

**AASHTO Discussion Paper:
“Building our Transportation Workforce Together”**

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act provided the necessary federal funding and policy platform to revamp and modernize the nation’s transportation infrastructure. In implementing the IIJA, the longstanding need to strengthen and invest in our workforce has become even more glaring, as the post-Covid environment has exacerbated the pace of retirements and with newer employees staying for shorter tenures. This is occurring in a context in which all industries are facing fewer candidates, and the impact and reach of technology in the workforce is ever-changing.

Our workforce issues are as diverse and multifaceted as our employees themselves, and the way things have always been done is no longer a viable option in the face of such transformational change. We must approach our workforce like we are approaching safety—with a sense of urgency. This urgency should be imbued every step of the way from grade school, post-secondary education, vocational training, professional certifications, recruitment, and retention.

There is also opportunity to leverage and scale the respective workforce development efforts at AASHTO, AGC, and ARTBA, in order to make a broader impact in every discipline crucial to the long-term future of the transportation industry.

To inform development of tangible next steps, the Joint Committee is invited to consider the following questions:

- What successful strategies are being used to distinguish state DOTs and industry partners as an employer of choice that attracts, retains, and engages a diverse workforce? What opportunities does the workforce in the organization have for continued growth and rewarding assignments?
- How is the industry supporting “reskilling” to ensure we have the right people in the right job, working on the right tasks, at the right time, with the right knowledge and skills?
- How can we address workforce shortages by utilizing out-of-state, foreign, and seasonal workers, as well as developing college-to-industry pipelines such as internships and job shadowing programs?
- Under the IIJA, core federal highway formula dollars can be used to support surface transportation workforce development, training, and education activities. How widely adopted is this tool, and how can we maximize its effectiveness?