

PROJECT OVERVIEW
JUNE 2019

The High Road to Public Transit

Joint Workforce Investment (JWI), is a high road training partnership (H RTP) between Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) and Amalgamated Transit Union Local 265 (ATU 265). The partnership grew out of a shared need to identify solutions to industry challenges in public transit. JWI convenes labor and management representatives to develop programs and solutions that address recruitment and retention issues, promote health and wellness, and to professionalize and upskill jobs, with the goal of improving operations and the quality of public transit. Since 2016, JWI has launched apprenticeships that create career ladders and lattices for frontline public transit workers.

Leaders from JWI, the California Labor Federation's Workforce and Economic Development (WED) program, and Balance.point Strategic Services, a third-party consultant, came together to establish California Transit Works! (CTW). CTW is a statewide consortium of transit agencies, labor unions, and community colleges that promotes high road training partnerships to address critical issues in public transit. The consortium's transit agencies and labor unions have over 10 years of experience creating and expanding labor-management partnerships. The consortium draws on the knowledge and skills of frontline workers, promotes ongoing health and wellness strategies for workers in a high-stress industry, and addresses workplace and industry issues related to skill development and technological change.

Through the CWDB's H RTP initiative, CTW's effort to expand the capacity of transportation industry partnerships will advance the high road model in two critical ways: one, by creating the first formal "high road partnership of partnerships" model in California; and two, by extending access to online resources to develop and improve high road partnerships in public transit. Ultimately, CTW is strengthening the workforce development system by facilitating the expansion of high road partnerships, providing technical assistance to new transit labor-management partnerships, and helping regional industry leaders identify and address shared skill and modernization challenges. The consortium also supports the development of worker training and health and wellness strategies by piloting and refining practices tailored to each partnership's needs.

CTW is determining its scope of work and vision as a formal partnership consortium in three major ways.

CREATING A CONSORTIUM OF TRANSIT PARTNERSHIPS ACROSS CALIFORNIA

CTW convenes a core team of transit partnership leaders to discuss anticipated industry changes, related workforce challenges, and its role in facilitating solutions. This network provides a space for ongoing learning and knowledge exchange between strategic partners in the transit industry. The consortium then uses their collective expertise to create high road transit partnerships across the state by educating transit agency districts, community-based organizations, labor unions, and prospective employees on the value of H RTPs; providing tools and technical assistance to develop and strengthen industry partnerships; and sharing knowledge and resources to facilitate industry solutions like career pathways for frontline transit workers.

DOCUMENTING SUCCESSFUL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PRACTICES

To institutionalize its high road workforce development successes, CTW is documenting the practices developed over the years by its strategic partners, including the JWI's groundbreaking partnership between VTA and ATU 265, and JWI's work with Mission College-Santa Clara. Transit-specific examples of H RTP topics include how and why to engage in apprenticeship and mentoring programming, best practices for working with community colleges, and training apprenticeship trainers.

DEVELOPING ONLINE RESOURCES FOR HIGH ROAD TRANSIT PARTNERSHIPS

CTW is compiling best practices and creating a robust library of videos, documents, and other learning tools for a public website.

Ultimately, CTW helps public agencies and unions across California expand the high road approach in the transit industry and train a highly skilled workforce that meets quality professional service standards. Frontline transit workers gain economically sustainable jobs with opportunities for career growth and are positioned as key contributors to operational improvements, including those that advance the state's environmental and climate goals.

The California Workforce Development Board (CWDB) designed the High Road Training Partnership (H RTP) initiative to model a sector approach that can address critical issues of equity, job quality, and environmental sustainability. H RTPs are industry-based, worker-focused training partnerships that build skills for California's high road employers—firms that compete based on quality of product and service achieved through innovation and investment in human capital and can thus generate family-supporting jobs where workers have agency and voice.

**For more information, see
<https://cwdb.ca.gov/initiatives/high-road-training-partnerships/>**

A BRIEF TIMELINE OF NORTHERN CALIFORNIA TRANSIT HRTPS

VTA and ATU consider forming a high road training partnership

VTA and ATU convene to discuss the creation of JWI to address shared commitments to delivering professional public service and promoting the health and wellness of frontline operators.

JWI creates training programs through the Maintenance Career Ladder Training Program (MCLTP)

After ATU worker focus groups identify facility and fuel-island positions as dead-end jobs, JWI creates the MCLTP to facilitate a one-year, full-time, paid training program for those workers while VTA backfills their positions.

JWI and Mission College create two new apprenticeships

JWI and Mission College partner to create the first US Department of Labor coach operator and service mechanic apprenticeships, the beginning of an effort to support broader opportunities for workers and bridges from dead-end jobs to new careers.

Golden Gate Transit District (GGT) and ATU Local 1575 create operator mentoring program

GGT and ATU Local 1575 develop an operator mentoring program with support from JWI, per a 2015 collective bargaining agreement provision.

Alameda-Contra Costa Transit District (AC Transit) and ATU Local 192 agree to create training programs

AC Transit and ATU Local 192 agree to provisions for operator mentor and mechanic helper programs in their new collective bargaining agreement.

JWI is founded

JWI partnership agreement is reached to improve VTA public transit service in Santa Clara County, promote health and wellness, and address the shortage of skilled workers in an increasingly technology-driven industry.

JWI creates peer mentor program

JWI pioneers a worker-to-worker peer mentor approach to provide peer mentoring to support new operations in the coach operator occupation.

Mission College and JWI create four new DAS apprenticeships

Mission College partners with JWI to form Transit Apprenticeships for Professional Career Advancement (TAPCA), a set of four career ladder and lattice apprenticeships at VTA, which earn college credit and state certification.

JWI establishes first DAS registered coach operator apprenticeship

The first California Division of Apprenticeship Standard (DAS) registered coach operator apprenticeship is created, providing academic credit and transit certificates to coach operators.

CTW is founded

The first transit high road partnership consortium, CTW develops industry-driven, worker-centered partnerships.

AC Transit and ATU Local 192 pilot coach operator mentoring program

Adapted specifically for AC Transit and its workers, the program trains new coach operators and pairs them with peer mentors who provide on-the-job guidance.



Industry Partnerships: Where Demand Meets Supply

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, there were an estimated 27,730 transit and intercity bus drivers in California in May 2018. The annual wage of bus drivers is \$49,560 annually, or \$23.83 hourly. Because public transportation is seen as an environmentally friendly alternative to driving, many state and local governments have increased funding for public transportation. If that trend continues, employment in public transit will increase by 10%, or 2,300 jobs, between 2016 and 2026, according to the California Employment Development Department.

The public transit industry faces significant pressure to innovate and challenges to meet workforce demand, including an aging workforce, decreased transit use, new environmental policies, technological advances, and automation.

First, the transportation workforce is older than the general workforce, and ground passenger and rail have the highest number of older workers. A recent study of 125 transit agencies in the United States found that one in four bus operators will be eligible to retire within the next three to five years. Forty percent of Bay Area frontline public transit workers are eligible to retire today. Transit agencies already have trouble filling entry-level jobs, and retiring workers exacerbate the problem.

Second, to achieve the state's greenhouse gas reduction goals, the transit industry will need a highly skilled workforce. According to the American Public Transportation Association, the transportation sector is the largest emitter of greenhouse gas. California legislation has set ambitious emission reduction and quality improvement goals that call for the transit industry to move toward 100% deployment of clean-energy transit vehicle fleets by 2040. At the same time, zero-emission technology is evolving, and transit agencies must train workers in new bus technologies.

Third, as the use of ride-sharing companies in many urban areas is on the rise, public transportation ridership is declining. Those who continue to use public transportation are predominantly low-income people of color who use it to travel to

and from work. AC Transit reports that 74% of its riding population lives at 200% or more below the poverty line, and 56% of its riders do not have driver's licenses, highlighting the importance of public transportation services for disadvantaged communities.

CTW is helping build a public transit infrastructure to address these challenges and meet industry demand. Transit H RTPs are providing training and retention strategies that can meet the demand for technical transit jobs and provide workers with good quality jobs with career pathways.

CTW was formed to expand the H RTP model and develop the infrastructure across the state. CTW is establishing labor-management partnerships to create effective, worker-centered, training programs using the high road approach to workforce development.

Each partner on the CTW steering committee and in the core work group contributes specialized knowledge that collectively shapes and informs workforce development strategies to improve the transit industry. The core work group implements solutions by providing CTW members with technical assistance, including educational workshops and materials, to build labor-management partnerships and training projects.

Fig 1. CTW's Operational Structure and Roles

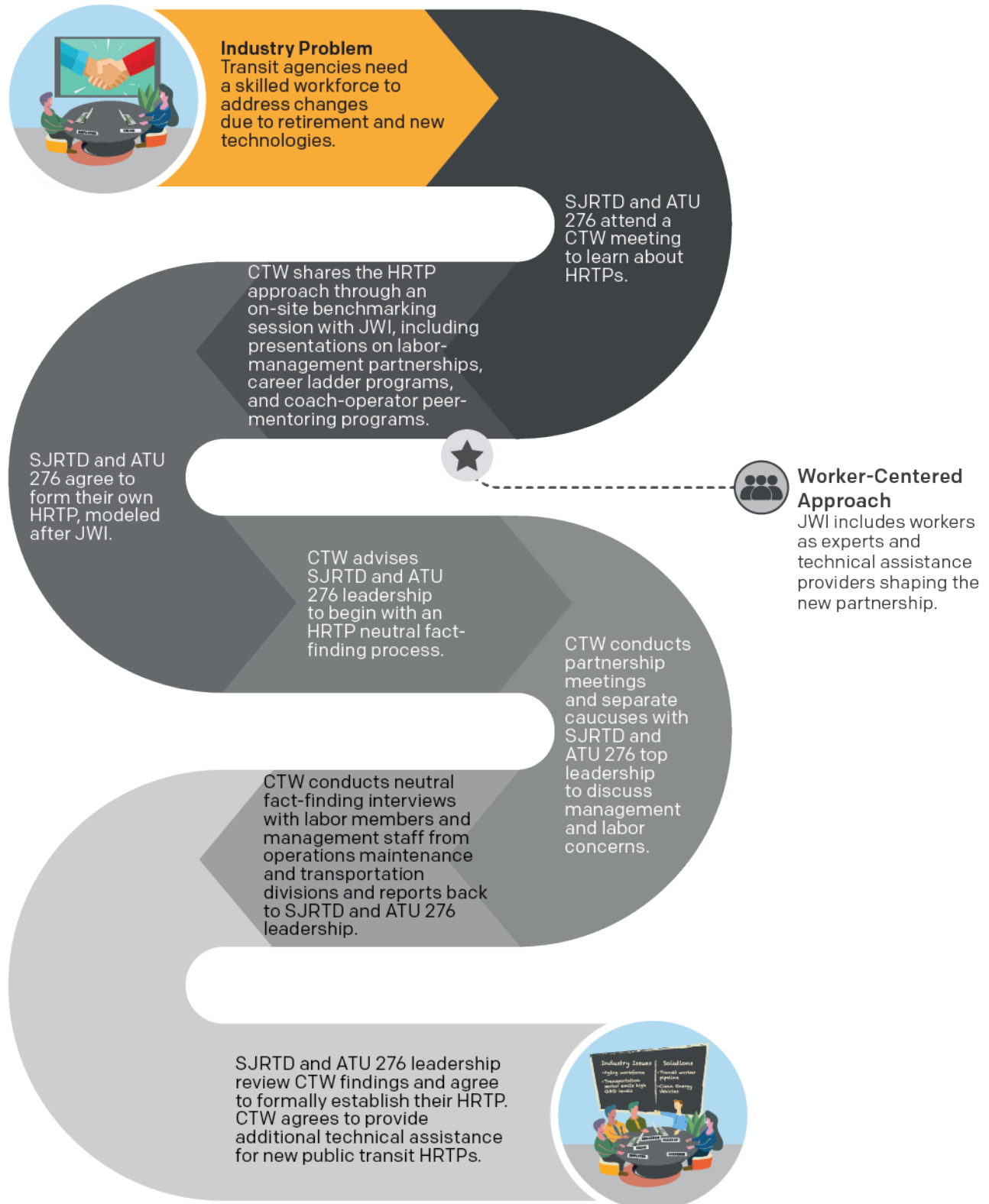
Through CTW, industry leaders convene to optimize their efforts and share expertise in building and sustaining partnerships. The formal operational structure includes a steering committee and core work group who provide technical assistance to CTW's member transit agencies and unions.



CTW shares high road transit partnership experiences that have contributed to important industry shifts with its consortium members. For instance, new partnerships learn to establish trust, accountability, standard operating procedures, and other essential elements that create a strong working relationship between transit agencies and unions. On the other end of the spectrum, mature partnerships establish peer mentorship, apprenticeship, and other workforce development programs that professionalize frontline transit worker occupations, improve wages, create leaders, reduce turnover rates, improve safety, and create a better work environment and passenger experience for everyone.

Fig 2. CTW's High Road Approach in the Transit Industry

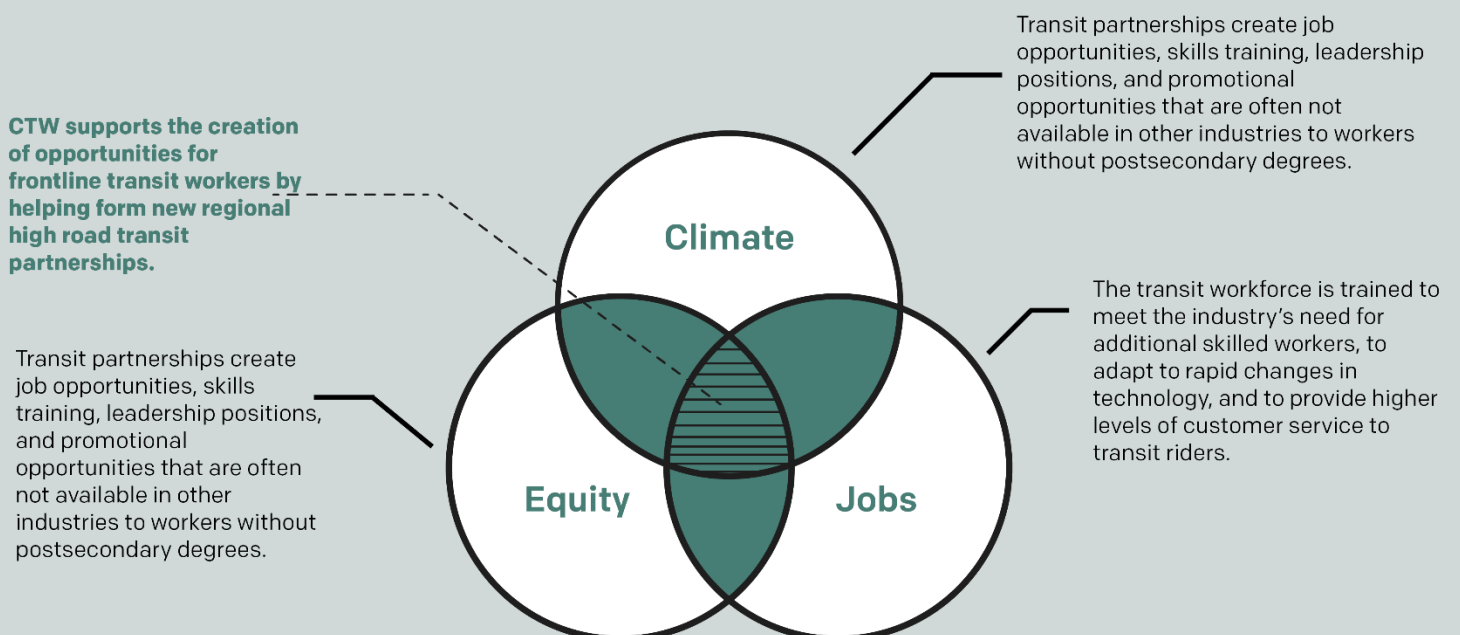
CTW addresses regional issues by helping transit agencies and unions solve problems together. One of CTW's first projects was to provide technical assistance to San Joaquin Regional Transit District and Amalgamated Transit Union Local 276 in forming their new partnership.



Taking the High Road: Improving Equity, Job Quality, and Climate Resilience

CTW's H RTP focuses on strategies and interventions that value equity, inclusion, and job quality. CTW is holding discussions with its steering committee - AC Transit, VTA, GGT, and ATU Locals 192, 265, and 1575 - to determine the partnership's role and capacity to assist transit high road training partnerships from other regions throughout California with integrating the Equity, Climate, and Jobs (ECJ) approach and meeting the supply and demand needs of the industry.

Fig 3. Taking the High Road: Improving Equity, Job Quality, and Climate Resilience



ADVANCING ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

CTW specializes in helping form partnerships and designing workforce development mechanisms for frontline transit workers who would otherwise not have professional development opportunities. CTW's network of experts share their approaches to solving industry problems through labor-management partnerships and provide guidance on forming regional partnerships that make workforce development opportunities more equitable and elevate worker expertise.

Through its technical assistance services, CTW shares practices from transit agencies like VTA, AC Transit, and GGT that value union partnerships and training. The JWI labor-management partnership, for example, created career ladders and lattices for frontline occupations. In 2016, JWI and Mission College created TAPCA, a system of four stackable apprenticeships—coach operator, service mechanic, track worker, and overhead line worker—that start with bus drivers and can lead to overhead line worker positions, the highest paid union position at ATU. For the coach operator apprenticeship, new employees attend a ten-week, on-the-job technical skills program, followed by additional on-the-job training, peer mentoring, and coursework that allows workers to earn a state certification, 18 college credits, and the skills needed to transfer to other occupations at VTA, including supervisory positions. In 2015, the VTA coach operator apprenticeship became the first of its kind to register with the California DAS. All four stackable apprenticeships earn newly established California Community Colleges Transit Certificates of Achievement (18-24 academic credits).

TAPCA created multiple pathways for workers to move from dead-end, entry-level jobs into higher-skilled, higher-paying jobs. New VTA employees starting coach operator apprenticeships are provided peer mentoring and access to career pathways and economic mobility. Workers transferring to new positions can increase earnings from \$15 to \$60 per hour and work in an environment that fosters learning and professional growth. VTA's investment in workers has increased its retention rate from 50% to 90% and its employees' demonstrated competence in interpersonal and technical skills to over 80%, twice the rate of non-JWI operators.

CTW continues to strengthen its infrastructure to support the rapid expansion of partnerships that will create transit apprenticeships and career pathways in other regions in California. The organization is currently documenting the models and practices refined over the past decade through videos, tools, and other resources transit agencies can access online. Collaborations with San Joaquin Transit and Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority are currently underway.

BUILDING ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL RESILIENCE

Public transit has played a leading role in the California's long history of reducing air and climate pollution from transportation, still the state's largest source of emissions. Public transit has replaced diesel fuel with natural gas in buses, piloted hybrid-electric and zero-emission technology in fleets, and ramped up transit service to provide an alternative to automobiles, especially single-occupancy vehicles. In addition to reducing tailpipe emissions (which account for nearly 40% of California's greenhouse gas emissions), these measures improve quality of life by reducing traffic congestion and noise pollution and encouraging more walking and bicycling. Installing solar panels to cover parking areas and using recycled water to wash buses are examples of other best practices that transit agencies have adopted to reduce their impact on the environment.

California is again calling on public transit to help lead the transition to a more sustainable transportation future with, for example, requirements to phase in zero-emission buses (ZEBs) in transit fleets (Innovative Clean Transit Rule, 2018) and a historic level of funding earmarked for public transit (Road Repair and Accountability Act, 2017). Public transit agencies are adapting their operations and workforces to the changes in technology and skills that accompany deployment of ZEBs, which include battery-powered and fuel cell buses. Over 100 ZEBs are in use across California, with another 200 on order. Agencies are looking to train employees in the skills necessary to maintain and repair the new electric vehicles and to create a culture of continuous learning to keep up with rapidly changing technology.

CTW works with transit agencies and unions that promote the professionalization of workers across all job classifications. For CTW members, professionalism requires workers to understand transit's role in clean transportation initiatives, public policy, and community health and sustainability; to directly engage with and support green practices in their daily work; to maintain, operate, and support low-carbon and zero-emission transit vehicle deployment; and to educate the public on the environmental and health benefits of using public transit. CTW's steering committee is discussing the partnership's capacity to effectively advance transportation sustainability efforts and address statewide and global goals to transition to zero-emission transportation.

DELIVERING SKILLS FOR QUALITY JOBS

CTW partners are collaboratively documenting best practices that connect frontline workers to leadership opportunities created to improve their health, safety, and the

professionalization of their occupations. For example, CTW is documenting JWI's mentoring program for VTA workers that values worker wisdom at its core. The program grew out of worker focus groups that identified a need for on-the-job support for new operators. The nature of transit jobs is often isolated and stressful; bus drivers are expected to meet tight schedules while providing good customer service to passengers with a wide range of needs and personalities. Using the proposed peer-to-peer support solution, following hours of design and negotiation, JWI piloted a union-led mentoring program that works for VTA, ATU 265, and the workers especially. Worker expertise and professionalism is now promoted through on-the-job peer mentoring and leadership. Veteran workers help mentees master the coach operating craft, provide service-standard guidance, and encourage a proactive approach to the work and their relationships with management. In the process, VTA also identified a need to set standard operating procedures within the agency. In the end, all staff—from operators to upper management—gained a clearer understanding of the agency's direction and values.

The training and mentorship programs position transit workers as leaders who set quality service standards for the industry, provide support to new workers, take ownership of operations, and create solutions rather than problems. The result is improved worker competency, a management style anchored in leadership rather than discipline, increased solidarity, a shared sense of responsibility and community, better day-to-day work experience, and quality service for the riding public. As a testament to the power of integrated worker voice, the mentoring program creates leaders in both management and unions, who in turn reinforce the value of working in partnership.

CTW further builds worker leadership by positioning workers as key partners outside of VTA work activities. For instance, when providing technical assistance in building a coach operator peer-mentoring program for the Workforce Investment Network (WIN), the H RTP between GGT and ATU Local 1575, CTW arranged for JWI coach operator mentors to prepare the curriculum and provide training to the WIN partnership team and its coach operator mentors. The H RTP mentor-to-mentor training approach created a new community of practice and raised the level of pride, solidarity, and professionalism across the Bay Area.

Expanding the High Road

An H RTP’s work is never done. H RTPs provide infrastructure for industry problem solving, and partnerships evolve along with industry problems and leaders. H RTPs must therefore attend to and strengthen their partnerships’ commitment to operating with high road values, to influencing their industries, and to improving their communities. CTW builds high road transit partnerships to address industry needs for a skilled workforce in a carbon-constrained economy. CTW is connecting frontline transit workers to high-quality jobs, increasing productivity by providing healthier and safer workplaces, and creating pathways for entry-level workers into safer, healthier, and higher skilled jobs. To continue to build the high road in transit, CTW will expand and strengthen its H RTP in these ways:

PARTNERSHIP OPERATIONS

CTW will create a formal operating structure, engage a membership base of new partnerships statewide, and expand its technical assistance capacity.

INDUSTRY SYSTEMS CHANGE

CTW will create new regional high road transit partnerships statewide, help partnerships professionalize frontline transit worker occupations, and create new career pathways and leadership opportunities for workers.

SOCIAL IMPACT

CTW will improve workers’ well-being by creating healthier workplaces, increase worker community engagement, expand transit use to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and enhance the quality of public transit services

Sources

- A Guide for the Development of Career Pathways in Transportation.** (2015). Retrieved December 13, 2018, from <https://s3.amazonaws.com/PCRN/docs/A-Guide-for-the-Development-of-Career-Pathways-in-Transportation.pdf>
- Bureau of Labor Statistics.** (2018). "Occupational Employment and Wages, May 2018, 53-3021 Bus Drivers, Transit and Intercity." Retrieved from <https://www.bls.gov/oes/2018/may/oes533021.htm>
- California Workforce Development Board.** (2018). Equity. Climate. Jobs.
- Employment Development Department.** (2019) "California Occupational Guides." Retrieved from <https://www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov/OccGuides/Detail.aspx?Soccode=533021&Geography=0601000000>
- Hendler Ross, S.** (2016). We're Growing Our Own. Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority. Retrieved December 13, 2018, from <http://www.vta.org/News-and-Media/Connect-with-VTA/Were-Growing-Our-Own#XBwxpnRKg2x>
- Hendler Ross, S.** (2017). VTA's Training Expertise Shared Nationwide. Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority. Retrieved December 13, 2018, from <http://www.vta.org/News-and-Media/Connect-with-VTA/VTAs-Training-Expertise-Shared-Nationwide#.XBGHnRKg2y>
- Mackey, M., Dresser, L., & Young-Jones, M.** (2018). Equity from the Frontline: Worker Voice Leads to a Network of Accessible Apprenticeship Pathways (Equity in Apprenticeship). Retrieved January 25, 2019, from https://equityinapprenticeship.org/assets/documents/Equity%20in%20Apprenticeship_VTA.pdf
- Mallett, W. J.** (2018). Trends in Public Transportation Ridership: Implications for Federal Policy. Retrieved December 13, 2018, from <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/R45144.pdf>
- Mission.** (n.d.). California Transit Works! Retrieved January 19, 2019, from <http://www.catransitworks.org/mission.html>

Monroy, J., Associates, R. V. B., Riddick, C., Nichols, C., & Calhoun, J. (n.d.). The Aging Transit Workforce. Retrieved January 19, 2019, from [https://www.apta.com/wp-content/uploads/Resources/members/memberprogramsandservices/Emerging-Leaders-Program/Documents/APTA%20ELP%20Group%202%20Handout%20\(PDF\).pdf](https://www.apta.com/wp-content/uploads/Resources/members/memberprogramsandservices/Emerging-Leaders-Program/Documents/APTA%20ELP%20Group%202%20Handout%20(PDF).pdf)

About this Series

Through the H RTP initiative, the CWDB has invested close to \$10 million to develop, refine, and expand a series of skill-focused, industry-based training partnerships that advance equity by linking workforce innovation to regional challenges of job quality, economic mobility, and environmental sustainability. The UCLA Labor Center, commissioned by the CWDB, is leading a two-year evaluation process to understand the successes and challenges of the funded partnerships in building a workforce infrastructure that can holistically address key issues related to equity, climate, and jobs. This is one of a series of eight partnership overviews from UCLA evaluators Ana Luz Gonzalez-Vasquez, Magaly Lopez, and Saba Waheed. For additional overviews and more information about the H RTP initiative, see <https://cwdb.ca.gov/initiatives/high-road-training-partnerships/>.