

Regional Rail Transit Training Institute

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The purpose of this project was to study the feasibility of a regional approach to rail transit training in the New York metropolitan area and to recommend a means for implementing such a cooperative training effort. The study focused on the following agencies -- the New Jersey Transit Rail division, the Port Authority Trans-Hudson corporation, Metro North Commuter Rail, Long Island Railroad, and the New York City Transit Authority. These agencies employ approximately two thirds of all rail transit employees in the United States. Each of these five agencies is struggling to provide quality service while containing their costs.

The first part of the study was to look at the existing training at the five agencies, to document the training needs of each agency, and to determine mutual training needs that could be addressed on a regional basis. The second part was to determine possible means of sharing training, drawing on the literature and from innovative approaches by other organizations.

As a result of the training needs analysis, the following recommendations were made:

1. Rail transit training departments should develop a systematic approach to their total training program. Training should be tied to organizational objectives from top management, in addition to meeting specific skill deficiencies identified by supervisors and in response to new regulations.
2. Training should be evaluated more rigorously. The evaluation should entail collecting quantitative data so that before-training and after-training performance can be compared.
3. Training departments should work with the unions to develop a positive union attitude toward training and to develop skills evaluation for all levels of employees.

The following recommendations were made for coordinating training among agencies:

1. Hold periodic meetings of training managers to discuss current problems and solutions.
2. Exchange catalogs of training courses and cross registration.
3. Develop training material (e.g., interactive video disks) jointly.
4. Apply for grants from Department of Labor, Department of Transportation, Department of Education, etc. jointly/
5. Work with community colleges as a group to develop rail related courses.

In order for rail transit agencies to remain competitive and permit them the flexibility that will be needed to deal with rapid changes in the economy, the labor pool, and technological advancement, training is becoming increasingly important. Given the situation where education is failing to keep pace with the increasingly sophisticated skills needed for employment, training should emerge as a strategy for success in coming decades.



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