more connected to the transit community.

We envision initial marketing materials to be developed and released by early-to-mid December 2012. APTA would provide additional information, including a dedicated web page during the first few months of 2013.

Proposed Application and Selection Process: Applicants would be directed to an online web site that would detail the program, including providing them access to an online application portal. The working group would identify and resolve a range of important information to include as part of the online application packet requirements.

Applicants would be early career individuals with 3 to 5 years of experience working in transit and 1 to 3 years of experience in managing tasks, projects, or staff. Applicants must demonstrate strong interest in the transit industry, be able to identify long-term career goals, and clearly have the support of their executive leadership to participate in this new program.

We propose that members of the Workforce Development Task Force and potentially other invited APTA members serve as the panel to select the initial set of attendees for the first round of the program. We propose that we limit the program to no more than 15-20 attendees for the initial offering. We envision selecting applicants at least 6-8 weeks in advance of their attending the opening program, either in conjunction with the 2013 APTA Bus & Paratransit Conference or the 2013 Rail Conference.

Tuition Fees: As of this draft writing, setting specific tuition fees will be better determined once the working group is able to flesh out the scope and extent of resources needed to carry out this proposed program. Tuition fees would not be prohibitive, and are established to help APTA



cover some of the anticipated program expenses. In addition to tuition fees, attendees would have related travel and hotel fees, costs for some meals associated with in-person sessions, and miscellaneous expenses. The sponsoring organizations and their attendees would need to reach agreement on payment for these costs, whether the sponsoring organization is able to cover these expenses as an employee benefit, or the attendee is willing to pay some costs as an investment in their professional development. The working group and taskforce would need to further discuss this topic.

Work Plan: The working group recognizes they have ambitious goals and plans ahead, to be able to launch the program by the spring of 2013. The working group and its partners would begin work on including initial announcements of plans for this new program pending approval of the APTA Executive Committee. Please see Attachment 2 for a summary list of key tasks from October 2012 through June 2014.

### **Summary and Next Steps**

The Workforce Development Task Force and its Mid-Level Management/Early Career Working Group are very excited and supportive to propose this new APTA Early Career Mid-Level Management Professional Development Program. This group believes the proposed national-level program will address an important skill and professional development gap for those young professionals planning to grow and develop their careers in the public transportation industry.

The hallmark of this program will be the industry mentor program for Early Career Mid-level managers. This singular component will engage seasoned leaders and managers from across the industry to invest in someone's future. The collective expertise of industry experts willing to mentor and coach a rising member of the industry sends an enormously powerful message to the public transportation industry and to the transportation industry at large. Responding to this call for mentors and coaching someone along their professional journey clearly is a strong response to APTA's executive leadership and that of Secretary of Transportation Ray LaHood.

With the endorsement and support of APTA's executive leadership and APTA's Executive Committee, the Workforce Development Task Force and its Mid-Level Management Working Group are eager to take the next steps to turn a proposed program into a premier early career professional development program for the public transportation industry.



Attachment 1

**Mid Level Managers Working Group and Advisors**

Richard Andreski, New Jersey Transit, chair  
Jill Chen Stober, KFH Group Incorporated, co-chair

Mary Ann Collier, Swayzer Engineering  
Terry Garcia Crews, SORTA  
Barbara Gannon, The Eno Transportation Foundation  
Richard Maxwell, The T

John Catoe, Jr., The Catoe Group\*  
Milo Victoria, OMNITRANS\*  
Jeffrey Ensor, Parsons Brinkerhoff\*  
Shelly Xie, WMATA\*

\*Advisors



Attachment 2

**DRAFT - Proposed Summary Work Plan**

September 2012

- Executive Committee review of proposed white paper and program plan
- Discussion, anticipated support

Mid-October-mid-November 2012

- Augment program working/advisory group to include broader representation from target audience supervisors/executive sponsors (public/private), recent early career individuals
- Conduct Online Meetings to address program's further development/refinement:
  - Program scope, target audience, overall and session curricula
  - Overall mentor program profile, framework, enlistment
  - Anticipated program resources, costs and fees
  - Program Metrics/success factors
  - Work plan – next level detail
  - Establish subject matter experts working groups to focus on specific program topics/elements/outcomes
- Meet with APTA IT Department to develop web page/application portal (leverage from existing models)
- Develop and distribute initial industry letter and program flyer/announcement (End October/Early November) to APTA public and private sectors' executive leadership

December 2012:

- Continue to edit and flesh out curricula sessions, work with smaller groups on specialized topics
- Edit and flesh out mentor program details: topics, recruitment plan, criteria, expectations
- Draft/send out initial "letter of interest" solicitation for mentors (mid December)
- Identify potential program faculty
- Edit/produce draft of electronic Early Career Mid-Level Managers program brochure (December)

January:

- Draft and post summary information for Early Career program web site page
- Promote program at CEO seminar; BMBG meeting, other venues
- Finalize content for online program brochure/web site
- Continue to edit and flesh out curricula sessions, work with smaller groups on specialized topics



- Continue to edit and flesh out mentor program details: topics, recruitment plan, criteria, expectations, member coaching program
- Review “mentor” interest level; identify initial round of possible mentors

#### February-March 2013

- Send out industry letter to announce opening of Early Career program application web site (February 1), application web site live
- Continue program development, curricula refinement
- March 15 – application web site closes
- Mid – March – early April – Web site accessible to committee members for application review

#### April – May/June 2013:

- Early to mid April: Task force selection committee meets to select initial cohort of Early Career Program
- Notify applicants of task force decisions
- Assign/pair mentors/mentees
- Collect additional profile information of attendees
- Open collaboration web site for incoming attendees
- Conduct initial online meeting with incoming cohort prior to in-person session
- Launch Program (either with 2013 Bus and Paratransit Conference or 2013 Rail Conference) – recommend June 2013 Rail Conference

#### July 2013 – March 2014

- Moderate and support mentor program
- Schedule and conduct two-to-three online check-in sessions with class cohort
- Support and monitor online forums for mentees
- Finalize curricula/faculty/program for closing session
- Monitor progress, mid-term assessments (November – December)
- Potential featured session of 2013 APTA Annual meeting of new Early Career Program
- Plan refinements for second cohort
- Plan for second class
- Post application for second class February 2014

#### Spring 2014

- Host concluding session and graduation of initial cohort at 2014 Bus & Paratransit Conference.



September 2012

# Creating Sustainable Human Capital Investment

A FINAL REPORT OF THE 2012 APTA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT TASK FORCE



AMERICAN  
PUBLIC  
TRANSPORTATION  
ASSOCIATION