



Labor–Management Partnerships for Public Transportation, Volume 1: Toolkit

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AUTHORS

Scott Baker, Chuyuan (Viktor) Zhong, Douglas Taylor, William F. Scott, and Richard Plante; Transit Cooperative Research Program; Transportation Research Board; National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine

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TRANSIT COOPERATIVE RESEARCH PROGRAM

TCRP REPORT 181

**Labor–Management
Partnerships for
Public Transportation**

Volume 1: Toolkit

Scott Baker
Chuyuan (Viktor) Zhong
AECOM
Arlington, VA

Douglas Taylor
THE LABOR BUREAU, INC.
Alexandria, VA

AND

William F. Scott
Richard Plante
DIVERSIFIED WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS, LLC
College Park, MD

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TRANSIT COOPERATIVE RESEARCH PROGRAM

The nation's growth and the need to meet mobility, environmental, and energy objectives place demands on public transit systems. Current systems, some of which are old and in need of upgrading, must expand service area, increase service frequency, and improve efficiency to serve these demands. Research is necessary to solve operating problems, adapt appropriate new technologies from other industries, and introduce innovations into the transit industry. The Transit Cooperative Research Program (TCRP) serves as one of the principal means by which the transit industry can develop innovative near-term solutions to meet demands placed on it.

The need for TCRP was originally identified in *TRB Special Report 213—Research for Public Transit: New Directions*, published in 1987 and based on a study sponsored by the Urban Mass Transportation Administration—now the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). A report by the American Public Transportation Association (APTA), *Transportation 2000*, also recognized the need for local, problem-solving research. TCRP, modeled after the successful National Cooperative Highway Research Program (NCHRP), undertakes research and other technical activities in response to the needs of transit service providers. The scope of TCRP includes various transit research fields including planning, service configuration, equipment, facilities, operations, human resources, maintenance, policy, and administrative practices.

TCRP was established under FTA sponsorship in July 1992. Proposed by the U.S. Department of Transportation, TCRP was authorized as part of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA). On May 13, 1992, a memorandum agreement outlining TCRP operating procedures was executed by the three cooperating organizations: FTA; the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, acting through the Transportation Research Board (TRB); and the Transit Development Corporation, Inc. (TDC), a nonprofit educational and research organization established by APTA. TDC is responsible for forming the independent governing board, designated as the TCRP Oversight and Project Selection (TOPS) Committee.

Research problem statements for TCRP are solicited periodically but may be submitted to TRB by anyone at any time. It is the responsibility of the TOPS Committee to formulate the research program by identifying the highest priority projects. As part of the evaluation, the TOPS Committee defines funding levels and expected products.

Once selected, each project is assigned to an expert panel appointed by TRB. The panels prepare project statements (requests for proposals), select contractors, and provide technical guidance and counsel throughout the life of the project. The process for developing research problem statements and selecting research agencies has been used by TRB in managing cooperative research programs since 1962. As in other TRB activities, TCRP project panels serve voluntarily without compensation.

Because research cannot have the desired effect if products fail to reach the intended audience, special emphasis is placed on disseminating TCRP results to the intended users of the research: transit agencies, service providers, and suppliers. TRB provides a series of research reports, syntheses of transit practice, and other supporting material developed by TCRP research. APTA will arrange for workshops, training aids, field visits, and other activities to ensure that results are implemented by urban and rural transit industry practitioners.

TCRP provides a forum where transit agencies can cooperatively address common operational problems. TCRP results support and complement other ongoing transit research and training programs.

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Scott Baker of AECOM was the Project Manager and co-Principal Investigator. Douglas Taylor of The Labor Bureau, Inc., and William F. Scott of Diversified Workforce Solutions, LLC, were the other two co-Principal Investigators. The other authors of this report are Chuyuan (Viktor) Zhong of AECOM and Richard Plante of Diversified Workforce Solutions, LLC. Professor Thomas Kochan from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology served as the Project Advisor.


FOREWORD

By Dianne S. Schwager

Staff Officer

Transportation Research Board

TCRP Report 181: Labor–Management Partnerships for Public Transportation is a two-volume report that provides resources for public transportation management and labor union leaders to establish, manage, and improve labor–management partnerships. *Volume 1: Toolkit* encompasses three major components: (1) the development of a labor–management partnership charter to start or improve a partnership; (2) labor–management partnership guidance that provides specific recommended actions for both management and labor union leaders; and (3) a labor–management partnership workshop framework that can be used to develop a cooperative workshop that prepares management and union representatives with essential skills for establishing and managing labor–management partnerships. *Volume 2: Final Report* provides background material that was used to develop the *Toolkit*.

Public transportation is a labor intensive service industry with a workforce consisting largely of employees who operate, maintain, supervise, and manage transit services. Most transit employees in large and mid-size urban areas are represented by labor unions, in particular vehicle operators and maintenance workers. As in many other industries, sometimes relations between labor and management at transit agencies are strained and adversarial, characterized by a lack of trust and respect, animosity, and poor communication. Many argue that these negative relations create lose-lose situations for transit managers, employees, and communities. Advocates for positive labor–management relationships believe much can be gained by building effective partnerships, resulting in broader cooperation between labor and management. Over the past 30 years, many organizations in the United States have pursued initiatives to improve labor–management relationships. These initiatives often occur in conjunction with efforts to address specific work place problems. While some research has been conducted, more information was needed about challenges organizations have faced in building and sustaining these initiatives. For example, more information was needed regarding (1) the practical factors and circumstances that lead to success in creating and sustaining positive labor–management partnerships both within and outside the transit industry and (2) the potential benefits to labor and management from successful labor–management cooperation and partnerships.

Under TCRP Project F-20, AECOM, The Labor Bureau, Inc., and Diversified Workforce Solutions, LLC, were tasked with developing a practical toolkit for creating, implementing, and sustaining positive labor–management partnerships at transit agencies. The *Toolkit* was to address how successful partnerships can benefit both labor and management, identify the factors and circumstances that lead to success in creating and sustaining positive labor–management relationships, and serve transit agencies interested in improved labor–management cooperation.

To meet the project objectives, the research team conducted a literature review; extensive surveys of transit managers and labor union leaders in the United States to gather facts and data on success factors and barriers of labor–management partnerships; six in-depth case studies of selected transit systems with successful labor–management partnerships; and a workshop of labor union representatives and managers with experience in labor–management partnerships.



CONTENTS

1	Summary
4	Chapter 1 Benefits of Labor–Management Partnerships
4	Labor–Management Partnerships Improve Overall Labor–Management Relations but Cannot Substitute for Dispute Resolution Processes
4	Summary of Benefits of Labor–Management Partnerships as Reported by Management and Labor
6	Chapter 2 Labor–Management Partnership Charter
6	Commitment to Work Together
6	Non-Binding Umbrella Document
7	Alternative Terms for Labor–Management Partnerships
9	Chapter 3 Labor–Management Partnership Guidance
14	Chapter 4 Labor–Management Partnership Workshop Framework
14	Workshop Framework Objective
14	Adult Learning Principles and Tools
15	Working Together
16	Managing Disagreements
17	Problem-Solving Tools
19	Obtaining Broad Buy-In
20	Group Facilitation
20	Group or Team?
21	Chapter 5 Conclusion
22	Bibliography


S U M M A R Y

Volume 1: Toolkit

Volume 1: Toolkit of TCRP Report 181: Labor–Management Partnerships for Public Transportation, is the principal research product of TCRP Project F-20, “Transit Labor–Management Partnerships: What Makes Them Work? What Makes Them Last?”

The research showed that cooperation or partnership behavior is a desired component of success for both management and labor, success being defined as achieving their respective goals in the transit enterprise. The *Toolkit* begins by summarizing the benefits of effective labor–management partnerships (LMPs) found in the case studies of six transit systems. The following benefits of LMPs are reported in the six case studies:

- Improved communication
- Timely decision-making on operational issues
- More effective and efficient labor negotiation
- Better employee training opportunities
- Long run gains in wages and benefits
- More productive workforce

Labor–Management Partnership Toolkit: Overview

The objective of the *Toolkit* is to help transit systems establish, improve, revive, or expand their LMPs. The *Toolkit* includes the following three key components:

- The Charter Document
- The Labor–Management Partnership Guidance
- The Labor–Management Partnership Workshop Framework

The LMP Charter Document serves as a starting point for management and union leaders to come together to recognize their existing partnership and plan for improvements, or to identify areas to start a partnership. The Charter is intended as an umbrella—an aid that helps to re-orient management and union’s cooperative approach to workplace improvement and to periodically bring them together for a re-examination or renewal of their partnership with different challenges and different people involved. More tangible and immediate results, including those which are cooperative in genesis, may require written, enforceable agreements of the type labor relations professionals understand. For example, when the parties determine to fund and operate a workforce training and manpower development project for certain scarce occupations, which are in their mutual interest, the project should be depicted in a detailed and binding agreement for the understanding and protection of all involved.

However, this Charter is non-binding in nature—something that is novel in the setting of collective bargaining. While the Charter may be adopted widely in the transit

2 Labor–Management Partnerships for Public Transportation

industry, management and the union may modify the final paragraph of the draft to make it binding if that is mutually desired. Collective bargaining with binding contracts is widespread in public transportation and accepted by workers, management, and political leaders. The tough negotiations and resulting binding collective bargaining agreements have, over time, come to provide both labor and management meaningful institutional security. This security should serve as a foundation to build a more effective, consistent, and long-range mode of doing business on both sides. Management and union can achieve that by finding mutual goals and achieving common successes through this non-binding Charter; these successes can be as important and enduring as the deals management and union strike through tough negotiation.

The Labor–Management Partnership Guidance provides a practical reference with specific recommended actions for both management and union leaders. It lists 14 guidelines that have proven to be constructive in the success and sustainability of LMPs in the transit industry. The 14 guidelines are categorized into five groups.

Table S-1 summarizes the 14 guidelines. Actions for management and union leaders are also recommended for each guideline. The complete guidance can be found in Chapter 3 of the *Toolkit*.

The Labor–Management Partnership Workshop Framework has practical training techniques for LMP workshop developers. It recommends a framework for workshop developers to develop a cooperative workshop that prepares management and union representatives with essential skills for establishing LMPs. It emphasizes consensus and relationship building

Table S-1. Summary of labor–management partnership guidance.

A. Improve the Cultural Environment for Partnership
1. Respect the individuals representing the other party.
2. Design, implement, and sustain effective communication.
B. Prioritize the Best Partnership Objectives
3. Separate issues between integrative (or win-win) and distributive (or zero-sum) ones.
C. Advocate the Partnership
4. Establish broad-based buy-in from all key stakeholders with formality and structure that is made clear to all.
5. Be confident that managers can cooperate with unions yet still continue to defend prerogatives and efficiency.
6. Be confident that union leaders' cooperation with management will not compromise members' interests.
D. Build Strength within the Partnership
7. Outline shared goals and expectations of the partnership.
8. Align all necessary resources to support the partnership.
9. Require consistent accountability of everyone in the organization with a governing or executing responsibility for the partnership.
10. Provide for comprehensive skill building for both union and management throughout the course of the partnership.
11. Provide an independent facilitator, if affordable.
E. Make the Most of Events
12. Support stability in union and management leadership and smooth LMP leadership transitions.
13. Take advantage of specific successes (e.g., pension fund governance, apprenticeship) to build a broader partnership.
14. Take advantage of shared challenges and crises to catalyze partnership agreements.

as well as the adult learning nature of LMP training. Effective cooperation can be achieved through training in particular skills, which pertain to group work and decision-making, and the employing of a skilled facilitator once the parties have acknowledged and committed to adopting the partnership on an ongoing basis.

Supplemental *Final Report*

This *Toolkit* is supplemented by *Volume 2: Final Report of TCRP Report 181: Labor–Management Partnerships for Public Transportation*, which documents the research conducted for this project. The *Final Report* describes the research methodology, telephone survey and case studies processes, and intermediate research findings and analyses such as literature review, data collected from the telephone survey, and summaries of the case studies.

The research found that management and union in most transit systems have established cooperative efforts in at least one specific area. In many transit systems they have established cooperation in multiple areas. Most common among the reported areas of cooperation are pension governance, skill training, preventable accidents, health and welfare plan, workplace safety, and schedule preference.

Existing labor–management cooperation in the transit industry demonstrates a wide range of forms and conditions. The effectiveness of cooperation also varies from system to system. In some cases, effective labor–management cooperation is confined to a specific area or committee; while in other cases, cooperation starts in one area and later spreads to multiple areas within a transit system.

Effective and lasting LMPs are found to share some common success factors. From the literature review, survey findings, and six in-depth case studies, the *Final Report* presents a list of success factors (and caveats) for LMPs. These success factors (and caveats) form the basis for the Labor–Management Partnership Guidance in the *Toolkit*.

The *Final Report* supplements the *Toolkit* and provides a reference for the specific and detailed experiences of LMPs and lessons learned from LMPs in the transit industry.



CHAPTER 1

Benefits of Labor–Management Partnerships

This research has concluded that transit systems and their workers benefit from a wide variety of cooperative or partnership activities. When both management and union pursue mutual goals in tandem, they are effective in accomplishing improvements in a wide variety of transit operations, such as marketing, public funding for transit, money management (especially in the case of funded pensions), wellness (e.g., health and welfare plan design, exercise and diet, employee assistance programs), scheduling and service modifications, workforce recruitment and training, and workplace safety including accident evaluation.

Labor–Management Partnerships Improve Overall Labor–Management Relations but Cannot Substitute for Dispute Resolution Processes

This project confirmed that coordinated and cooperative programs proved more efficient and meaningful than initiatives undertaken by either the management or the union acting alone. It was discovered further that even the confrontational and litigious aspects of labor relations worked more efficiently when partnerships were in active use, because the practitioners became more skilled at determining which issues were suited to the cooperative approach and which required formal difference resolution like negotiation, lawsuit, or arbitration.

Importantly, the research also found that under no circumstances should partnerships be undertaken to substitute for or even dampen dispute resolution activities in labor relations. Identifying and resolving disputes is a critically important aspect of labor relations and should remain separate from the cooperative/partnership work. It may not be desirable to reduce the number of dispute resolution activities (e.g., grievances), but speeding up dispute resolution processes without compromising fairness is a widely desired benefit of labor–management partnerships.

Summary of Benefits of Labor–Management Partnerships as Reported by Management and Labor

Table 1 summarizes the benefits of LMPs reported by management and union from the six case studies conducted during the research. The benefits were reported by medium and large transit agencies that provide bus-only and bus and rail transit services.

Table 1. Benefits of labor–management partnerships found in case studies.

Transit System Features	Management Reported Benefits	Union Reported Benefits
A medium bus operator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More effective and efficient labor negotiations with fewer arbitrations • More effective and rapid communication between management and union members during emergency, (e.g., extreme weather) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More effective and efficient labor negotiations with fewer arbitrations • Avoided turnover of management with a positive relationship with union • Revival, enhanced effectiveness, and expanded scopes of two joint labor-management committees
A large bus and rail operator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved communication, cooperation, and timely decision-making on critical operating issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved communication, cooperation, and timely decision-making on critical operating issues
A large bus and rail operator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Productivity and a positive work environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long run gains in wages and benefits
A medium bus and rail operator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Labor–management meetings involving union participation contribute to more effective decision-making • More effective and efficient labor negotiations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Labor–management meetings provide a problem-solving alternative to the grievance process • More effective and efficient labor negotiations
A medium bus and rail operator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A more motivated and productive workforce 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An active training program that facilitates employees’ career advancement
A large bus and rail operator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More effective communication • Respect for each other and greater trust 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct communication channel with top management, (e.g., open door policy) • No “gotcha mentality” to working together • Greater trust



CHAPTER 2

Labor–Management Partnership Charter

This research shows that cooperation or partnership in transit systems contributes to the success of both management and labor. However, leadership turnover on both sides and other factors cause constant fluctuations in partnership actions and effectiveness. A mutual plan which focuses on joint activities can sustain and promote partnerships without compromising the collective bargaining process.

Commitment to Work Together

Just as periodic amendment and ongoing administration of the collective bargaining agreement prompts the parties to use their advocacy and strategic skills, periodic amendment and administration of a partnership plan reinforces, for management and union, their interdependence and potential for joint accomplishment. If exercised with confidence and common sense, each side—from union members to top officers and from street supervisors to the CEO and Board of Directors—can appreciate and come to depend upon partnership behavior to move the transit agency forward.

A partnership plan can help focus both sides on areas where they already cooperate for their mutual benefit, diagnose partnership endeavors which are not as productive as they should be, and reveal new areas of mutual benefit and interest where the parties can seek improvement together. An important objective of this research and its products is to diminish the temporal fluctuations in cooperative behavior. By evaluating their relationship periodically in terms of the partnership, each side can gain strength which will give the partnership more staying power and make it institutional—less dependent on the personal tendencies of individual leaders or the particular issues of the moment.

Non-Binding Umbrella Document

In order to make institutional progress, it is necessary for both management and labor to commit their plan to writing, if only to establish times and a description of the actions they will take. However, the last thing any labor–management relationship needs is yet another forum to litigate. A Charter is recommended because it encompasses, but does not, by itself, compel the parties' cooperative endeavors. If used as intended, the Charter should help to re-orient the management and union's cooperative approach to workplace improvement and, then, periodically bring them together for a re-examination or renewal of their partnership with different challenges and different people involved. This idea should be helpful to any labor–management relationship, whether the existing level of partnership is sparse or abundant.

The Charter is intended as an umbrella, an aid. Full-bore activities, even those which are cooperative in genesis and in function, may require written, enforceable agreements of the type labor relations professionals understand. For example, where the parties determine to fund and operate a workforce training and manpower development project for certain scarce occupations, which are to be in their mutual interest, that project itself should be depicted in a detailed and binding agreement, for the understanding and protection of all involved.

Finally, this non-binding Charter is novel in the setting of collective bargaining, but it is hoped that it will be adopted widely in the transit industry. Collective bargaining with binding contracts is widespread in public transportation and accepted by workers, management, and political leaders. The tough negotiations and resulting binding collective bargaining agreements have, over time, come to provide both labor and management meaningful institutional security. This security should serve as a foundation to build a more effective, consistent, and long-range mode of doing business on both sides. Management and union can achieve that by finding mutual goals and common successes through this non-binding Charter; these successes can be as important and enduring as the deals management and union strike through tough negotiation.

Alternative Terms for Labor–Management Partnerships

Labor–Management Partnership is one possible term but not the only term acceptable or considered most appropriate by all transit managers and union leaders. Survey results show that most survey respondents, from both management and union, think it is a positive term. But a few respondents commented that partnership may not be an appropriate term as it might suggest compromise of union’s independence and/or management’s prerogatives. Management and union leaders can choose a broadly acceptable term for their partnerships. Several alternative terms suggested by survey respondents are

- Labor–management cooperation
- Labor–management coordination
- Labor–management goals

CHARTER DOCUMENT PARTNERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The parties share common commitments to improve:

- the public transit service they provide;
- the quality of life at work and
- *[insert other shared goals, interests, or objectives that the partnership is intended to achieve].*

We have determined that specific changes to meet these shared goals, and others as well, will be best accomplished cooperatively by management and labor representatives. In order to expand the number of cooperative projects and to enhance the representatives' success in carrying them out, we will take the following specific steps.

1. In joint meetings of union and management representatives to be completed by *[insert one date for completion of 1a., 1b., and 1c.]*:
 - a. Identify existing joint or cooperative programs;
 - b. Evaluate each, then take steps to improve those which function and either abandon or modify those which do not;
 - c. Establish or revive at least one joint program which does not exist or is not presently in use.

2. Utilize the following measures in establishing the partnership:
 - a. Include top officials from union and management;
 - b. Include lower level officials from union and management ;
 - c. Include workers from each operational area who are not union officials but recognized as successful by both sides;
 - d. Obtain from each side facilities and resources to defray the costs of establishing the program;
 - e. Follow-up by documenting and adopting (by specific agreement, where appropriate, and contractual amendment, where necessary) one or more specific partnership projects with clearly stated written goals, specific allocated resources and measures of progress for purposes of future evaluation.

3. Assure continuation of the partnership by the following steps:
 - a. Meet regularly in conjunction with existing labor-management meetings or otherwise, to review progress and discuss problems or changes which may be required;
 - b. Focus on measurable objectives and on obtaining resources to carry out partnership programs;
 - c. Expand the partnership program wherever consensus may be achieved;
 - d. Renew the partnership program upon the request of either party by convening a meeting as often as agreed upon but at least every two years; and
 - e. Recognize that strong teaming, problem-solving, and decision-making skills are necessary to sustain successful partnership projects; and, subject to financial resources and at the option of the parties, engage a neutral professional facilitator to provide focused workshops as needed to ensure that partnership participants are equipped to apply those skills.

The partnership program is not a provision of the collective bargaining agreement and will not be enforced through grievance, regulatory or judicial complaint. Rather, it is a voluntary program which depends for success upon mutual commitment and ongoing renewal. Specific partnership activities may be reflected or referenced in the collective bargaining agreement or enforceable side agreements, but, in general, partnership projects will be voluntary in nature.

(Name/Title of Management Representative)

(Name/Title of Union Representative)

(Signature/Date of Management Representative)

(Signature/Date of Union Representative)



CHAPTER 3

Labor–Management Partnership Guidance

This guidance is designed to assist management and union leaders who are interested in establishing an LMP in their transit systems. It lists 14 guidelines that have proven to be constructive in the success and sustainability of LMPs in the transit industry. The 14 guidelines are categorized into five groups according to the aspect of the partnership they are concerned with. Each guideline has actions recommended for management and union leaders. See Table 2.

Table 2. Guidance for establishing and sustaining labor–management partnerships.

	Actions for Management Leaders	Actions for Union Leaders
A. Improve the Cultural Environment for Partnership		
1. Respect the individuals representing the other party.	Management training should develop in managers an appreciation for the value of the labor movement and the effectiveness of the union leadership and administrative structure. Management should also understand the different organizational structures of their unions, which are based on democracy. Without compromising efficiency or the limits it has currently set on the partnership, management should seek to extinguish any anti-union animus and respect the union leaders’ offices.	Union leaders should develop the labor relations skills of their successors and cultivate a pattern of respect for the managers.
2. Design, implement, and sustain effective communication.	Management must always be willing to listen to employee concerns, be attentive to employee perspectives, and provide information critical to the future of the transit agency to support continuing cooperation. Among managers, they can continually reinforce respect for the leadership of union officers and clarify the gains made through cooperation.	With management, union officials must be candid but not commit the union without authority to do so. With members, union officials at all levels can constantly communicate in meetings, publications, and conversations the efforts being made and the cooperative gains secured through LMPs. Union leaders should communicate issues and problems before they escalate rather than wait for negotiations.
B. Prioritize the Best Partnership Objectives		
3. Separate issues between integrative (or win-win) and distributive (or zero-sum) ones.	Managers should actively listen to and understand employee interests and perspectives, and should systematically seek out those issues on which there are common goals and interests. Managers should seek to clearly understand and distinguish those issues in which there is little commonality of interest, seeking efficient resolution of those as well but recognizing that the latter will be more challenging to resolve through LMP processes. Many issues will contain a combination of integrative and distributive elements.	Union leaders should study and understand the transit agency’s interests that management serves as well as the managers’ own interests and perspectives, and should systematically seek out those issues where common goals and interests exist. Union leaders should seek to clearly understand and distinguish those issues in which there is little commonality of interest, seeking efficient resolution of those as well but recognizing that the latter will be more challenging to resolve through LMP processes. Many issues will contain a combination of integrative and distributive elements.

Table 2. (Continued).

	Actions for Management Leaders	Actions for Union Leaders
C. Advocate the Partnership		
4. Establish broad-based buy-in from all key stakeholders with formality and structure that is made clear to all.	Authorized managers should agree to the Charter or perpetuating document.	Union leaders should agree to the Charter or perpetuating document.
5. Be confident that managers can cooperate with unions yet still continue to defend prerogatives and efficiency.	Managers must seek to explain the benefits of LMPs to governing boards and the public, and should refrain from sacrificing LMP strength to appease ephemeral anti-union fears.	
6. Be confident that union leaders' cooperation with management will not compromise members' interests.		Union officials must instill the membership with confidence in the LMP and should resist the temptation to sacrifice the LMP to demonstrate resolve or concern on unrelated issues. Union officials should also demonstrate the value of the LMP and seek support for the LMP from international unions and major sister unions.
D. Build Strength within the Partnership		
7. Outline shared goals and expectations of the partnership.	Discussions of goals and expectations must emerge during the course of cooperation. Management and union should reach consensus on the general goals and expectations of the LMP. Management should recognize union's desire to influence decisions outside of collective bargaining.	Discussions of goals and expectations must emerge during the course of cooperation. Management and union should reach consensus on the general goals and expectations of the LMP. Union should recognize management's desire for productive cooperation with union.
8. Align all necessary resources to support the partnership.	Both management and union should have a share of the financial costs. Management must fund the training program and ensure that managers and staff have the time needed for the training and communication activities.	Both management and union should have a share of the financial costs. The union should consider a financial contribution to the partnership, and should ensure that the necessary time and funding is available for the communication and training activities.

(continued on next page)

Table 2. (Continued).

	Actions for Management Leaders	Actions for Union Leaders
9. Require consistent accountability of everyone in the organization with a governing or executing responsibility for the partnership.	The entire management team should understand who in the organization (an individual or a team) understands the partnership best and is responsible for guiding it. These LMP leaders should communicate the requirements for and limits of cooperation as necessary. Harm done by those who undermine the partnership should be addressed.	Union leadership needs to clearly enunciate the partnership policies and get buy-in from union leaders and support from rank-and-file; harm done by those who undermine the partnership should be addressed.
10. Provide for comprehensive skill building for both union and management throughout the course of the partnership.	In addition to participating in joint skill building efforts, management can establish labor partnership skill training as part of its career building curriculum. LMP training should be designed and carried out in order to enhance management’s ability to deliver quality transit service in joint efforts with union.	In addition to participating in joint skill building efforts, union officials can provide newer officials and members with exposure to partnership concepts and benefits. LMP training should be designed and carried out in order to enhance management’s ability to achieve common goals in joint efforts with union.
11. Provide an independent facilitator, if affordable.	Jointly selecting and funding an independent facilitator can further reinforce a strong partnership. An in-house management designee to support the cooperative process and guard against excessive skepticism can also contribute to strengthening a partnership.	Jointly selecting and funding an independent facilitator can further reinforce a strong partnership.
E. Make the Most of Events		
12. Support stability in union and management leadership and smooth LMP leadership transitions.	Governing boards should recognize that excessive turnover in executive leadership can materially weaken LMPs, and leadership succession processes need to be managed to ensure LMP survival and effectiveness. Management teams should recognize the value of long-term trusting relationships between leaders. If union leadership changes in a destabilizing manner, management must be prepared not to ask too much of new leadership and to cultivate new relationships.	Unions whose membership values the long-term rewards of LMPs will be able to support steady leadership and smooth transitions; union leadership should plan for continuing LMPs after terms are complete.

Table 2. (Continued).

	Actions for Management Leaders	Actions for Union Leaders
13. Take advantage of specific successes (e.g. pension fund governance, apprenticeship) to build a broader partnership.	Clear successes (such as pension governance or apprenticeship programs) should be carefully protected, and the processes and relationships should be extended to other common goals.	Clear successes (such as pension governance or apprenticeship programs) should be carefully protected, and the processes and relationships should be extended to other common goals.
14. Take advantage of shared challenges and crises to catalyze partnership agreements.	Management should seize the opportunity of a crisis shared with the union and jointly resolved by management and union with positive outcomes to strengthen the LMP.	Union leadership should seize the opportunity of a crisis shared with management and jointly resolved by management and union with positive outcomes to strengthen the LMP.



CHAPTER 4

Labor–Management Partnership Workshop Framework

The professional experience of the project team, supported by the case studies, clearly indicates that the success and sustainability of LMPs in the transit industry depend heavily on the use of relevant teaming, problem-solving, and decision-making skills by the leadership and key members on both sides of the partnership. The workshop guide that follows is designed to actively involve participants in a process that will encourage retention of the skills they have learned and help transfer these skills to the real work environment.

Workshop Framework Objective

The objective of the workshop framework is to provide an effective behavioral blueprint that can be applied successfully in every type of group meeting associated with partnership projects. These might include meetings that seek initial agreement on the need for a partnership between an aspect of transit operations and the local union leadership, or meetings that address ongoing issues and goals of existing transit partnerships, or unilateral meetings held by either side that contribute to a partnership effort.

The workshop framework, to be used as a developer’s guide, will

- Present a practical approach for building a results-oriented working group consisting of management and labor representatives,
- Enable management and labor leaders to effectively manage interpersonal disagreements, and
- Identify simple but powerful problem-solving tools in joint labor–management workshops.

Adult Learning Principles and Tools

The workshop framework is firmly based on adult learning principles which make certain key assumptions.

- **Adults are motivated to learn because they have needs and interests that learning will satisfy.** Adults must see a benefit for themselves and their organization in order to want to become a part of a work group. Therefore, a starting point for organizing a group is to identify people with genuine interest and motivation to work on a problem or issue where their experience and knowledge will be engaged.
- **Adult orientation to learning is “life-centered” and not “subject-centered.”** Therefore, group members must have ample opportunity to discuss their actual work experiences. In work groups, theoretical lectures, and pep talks, excessive administrative minutia will frustrate adult learners.
- **Experience is the richest resource for adult learning.** Therefore, the focus of group meetings should be on analyzing experience.

- **Adults have a need to be “self-directing.”** Therefore, the role of the leader and coordinator is to engage in a process of mutual inquiry with group members rather than for them to transmit their knowledge to the group and then evaluate their conformity to it.

To achieve adult learning, the workshop framework recommends the use of some widely recognized skill-development and training tools that have been broadly applied in the transit industry such as the following:

- **The ADDIE model.** A systematic instructional design model consisting of five phases: (1) assess, (2) design, (3) develop, (4) implement, and (5) evaluate.
- **Cause-and-effect diagram.** A tool to assist identifying potential factors causing an overall effect.
- **Flowcharting (process mapping).** An activity that defines how an entity functions, to what standards its processes should be implemented, and how to evaluate the effectiveness of the entity.
- **Brainstorming.** An activity where workshop participants generate ideas spontaneously to address a predetermined problem.
- **Nominal group technique.** A process for collective problem identification, solution generation, and decision-making that encourages and more equally considers input from all participants.

The workshop framework that follows focuses on building and maintaining the key skills necessary for working groups to mutually start and sustain LMPs. The exact form or shape of meetings will differ at every transit agency, based on local custom and on the nature of the cooperative effort being undertaken. But the principles and problem-solving skills of the working group are widely applicable.

Initially, it is recommended that, if cost allows, both sides agree to engage a neutral professional workshop developer to develop a workshop based on this framework in ways that are appropriate to the specific transit property. But both management and labor members of LMPs will be able to apply the workshop framework effectively throughout the life of the partnership projects.

Working Together

The most effective entry point to creating a results-oriented group is use of the Task-Oriented Team Development Model. A high-performing group determines its **goals** first and foremost, then clearly identifies the **roles** of all group members, and next determines group operating **procedures** in order to cement group norms. Accomplishing these three activities, and in this order, maximizes the potential for highly effective interpersonal interactions and group success.

- **Goals.** Consensus on group goals must be reached and stated before any substantive work can proceed. One way to move forward the group’s discussion on goals is for labor and management members to find common interests they both share on the identified task. In addition, group members may identify their personal energy level and time commitment to the group activity, and even their own passion for working on an identified task. The clarity of the goals must be substantive and measurable. What the work “is” and “is not” requires inclusive group participation to ensure that no one has a different interpretation of the task. Failure to fully invest in this activity is the best way to ensure team failure. A group member who can’t or won’t subscribe completely to team goals once the group has come to an agreement must exit the group. Rock-hard goals that the group lives by at every juncture of its existence cement focus and commitment to the desired end result. A high-performing team will rally around its goals whenever threatened by outsiders. Ownership of team goals becomes the shared responsibility of all group members.

- **Roles.** For the group to become cohesive, group members must discuss and agree upon the role of each member. This activity is not to be taken lightly. A clear understanding about who takes the lead in key group activities is pivotal to group success.
 - Is there to be an identified leader? What specifically is his/her role to be? Who and what will he/she share with non-group members, and with whom will he/she share group activities? Is there an alternate leader when the leader can't attend a meeting?
 - Will the group accept substitute attendees when a group member can't attend a meeting?
 - Who will facilitate the meetings? What special skills does the facilitator need? Will this responsibility be shared, rotated?
 - Does the group need a secretary or scribe to take notes about group meetings? Does this role include developing an agenda for each meeting, notifying members of pertinent group information (via e-mail, telephone, etc.)?
 - Will the team issue reports (status, interim, final) about its activities, and to whom? Who will be responsible, the secretary?
 - Will the group want to invite special participants, who have special knowledge/information that the team needs, to the meetings?
- **Procedures.** Often referred to as ground rules, procedures may be divided into two groups:
 - **Operating procedures** include when and where the team will meet, how long each meeting will last, and the start and end times agreed upon by the team.
 - **Member conduct procedures** focus on appropriate codes of conduct that members agree are essential for interpersonal effectiveness such as respecting each member's ideas, not interrupting someone when they are speaking, one person speaking at a time, and confidentiality of information shared in meetings.
Two additional procedural activities can support effective team work:
 - **Onboarding/off boarding** includes setting aside time before and at the end of each meeting to attend to team business that is procedural, leftover information from a previous meeting, or information about future meetings.
 - **Evaluating group processes** enables a high-performing team to evaluate the “process” side of its work.

Any ground rule that the team agrees to becomes a procedure.

Agreed upon **goals, roles, and procedures** support an open and inclusive environment where members feel free to share their honest thoughts about the task. As a means to an end, focus is placed squarely on the task at hand (goals) and not on the niceties of group bonding. Team members who have bought into the team's goals are self-policing. Serious violation of any of these team agreements compromises the trust that is being built within the team over time.

Managing Disagreements

Conflict within work groups is inevitable. In its early stages, conflict is a healthy component of the teaming experience. Isn't this counterintuitive? No. Conflict is a clear indication that members of the group are actively engaged in the activity, that they are willing to vocalize their opinions openly without much regard for what others may think. A group that has been charged with “moving” the organization from one place to a better place should not want “yes men” and status quo seekers to populate their meetings.

People with legitimate and divergent views must be able—in an open and supportive environment—to have their opinions heard, respected, and integrated into the fabric of the discourse. Conflict becomes dangerous in a group when members take intransigent positions and engage in personal attacks about other members. Keep in mind that if everyone

already had the same point of view, there would be no need to bring a group together in the first place.

Managing conflict must be the responsibility of each team member. Agreed upon team rules that are violated must be addressed immediately and within the confines of these rules.

For example, a team rule is “focus on the problem, not the person.” Any team member may cite the rule, why it was violated, and simply state, “I thought we agreed that no global observations about a member were to be allowed. Your comment that George’s idea was stupid was inappropriate. I believe you should have focused on the idea and why you disagreed with it.” Disagreements can be minimized when all team members focus on these actions:

- **Separate the person from the comment or problem.** For the team to move forward and succeed, in sometimes contentious circumstances, team members are being healthy contributors in the meetings when they can say, “I will be soft on the person, but I’m not going to be afraid to be hard on the problem.” Adopting such an attitude will allow the team to address significant issues that require serious discussion and resolution.
- **Respect each team member and be willing to hear them out.** Conscientious team members must continually work to maintain the self-respect of each member. Confidence in the task grows when all members feel their contributions support and help the team succeed. The best way to destroy a team is to belittle, in any manner, another team member’s presence. It is hard work, especially in group settings, to be willing to hear another person’s opinions. Active listening is a skill most of us are not good at. Becoming better at this skill requires first paying close attention to what another person is saying and second having the skills to know when and how to step in with observations that summarize or paraphrase what you’ve heard. Adroit use of these skills shows that you have been listening, which is a form of recognition, and that you wish to comment on what you’ve heard.
- **Assign responsibility to people for their actions.** The responsibility to correct or improve one’s behavior must rest squarely with the person who engaged in the behavior. In addition to citing the specific behavior in question, underscore the impact that the behavior has had on the team. In instances of the same or similar behavior, the person should have explained, in private, the consequences for continued similar behavior which may include removal from the team. The group must recognize that attaining its stated goals is more important than the participation of any one individual.
- **Seek a joint problem-solving approach.** A group that is able to use recognized problem-solving tools successfully during meetings typically attains a higher level of performance. Problem-solving tools help to move the group away from a focus on the individual to a focus on the group. In addition, structured tools that incorporate graphical techniques and relevant project data produce better solutions than unstructured discourse. When individual ideas and hard data are presented graphically to the group, perceptions and erroneous beliefs tend to dissolve.
- **Set a good example.** During group meetings, demonstrate all agreed on rules established by the team. Encourage the team to look for options and discourage groupthink paralysis. Continually seek to reinforce the common interests that enabled the group to coalesce around team goals agreed upon at the beginning of the activity.

Problem-Solving Tools

A group’s decision to employ a problem-solving tool is a clear indication that the team has been able to move beyond the sometimes difficult forming stage to a normative period where the real work of the group may be accomplished. The range of tools available to aid a team is immense and runs the gamut from easy to complex and time consuming. It is beyond the scope

of this guide to discuss them all. Three of the most commonly used tools are discussed in this guide. For more tools, refer to the references at the end of the *Toolkit*.

- **Brainstorming.** The round-robin method is used to help a group create as many ideas in as short a time as possible. Each group member must give an idea as their turn arises in the rotation or pass until the next round. Piggybacking on someone else’s idea is encouraged. The group scribe needs to capture all ideas on a chart that all members can view. After the round-robin session has run its course, the group discusses the various ideas, which may be combined, eliminated, or added. The best ideas may then be prioritized and the group decides the actions to be taken. Generally accepted ground rules for brainstorming include:

- Everyone agrees on the issue to be brainstormed.
- Never criticize ideas during the round-robin period.
- Encourage spontaneity and outside-the-box ideas.

It is recognized that differences of opinion exist over the use of this tool. A review of recent literature on the topic of brainstorming reveals widely varying opinions regarding both its effectiveness and desirability as a tool. The literature does not generally condemn its use but points out weaknesses based on empirical evidence. For example, an individual idea can at times be more creative than brainstorming; fear of open expression sometimes inhibits creativity; the first few brainstormed suggestions of some group members tend to shape the thinking of later contributors—thus reducing creativity; the debate or lack of it over expressed ideas enhances or detracts from the resulting creativity. Some findings were influenced by the physical and/or psychological circumstances of the experiment being conducted. For the purpose of this workshop guide, brainstorming should remain in consideration for use, but with sensitivity to local circumstances. It may, for example, be conducted silently in written form with results posted on a board anonymously.

- **Cause and effect.** Use this method, which has many variations, when a group needs to identify and explore the possible causes of a specific problem or condition (the effect). This method was developed to represent the relationship between some “effect” and the possible “causes” influencing it. The effect or problem statement is first agreed upon by the group and visually displayed for the group to view. The group then identifies all the major causes for the effect underneath the problem statement. The causes might be summarized under four categories: people, machines, methods, and materials. These categories are only suggestions, but they help the group place the causes in convenient pockets and facilitate analysis later in the process.

When major causes have been determined, further analysis may prompt the group to ask why something happens and list responses underneath the major causes. Further analysis may include a focus on the causes that appear repeatedly. The group may want to gather data to determine the relative frequencies of the different causes. When analysis of the effect is complete (and this might require several meetings), the team should reach consensus on the most likely cause or causes leading to the effect and determine an appropriate course of action to eliminate the effect. The team should also agree on a method to evaluate all implemented solutions, to include how and when to make adjustments if they are needed.

- **Nominal group technique.** This technique tries to provide a way to give everyone in a group an equal voice in problem selection. The steps in this process are as follows:
 - *Group members identify a problem they believe is important for the group to address.* The problem statement is placed on a chart for all to view (if members are reluctant to make their problem areas known, have group members submit their problem in advance on paper and the team scribe transfer the problem statement to a team chart).
 - *When all problem statements can be seen by the group, make sure that the same problem is not listed twice (may be in slightly different words).* If the problem is repeated combine them into one item.

- *Assign a letter to each problem statement.* Group members write on a piece of paper the letters corresponding to the number of problem statements the team produced. For example, the problem list may look like this: A. accidents, B. operators, C. garage, D. overtime, E. routes, etc. The problem list should not exceed eight problems. Either secretly or as a group, members vote on each problem statement, assigning five points to what they believe is the most important problem the team needs to work on. Then, four for the next problem statement, and so forth. When points are tallied, the problem statement with the most points is addressed first, then the problem statement with the second most points is worked on next, and then the group moves through the list.

A variation of this technique may be used when the team needs to select a solution to a problem where divergent opinions have not resulted in a team solution; where a democratic and/or expedient solution is desirable.

Obtaining Broad Buy-In

For LMPs to generate systemwide impacts, management and union leaders must obtain the broadest possible buy-in from their respective constituents. The case studies found that doubts about LMPs exist in both management and represented labor. The concept of partnership between management and union members is still new to many in the transit industry. Without seeing a functioning partnership, it is not surprising that one cannot envision the benefits of a cooperative labor–management relationship that promotes joint problem solving without compromising the management’s prerogatives in decision-making and the union’s independence in collective bargaining.

Management and union leaders both face the challenge of persuading their constituents. The joint labor–management workshop will prepare its management and union participants in explaining LMPs to obtain broad buy-in from their respective constituents. The benefits of an LMP workshop are discussed below.

- **Transit industry experience.** Past experiences of LMPs in the transit industry will be valuable resources for management and union leaders who have the intention to establish a partnership in their transit systems. The workshop will present proven benefits of LMPs that participants could directly harness and communicate to their constituents. The six case studies conducted for this research are good sources of transit industry experience. Workshop developers could rely on the summaries of the case studies to tailor the curriculum for the respective transit systems.
- **Types of partnerships and possible structures.** The workshop will also introduce the range of scopes, formality, and administrative structures that existing LMPs in the transit industry adopt. This provides tangible images of how LMPs function and what they can achieve. Such examples help workshop participants form their own visions of partnerships unique to their transit systems and, in turn, allow them to help their constituents imagine a partnership they desire.
- **Persuasive communication tactics.** When management and union leaders advance the idea of an LMP to their constituents, it is inevitable that they will face concerns, questions, doubts, and criticism. Such responses to LMPs can sometimes be distrustful and hostile; some may even question the good intention and integrity of an individual. It requires persuasive and tactful communication to convince stakeholders, such as managers at any level, board members, union members, and other stakeholders, that LMPs are for the better of the transit agency and do not compromise the interests of either the management or the union.
- **Different approaches to obtain buy-in.** Because of the different natures of their respective constituencies, management and union leaders need different kinds of guidance in obtaining

buy-in. Challenges from the board or the public to management leaders have very different political sensitivity than challenges from union members to union leaders. This requires the workshop to address management-specific and union-specific challenges separately.

Group Facilitation

Group dynamics is an area of social science that focuses on advancing knowledge about the nature of group life. Labor–management workshops will often require someone to coordinate the group’s meetings. Often this person is not the identified group leader. A good working knowledge of group dynamics and effective facilitation skills in coordinating group meetings are essential to the group’s success. Key responsibilities of the coordinator include:

- Introducing the discussion session,
- Being a task-oriented timekeeper who keeps the group moving so that it does not get sidetracked,
- Restating and drawing attention to the main ideas of the discussion so that learning is focused,
- Promoting a climate of acceptance, openness, and support to facilitate learning, and
- Knowing when to provide a sense of closure.

In addition, a group coordinator must (1) constantly model the behaviors established by the group, (2) be unbiased in interactions with the group, (3) focus on enhancing the “process side” of the discussion, (4) have excellent knowledge of potential problem-solving tools (proposing the use of tools and being able to manage a group’s use of tools in meetings), and (5) be able to capture and manage the visual display of key discussion areas.

Group or Team?

It is relevant that in labor–management workshops there is an understanding about the question: Are we a group or a team? Although we use group and team interchangeably, not all groups are teams. Teams are just one type of a small group. The leader and coordinator of the labor–management workshop should obtain agreement on one term and use it throughout the workshop. Doing this will mitigate any misunderstanding, confusion, and possible conflict.

Committees, task forces, departments, and councils are groups, but they are not necessarily teams. Groups don’t become teams simply because that is what someone calls them. No matter how often it is referred to as one, the entire membership of a large organization is never a team. A team exists based on a set of interpersonal interactions structured to achieve established goals. A team strives to attain mutual goals and is aware of who is and is not a member of the team. Teams have specific functions and roles to perform, and have a limited life-span of membership.


CHAPTER 5

Conclusion

Historically, labor relations have been critical aspects of public transit operations in the United States. A positive and productive labor–management relationship is indispensable to delivering quality transit services to the public and maintaining high standards of labor welfare. LMPs are an effective way to improve labor relations in a transit system. The research that led to this *Toolkit* found that LMPs of various forms and extents already existed in the transit industry. LMPs benefit both management and union in ways such as effective operation and management decision-making, fairer compensation and employee welfare, training and career development opportunities, safety and health, and employees’ morale and productivity, among others. Most importantly, a successful LMP achieves such benefits without compromising the union’s independence and the management’s prerogatives.

This *Toolkit* was designed to help transit systems establish (if an LMP does not already exist), improve, revive, or expand their LMPs. The LMP Charter helps management and union leaders to establish a partnership, if it does not exist, or to renew an existing one by periodically re-orienting themselves in their endeavor to improve workplace relations and re-examine the partnership with the different challenges and different people involved. The Labor–Management Partnership Guidance provides a practical reference of recommended actions for both management and union leaders. The Labor–Management Partnership Workshop Framework provides training techniques for LMP workshop developers.

The continuing success of an LMP is a dynamic process that requires continuous effort from management and union leaders. Challenges for an established LMP caused by a wide range of factors such as labor disputes, management or union leadership turnover, operational or fiscal crises, and many others, are inevitable. A successful LMP has to quickly evolve so as to adapt to the changing environment. It is the objective of this *Toolkit* to provide the necessary tools for management and union leaders to sustain their partnerships through challenges and changes.



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Abbreviations and acronyms used without definitions in TRB publications:

A4A	Airlines for America
AAAAE	American Association of Airport Executives
AASHO	American Association of State Highway Officials
AASHTO	American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials
ACI-NA	Airports Council International-North America
ACRP	Airport Cooperative Research Program
ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act
APTA	American Public Transportation Association
ASCE	American Society of Civil Engineers
ASME	American Society of Mechanical Engineers
ASTM	American Society for Testing and Materials
ATA	American Trucking Associations
CTAA	Community Transportation Association of America
CTBSSP	Commercial Truck and Bus Safety Synthesis Program
DHS	Department of Homeland Security
DOE	Department of Energy
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
FAA	Federal Aviation Administration
FHWA	Federal Highway Administration
FMCSA	Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration
FRA	Federal Railroad Administration
FTA	Federal Transit Administration
HMCRRP	Hazardous Materials Cooperative Research Program
IEEE	Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers
ISTEA	Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991
ITE	Institute of Transportation Engineers
MAP-21	Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (2012)
NASA	National Aeronautics and Space Administration
NASAO	National Association of State Aviation Officials
NCFRP	National Cooperative Freight Research Program
NCHRP	National Cooperative Highway Research Program
NHTSA	National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
NTSB	National Transportation Safety Board
PHMSA	Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration
RITA	Research and Innovative Technology Administration
SAE	Society of Automotive Engineers
SAFETEA-LU	Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (2005)
TCRP	Transit Cooperative Research Program
TDC	Transit Development Corporation
TEA-21	Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (1998)
TRB	Transportation Research Board
TSA	Transportation Security Administration
U.S.DOT	United States Department of Transportation

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