

# Creating Opportunities for Individuals with Disabilities in the Transportation Workforce



# About this Module



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The contents of this module are intended to be a resource for mobility and transportation agencies and organizations to facilitate the recruitment of individuals with disabilities

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Organizations and hiring managers are encouraged to use all or some of this content to complement existing recruitment strategies

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This module is intended to build on the work that an organization may have around diversity, equity, inclusion, and access (DEIA)

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The resources included in this module can be used as an ongoing source of ideas and references

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This is only the beginning – agencies and organizations are encouraged to explore local resources in their own communities

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# Module Development

The contents of this module were developed cooperatively by the [National Center on Mobility Management \(NCMM\)](#) and the [Transit Workforce Center \(TWC\)](#), technical assistance centers funded by the US Department of Transportation, [Federal Transit Administration](#).

NCMM and TWC provide technical assistance, produce trainings and products, host events, and conduct programming around professional and workforce development.

NCMM is a national technical assistance center created to facilitate communities in adopting mobility management strategies. NCMM is a partnership across three national organizations: the [Community Transportation Association of America \(CTAA\)](#) which is the lead organization, the [American Public Transportation Association](#), and [Easterseals](#).

Operated by the [International Transportation Learning Center](#), TWC is FTA's first-ever technical assistance center focused on workforce development. TWC supports the workforce development needs of urban, suburban, tribal, and rural public transportation entities, with an overarching mission to assist the industry as it recruits, hires, trains, and retains the diverse workforce needed now and in the future.

This module was developed by Easterseals' Dr. Judy Shanley along with ITLC/TWC staff. All questions and suggestions should be directed to [jshanley@easterseals.com](mailto:jshanley@easterseals.com). The module is disseminated in the interest of information exchange. Neither the NCMM, TWC, nor the FTA assumes liability for its content or use. The opinions and conclusions expressed herein are solely those of the authors and should not be construed as representing the opinions or policy of any agency of the federal government.



# Learning Outcomes

Mobility and Transit Professionals using this learning module will:



Examine information related to hiring people with disabilities into transportation careers.

Identify key strategies that can be used to recruit individuals with disabilities into the transportation workforce.

Discover resources to complement the range of recruitment tools that employers may already be using.

# Using this Module



1. Review the content throughout the module.



2. Consider the thought questions before and after each major section that enable you to reflect on what you have learned.



3. Connect with practitioners in the field to learn more about this subject area.



4. Explore the links and resources to acquire more information.

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# Introduction

# Challenges and Opportunities





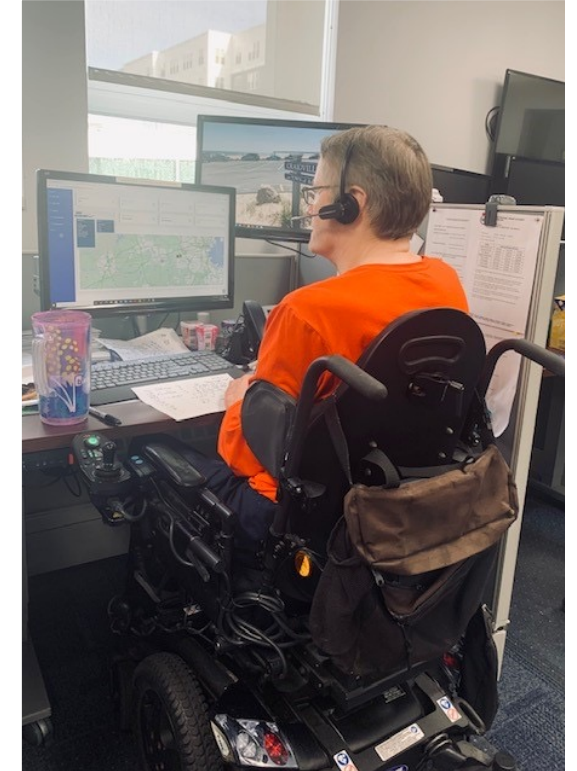
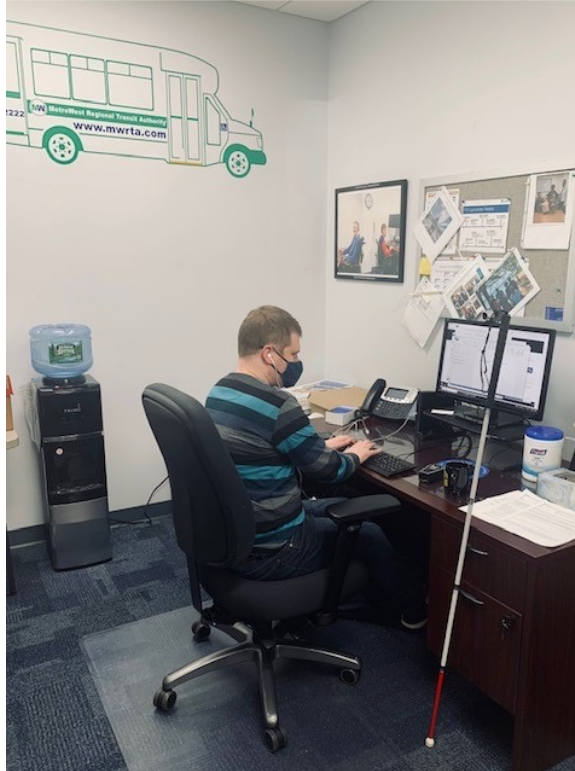
# Reflection Questions

- Have you ever had a colleague with a disability?
- Have you ever known someone who had challenges finding work because of a disability? If so, what were the impacts of those challenges, and what was the outcome?
- Have you personally ever had to cope with a disability in a job search or work-related situation?





# People with disabilities are already successful employees within transit agencies.



*Here are several of MetroWest Regional Transit Authority's employees with disabilities.  
Stay tuned for examples later in the module.*

It's not about charity or meeting Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) hiring goals....



..its about the value that qualified and competent employees can add to your organization.



# What is “disability”?

...“a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities” -*Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990*

Types of disabilities may include:



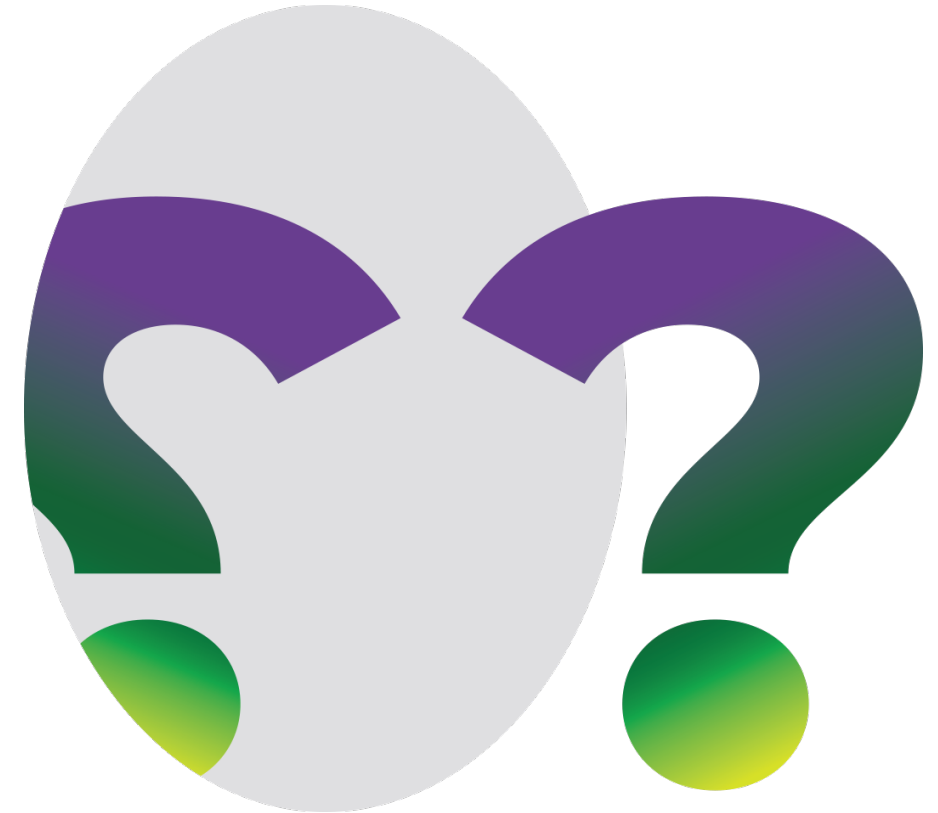
...and more! Some disabilities are hidden/not immediately apparent to others.



# Recruitment and a Welcoming Workplace

# Reflection Questions

- Have you seen or experienced recruitment and outreach strategies directed toward employees with disabilities?
- What barriers to employment in your organization might people with disabilities face? Think about more than one type of disability.
- Have you seen, worked in, or been involved in a workplace that is or was welcoming to people with disabilities? How was that welcoming nature manifested?



# Recruitment Strategies in Transit



- Start career awareness outreach early
- Work in partnership with appropriate organizations
- Feature images and voices of current workers with disabilities in your recruitment campaigns
- If they are interested, send current workers with disabilities out into the community, through partnerships and community campaigns; they can be your best ambassadors
- Use targeted outreach that emphasizes transit's role in serving the community, including access for people with disabilities
- Target message and type of materials (including accessible materials) to the audience you are trying to reach; your community partners can help
- Include information about accommodations in your advertising and outreach

# Start Early

- Connect with youth transition professionals from K12 schools and vocational rehabilitation professionals from Dept of Labor offices
- Visit K12 schools on career days and community fairs
- Invite children and youth into your agency and facilitate awareness regarding mobility and transportation options in both rider access and employment contexts
- Be present at relevant community forums that families attend





# The Importance of Partnerships



- Establish and maintain relationships with human services organizations, particularly those with a workforce development program
  - Centers for Independent living (CILs) or State Independent Living Council (SILC)
  - Governors Committees on People with Disabilities
  - Mayors Office of People with Disabilities
  - Workforce Boards and Councils
  - Higher education organizations – disability services offices
  - Vocational rehabilitation agencies and job centers
- Ensure your recruitment methods are accessible

# Accessible Recruitment Materials

Accessible materials can take on many forms, such as:

- Large type font size (at least 14-18 point font)
- Use easy to read font such as Arial or Verdana
- Use a limited number of fonts on a page
- Use high-contrast colors (e.g., dark words on a white background)
- Line spacing should be 1.5 or 2.0 (double-spaced) when possible
- Braille if requested
- Audio version of print materials

From the [Tarjan Center at UCLA](#)

## Beyond Just Recruitment: Tips for Making a Welcoming Workplace



**A critical part of recruitment is the workplace you are recruiting people into. For successful recruitment and retention of people with disabilities, the workplace must be welcoming.**

- **Supports and accommodations should be individualized, not based on a diagnosis.** Range of function can vary within in a single disability. Individuals with the same disability may not have the same functional capacity.
- **Consult with those who have disabilities to determine needs.** The best source to understand the needs of people with disabilities is people themselves.
- **Connect with community agencies** to learn about inclusive hiring practices.

# Beyond Just Recruitment: Tips for Making a Welcoming Workplace



## **Consider incorporating into your workplace the following:**

- A career ladder to create opportunities for advancement for all staff
- Education and training to all staff regarding interacting and working with individuals with disabilities (called disability etiquette)
- An induction program that provides peer-to-peer support
- A mentoring program
- Visibility of people with disabilities in key leadership positions



## Recruitment and Creating a Welcoming and Appropriate Environment

# Examples of Success

### MetroWest Regional Transit Authority (MWRTA)

- Central Massachusetts
- Employs people with a range of disabilities
- Currently, people with disabilities comprise 20% of MWRTA's workforce across a variety of roles (e.g., call center, grant writing)
- MWRTA partnered with disability-serving organizations
- Partners help identify candidates & navigate accommodation processes

*"It really was our benefit... We got some great employees and we still have them to this day"*

Deputy Administrator of MWRTA



*Several of MWRTA's employees with disabilities*



## Recruitment and Creating a Welcoming and Appropriate Environment

# Examples of Success

### Central Ohio Transit Authority (COTA)

- Columbus, OH
- Accommodates young people with learning challenges in its pre-apprenticeship technician program
- COTA realized some participants had different ways of learning and likely had Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) in high school
- COTA worked to determine what barriers to success might exist, exploring varied ways to train and establish competency to fit the individual's learning styles

*"COTA gets another good employee who, with some special attention, now has the confidence to succeed. This approach provides us with a well-rounded and diverse workforce and helps us live up to our motto, Moving Every Life Forward."*

COTA's Workforce Development Senior  
Program Manager

# Reflection Questions

- Which organizations in your community might be helpful recruitment partners?
- Which of the strategies for a welcoming workplace discussed in this section might work well in your organization?





# Accommodations



# Reflection Questions

- Based on your experience and general knowledge, what is a disability accommodation?
- What experiences have you or others you know had with accommodations in school, employment, or other organizations?



# What are Reasonable Accommodations?

Under Title I of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), a reasonable accommodation is a modification or adjustment to a job, the work environment, or the way things are usually done during the hiring process.



Equity in **applying** for the job and in **performing** the job

# More about Reasonable Accommodations

- Modifications enable an individual with a disability to have an equal opportunity not only to get a job, but successfully perform their job tasks to the same extent as people without disabilities.
- The ADA requires reasonable accommodations as they relate to three aspects of employment:
  - 1) ensuring equal opportunity in the application process
  - 2) enabling a qualified individual with a disability to perform the essential functions of a job
  - 3) making it possible for an employee with a disability to enjoy equal benefits and privileges of employment

# Examples of Reasonable Accommodation

- Physical changes
  - Installing a ramp or modifying a restroom
  - Modifying the layout of a workspace
- Accessible and assistive technologies
  - Ensuring computer software is accessible
  - Providing screen reader software
  - Using videophones to facilitate communications with colleagues who are deaf
- Accessible communications
  - Providing sign language interpreters or closed captioning at meetings and events
  - Making materials available in Braille or large print
- Policy enhancements
  - Modifying a policy to allow a service animal in a business setting
  - Adjusting work schedules so employees with chronic medical conditions can go to medical appointments and complete their work at alternate times or locations

[From the US Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy](#)



# Examples of Transit-Specific Workplace Accommodations

- Screen-reader software that successfully interacts with scheduling and dispatching software
- Adjustable-height desks in call center or other offices
- Additional time off for medical appointments as needed for older adults and people with disabilities across transit settings
- Changing schedules to align with medical needs for certain positions
- Reduce sensory stimuli such as audible or light announcements in maintenance facilities as feasible
- Making space for service animals on vehicles and in office spaces



# Cost of Accommodations

The U.S. Department of Labor announced today that a new report finds that nearly half of workplace accommodations made for people with disabilities can be implemented at no cost to employers, and of those that do incur a one-time cost, the median expenditure has decreased when compared to previous reports to only \$300.

Accommodation and Compliance: Low Cost, High Impact

Job Accommodation Network, 2023

# Consider Using PEAT's Digital Accessibility Toolkits

Resources from PEAT's website equip employers with the information needed to ensure the digital workplace is accessible to everyone, including people with disabilities. For example:



## The Accessibility Playbook for Emerging Technology Initiatives

This Playbook is a blueprint for anyone seeking to launch a successful initiative to drive the development of emerging technologies that are accessible to and inclusive of people with disabilities.

[Learn More about the Accessibility Playbook](#)



## Staff Training Toolkit

This Toolkit contains detailed guidance for training employees across an organization with the accessibility knowledge they need that is specific to their role.

[Learn More about the Staff Training Toolkit](#)

# National Workforce and Disability Resources

## **Need help understanding accommodations and getting started?**

- US Department of Labor, [Office of Disability Employment Policy](#) (ODEP): Disability, Part of the Equity Equation
- [Job Accommodation Network](#)- free consultation on workplace accommodations
- [National Technical Assistance Center on Transition-The Collaborative \(NTACT\)](#): Connect with High school youth transition professionals
- [Easterseals Workforce Development Services](#)





# National Workforce and Disability Resources (cont'd)

- **ADA National Network**. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) National Network provides information, guidance, and training on how to implement the ADA in order to support its mission to "assure equality of opportunity, full participation, independent living, and economic self-sufficiency for individuals with disabilities."
- **EARN**. The Employer Assistance and Resource Network on Disability Inclusion (EARN) offers information and resources to help employers recruit, hire, retain and advance people with disabilities; build inclusive workplace cultures; and meet diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility (DEIA) goals.
- **DREDF**. Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund (DREDF), founded in 1979, is a leading national civil rights law and policy center directed by individuals with disabilities and parents who have children with disabilities.
- **NCIL**. The National Council on Independent Living is the longest-running national cross-disability, grassroots organization run by and for people with disabilities. Founded in 1982, NCIL represents thousands of organizations and individuals including: individuals with disabilities, Centers for Independent Living (CILs), Statewide Independent Living Councils (SILCs), and other organizations that advocate for the human and civil rights of people with disabilities throughout the United States. NCIL advances independent living and the rights of people with disabilities.

## Key Questions to Consider on Accommodations



- Are your interview and hiring processes accessible to people with disabilities?
- Do you have training materials that are accessible for all learners?
- Do your staff understand the American with Disabilities Act (ADA) and reasonable accommodations?

# Review Questions

- Think about several types of positions in an organization you are familiar with and several types of disabilities. What kinds of accommodations might be helpful for each? You can draw a matrix or table to visualize.
- Describe how at least two national organizations can be helpful to you in developing accommodations in your organization.





# Measuring Success

# Reflection Questions

- Have you had experience assessing the impact of workplace or organizational programs? If so, what did you measure?
- Why might you want to assess the impact of workplace-based programs for people with disabilities? What might you learn and do based on those assessments?



*THINK*  
*ANALYZE*  
*EVALUATE*  
*ASSESS*



Always Assess How it's Going

# So, What's So Important about Data and Metrics?

- Informs you about performance
- Enable real-time corrections
- Important to “tell your story”
  - Funding, policy, recruitment, partnerships
- Contributes to the validity of the program
- Oh yes, sometimes funders require!

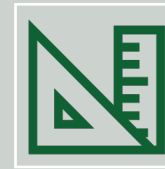
[National Academy of Sciences Proceedings](#)

WHY?

# Performance Measurement starts with Collecting the “Right Data” and using the “Right Process”



Know your challenge/problem  
(needs, assumptions, situations)



Know your solution or strategy  
(Inputs, activities)



Know the metrics & method  
(measurement, evaluation)

-Outputs: Things that can be counted;

-Outcomes: Impacts or changes as a result of a program or service



Know how best to communicate and report



# Measuring Progress - Outputs

## Examples of Output Measures:

- Increase in number of people with disabilities in the work setting
- Increase in career advancement opportunities
- Increase in number of individuals with disabilities in work teams
- Increase in number of individuals with disabilities as decision-leaders, managers, supervisors
- Increase in the number of meaningful relationships with recruitment sources
- Decrease in number of ADA related reports, incidents, and decreases in staff turnover attributed to ADA issues.

# Measuring Progress - Outcomes

## Examples of Outcome Measures:

- Increase in the percentage of employees (with and without disabilities) indicating positive perceptions of the work setting and specifically referencing diversity
- Inclusive recruitment and retention policies and practices become fully integrated and “common” in the work setting
- Decrease in overall costs of turnover– the Return on Investment (ROI) is proven by calculating the cost of turnover
- Increase in the production of work products and services that reflect inclusive practice and regard for individuals with disabilities
- Increase in career ladder opportunities and positions of authority for employees with disabilities

# Review Questions

- What are some examples of performance measurement indicators or processes to better understand how well people with disabilities are included in an organization?
- What types of data can you use to measure the success of activities to recruit people with disabilities?





# Conclusion & Resources

# Review Questions: Applying What You've Learned

- What are the major strategies for recruiting and retaining persons with disabilities in the transit workforce?
- What did you learn today that you will take back with you into your work?



# FTA Technical Assistance Centers



National Center for  
Mobility Management



Transit Workforce Center



National Aging and  
Disability Transportation  
Center



National Center for Applied  
Transit Technology



Rural Transit Assistance Program



Shared-use Mobility Center



ACL Inclusive Transportation  
Partnerships

# Additional Federal Supports

- [The National Transit Institute \(NTI\)](#) at Rutgers University conducts trainings and educational programs related to public transportation. Funded by FTA, NTI's mission is to provide training, education, and clearinghouse services in support of public transportation and quality of life in the United States. Training is available to public transportation agencies, metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs), State Departments of Transportation, and other agencies providing transportation services.
- [The Mobility on Demand Innovation and Knowledge Accelerator \(IKA\)](#) is a partnership between the Shared Use Mobility Center (SUMC) and FTA. The IKA provides technical assistance to support FTA's Mobility on Demand Sandbox grantees and shares knowledge learned with the larger public transportation industry.
- [The Multi-State Technical Assistance Program \(MTAP\)](#), administered by the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO), provides a forum through which state-level public transportation agencies can communicate with each other about federal transit regulations, grant program management, and technical issues pertaining to everyday administration of public transportation service. MTAP was developed to benefit the member states as well as their Federal program counterparts and local transit operators. Networking among the States is conducted through two annual meetings, peer-to-peer assistance, conference calls, and electronic communication.



# Thank you!

This module is intended to provide an overview of the wide range of topics that should be considered in strategies to recruit people with disabilities into transportation careers.

We would always welcome your suggestions for this module. Let us know how you use the material and how it affects your knowledge and practice:

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[twc@transportcenter.org](mailto:twc@transportcenter.org)





# Additional Information on the National Federally-funded Technical Assistance Centers

- The [National Aging and Disability Transportation Center](#) (NADTC) is a national technical assistance center funded by FTA with guidance from the Department of Health and Human Services' Administration for Community Living (ACL). NADTC promotes the availability and accessibility of transportation options that serve the needs of people with disabilities, older adults, caregivers, and communities with a focus on the Enhanced Mobility of Seniors & Individuals with Disabilities Section 5310 program and other transit investments. The NADTC supports the delivery of effective, efficient, high-quality, and coordinated specialized transportation services that maximize Federal investments.
- The [National Center for Applied Transit Technology](#) (N-CATT) provides technical assistance to small-urban, rural, and Tribal transit agencies. N-CATT supports the use and development of transit technologies and innovations with the goal of making services more cost-effective and efficient. N-CATT's work supports CCAM's mission by developing and supporting transit programs—which includes support for CCAM's targeted populations—in rural and small-city America.
- The [National Center for Mobility Management](#) supports FTA's Transit & Health Access Initiative and is funded through a cooperative agreement with FTA. The NCMM's mission is to promote customer-centered mobility strategies that advance good health, economic vitality, self-sufficiency, and community. NCMM provides technical assistance and training; catalogs and disseminates best practice information on innovative mobility management programs; and works to enhance the coordination of Federal resources for human services transportation, especially for people with disabilities, older adults, and people of lower income. NCMM tracks State and regional transportation coordination contact information at <https://nationalcenterformobilitymanagement.org/states-at-a-glance/>.
- The [National Rural Transportation Assistance Program](#) (RTAP) addresses the training and technical assistance needs of rural and Tribal transit programs across the nation and supports state RTAP programs. National RTAP provides comprehensive free technical assistance programs and resources, including training materials, webinars, newsletters and technical briefs, peer resources, research, and innovative technology initiatives. RTAP's technical assistance aligns with the mission of the CCAM by helping to improve the availability and efficiency of rural and Tribal transit.
- The [Transit Workforce Development Technical Assistance Center \(TWC\)](#) was created by FTA in September 2021 to support public transit agencies' workforce development needs for all modes and in communities of varying sizes, including urban, tribal, and rural entities. The center helps transit agencies recruit, hire, train, and retain the diverse workforce needed now and in the future. Main initiatives include 1) conducting technical assistance activities within and for transit agencies that promote more effective and efficient training of frontline workers involved in public transportation maintenance and operations; and 2) implementing technical assistance activities through collaborative partnerships between transit agency management and labor, including apprenticeships. Overall, the center is providing opportunities to address social inequities that exist in the transit industry and creating diversity within and among the transit workforce.