

Meeting Tomorrow's Needs: Transport and Employment

Wednesday, 25 May, 13.45-15.15, Hall 2

Transport's large and diverse workforce is evolving as society changes, but in different ways and at different speeds across countries. But is employment in the transport sector keeping pace with changes in demand, in technology and in society? Up to one in ten workers within developed countries works in the transport sector, with most of those jobs being held by men (80% compared to 60% for all jobs). Some sub-sectors, such as road freight, are highly fragmented, with thousands of small-scale operators and a few very large operators. Others, such as national rail services, tend to be dominated by single large employers. Some key areas of employment within the sector did not exist just a few years ago, such as mobility managers, whereas other categories of jobs risk losing relevance. This session will address the key employment challenges facing the sector with respect to societal trends, technology development, new service provision and training.

Chair

- George Dragnich, Executive Director, Social Dialogue, International Labour Organization

Panellists

- David Cockroft, General Secretary, International Transport Workers' Federation
- Sylviane Delmas, Inspector General, RATP Paris, France
- Thomas Ehm, Vice President of Employment, Training and Competence Management, Airbus
- Oksana Exell, Executive Director, Asia-Pacific Gateway Skills Table, Canada
- William Millar, President, American Public Transportation Association, USA

Transport is hiring, but is the sector attracting workers?

Globally, the transport sector is hiring workers in unprecedented numbers, even despite the recent economic crisis, and prospects remain good for future job growth in the sector. This growth is largely fuelled by developing countries – with other regions displaying divergent trends often characterised by job losses and/or worker shortages. Are careers in the transport field attractive? In many key areas, such as truck and bus driving, employers face difficulties recruiting sufficient numbers of qualified drivers willing to put up with difficult working conditions. Hiring qualified foreign workers in this context may seem

to be an appropriate response but can be problematic if domestic unemployment levels remain high. Many jobs might be attractive, especially those relating to logistics or involving new skill sets related to mobility management in public transport, but these opportunities are less known to first-time job seekers. While there appears to be a clear need to better educate people about opportunities in transport, there is an equally compelling need for transport to redefine jobs to better meet people's expectations.

Society is changing – are transport jobs keeping pace?

Women have entered the workforce in large numbers, but less so in transport – is the field addressing the needs of the female workforce (for example, in terms of job security with respect to maternity leave)? In some areas, it would appear so, especially as women rise to management positions within companies. In other areas, transport jobs have changed tremendously allowing for new opportunities – for example, in a field that historically required tremendous physical strength, dockworkers now move thousands of containers per week via computer-guided high-tech cranes.

Generation X, Y and Z bring a different set of work expectations than did their predecessors, especially with regards to flexibility and work-home life balance. Likewise, qualified workers shy away from jobs that do not meet growing expectations regarding health and safety. This is the case for truck drivers in several developing countries. Making transport jobs safe, flexible, non-repetitive, and part of a creative solution set delivering real life-improving services will all contribute to job attractiveness in the sector ... and this will require changes in the thinking of both organised labour and management thinking on the issue.

Is training keeping up with the needs of the sector?

New forms of flexible and targeted training programmes are required for those jobs attracting too few or insufficiently trained candidates. These may involve establishing common qualifications and ensuring that both state and private sector training programmes fully conform to these. It may also require that training programmes adapt to meet the lifestyles of the changing workforce, for example, by allowing workers to gain certain targeted competencies rather than the full-scale training programmes that are the norm now. New, dynamic partnerships between employers and education institutes at all levels can help ensure that workers enter the field with the skills their employers need. At the same time, the sector needs to focus on training that allows it to keep experienced older workers engaged despite lengthening careers and changing skill requirements. Training has costs and these must be borne in mind – but training allows employers to increase productivity which compensates for this. Finally, while training improves workers' skills, we must keep in mind that these skills must add real value for transport users if they are to benefit all.