
Competency Models In Action:

Using a Competency-Based Approach to Prepare Public Transportation Workers

June 2014

- Collaborating with Industry on Transportation Workforce Needs
- Developing Competency-Based Career Pathways for Transit Operations & Maintenance Occupations
- Participating in the Update of the Transportation, Distribution, and Logistics Competency Model

Introduction

The Transportation Learning Center (TLC) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to improving public transportation by making a committed investment at the national and local levels in frontline technical workers. This commitment is manifested in a number of key initiatives including using a competency-based approach to create career pathways into public transportation jobs that provide living wages and benefits. The emphasis is on access to jobs and continuing education and training for young people and for men and women from disadvantaged populations served by public transportation.¹

TLC is well-positioned to demonstrate the value of the competency-based approach for preparing individuals for occupations in the transportation sector. It served as one of five industry champions for the recent update of the U.S. Department of Labor's (DOL) Transportation, Distribution, and Logistics (TDL) Competency Model. The organization is also working with several cities and states in implementing competency-based career pathways programs to prepare young people for careers in transit occupations.

The Workforce Need

Public Transportation – passenger bus and rail service – is the fastest growing sector in the overall transportation industry. Close to 400,000 employees are currently employed within public transportation, the majority being frontline operations and maintenance employees.² With 63 percent of transit's workforce above age 45, retirements could loom large in the next decade, creating even more career openings.³

Update of the TDL Competency Model

To ensure that the model reflects the knowledge and skills needed by today's Transportation, Distribution, and Logistics workforce, the DOL Employment and Training Administration worked with the U.S. Department of Transportation and industry and labor stakeholders to

¹ <http://www.transportcenter.org>

² National Transit Database, 2012

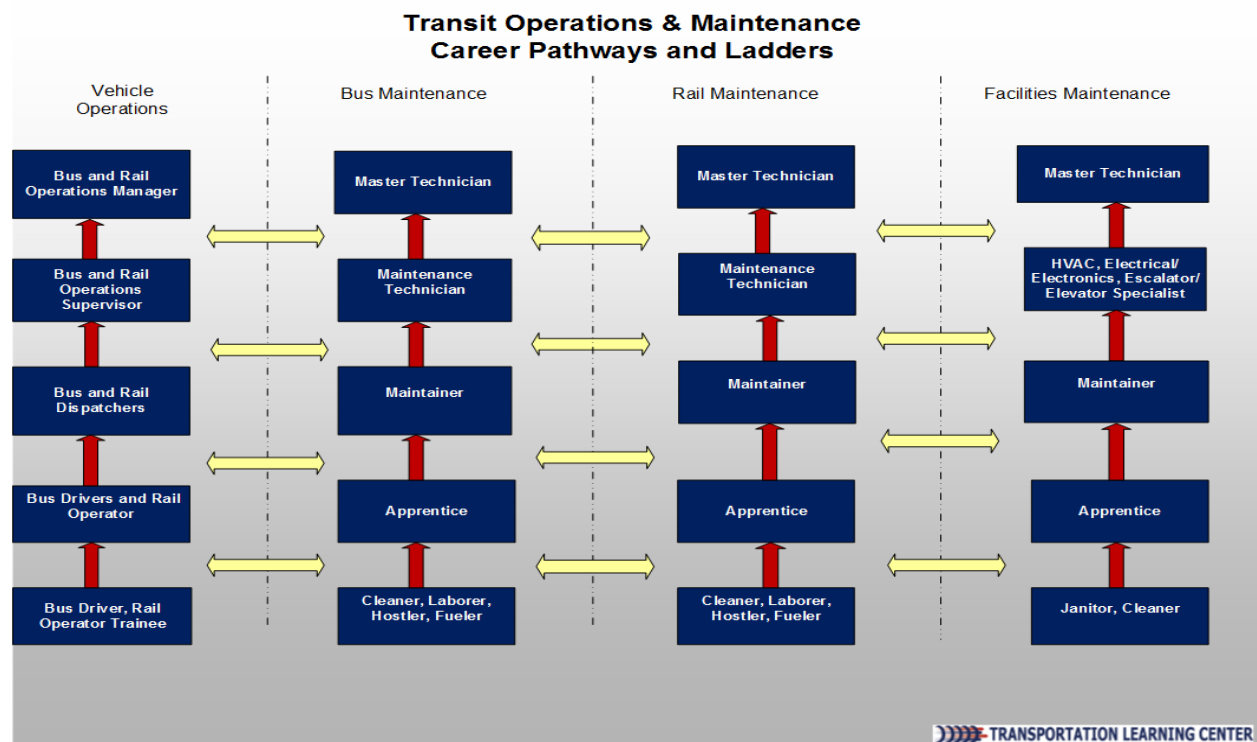
³ Transportation Learning Center Analysis of Bureau of Labor Statistics Industry Employment Data, June 2014

update the original model. Completed in February 2014, the updated model features a new Tier 5 providing background on specific transportation sectors and a reorganization of Tier 4 industry-side competencies, as well as several updated and new workplace, academic and personal effectiveness competencies in Tiers 1-3.⁴

“As an industry champion in this effort, we concentrated on the industry-wide and industry-sector competency tiers, in particular Maintenance/Repair, Safety and Security,” says Xinge Wang, Director of Research, TLC. “We validated the pathways and occupations and provided resources for the occupation-specific requirements. In the past ten years, we have engaged industry stakeholders from management, labor and the federal government to establish competency-based industry training standards for five transit frontline technical occupations: Signals, Traction Power, Transit Elevator-Escalator, Rail Car and Bus Technicians. We have also developed national apprenticeships for three of these occupations that have been approved by DOL. All of these are connected to our career pathways model. Our organization is committed to disseminating information about the TDL Competency Model to all of our partners. It is a great asset for the transportation industry.”

Competency-Based Career Pathways

In addition to the national training standards, TLC has also developed joint labor-management competency-based career pathways and ladders programs for transit operations and maintenance occupations.



⁴ <http://www.careeronestop.org/competencymodel/competency-models/transportation.aspx>

“Our focus is on creating career pathways that link young people in the communities that public transit systems serve to good jobs in that field,” says Pat Greenfield, Senior Program Director, Workforce Education, TLC. “We are working with partners across the county on a combination of strategies to help young people develop competencies as frontline workers in public transit systems or other related occupations. In Philadelphia, we are collaborating with the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority, Transport Workers Union Local 234, Keystone Development Partnership, Philadelphia Academies, Inc., local transportation employers and local colleges and post-secondary technical schools to develop a pipeline system that will bring the next generation of frontline employees into transit careers. This approach includes internships, hands-on training modules, job shadowing, after school and summer youth programs, career awareness activities, and outreach conferences and mentoring.” She also noted that TLC's partners at the Utah Transit Authority and Amalgamated Transit Union Local 382 have engaged in hands-on competency-based programs, including outreach aimed at women. In addition, in West Virginia, the TLC is collaborating with the State Department of Education's Career Technical Education program and the Rahall Transportation Institute at Marshall University on competency-based transportation curricula for high school students that link to specialized transportation degrees at Mountwest Community and Technical College, with options to continue on to four-year degrees.

Next Steps

“It’s a continuous thread,” says Dr. Greenfield. “Students work through the tiers of the TDL Competency Model, including the foundational tiers, to strengthen their knowledge. Our goal is to equip students with the skills that will enable them to move across sectors in the transportation industry.”

Related Links

Transportation Learning Center
<http://www.transportcenter.org>

Summary of Changes to TDL Competency Model
http://www.careeronestop.org/competencymodel/Info_Documents/TDLSummaryofChanges.doc

Pathways to Equity: Effective Transportation Career Partnerships
http://www.transportcenter.org/images/uploads/publications/LCCHR_FINAL112013.pdf

National Training Standards
<http://www.transittraining.net/standards>