

AASHTO-AGC-ARTBA Joint Committee
Joint Position Statement JPS-1-15
Title: Attracting, Developing and Training a Qualified Work Force

The transportation infrastructure industry, both on the public and private side face significant challenges attracting, developing and training the work force of the future. Projected increases in retirements of the baby boom generation, competition for workers from other industries, and the difficulty in recruiting women and minorities are challenges to transportation work force development. Others factors specifically for the construction industry include the dismantling of the public vocational and technical education programs, declining participation in union apprenticeship training and an increasing focus on college preparatory programs at the high school level. Concerns about job continuity due to uncertainty about federal funding also undermines the effort to recruit workers to the transportation infrastructure industry.

It is in the best interest of the transportation infrastructure community to encourage more individuals to pursue careers in this industry. It is critical to develop a skilled and diverse transportation work force across a broad range of both professional and skilled transportation careers: engineers, planners, construction workers, welders, equipment operators, truck drivers, estimators and others. The joint committee identified some initiatives around the country by either the construction industry or the state DOTs to promote transportation careers, however, there seemed to be little coordination.

Some of the initiatives that AASHTO, FHWA, AGC and ARTBA could cooperate on include:

Promote public relations initiatives such as the “Go Build” programs in Alabama, Georgia and other states and similar programs aimed at raising awareness to careers in the transportation infrastructure industry.

Promote Transportation and Construction Career days to introduce the younger generation to the available careers and benefits of working in the modern transportation construction field.

Cooperate in promotion of Youth/Millennial Mentoring Programs within private companies and at DOTs.

Encourage creation of Internships in DOTs and private sector companies.

Work jointly to make AASHTO TRAC program a success including consideration of financial support.

Encourage charter schools with construction and technical skill curriculum.

Encourage partnerships between apprenticeship programs and institutes of higher education.

Work with veteran organizations that provide training and career direction.

Promote inclusion of horizontal construction in existing construction management programs that currently tend to emphasize vertical construction skills.

Encourage Congress to extend on-the-job training (OJT) and supportive services funding without limiting states’ flexibility in accessing and using these funds.

Promote and engage in student competition programs sponsored by the ASCE and other organizations.

The joint committee believes that the transportation work force needs of today and the future will play an important part in addressing the Nation’s transportation infrastructure needs. The joint committee therefore recommends that AASHTO, FHWA, AGC and ARTBA look for opportunities to work cooperatively on initiatives that promote the industry, encourage the youth to select transportation as a career choice and make the available educational opportunities more transportation friendly.